



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Sunev

Abbie Phillips Walker

There was once a poor peasant and his wife who had a very beautiful daughter named Sunev. So beautiful was she that her hair rivaled the sun in its golden brightness. Her eyes were like the blue sky and her lips were so red that the roses beheld her with envy. Her skin was so white and fair that the winter snow was not whiter. Her teeth were like the pearls. And when an old witch named Zitna, who lived in the forest nearby, saw Sunev one day she became enraged because she was more beautiful than her own daughter.

Witch Zitna had thought till then that her own daughter was the most beautiful creature in the world, for the witch child was as dark as Sunev was fair, and Witch Zitna wished the Prince of Esor, who was looking for a wife, to wed her.

She knew that the Prince had sent out his servants far and near to look for the most beautiful lady in the country for his wife, and if Sunev were brought before the Prince of Esor her daughter would never be chosen.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to entice the lovely Sunev into the forest and there change her into the shape of an animal and leave her to her fate.

The wicked Witch Zitna watched her chance, and one day, when Sunev was sent into the forest to gather wood, Witch Zitna slipped out from behind a tree and touched her with her magic stick, changing her into a tiger.

Poor little Sunev was so frightened when she beheld her paws she fell on the ground and began to moan and cry and all the birds and animals of the forest came running to see what had happened.



The witch, in her haste, forgot to deprive Sunev of her power to talk, so when the birds and animals wanted to know what was the matter she told them she did not know, but something dreadful had happened and she was no longer a girl, but a tiger, and was afraid to go home.

The birds and animals can understand any language, and, being now part animal

herself, Sunev had no trouble in understanding them.

“Do not cry,” they told her. “It must be the work of Witch Zitna, but we will protect you, and when the hunters come we will warn you so you may hide until they go. Eat the berries and nuts and we will find you a nice place to sleep, so dry your eyes and some way may be found to restore you to your own shape.”

Sunev did as the birds and animals told her, for there was no other way, and soon she became fond of her forest home and all her new friends.

Witch Zitna now proceeded to have her beautiful daughter seen by the messengers of the Prince of Esor, and they carried her off to his palace, sure they had found at last a wife that would suit their royal master.

Of course the parents of little Sunev looked everywhere for her, but she could not be found, and when they saw the tiger coming toward them they fled, for they did not know that the beautiful and graceful tiger-skin held their own child.

The Prince of Esor, when he saw the witch child, thought that she was beautiful, but he had wished for a wife that was as fair, so he decided to wait, and sent out his servants again to look for a lady with golden hair.

Witch Zitna was enraged when she heard this, for she knew that until her daughter was safely married to the Prince she was not safe.

The reason for this was that every night Venus, the goddess of beauty, came to the forest to look for the graceful tiger the fairies had told her about, for, while Sunev looked like a tiger, she had more grace and beauty than a real tiger, though they are graceful, too.

Venus did not wish even a tiger to rival her in being graceful, so she wanted to see this wonderful animal that she might learn from it more charm.

One night Sunev was walking through the forest in the moonlight when Venus, in the form of a tree, beheld her.

Knowing at once that the graceful tiger was a mortal changed, she called her attendants, who were not far away, and, changing herself back to her own beautiful form, she spoke to Sunev.

“What is your name, beautiful creature, and why are you in this form?” she asked.

It was the first time any one but the birds and animals had spoken to her since Witch Zitna had changed her, and poor little Sunev began to cry for joy.

Venus soothed her and soon Sunev told her all she knew of her sad plight. But when she told the goddess her name a flash of anger came to the eyes of Venus.

“Old Witch Zitna has done this,” said the goddess. “She shall pay for it, for, my dear, your name is mine spelled backward and you are my godchild. Zitna knew she had much to fear in the beauty you possess. Come with me!”

It did not take long to reach the cave of Zitna, for Venus had the power of witches and fairies when she wished to use it.

“Come forth!” called Venus, when they reached the cave of Zitna. “Undo your cruel work,” she commanded, when the trembling witch appeared in the doorway of her cave.

In another minute Sunev stood in her own lovely shape before Venus, who, instead of being jealous of the wonderful beauty she beheld, drew Sunev to her and kissed her on her brow.

“You will always be the most beautiful woman in the land,” she said. “Be you old or young, none shall compare with you.

“As for your daughter, Witch Zitna, you will never see her again, for a mother who would treat the daughter of another as you have done this beautiful girl is not the sort to have a daughter. I will claim your daughter as well as Sunev for my godchild.”

Sunev did not know how they reached the door of her parents’ home, but she stood there a short time after, and with trembling hands opened the door.

Oh, how happy her father and mother were to have her again! The joy of seeing her safe made them forget the time, and it was the trumpeting of the Prince of Esor’s messengers that told them the day was far gone.

The messengers knocked at the door, and when Sunev opened it they knew they had found the wife of their Prince.

Sunev’s father and mother were overcome with sorrow when the messengers told their errand. They thought they had found their child, only to lose her again, but the messengers told them they might go along to the palace. So they all set out.

When the Prince of Esor saw the beauty of Sunev he knew she was the one woman in the world for him, and without delay he ordered the wedding feast to be prepared.

A wonderful gown of white and gold was brought from the royal clothes-room, and a crown of pearls and diamonds was placed upon her beautiful golden hair, and upon her dainty feet golden slippers and silk stockings.

Her father and mother were not forgotten by the Prince, either. They were dressed in clothes they had never even dreamed of and given a palace near

where Sunev and Prince Esor were to live.

But what had become of the beautiful witch child all this time, for, of course, she was not to blame for the bad deed of Witch Zitna and should not be made to suffer?

She was safe and happy, you may be sure, for she was surrounded by every comfort and luxury in another part of the palace, and she did not wish to become the wife of the Prince.

Instead, she loved one of the friends of the Prince, a noble lord who had fallen in love with her, but did not dare speak his love because he knew the Prince might choose her for his bride.

But when this noble lord heard a wife had been found for his Prince and it was not the beautiful girl he loved, he told the witch child of his love and they were married the very night that the Prince and Sunev were married.

And it turned out that the witch child was not a witch child at all, but had been stolen when a baby from a stork who was carrying her through the forest to the home of a nobleman, for the goddess Venus, true to her promise, took both of the beautiful girls for her godchildren and had the fairies see that they were both made happy.

The witch child was given a pretty name, but her husband best loved to call her the Queen of Night, because of her wonderful dark beauty.

Sunev was the Princess of Esor, of course, but the Prince called her Princess Rose, and if you will spell Esor backward you will learn why.

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