

Cinderella

Once there was a gentleman who married, for his second wife, the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had two daughters of her own, who were, indeed, exactly like her in all things. He had likewise, a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over but the stepmother began to show herself in her true colors. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl and employed her in the meanest work of the house. She scoured the dishes and cleaned madam's chamber. She slept on a wretched straw bed, while her sisters slept in fine rooms.

The poor girl bore it all patiently, and she used to go to the chimney corner and sit down there in the cinders and ashes, which caused her to be called Cinderella. However, Cinderella, notwithstanding her coarse apparel, was a hundred times more beautiful than her sisters.

It happened that the king's son gave a ball and invited all persons of fashion to it. Our young misses were mightily delighted at this invitation.

They said to Cinderella, "Would you not like to go to the ball?"

"Alas!" said she, "you only jeer me; it is not for such as I am to go to such a place."

"You are quite right," they replied. "It would make the people laugh to see a Cinderwench at a ball."

They went to court, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could. When she lost sight of them, she started to cry.

Her fairy godmother, who saw her all in tears, asked her, "You wish that you could go to the ball; is it not so?"

"Yes," cried Cinderella, with a great sigh.

"Well," said her godmother, "be but a good girl, and I will contrive that you shall go."

Then she took her into her chamber, and said to her, "Run into the garden, and bring me a pumpkin."

Cinderella went immediately and brought it to her godmother. She struck the pumpkin with her wand, and it was instantly turned into a fine coach, gilded all over with gold.

She then went to look into her mousetrap, where she found six mice, all alive. She gave each mouse a little tap with her wand, and made a very fine set of six horses of a beautiful mouse-colored dapple gray.

For a coachman, Cinderella brought a rat, and the fairy touched him with her wand, turning him into a fat, jolly coachman.

After that, she said to her, "Go again into the garden, and you will find six lizards behind the watering pot. Bring them to me."

Her godmother turned them into six footmen, who skipped up immediately behind the coach, with their liveries all bedaubed with gold and silver. The fairy then said to Cinderella, "Well, are you not pleased with it?"

"Oh, yes," she cried; "but must I go in these nasty rags?"

Her godmother then touched her with her wand, and Cinderella's clothes turned into cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels. She gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the whole world. She got up into her coach; but her godmother, above all things, commanded her not to stay past midnight, telling her that if she stayed one moment longer, the coach would be a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her coachman a rat, her footmen lizards, and that her clothes would become just as they were before.

She promised her godmother to leave the ball before midnight, and then drove away, scarcely able to contain herself for joy. The king's son, who was told that a great

princess had arrived, ran out to receive her. He gave her his hand and led her into the hall. There was immediately a profound silence. Nothing was then heard but a confused noise of, "How beautiful she is! How beautiful she is!"

The king's son led her to the most honorable seat, and afterward took her out to dance with him. She danced so very gracefully that they all more and more admired her.

She thought that it was no later than eleven when she counted the clock striking twelve. She jumped up and fled, as nimble as a deer. The prince followed but could not overtake her. She left behind one of her glass slippers, which the prince picked up most carefully. She reached home, but quite out of breath, and in her nasty old clothes, having nothing left of all her finery but one of the little slippers.

As she was eagerly telling her godmother everything that had happened at the ball, her two sisters knocked at the door, which Cinderella ran and opened.

"You stayed such a long time!" she cried, gaping, rubbing her eyes and stretching herself as if she had been sleeping.

"If you had been at the ball," said one of her sisters, "you would not have been tired with it. The finest princess was there, the most beautiful that mortal eyes have ever seen."

They told her that this princess hurried away with so much haste that she dropped one of her little glass slippers, which the king's son had picked up, and that most certainly he was very much in love with the beautiful person who owned the glass slipper.

What they said was very true; for a few days later, the king's son had it proclaimed that he would marry her whose foot this slipper would just fit. They began to try it on all the court, but in vain; it was brought to the two sisters, who did all they possibly could to force their foot into the slipper, but they did not succeed.

Cinderella knew that it was her slipper and said, "Let me see if it will not fit me."

Her sisters burst out laughing, but the gentleman who was sent to try the slipper looked earnestly at Cinderella, and said that he had orders to let everyone try.

He had Cinderella sit down, and he found that it went on very easily, fitting her as if it had been made of wax. Her two sisters were greatly astonished, but then even more so, when Cinderella pulled out of her pocket the other slipper. Then in came her godmother and touched her wand to Cinderella's clothes, making them richer and more magnificent than any of those she had worn before.

And now her two sisters threw themselves at her feet to beg pardon. Cinderella embraced them and said that she forgave them with all her heart, and wanted them always to love her.

She was taken to the young prince. He thought she was more charming than before, and, a few days after, married her. Cinderella gave her two sisters lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the court.

Moral: Beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired. Graciousness, however, is priceless and of even greater value.