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The Good Little Mouse

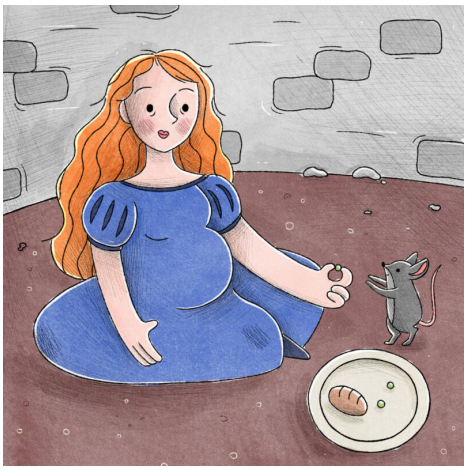
Madame d'Aulnoy

Once upon a time, there lived a king and queen in a land where everyone was happy and content. The royal couple was very loved by their people, but the king of a neighboring kingdom was jealous of their happiness. This cruel king attacked the land of the friendly king and queen, and killed the king in the process.

The queen was taken captive and locked in the tower of the palace of the cruel king. She was to be killed only after giving birth to her child, which the cruel king hoped would be a girl so he could marry her off to his son.

The king brought a fairy to the tower to make sure the child would be a girl. The fairy whispered to the queen, who was lying on a worn-out mattress, "Do not worry, everything will be okay. This unfortunate situation will soon come to an end."

The king demanded the fairy to predict the child's gender, and she assured him that it would be a beautiful and intelligent daughter. The king threatened to kill both the mother and child if the prediction was false.



Every day, the queen was given three peas and a piece of bread to survive on. She spent the whole day spinning woolen threads for the cruel king on a spinning wheel. One evening, she noticed a small cute mouse in her room. The mouse began to dance and made her laugh. She then gave the mouse her last pea, saying, "Look what I have for you. It's not much, but it's all I have and I gladly give it to you!" At that moment, a delicious piece of roasted meat and two pots filled with various delicacies appeared on the table. "Oh, look now," smiled the queen, "a good deed is always rewarded." She took two candies from one of the pots and gave them to the mouse, who danced even more joyfully.

The next morning, the queen received her usual three peas and a piece of bread. The jailer had put them on a large plate as a joke. When the queen went to get

her food for the day, she saw that the mouse had eaten everything. "Oh, what a naughty little creature," she thought, "if this continues, I will soon starve."

But when she tried to put the lid back on the empty plate, she saw that it was now filled with various healthy foods. She began to eat, thinking that the baby would be born soon. She raised her arms in the air and cried out, "Help me find a way to save my child!" At that moment, she saw the mouse playing with some straw. "If there is enough straw, I could weave a basket to put the child in," she thought to herself. "And with the wool, I could spin a strong thread to lower the basket from the tower."

There was enough straw to make a sturdy basket. Every day, she hung the basket from the tower to see if the rope was long enough to reach the ground. Every day, she looked out the window, hoping to see a kind person who would take the baby and raise her in secret.

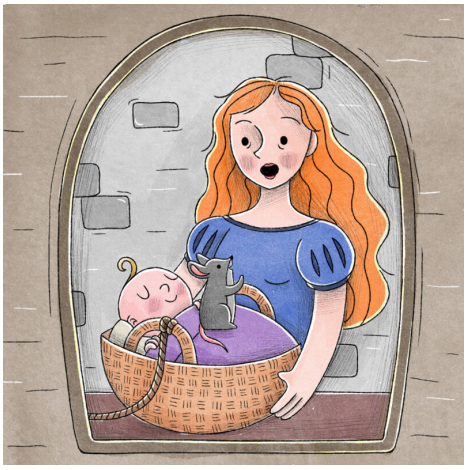
One day, she saw an old woman walking by with a stick. The old woman offered to help the queen if she would give her a mouse. The queen started to cry. "Why are you crying?" asked the old woman.

"I don't have many mice in my room, but I have one that I have grown to love very much. She is such a sweet and pleasant creature. So cute and so lovely!" said the queen sobbing. "I cannot give the mouse to you."

"If you prefer a hairy rodent over your own child, that is your own business," the old woman shouted and then walked away.

That same evening a beautiful princess was born. The queen named her Joliette, dressed her and placed her in a basket. She wanted to lower the basket out the window, hoping that someone would find and care for the baby. As she picked up the basket, a mouse jumped in. "Oh, poor little creature," said the queen. "I could have sacrificed you to save my child, but I couldn't do it."

