**The Würm**

An old couple wanted a child before it was too late. They were getting old, decrepit. Having tried every permissible means, and being God-fearing, they heard about an old woman who lived in the deep woods, a midwife, who was supposed to be able to help with things like this. So they gathered up some gifts – some cheese, meat, bread and honey, and went searching for her. When they finally found her deep in the woods, they gave her the gifts and she told them what to do! “Go home and wash your dishes, and when you’re done, throw the dirty dishwater under the bed. In the morning, when you wake up, you'll find a flower. It’ll have a black blossom and a white blossom. You pick the white and leave the black one alone.“

When the old couple woke up in the morning and saw the flower, they were amazed. But, since they were never real good at listening, they started wondering if maybe they should pick both – just to be sure! They, of course, end up picking both. And is usually the case when stupid things in the world go down, nothing happened -- no thunderbolt from the heavens, no thundering voice of God . Well, the woman’s belly starts to grow and finally, the time for birth arrives. What pops out first is a slimy lizard whom the midwife tosses out the window – she’s sure they wouldn’t want it. Then, luckily, a healthy baby boy is born and all is well. The Würm/lizard is forgotten and crawls away, alone and unwanted, to find a place to live. He grows up alone in the swamps and forests as a scavenger.

The Wurm spends his life hiding, letting his resentments grow bigger and bigger. He has never experienced warmth or love. He has never felt he deserved any of the “good” things in life..

At some point, the Würm decides he’s had enough of living in shame and squalor, having people shoot at him and scream whenever they see him, hiding and watching life through people’s windows and seeing the great lives they have, the good food, the warm rooms, the love and affection. Worse, he’s watched his brother, the Prince, rise to the top. Everything the Prince does turns out great – he’s a football hero, the smartest in school, has all the girlfriends he wants, tons of attention. He’s even going to marry the King’s daughter. The Würm finally gets fed up.

So he kidnaps the woman the Prince is going to marry. He tells the King and the Prince that he will not let the woman go until the King and the Prince can find a woman to spend the night with him. The King offers a lot of money for a woman to go spend the night with the Wurm. Many women try but none succeed. These women show up to receive a quick infusion of cash. When the villagers come back the next morning to check on the woman who has entered the cave the night before, she has been vaporized into ashes by the Wurm anger and rage.

There is one woman who is giving thought to trying to spend the night with the Wurm. The challenge of doing something difficult, something that requires hard work and dedication appeals to her. She consults the elders in her village, listens to their wisdom and advice, gathers support from others, and takes the time to weave 11 wedding shirts. She knows she needs to be prepared to confront the Wurm. When she finally feels prepared, she shows up to the cave with her 11 wedding shirts, her bucket of water, her scrub brush, her lye and several others tools she has acquired. She enters the cave to spend the night with the Wurm.

The next morning the people of the village show up to check on the woman. They find her with a transformed Wurm. Although he doesn’t look a Prince, he is transformed into a Warrior. He is a Warrior who can understand and take full responsibility for his past, for things he has done that he is not proud of, but who can also face into his past knowing that he has worked hard to transform himself and work through his layers of crud. This Warrior is now a Warrior of dignity and grace who can understand and own his past.

F**ood for Thought”**

What is the moral of the fairy tale? (IT IS NOT THAT YOU JUST NEED A GOOD WOMAN TO CLEAN YOU UP!)

What part of the story represents shame?

What kind of feelings do you think build up when a person feels a great deal of shame about their sexuality?

How do you think these feelings may get activated when asked to talk openly and honestly about their sexuality?

What is the fairy tales message about overcoming the shame?

What is the message of the Warrior?

***Other “Food for Thought”***

*What do you think happened inside that room? Why nine shirts?*

*What does it do to a person to be thrown out, not wanted anymore?*

*What made the Würm decide to finally ask for what he wanted instead of just living in his hole and wasting away?*

*Why lye and a scrub brush?*

*How do you think the Würm felt watching his brother get everything he wanted?*

*What did the girl have to do to be ready to meet the Würm and not disappear like all the others?*

*Why don’t people ever follow the instructions?*

*Why was everything so easy for the Prince?*

*Why were people so scared of the Würm?*