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Little Ida's Flowers

Hans Christian Andersen

Little Ida loved her big cousin. He always told her the most wonderful stories. One day, Little Ida went up to her cousin. 'My poor flowers are all wilted. Yesterday they were beautiful and now all the petals are drooping,' she said sadly, showing her the bouquet. Her cousin smiled and said: 'You know why, dear Ida, your flowers went to a ball last night. That's why they are tired now and are drooping.'



Ida thought for a moment and said, 'But flowers can't dance, can they?' 'Sure they do', said her cousin. 'When we go to sleep, the flowers come to life. Almost every evening they have a ball. They jump and dance all evening. Hyacinths, daisies, lilies-of-the-valley, tulips, all flowers can join in.' 'Where do the prettiest flowers dance?' 'They dance in the king's summer palace. When the king goes back to town in the autumn, the flowers go into the castle. That's why you won't see any flowers in the gardens at that time.'

'Could I see the flowers dancing as well?' 'Of course,' her cousin answered. 'When you get to the castle, just look through the window.' Ida would like to see that. At that moment the dull neighbour walked up to Ida and her cousin. He didn't like the stories the cousin was telling Ida at all. 'What are you telling that child now? It's all a stupid fabrication.'

But Ida did not think it was a stupid fabrication and thought about the story of the flowers all day long. She put her wilted bouquet in the doll's bed of her beloved doll Sofie. Maybe then they could get better. Sofie had to sleep one night in the drawer of the desk. When little Ida went to bed, she whispered to her mother's flowers in the living room, 'I know you are going to a ball tonight,' but the flowers didn't reply.

Ida woke up in the middle of the night. She had been dreaming about her cousin and the flowers. Then, very softly, she heard music in the distance. Little Ida snuck out of bed as quietly as she could. She did not want to wake her mom and dad. On tiptoes, Ida went into the living room. What she saw there she could not have imagined. All her mother's flowers had come out of their pots and vases and were dancing. A large lily sat behind the piano and played the happiest of tunes. Ida's flowers also joined in enthusiastically. They no longer looked sick or tired at all.



Not only the flowers danced. Little Ida saw the parasol jumping all over the room. A stone figurine opened the drawer of the desk and out came doll Sofie. Sofie danced with Ida's flowers. 'Thank you for letting us borrow your bed,' they said. 'You can keep sleeping there if you want,' said Sofie. 'Oh no, we won't live that long,' the flowers replied. 'Tomorrow we will be dead. Tell Ida to bury us in a nice spot in the garden. Then we will rise again in the summer. Even more beautiful than we are now.'

The next day, little Ida walked into the living room. Nothing was left of the ball. She took Sofie out of the desk drawer, but the doll said nothing. 'I know what you were supposed to tell me about the flowers,' little Ida said to her. 'It's not nice of you to not say anything, when they have danced so beautifully with you.' But little Ida knew what she had to do. She took the wilted bouquet out of the doll's bed and, together with her cousin, looked for the best place in the garden, so the flowers could come back next summer.



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