"Be at ease," replied the mouse in human language and slowly transformed into a fairy. It was the fairy who had visited her with the cruel king in the beginning and had been kind to her. "I have tested you," said the fairy, "to see if you have a good heart. And you have proven it. Even when I took the form of the old woman who wanted the mouse in exchange for the care of your child. That was also a test, and you have shown that you are loyal to your friendships." Then she leaned over the child and blessed her with health, beauty, and wealth. Fairies have the special gift to do so.



The queen asked the fairy if she would take the child to raise her as her own daughter. The fairy agreed, and together they went back in the form of the mouse in the basket. The queen lowered the basket. When the fairy resumed her own form on the ground, she saw that the fairy Cancaline had stolen the baby. Cancaline was a cruel fairy, and more powerful than she was.

When the good fairy brought the terrible news to the queen, she asked the good fairy to do everything to get the child back.

Meanwhile, the king heard that the queen had given birth and had the baby picked up. But the queen said that a cruel fairy had taken her baby by force. The king replied, "Then I will keep my promise, and the queen will be killed. I will personally hang her from the tallest tree in the forest."

In the forest, the fairy made herself and the queen invisible with a spell, so they could escape. The fairy took the queen to her beautiful castle. She was taken care of, and if she had had Princess Joliette with her, she would have been completely happy. But they could not locate where Cancaline had hidden her, although the little mouse tried everything she could.

Years passed until the moment arrived when the princess would turn 15. Big news came from the castle of the cruel king. The king's son would marry the girl who cared for the turkeys, although the girl had refused to marry the ugly prince. But the prince and the king had forced her, and on the king's order, the marriage had to be performed. Because she still refused to marry the prince, she was locked up in a tower until the day of the wedding.



The little mouse wanted to meet the turkey keeper and paid her a visit. There she found the girl. She was dressed in rags, and around her were dresses of gold that were trampled by dozens of turkeys. The prince was also there. He had a hunchback, limped, and was blind in one eye. "Why don't you marry me," the mouse heard him say. "If you don't marry me, I will kill you." The girl said, "I'd rather die. You are as ugly and cruel as your father." Then the prince left the room, and the mouse transformed into an old shepherdess. "You take good care of your turkeys, I see," she said to the girl.

The girl looked at the old shepherdess who was very impressed by her beauty. "Tell me," said the shepherdess, "how did a girl like you end up in this place?" The girl answered: "I don't know what to do. I don't want a crown. I don't even know who I am, who my father and mother are. I was brought here by a fairy named Cancaline. She would regularly beat me for no reason, so one day I ran away. I walked to the forest and that's where the son of the cruel king found me. He asked me to come to the castle and work as a turkey-herder. He came to see me every day and fell in love with me. I didn't want it, but it happened."

The fairy asked what her name was, and she said, "I call myself Joliette." Then the fairy knew for sure that this had to be the princess and told her who she was. The girl washed herself and put on the golden dress. She was truly beautiful, the most beautiful girl anyone had ever seen.

Immediately after, the fairy brought the queen the good news.

Meanwhile, the ugly prince had walked into the forest where he began to cry under a tree. The king saw it and asked him why he was so sad. The prince said that the girl would never love him. The king assured his son that she would definitely love him, otherwise he would kill her. Then he had his men fetch her. They were very surprised to see the girl in the beautiful clothes, but when she told them who she was, they tied her up and took her to the king. The king gave her an ultimatum: she would love his son, or he would kill her, and then he locked her up in the tallest tower.

That day, the fairy and the queen arrived at the castle of the cruel king. They had heard everything. That night, the fairy visited the king in the form of a small mouse. She nibbled pieces off his ear. The king was still very sleepy and thought someone was trying to kill him. The mouse did the same to the son. She made sure he couldn't open his good eye and was blind in the other eye. The mouse made sure that both men were facing each other in a dark room. The son didn't recognize his own father's voice and thought someone was trying to kill him. So he killed his father and before the king fell, he stabbed his son. They had killed each other in the fight.



The fairy and the queen brought the princess out of the tower and took her to the great hall of the castle. There, they asked the subjects of the cruel king if they would agree to the princess as their new queen. They were all too happy to do so because they had been fed up with their cruel king for a long time. There was music, dancing, and singing. There hadn't been so much joy in the land for a long time. The fairy brought a prince to the castle the next day, who was as handsome as the princess and had a heart of gold. When the prince saw the princess and the princess saw the prince, they both fell in love instantly. They married shortly thereafter and everyone lived happily ever after.



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