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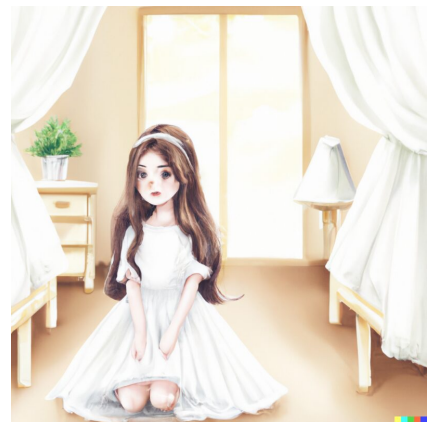
The girl and the goblin

Maud Lindsay

There was once a little girl (her name was Little Daughter), who had a little room, which was full of treasures, and was as lovely as love could make it. You never could imagine, no matter how you tried, a room more beautiful than hers; for it was white and shining from the snowy floor to the ceiling, which looked as if it might have been made of a fleecy cloud. The curtains at the windows were like the petals of a lily, and the little bed was like swan's down.

There were white pansies, too, that bloomed in the windows, and a dove whose voice was sweet as music; and among her treasures she had a string of pearls which she was to wear around her neck when the king of the country sent for her, as he had promised to do some day. This string of pearls grew longer and more beautiful as the little girl grew older, for a new pearl was given her as soon as she waked up each morning; and every one was a gift from this king.

Her mother helped her to take care of them and of all the other beautiful things in her room. Every morning, after the new pearl was slipped on the string, they would set the room in order; and every evening they would look over the treasures and enjoy them together, while they carefully wiped away any specks of dust that had gotten in during the day and made the room less lovely.



There were several doors and windows, which the little girl could open and shut just as she pleased, in this room; but there was one door which was always open, and that was the one which led into her mother's room. No matter what Little Daughter was doing she was happier if her mother was near; and although she sometimes ran away into her own room and played by herself, she always bounded out at her mother's first call, and sprang into her mother's arms, gladder than ever to be with her because she had been away.

Now one day when the little girl was playing alone, she had a visitor who came in without knocking and who seemed, at first, very much out of place in the shining white room, for he was a goblin and very ugly. He had not been there more than a very few minutes, before nearly everything in the room began to look more like him and less like pretty snow: and although the little girl thought that he was

very strange and ugly when she first saw him, she soon grew used to him, and found him an entertaining playfellow.

She wanted to call her mother to see him; but he said: "Oh! no; we are having such a nice time together, and she's busy, you know." So the little girl did not call; and the mother, who was making a dress of fine lace for her darling, did not dream that a goblin was in the little white room. The goblin did not make any noise, you know, for he tip-toed all the time, as if he were afraid; and if he heard a sound he would jump. But he was a merry goblin, and he amused the little girl so much that she did not notice the change in her dear room.

The curtains grew dingy, the floor dusty, and the ceiling looked as if it might have been made of a rain cloud; but the child played on, and got out all her treasures to show to her visitor. The pansies drooped and faded, the white dove hid its head beneath its wing and moaned; and the last pearl on the precious string grew dark when the goblin touched it with his smutty fingers.

"Oh, dear me," said the little girl when she saw this, "I must call my mother; for these are the pearls that I must wear to the king's court, when he sends for me."

"Never mind," said the goblin, "we can wash it, and if it isn't just as white as before, what difference does one pearl make?"



"But mother says that they all must be as fair as the morning," insisted the little girl, ready to cry. "And what will she say when she sees this one?"

"You shut the door, then," said the goblin, pointing to the door that had never been closed, "and I'll wash the pearl." So the little girl ran to close the door, and the goblin began to rub the pearl; but it only seemed to grow darker. Now the door had been open so long that it was hard to move, and it creaked on its hinges as the little girl tried to close it. When the mother heard this she looked

up to see what was the matter. She had been thinking about the dress which she was making; but when she saw the closing door, her heart stood still with fear; for she knew that if it once closed tight she might never be able to open it again.

She dropped her fine laces and ran towards the door, calling, "Little Daughter! Little Daughter! Where are you?" and she reached out her hands to stop the door. But as soon as the little girl heard that loving voice she answered:—"Mother, oh! Mother! I need you so! my pearl is turning black and everything is wrong!" and, flinging the door wide open, she ran into her mother's arms.

When the two went together into the little room, the goblin had gone. The pansies now bloomed again, and the white dove cooed in peace; but there was much work for the mother and daughter, and they rubbed and scrubbed and washed and swept and dusted, till the room was so beautiful that you would not have known that a goblin had been there—except for the one pearl which was a little blue always, even when the king was ready for Little Daughter to come to his court, although that was not until she was a very old woman.

As for the door, it was never closed again; for Little Daughter and her mother put two golden hearts against it and nothing in this world could have shut it then.

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