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The Milk-White Horse and the Prince

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One night, as the clock struck twelve, a magnificent white horse galloped along a deserted road without a rider. The horse wore a gilded leather bridle adorned with jewels, and a red velvet saddle trimmed with gold rested on its back. It halted beneath a tree, eagerly searching for someone.

Suddenly, the tree's branches swayed, and the tree itself transformed into a Prince. Clad in a black velvet suit, with a long black feather cascading down his cap, he stroked the horse before gracefully mounting it. The horse trotted along the road until it reached the precipice of a steep hill. There, it paused and lifted its forefoot. Its wings, tucked close to its sides until now, unfurled in all their glory. With a powerful beat, the horse and its rider soared across a valley toward a snow-white mountain.

Perched atop the mountain was a house. The Prince, actually an enchanted Prince, had been entrusted by the fairies with the task of rescuing a Princess held captive within that very house. Three monstrous creatures, who had snatched her away from her parents, kept her as their prisoner. Though the Prince had attempted to climb the treacherous mountain, its ruggedness and steepness rendered his efforts futile. Thus, he had confided in the fairies, who devised a plan for him to reach the Princess by means of the milk-white horse. And so, they dispatched the noble steed to carry him.



When they neared the mountain's summit, the horse descended, and the Prince dismounted. He lovingly patted the horse, then secured it to a nearby tree. Meanwhile, in one of the rooms within the mountain's house, the young Princess sat weeping. Though adorned in a beautiful dress and surrounded by fragrant flowers, her heart remained heavy with the knowledge of her captivity. Before her lay a table, laden with delectable treats, but even this failed to distract her from the three monsters who held her hostage.

Suddenly, the door swung open, revealing the grotesque trio. One had a bovine head and hooved hands attached to a human body. The second resembled a sea

lion and walked on its hind legs. Lastly, a colossal giant with a horse's head completed the menacing group. They seated themselves at the table, hungrily devouring the food. They invited the little Princess to join them, but her tears flowed more profusely, and she moved as far away as possible.

After some time, the monsters departed, leaving the Princess to her solitude. She approached the table, hoping to find solace in the fruits provided, for she was growing faint. As she reached for a piece of cake, she noticed a mouse nibbling on it. "Poor little thing," she remarked, "I won't harm you." The mouse sat upright and gazed at her. "Cease your weeping," it spoke, "and partake in some nourishment. You have a long journey ahead."

The Princess, taken aback by the talking mouse, remained speechless for a moment. Finally, she responded, "I am not embarking on any journey. I am a prisoner in the house of the three monsters. Have you encountered them?"

"Oh, yes," replied the mouse. "But their threat doesn't concern me. My small stature keeps them from catching me. But now, eat, for I am here to take you home." With that, the mouse leaped onto the floor. "Avert your gaze," it commanded. The Princess obeyed. "Now, look at me!" And as she turned her eyes back, the Prince stood before her. "I had to shrink to gain entry and find you," he explained, "but now that you know I can protect you, I must assume the form of a mouse again." In an instant, he scurried across the table.

By now, darkness enveloped the surroundings, with only the moon casting a faint glow. "Be at the window at midnight tonight," the mouse instructed, "and I will be there to whisk you away." Uttering those words, it darted beneath the door.

As the final stroke of twelve resounded, a brilliant flash illuminated the room, causing the window bars to disintegrate. There stood the Prince upon the milk-white horse. With great care, he lifted the Princess onto the saddle in front of him. However, the monsters spotted them and charged, their visages twisted into terrifying ugliness. The Prince stretched out his arms, and a radiant beam of light emanated from him, enveloping the monsters, while he chanted:

"Magic art, now turn to stone, These grim monsters and their home."

The ground quaked and trembled, and the milk-white horse spread its wings, lifting them above the transformed terrain. The Princess peered downward, observing that the mountain and its house had been replaced by three pointed peaks.

The Prince had transmuted the monsters into stone, forever ending their capacity to inflict misery. The little Princess's parents, overjoyed by her return, invited the Prince to reside with them and marry their daughter. Together, they

formed a blissful family within the castle, basking in their newfound happiness.

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