

1812

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES
THE PRINCESS IN DISGUISE**

Jacob Ludwig Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm

Grimm, Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) - German philologists whose collection "Kinder- und Hausmarchen," known in English as "Grimm's Fairy Tales," is a timeless literary masterpiece. The brothers transcribed these tales directly from folk and fairy stories told to them by common villagers. The Princess in Disguise (1812) - A beautiful queen, near death, makes the king promise to marry only someone as beautiful as she. The king resolves to marry his daughter who, on learning this, runs away and becomes a servant.

THE PRINCESS IN DISGUISE

A KING once had a wife with golden hair who was so beautiful that none on earth could be found equal to her. It happened that she fell ill, and as soon as she knew she must die, she sent for the King and said to him, "After my death I know you will marry another wife; but you must promise me that, however beautiful she may be, if she is not as beautiful as I am and has not golden hair like mine you will not marry her." The King had no sooner given his promise than she closed her eyes and died.

For a long time he refused to be comforted, and thought it was impossible he could ever take another wife. At length his counselors came to him, and said, "A King should not remain unmarried; we ought to have a Queen." So he at last consented, and then messengers were sent far and wide to find a bride whose beauty should equal that of the dead Queen. But none was to be found in the whole world; for even when equally beautiful they had not golden hair. So the messengers returned without obtaining what they sought.

Now, the King had a daughter who was quite as beautiful as her dead mother, and had also golden hair. She had all this while been growing up, and very soon the King noticed how exactly she resembled her dead mother. So he sent for his counselors, and said to them, "I will marry my daughter; she is the image of my dead

wife, and no other bride can be found to enable me to keep my promise to her.” When the counselors heard this, they were dreadfully shocked, and said, “It is forbidden for a father to marry his daughter; nothing but evil could spring from such a sin, and the kingdom will be ruined.” When the King’s daughter heard of her father’s proposition she was greatly alarmed, the more so as she saw how resolved he was to carry out his intention.

She hoped, however, to be able to save him and herself from such ruin and disgrace, so she said to him, “Before I consent to your wish I shall require three things- a dress as golden as the sun, another as silvery as the moon, and a third as glittering as the stars; and besides this, I shall require a mantle made of a thousand skins of rough fur sewn together, and every animal in the kingdom must give a piece of his skin toward it.” “Ah!” she thought, “I have asked for impossibilities, and I hope I shall be able to make my father give up his wicked intentions.” The King, however, was not to be diverted from his purpose. All the most skilful young women in the kingdom were employed to weave the three dresses, one to be as golden as the sun, another as silvery as the moon, and the third as glittering as the stars. He sent hunters into the forest to kill the wild animals and bring home their skins, of which the mantle was to be made; and at last when all was finished he brought them and laid them before her, and then said, “Tomorrow our marriage shall take place.”

Then the King’s daughter saw that there was no hope of changing her father’s heart, so she determined to run away from the castle.

In the night, when every one slept, she rose and took from her jewel-case a gold ring, a gold spinning-wheel, and a golden hook. The three dresses of the sun, moon, and stars she folded in so small a parcel that they were placed in a walnutshell; then she put on the fur mantle, stained her face and hands black with walnut-juice, and committing herself to the care of Heaven, she left her home.

After traveling the whole night she came at last to a large forest, and feeling very tired she crept into a hollow tree and went to sleep. The sun rose, but she still slept on, and did not awake till nearly noon.

It happened on this very day that the King to whom the wood belonged was hunting in the forest, and when his hounds came to the tree they sniffed about, and ran round and round the tree barking loudly. The King called to his hunters, and said, “Just go and see what wild animal the dogs are barking at.” They obeyed, and quickly returning told the King that in the hollow tree was a

most beautiful creature, such as they had never seen before, that the skin was covered with a thousand different sorts of fur, and that it was fast asleep.

“Then,” said the King, “go and see if you can capture it alive. Then bind it on the wagon and bring it home.” While the hunters were binding the maiden she awoke, and full of terror cried out to them, “I am only a poor child, forsaken by my father and mother; take pity on me, and take me with you!” “Well,” they replied, “you may be useful to the cook, little Roughskin. Come with us; you can at least sweep up the ashes.” So they seated her on the wagon and took her home to the King’s castle. They showed her a little stable under the steps, where no daylight ever came, and said, “Roughskin, here you can live and sleep.” So the King’s daughter was sent into the kitchen to fetch the wood, draw the water, stir the fire, pluck the fowls, look after the vegetables, sweep the ashes, and do all the hard work.

