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The Red Shoes

Hans Christian Andersen

A long time ago there was a very poor girl who always walked on her bare feet. On the day her mother died, Karen, for that was her name, was given a pair of red shoes by Mrs. Shoemaker. The little shoes were made of rags, but they were the most beautiful shoes Karen had ever had.

As Karen walked behind her mother's coffin in her red shoes, a magnificent carriage drove by. The old, rich lady in the carriage saw Karen walking and took pity on her. 'Come and live with me, sweet girl,' she said. And so it happened. Karen came to live with the old lady and was given beautiful new clothes. The red shoes were thrown away because the old lady thought they were hideous. Karen was sorry about that, but was much happier than she had ever been.



One day the queen came to town with the little princess. Everyone came to see the princess. Karen, too, wanted to get a glimpse of the little girl. When she saw the princess standing there, she saw that the little girl had on beautiful red shoes. They were much prettier than the red shoes Karen herself had first. She was a little jealous 'If only I had shoes like that myself,' she thought.

A few years later Karen was old enough to be accepted into the church. She received new clothes especially for this purpose. The old lady also allowed her to have new shoes made. At the shoemaker's Karen immediately saw beautiful red shoes, exactly like the ones the princess had worn years ago. Immediately Karen knew that she wanted these shoes. The old lady would never approve, but since she could no longer see very well, Karen decided to buy the shoes anyway.

The next day, Karen walked through the church in her new shoes. No one could take their eyes off the striking patent leather shoes. Surely these were not shoes you wear in church! Meanwhile, Karen couldn't think of anything else. As a result, she barely heard what the priest said and missed the important service. She even forgot to pray.



When Karen came out of the church after the service with the old lady, there was an old soldier standing at the door. The soldier looked at Karen's shoes and said, "Those are shoes for dancing, not for going to church. He tapped the soles of the shoes. 'Stay on firmly while dancing'. Immediately Karen got the irrepressible feeling that she had to dance. She carefully did one dance step and suddenly couldn't stop dancing. She was put in the lady's carriage by bystanders, but even there she did not stop dancing. She even kicked the old lady! Fortunately, they then got the red shoes off her feet and her legs calmed down. At home, the shoes went straight into the closet, but Karen couldn't forget about the shoes.

Some time later, the old lady became very ill. Karen took care of her as best as she could, until one day she heard that there would be a big party that night. Karen put on her red shoes and left the old lady by herself. But as soon as Karen made one dance step, the shoes took control again. Karen couldn't help but dance. The shoes took her deep into the dark forest.



Meanwhile, Karen was scared and sad. She tried to take off the little shoes, but they were completely stuck on her feet. She regretted her decision to leave the old lady alone and felt very guilty. Karen danced day and night, across fields and roads and sometimes right across town. Never before had she felt so alone.

One day Karen danced past the executioner's house. "Help me!" she called out to him. And he did. He chopped the shoes off Karen's feet and made beautiful new wooden feet for her. Meanwhile, the shoes danced on, heading for the horizon. Karen quickly went back to the city, where she lived a good and quiet life. And never again did she look for pretty clothes.



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