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Trouble When One's Young

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Long ago there lived a beautiful maiden whose name was Clarinha. She had been betrothed to a prince whom she had never seen. When at last he should be old enough to receive the rule of the kingdom he was coming to claim her as his bride.

Clarinha lived in a magnificent palace surrounded by a beautiful garden. Every day she spent many hours among the lovely flowers and trees.

One day an eagle alighted on the tallest tree in the garden.

"Good morning, fair Clarinha," he said to her.

"Good morning," she replied in surprise. Never before had an eagle spoken to her.

"Which do you prefer, trouble when you are young or when you are old?" asked the eagle.

Clarinha did not know what to say. That night she asked her mother which would be better to choose.

"Choose trouble when you're young, dear child," advised her mother. "When you are young it is easy to bear anything, but when you are old you can endure nothing."

She remembered her mother's words. Next day when the eagle again addressed the same question to her, she answered: "Trouble when I'm young."

Clarinha had hardly said these words when the eagle lifted her up by the pink skirt she was wearing and carried her away. On he flew over seas and mountains. Clarinha was frightened nearly to death.

At last the eagle set her down in a strange land. She was hungry, and, accordingly, hired out in a bakeshop to earn her living. She would have been happier if the eagle had flown away, but he remained in a nearby tree-top.

The baker went out, leaving Clarinha to bake the dough which he had left ready to put into the oven. The little maid carefully closed the door and all the windows so that the eagle would not be able to get inside. As soon as the baker was out of sight, however, he flew down the chimney. He tore about the bakeshop,

spilling all the dough on the floor and breaking the dishes. Then he went back up the chimney when he had completed all the damage there was to be done.

When the baker returned he flew into a terrible rage. He gave poor Clarinha a beating and turned her out into the street.

She walked about the city and at last found work as shopkeeper in a little shop on a corner. The owner of the business went away next day, leaving her in charge of everything. As soon as he was gone she shut the door and all the windows, but the eagle flew down the chimney and broke the cups and glasses and plates which were set out for sale in neat rows upon the shelf.

"What have you been doing in my shop?" cried the owner in anger when he returned and saw the destruction which the eagle had left behind.

He didn't give the poor girl a chance to reply, but seized her roughly and threw her out into the street.

Clarinha walked and walked seeking work, and at last she arrived at the door of the royal palace.

"Do you happen to need a servant?" she asked the queen.

"I have all the servants I need," replied the queen.

The prince was standing nearby.

"Hire her, mother," he advised. "She'll do to take care of the ducks."

Accordingly, the queen hired Clarinha to care for the ducks. The next morning all the ducks in the royal duckyard were dead. The eagle had killed them all.

"Hire her for a seamstress, mother," said the prince. "The poor little thing is crying as if her heart would break. I'm sorry for her."

The queen hired Clarinha to be a seamstress in the royal palace.

That very day the prince left home to visit his betrothed. He was going to marry a beautiful maiden in a neighboring land, whom he had never seen. As he left the palace he asked each one of the servants what gifts he should bring at his return.

When he came to Clarinha, her reply was, "Bring me a stone from the palace wall of your betrothed."

The prince thought it a strange request, but he promised to fulfill it.

As soon as the prince arrived in the land where his betrothed lived, he found out that the palace was in mourning because of her mysterious disappearance one day from the garden.

He was so sad that he could not linger in that land. He stayed only long enough to buy the gifts which he had promised to bring to the servants. Along with the other gifts he carried a stone from the palace garden of his betrothed.

When Clarinha received her gift she heard the story of the mysterious disappearance of the prince's bride. As soon as she held the stone in her hand she knew that it came from the wall of her own loved garden. Joy shone in her beautiful eyes.

For the first time the prince noticed how very lovely Clarinha was. He had always liked the little maid even when her face was sad, but now that she was happy he saw that she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"What does that pretty little maid intend to do with that stone?" he asked the queen.

"I cannot guess," replied the queen. "She seemed happy enough to receive it. I never saw her look happy before. Trouble seems to follow whatever she undertakes. I was on the point of discharging her. She's caused me nothing but endless annoyance. I hired her only to please you."

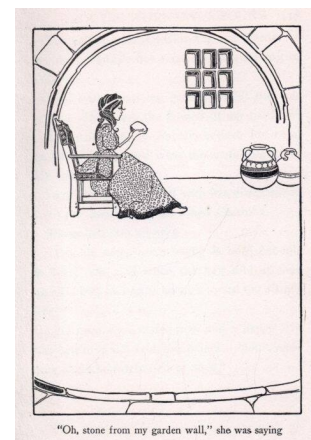
The prince followed Clarinha and listened at her door. Inside her room she was talking to the stone.

"Oh, stone from my garden wall," she was saying. "How are the flowers of my garden?"

The prince could hardly believe his ears. Suddenly he guessed what the truth might be. He burst into the room.

"Are you my betrothed who has disappeared from her own land?" he asked Clarinha.

She smiled into his eyes.



"Trouble when one's young is hard enough to bear," she said when she had told all her story. "I've had quite enough to last me all my life."

"Your woes are ended now and a happy life lies before you," said the prince. "Our wedding shall be celebrated at once."

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