Poor Roughskin, as they called her, lived for a long time most miserably, and the beautiful King’s daughter knew not when it would end or how. It happened, however, after a time that a festival was to take place in the castle, so she said to the cook, “May I go out for a little while to see the company arrive? I will stand outside the door.” “Yes, you may go,” he replied, “but in half an hour I shall want you to sweep up the ashes and put the kitchen in order.” Then she took her little oil-lamp, went into the stable, threw off the fur coat, washed the nut-stains from her face and hands, so that her full beauty appeared before the day. After this she opened the nutshell and took out the dress that was golden as the sun, and put it on. As soon as she was quite dressed she went out and presented herself at the entrance of the castle as a visitor. No one recognized her as Roughskin; they thought she was a King’s daughter, and sent and told the King of her arrival. He went to receive her, offered her his hand, and while they danced together he thought in his heart, “My eyes have never seen any maiden before so beautiful as this.”

As soon as the dance was over she bowed to the King, and before he could look round she had vanished, no one knew where. The sentinel at the castle gate was called and questioned, but he had not seen any one pass.

But she had run to her stable, quickly removed her dress, stained her face and hands, put on her fur coat, and was again Roughskin. When she entered the kitchen and began to do her work and sweep up the ashes, the cook said, “Leave that alone till tomorrow; I want you to cook some soup for the King. I will also taste a little when it

is ready. But do not let one of your hairs fall in, or you will get nothing to eat in future from me." Then the cook went out, and Roughskin made the King's soup as nicely as she could, and cut bread for it, and when it was ready she fetched from her little stable her gold ring and laid it in the dish in which the soup was prepared.

After the King had left the ball-room he called for the soup, and while eating it thought he had never tasted better soup in his life. But when the dish was nearly empty he saw to his surprise a gold ring lying at the bottom, and could not imagine how it came there. Then he ordered the cook to come to him, and he was in a terrible fright when he heard the order. "You must certainly have let a hair fall into the soup; if you have, I shall thrash you!" he said.

As soon as he appeared the King said, "Who cooked this soup?" "I cooked it," he replied. "That is not true," said the King. "This soup is made quite differently and much better than you ever made it."

Then the cook was obliged to confess that Roughskin had made the soup. "Go and send her to me," said the King.

As soon as she appeared the King said to her, "Who art thou, maiden?" She replied, "I am a poor child, without father or mother." He asked again, "Why are you in my castle?" "Because I am trying to earn my bread by helping the cook," she replied. "How came this ring in the soup?" he said again. "I know nothing about the ring!" she replied.

When the King found he could learn nothing from Roughskin, he sent her away. A little time after this there was another festival, and Roughskin had again permission from the cook to go and see the visitors. "But," he added, "come back in half an hour and cook for the King the soup that he is so fond of." She promised to return, and ran quickly into her little stable, washed off the stains, and took out of the nutshell her dress, silvery as the moon, and put it on.

Then she appeared at the castle like a King's daughter, and the King came to receive her with great pleasure; he was so glad to see her again, and while the dancing continued the King kept her as his partner. When the ball ended she disappeared so quickly that the King could not imagine what had become of her.

But she had rushed down to her stable, made herself again the rough little creature that was called Roughskin, and went into the kitchen to cook the soup.

While the cook was upstairs she fetched the golden spinning-wheel and dropped it into the soup as soon as it was ready. The King again ate it with great relish; it was as good as before, and when he sent for the cook and asked who made it, he was obliged to own that it was Roughskin. She was also ordered to appear before the King, but he could get nothing out of her, excepting that she was a poor child, and knew nothing of the golden spinning-wheel.

At the King's third festival everything happened as before. But the cook said, "I will let you go and see the dancing-room this time, Roughskin; but I believe you are a witch, for although the soup is good, and the King says it is better than I can make it, there is always something dropped into it which I cannot understand." Roughskin did not stop to listen; she ran quickly to her little stable, washed off the nut-stains, and this time dressed herself in the dress that glittered like the stars. When the King came as before to receive her in the hall, he thought he had never seen such a beautiful woman in his life. While they were dancing he contrived, without being noticed by the maiden, to slip a gold ring on her finger, and he had given orders that the dancing should continue longer than usual. When it ended, he wanted to hold her hand still, but she pulled it away, and sprang so quickly among the people that she vanished from his eyes.

She ran out of breath to her stable under the steps, for she knew that she had remained longer away than half an hour, and there was not time to take off her dress, so she threw on her fur cloak over it, and in her haste she did not make her face black enough, nor hide her golden hair properly; her hands also remained white. However, when she entered the kitchen, the cook was still away, so she prepared the King's soup, and dropped into it the golden hook.

The King, when he found another trinket in his soup, sent immediately for Roughskin, and as she entered the room he saw the ring on her white finger which he had placed there. Instantly he seized her hand and held her fast, but in her struggles to get free the fur mantle opened and the star-glittering dress was plainly seen. The King caught the mantle and tore it off, and as he did so her golden hair fell over her shoulders, and she stood before him in her full splendor, and felt that she could no longer conceal who she was. Then she wiped the soot and stains from her face, and was beautiful to the eyes of the King as any woman upon earth.

"You shall be my dear bride," said the King, "and we will never be parted again, although I know not who you are." Then she told him her past history, and all that had happened to her, and he

found that she was, as he thought, a King's daughter. Soon after the marriage was celebrated, and they lived happily till their death.

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