

King Thrushbeard

IN A DISTANT KINGDOM, years ago, there lived a king with an arrogant and haughty daughter. When it came time for the princess to marry, the king held a banquet to which he invited many eligible young princes. The princess scorned them all, especially one she named King Thrushbeard, for his pointed beard reminded her of the beak of a thrush.

Soon after, the king lost his patience with his daughter. A beggar was passing the castle and, in a fit of temper, the king gave the princess to him as his wife. The princess screamed and cried, but to no avail. The beggar grasped her firmly by the hand and took her home with him. On the way, they passed a fine city. "Whose city is this?" asked the princess. "It is King Thrushbeard's, and might have been yours," said the beggar, and the princess dropped a tear. Later they passed a fine forest. "Whose forest is this?" asked the princess. "It is King Thrushbeard's, and might have been yours," replied the beggar, and the princess dropped a tear. Finally they came to a dreadful little hovel. "Whose wretched hovel is this?" asked the princess. "It is mine, and you will live in it with me," said the beggar, pushing her inside.

Life was hard for the princess. Not only did she have to do all the household tasks, but because of their great poverty, she also had to try to make some extra money. Her fingers were too delicate to weave baskets. She had not the skill to make pottery. So the beggar got her a position as kitchen maid at the castle, where she had to do all the dirty work. Occasionally scraps from the table were tossed her way. These she would store in little iron



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The Beggar leads the Princess to his hovel

pots which she hid in her dress and took home to feed herself and her beggar husband. This was the only way the two of them were able to survive. One day, as she was about to return to her hovel at the end of the day's work, she heard the sound of music and laughter coming from the great hall of the castle. Quietly she crept upstairs to see what was happening. A great feast was being given to celebrate the marriage of the eldest princess. The hall was bright, and filled with nobles in rich silks, gleaming gold and flashing jewels. Hiding behind a curtain, the princess watched and wept, thinking of how her proud nature had brought her to such a sad state.

Suddenly a prince, who seemed to the princess

the most handsome man she had ever seen, noticed her hiding behind the curtain. He went to her, and told her that he wanted to dance with her. Great was the princess's embarrassment when she saw that he was none other than King Thrushbeard! But he did not seem to recognize her. As she danced with him, the iron pots fell from her ragged dress and clanged against the floor, spilling food all over. Everyone laughed at her. The princess wept with humiliation, and tried to run away. But the guards caught her as she ran down the stairs, and brought her back to King Thrushbeard.

"Do not be afraid," he told her, "for I and the beggar whom you married are the same person. Out of love for you I put on the disguise to teach you humility. You have learned your lesson." The weeping princess sobbed, "I am unworthy to be your wife." But King Thrushbeard kissed her, dried her tears, and the two lived in great happiness. □

The Lady and the Lion

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a father who had three daughters. One day, before he went on a trip, he asked them what presents they wanted him to bring back. The two elder daughters wanted jewelry, which was simple enough for the father to get. But the youngest wanted a singing, soaring lark. Before his return, the father had bought the jewelry, but he had not found a lark. As he was passing through a dark forest, he spied one in a tree, climbed up and caught it. At that very moment a lion, howling with rage, came bounding out. "How dare you take my lark," he roared. "Prepare to die!" The man begged to be spared and the lion let him go, on the condition that his youngest daughter be given to him.

When the man returned home, there was great wailing as he told his story. But the youngest daughter did not fear, and went alone into the forest. There she was met by the lion, who took her to his castle, where other lions dwelt. He was a prince under a spell, and took his human form at night, as did his companions. The lion and the maid fell in love, and lived happily together.

One day the lion told the maid that her eldest sis-

ter was about to be married, and gave her permission to visit home if she so wanted. The maid refused, unless the lion would come with her. He told her that he dared not, for were a single ray of light to touch him, he would turn into a dove and be forced to fly about the world for seven years. The maid promised she would protect him from the light.

The lion went to the wedding feast, but, as fate would have it, even though the maid tried to shield him from the light, a beam touched him. He turned into a dove and flew away. For seven years the maid endured great hardship trying to find him. Then she found that, human again, he had married an evil princess, who had taken his memory from him. She went to the princess, who envied the maid's gown, which had been given to her by the sun during her wanderings. The princess asked the maid if she would sell it. The maid said she would give it only if she were allowed to enter the prince's room that night. The bargain was struck, but the princess put a drug in his drink. When the maid entered the prince's room, she was unable to rouse him.

The next day the maid showed the princess three eggs which the moon had given her during her wanderings. She broke them open and out ran three golden chicks. The princess wanted them, and the maid gave them on the condition that she again be allowed into the prince's room. But that night the prince did not drink the drug, so when the maid was let into his chamber, he recognized her and told her how he had been enslaved by the princess.

Now the princess's father was a powerful sorcerer, so the prince and the maid quietly slipped away from the palace. They mounted a griffin which bore them over the Red Sea. When the beast became tired, the maid dropped a nut the night wind had given her. At once a tall nut tree grew from the water, and the griffin was able to rest in its branches for the night. In the morning he returned the prince and the maid home safely, and they lived in peace and contentment for the rest of their lives. □

The foregoing two tales by the Brothers Grimm were adapted by James Spero.