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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Dolphin's Bride

One day there came through the woods that bordered on a big ocean a poor little beggar girl named Nitta. Nitta was crying; she was hungry and she did not know where to go, for her aunt, who had a daughter of her own, did not want to support Nitta and had turned her out-of-doors that very day.

"I am too poor to support you," said the hard-hearted aunt. "You must take care of yourself."

Nitta's father and mother were dead and there seemed to be no place for her but the woods, so she wandered along until she came to the ocean, and there she sat down to cry out her grief.

While she was crying a big dolphin poked his head out of the water. "What are you crying for, little girl?" he asked.



Nitta was so surprised to hear the dolphin speak that she stopped crying at once. "I am crying because I have no home," she replied.

"I will give you a home if you will come with me," said the dolphin. "I need some one to take care of my house."

"But I cannot live in the water; I would drown," said Nitta.

"I would not ask you to come if you would drown," answered the dolphin. "But you must decide for yourself whether you could keep house for a fish. There are no children to play with at the bottom of the ocean."

"I shall starve if I stay on land, and I may find a good home," thought Nitta as the dolphin waited for his answer.

"I'll go with you," she said.

"Then jump on my back," said the dolphin, "and close your eyes; there is nothing to fear. I promise you that." Nitta jumped on his back and closed her eyes. Over the waves they went, and then suddenly Nitta felt the dolphin plunge under the water, and down, down they went, and then next thing she knew the dolphin stopped and said, "Here we are."

Nitta opened her eyes, and instead of being in the water, as she thought, she was in a beautiful garden in front of a beautiful house. Up the steps the dolphin flopped, for, of course, he could not walk, having no feet, and Nitta followed him.

He led her into a big hall hung with beautiful pictures and soft carpets upon the floor upon which Nitta was almost afraid to step.

Nitta almost forgot her companion, she was so overcome with all the grandeur she beheld.

On both sides of the long hall were many rooms, one of gold, one of silver, one of marble, and the dolphin told Nitta she was to choose which room she would care to have for her own.

"But you said I was to keep your house," said Nitta; "a servant cannot live in one of these beautiful rooms."

"I did not say I wanted you to be a servant," said the dolphin. "I want some one to live here and care for the house, but not to do the work."

Nitta chose a beautiful room hung in blue silk, with chairs of blue damask and beautiful rosewood frames. The ceiling was a darker blue, and all over it were dotted diamonds that twinkled like stars.

The floor was covered with a blue velvet carpet, soft and thick, and over it were scattered big pink roses which looked as if they would crush when stepped upon, they seemed so natural.

There was a piano of rosewood at one end of the room, and upon this Nitta was surprised to see the dolphin jump and with its fins begin to play. Music such as Nitta never heard came from the keys, and so enchanted was she that when the dolphin stopped playing Nitta ran to him and put her hand upon his head.

"You poor fish," she said, "it is too bad you are not a man. I wish I were a fairy and could change you into a prince. This place is far too beautiful for a fish to live in, and besides, you play such wonderful music. How is it possible?"

"There is only one way you can help me, and since you wished to be a fairy and change me into a prince," said the dolphin, "I will see if you will keep your word.

"Look behind the door and bring the sword you will find there, and I will tell you the only way I can be freed from the spell of a witch who hates me."

From behind the door Nitta brought the sword. She found it had a beautiful handle of gold and set with diamonds and pearls, but the blade looked sharp and pointed and Nitta trembled as she held it.

"Now if you really are sorry for me," said the dolphin, "and wish to make me a prince, strike off my head."

Nitta dropped the sword at the very thought of anything so terrible. "I cannot do that," she said. "You have been too kind to me."

"That is the only way you can repay me," said the dolphin, with a sigh. "I see you did not mean what you said about wishing to be a fairy."

"Oh yes, I do, indeed I do!" said Nitta. "I do not want to kill you, but I will put you out of misery if that is what you want."

She picked up the sword and swung it over her head; then she looked at the dolphin, closed her eyes, and brought down the sword.

As it fell Nitta felt herself slipping away, it seemed to her into the bottom of the ocean.

When she opened her eyes she saw a very handsome man bending over her. "You are a brave girl," he said.

"You have saved me from a terrible fate."

"Where is the good dolphin?" asked Nitta. "Oh, I will never forgive myself for killing him!"

"He is gone forever. I was the poor dolphin," said the handsome man at her side. "You broke the spell that held me, for the old witch who changed me into the dolphin said I must remain one until a pretty woman should strike off my head."

"But why would a witch change you into a fish?" asked Nitta.

"Because I would not marry her daughter and make her a princess," replied the handsome man. "You see, I am a prince and I was waiting for the girl I could love to appear before I would take my princess."

"And now I have found her. Will you become my princess?"

Nitta was already in love with the handsome man who had fallen in love with her, and so they were married that very day in the wonderful castle of beautiful rooms and lived happily ever after.