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Beauty and the horse

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There was once a merchant whose business was so immense that he was the wealthiest tradesman known. He had three daughters, one of whom was named Beauty. One day the merchant received word from friends far away, informing him of the failure of one of his connections, and he at once prepared himself for a journey to that place. The two older daughters asked him to buy all sorts of finery and dresses for them, but Beauty asked for nothing at all. When the merchant left, these two girls had rubbed their eyes with onions in order to look as if they were sorry to bid him good-bye; but Beauty needed no such artifice; her tears were quite natural.

So the merchant went away, and in due time arrived at the place where the tradesman of whom he had heard the bad news was living. But instead of obtaining money, as he hoped, he was kicked and beaten so violently that it seems a great wonder he came away without losing his life. Of course he had now nothing to do but return, so he mounted his horse and turned homeward. Towards evening he unfortunately lost his way, and when it became quite dark he knew no better than to ride in the direction of a light which was shining from a distance. At length he reached a beautiful little palace, but although it was lighted, there seemed to be no one at home. After a while he found a shelter and food for his horse—pure oats, and nothing else. The animal might well dance for joy, for both man and beast were wellnigh exhausted from the long ride. When the horse had been provided for, the master stepped into the palace. There a light was burning, and a table was laid for one person, but no one was to be seen. As the merchant was tired, he sat down without invitation, and ate a hearty supper. A fine bed was there, too, and when he had eaten enough he stretched himself among the pillows and enjoyed a good night's rest.

The next morning everything appeared as on the evening before. The horse was well supplied, and as breakfast was ready on the table, the merchant seated himself, doing justice to the good meal. As he was now ready to leave, he thought it might be well to look over the premises, and glancing into the garden he perceived some exquisite flowers. He went down, intending to carry some of them home with him as a present for Beauty; but no sooner had he touched them than a horse came running towards him as fast as it could trot, saying: "You thoughtless man; I was good to you last night, I gave you shelter and provisions, and now you would even take with you the most beautiful flowers in

my garden."

The merchant immediately begged pardon, saying that he had intended the flowers as a gift for Beauty, his daughter.

"Have you several daughters?" asked the horse.

"Yes, I have three, and Beauty is the youngest one," he replied.

"Now you must promise me," said the horse, "that you will give me the daughter whose name is Beauty; if you refuse, I will take your life."

Well, the merchant did not wish to lose his life, so he promised to bring his daughter to the palace, whereupon the horse disappeared among the trees, and the man rode home.

As soon as he reached his house, the two older daughters came out and asked him for the fine things which they were expecting. But Beauty came and bid him welcome. He produced the flowers and gave them to her, saying, "These are for you, but they cost your life;" and he then told her how he had been obliged to make the fatal promise to the horse, in order to save his life. Beauty at once said, "I am willing to follow you, father, and am always glad to help you." They started on their journey, and soon arrived at the palace.

As before, no one was to be seen, but the merchant found food for his horses and a good stable. The table was also laid for two persons, and there were two beds. Having done justice to the supper, father and daughter retired and slept soundly. When they awoke the next morning, they found breakfast ready for both, ate heartily, and having exchanged many loving and tender words, they separated, the father riding away. We will let him proceed, and see what occurred at the palace.

Shortly before dinner-time the horse arrived. He came into the room and said, "Welcome, Beauty!" She did not feel very glad, and had all she could do in keeping her tears back. "You shall do nothing but walk around in these rooms and in the garden," continued the horse. "Your meals are provided for. I shall come home every day at noon; at other times you must not expect me."

Time passed, and Beauty felt so lonely that she often longed for noon, when the horse came home, and she could talk with him. She gradually came to look at him more and more kindly; but one thing caused her great distress, namely, that she had no news from her father. One day she mentioned this to the horse.

"Yes," said he, "I understand that very well. In the large room you will find a mirror in which you can see all that you are thinking of."

She was happy to learn this, and went straight into the room where the mirror was hanging. As soon as she thought of her father, her old home was visible in

the glass, and she noticed how he was sitting in his chair with a sorrowful expression upon his countenance, while his two daughters were singing and dancing. Beauty felt sorry over this state of affairs, and the next day she told the horse what she had seen.

"Your father is sorry, I suppose," said the horse, "because he has lost you. He will soon feel better, however."

But on the next day, when Beauty consulted the mirror, her father looked pale and ill, like one who is deadly sick; both of her sisters were dressed for a ball, and neither of them seemed to care for the weak man. Beauty burst into tears, and when the horse came home, asking what ailed her, she told him of the bad state of affairs, wishing that he would allow her to return and nurse her poor father during his illness.

"If you will promise to come back," said the horse, "you may return and stay for three days; but under no condition must you break your word."

Beauty told him she would come back in three days.

"To-night," resumed the horse, "before going to bed, you must place the mirror under your pillow, saying: 'I wish to be home to-morrow.' Then your wish will be fulfilled. When you desire to return, you must do likewise."



The next morning, when Beauty awoke, she was at her old home. Her father became so glad to see her again that he at once felt a great deal better. She cared so well for him that the next day he was able to be up, and on the third day he was almost well. As he wished her to stay with him few days longer, she complied, thinking that no harm would come from it. On the third day after, however, when she looked into the mirror, she saw the horse stretched on the ground in front of the bench which was her favorite seat in the garden. She now felt that it would be impossible for her to remain longer, hence in the evening, before going to bed, she placed the mirror under her pillow, saying: "I wish to be at the palace to-morrow morning."

She promptly awoke in the palace the following morning, and hurrying into the garden she found the horse so very sick that he could not stand on his legs. Beauty knelt down and asked him to forgive her for staying away longer than she had promised. The horse asked her if she could not persuade herself to stay with him all her life, but she answered that it would seem very singular to live with a horse all her lifetime. The poor animal now sighed so deeply that she took pity on him and said, fearing that he might die then and there, that she would

always stay with him and never leave him. As soon as she had made this promise, the horse vanished, and a beautiful young prince stood before her. He seized her hand and asked whether she was not sorry for the promise she had made. No, she said, she would rather stay with him now than when he was in the shape of a horse. He now told her that both he and the whole land had been enchanted by his wicked step-mother, who had converted him into a horse, and told him that only when a beautiful young girl would promise to stay with him, in his altered shape, would the enchantment be over. He wanted to marry Beauty, and live in the palace which belonged to him.

So they sent for her father to take up his residence with them, and now the marriage was performed and celebrated in a splendid manner. They lived long and happily together, the prince and his Beauty.

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