



Princess Rosamund

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Danish

Intermediate
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There was once a princess who possessed three wonderful gifts: Whenever she wept, pearls rolled out from the corners of her eyes; when she smiled, roses dropped from her cheeks; and with every step she made barefooted, a gold piece was left in the dust under her heels. The king and the whole nation rejoiced over these wonders, for the treasury never became empty, and whenever there was any need of money, the girl was always ready to take a walk barefooted through the rooms of the Royal palace. On such occasions a number of courtiers always followed her with large crystal bowls, gathering up the gold pieces left by her footsteps. The fame of Princess Rosamund spread far and wide, and no sooner had it reached Prince Hermes, a son of the king of one of the adjoining countries, than he asked his father's permission to go and win her hand. The king consented; but when every thing was ready for his son's departure, a war broke out, and the young prince was called away by other duties. While he fought gallantly against the enemies, the queen's first lady of honor proposed to the Royal couple that the beautiful princess be invited to visit them, so that the brave prince would, on his return from the battle-fields, find her there already.



“Princess Rosamund.” Illustration by unknown artist, published in Danish Fairy Tales and Folktales by J.

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The king and queen at once determined to carry out this plan, so the lady of honor was selected as a worthy messenger for the delicate errand of proposing a union between the youngest members of the two renowned and illustrious families, and set out accordingly on her journey.

The lady of honor was, however, a witch, who had planned to deceive the royal family. She had a daughter whom she wished the prince to marry, but who was neither good nor pretty. When she arrived at her destination she told her errand, and showed Princess Rosamund the picture of Prince Hermes. The girl declared herself ready to give him her hand in marriage if he proved as noble and good as the picture seemed to indicate. Her parents readily gave their consent, whereupon everything was made ready for their daughter's departure. Before Rosamund took leave of her home, she walked three times around the large court-yard barefooted for the benefit of the poor, who were permitted to pick up the gold coin that she left behind her.

Rosamund and the lady of honor drove in a carriage by themselves, followed by an escort of stately noblemen and guards. When they had travelled a long distance, the witch made a fearful storm gather around them. It became as dark as the darkest night around the place; the escort was scattered, and the daughter of the evil woman emerged from the depths of a black cloud. She and her mother seized Rosamund, who cried torrents of pearls, and robbed her of her beautiful eyes, which they threw into a ditch at one side of the road, while the princess was herself pushed out into the mud at the other side. Now the daughter of the witch seated herself in the carriage with her mother, and away they drove to the home of Prince Hermes.

The unfortunate princess was in the mean time lying in the ditch, bewailing her cruel fate. At length two wagoners who passed along the road heard her voice, and pulled her out of the disagreeable place. Her shoes were lost, her stockings were torn, and when she walked there was a sound like the ring of gold from under her feet. As one of the men bent down to find out the reason of this sound he noticed the gold pieces.

The two men at once became mad with joy. They forced the princess to walk about all the livelong day, the one leading her by her hand while his comrade busied himself with gathering up the money. Finally she fainted from sheer exhaustion and pain. She was, in fact, more dead than alive, and her feet bled from the many sharp stones that had hurt them over and over again. The wagoners now were afraid that they had killed her, so they left her lying in the road and pursued their way as rapidly as their horses would run. In a little while a gardener

happened to pass the place where the princess had been left. Being a kind and charitable man, he lifted the poor girl into his carriage and took her to his home. She was sick a very long time, but finally she began to recover and regain her health and strength. One day she happened to hear the gardener tell his wife of Prince Hermes's and Princess Rosamund's marriage, the wedding having just been celebrated with great pomp and splendor. People had assembled from all over the country, said the gardener, to catch a glimpse of the princess who left gold coin in her footprints and shed roses by her smiles. None of these wonders had occurred, however; the princess was not at all what had been expected, and no one had proved able to make her smile or weep. She was sullen and disagreeable to all, even to the prince, her husband, who did his best to make her happy, but without the slightest effect. She beat all her maids with a broomstick, so at length no one could be induced to serve her.

The gardener's wife said: "It seems to me that the poor girl whom you found in the road looks so gentle and good that she might serve the princess and satisfy her. If we could only find a pair of eyes for her, it might be worth trying."

"There is a woman in town," answered her husband, "who trades in eyes. I will go and see whether she has a pair which may serve this girl."

The next morning the good man went out with a large basket filled with fine apples, which he brought to the old woman, asking her for a pair of eyes. She sat reading in a large book with big red letters, and merely reaching into a tub near her, she produced a pair of eyes, handed them to the gardener, and pointed to the door.

When the gardener reached home the balls were at once placed in the girl's head. But the effect was remarkable: she remained sitting at the same place all the day, and fixed her glance upon a small hole in the wall. When this had been going on for eight days the gardener brought the eyes back to the woman, complaining that they did not at all seem to fit the person who desired to use them, and asking for another pair in exchange.

"No wonder," said the woman. "These are cat's eyes, and the girl has most likely looked at the hole in the wall because she expected a mouse to appear. Here is another pair—beautiful blue eyes, which I found in a ditch a few days ago. Try them."

The girl tried them, and found them to be her own. Now the gardener followed her to the palace, where the

princess at once engaged her service. Although Rosamund tried her best to please her, it was very difficult, and the poor girl suffered much from her sullen and whimsical mistress.

One day she was waiting on her when Prince Hermes came into the room. Rosamund was so moved by seeing him that she dropped a silver coffee-pot which she was holding in her hands upon the white silk carpet. The princess arose furious, rushed at her, and began to box her ears. The tears started in Rosamund's eyes, and soon a stream of pearls rolled across the floor towards the place where Prince Hermes was standing.

"Pearls!" cried he. "Are your tears pearls?"

Rosamund wiped her eyes and smiled, but at the same moment two beautiful roses fell from her cheeks. The prince called his parents, and when they had heard of her sufferings he pulled out his sword and killed the witch and her daughter. Afterwards he married the right Rosamund, and then people were no longer deceived, for she smiled so often and so willingly at every one that the whole land was happy. I saw her yesterday, and she smiled at me too, and one of the roses stands before me in a glass of water.

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