

The Hearth-Cat (Portuguese Version of Cinderella)

Zófimo Consiglieri Pedroso

Portuguese

*Advanced
10 min read*

There was once a schoolmistress who was a widow, and had a daughter who was very plain. This mistress had a pupil who was very pretty, and the daughter of a traveler. The mistress was very attached to her father, and every day would beg the girl to ask him to marry her, promising to give her porridge made with honey.

{Note: You can read an illustrated version of this story plus other Cinderella stories from around the world in our collection *Cinderella Tales: International Cinderella Stories and Fairy Tales*, now available on Amazon in Kindle and paperback}

The girl went home to ask her father to marry her schoolmistress, as she would then give her porridge made with honey. To this request the father replied that he would not marry her, for he well knew that though she said now that she would give her porridge made with honey, later on she would give her porridge with gall. Yet, as the child began to cry, begging her father to consent, the father, who loved his child very much, in order to comfort her, replied that he would order a pair of boots to be made of iron, and hang them up until the boots would rust to pieces with age, when he would marry the mistress.

The little girl, very pleased to hear this, went immediately to tell the mistress, who then instructed her pupil to wet the boots every day. The little girl did so, and after a while the boots fell to pieces, and she went and told

her father of it. He then said that he would marry the mistress, and on the following day married her.

So long as the father was at home the child was treated with kindness and affection, but the moment he went out the mistress was very unkind to her, and treated her badly. She one day sent her to graze a cow, and gave her a loaf, which she desired her to bring back whole, and an earthen pot with water, out of which she expected her to drink, and yet was to bring back full. One day the mistress told the girl that she wished her to employ herself in winding some skeins of thread until the evening. The little girl went away crying and bewailing her lot; but the cow comforted her, and told her not to be distressed, — to fix the skein on her horns and unravel the thread. The good cow after that took out all the crumb from the loaf by making a small hole with one of her horns, and then stopped the aperture, and gave the girl the loaf back again entire.

In the evening the girl returned home. When her stepmother saw that she had finished her task, and brought all the thread ready wound, she was very vexed and wanted to beat her, saying that she was sure the cow had had something to do with it, and next day ordered the animal to be killed. At this the girl began to cry very bitterly, but the step-mother told her that she would have to clean and wash the cow's entrails in a tank they had, however grieved she might feel for the loss of the animal.

The cow, however, again told the girl not to be troubled, but to go and wash her entrails, but was to be careful to save whatever she saw come out of them. The girl did so, and when she was cleaning them she saw a ball of gold come out and fall into the water. The girl went into the tank to search for it, and there she saw a house with everything in it in disorder, and she began to arrange and make the house look tidy. She suddenly heard footsteps, and in her hurry she hid herself behind the door.

The fairies entered and began to look about, and a dog came in also with them, and went up to where she was and began to bark, saying: "Bow, bow, bow, behind the door hides somebody who did us good, and will yet render us more services. Bow, bow, bow, behind the door hides somebody who has done us good, and will yet render us more services."

The fairies, as they searched about, hearing the dog bark, discovered where the girl was hiding, and began to say to her, "We endow you by the power we possess with the gift of beauty, making you the most lovely maiden ever seen."

The next fairy then said, "I cast a sweet spell over you, so that when you open } our mouth to speak, pearls and gold shall drop from your lips."

The third fairy coming forward said, "I endow you with every blessing, making you the happiest maiden in the world. Take this wand, it will grant you whatever you may ask."

The girl then left the enchanted region, and returned home, and as soon as the mistress's daughter saw her approach she commenced to cry out to her mother to come quickly and see the hearth-cat, who had come back at last. The mistress ran to greet her, and asked her where and what she had been doing all that time.

The girl related the contrary of what she had seen, as the fairies had instructed her to do: that she had found a tidy house, and that she had disarranged everything in it, to make it look untidy.

The mistress sent her own daughter there, and she had hardly arrived at the house when she began at once to do as her half-sister had told her; she disarranged everything, to make the house look untidy and uncared for. And when she heard the fairies coming in she hid behind the door.

The little dog saw her, and barking at her said, "Behind the door stands one who has done us much harm, and will still continue to molest us. Bow, bow, bow, behind the door stands one who has done us much harm, and will continue to molest us on the first opportunity."

The fairies hearing this approached her, and one began to say, "I throw a spell over you which will render you the ugliest maid that can be found."

The next one took up the word and said, "I bewitch you, so that when you attempt to speak all manner of filth shall fall out of your mouth."

And the third fairy said, "I also bewitch you, and you shall become the poorest and most wretched maid in existence."

The mistress's daughter returned home, thinking she was looking quite a beauty; but when she came up close to her mother, and began to speak, the mother burst out crying on seeing her own daughter so disfigured and wretched. Full of rage, she sent her step-daughter to the kitchen, saying, that she was the hearth-cat, and that she should take care that she kept there, as the only place which was fit for her.

On a certain day the mistress and her daughter repaired to some races which were then taking place, but when the girl saw that they had left the house, she asked her divining rod to give her a very handsome dress, boots, a hat, and everything complete. She dressed and adorned herself with all she had, and went to the races, and stood in front of the royal stand.

The mistress's daughter instantly saw her, and began to exclaim and cry out at the top of her voice, in the midst of all the people present, saying, "Oh! mother, mother, that beautiful maiden over there is our very hearth-cat."

The mother, to quiet her, told her to be calm; that the maiden was not her step-sister, as she had remained at home under lock and key. The races were hardly over when the girl departed home; but the king, who had seen her, was in love with her.

The moment the mother reached home she asked the hearth-cat whether she had been out. She replied, that she had not; and showed her face besmeared with smut.

Next day the girl asked the wand to strike and give her another dress which would be more splendid than the previous one. She put on her things and repaired to the races. The moment the king perceived her he felt very pleased indeed; but the races were hardly concluded than she retired in haste, and went into her carriage and drove home, leaving the king more in love than ever with her.

The third day the girl asked the divining rod to give her a garment which should surpass the other two in richness and beauty, and other shoes; and she went and attended the races. When the king saw her, he was delighted, but was again disappointed to see her depart before the races were concluded. In her hurry to enter her carriage quickly, she let fall one of her slippers. The king picked it up and returned to the palace, and fell lovesick.

The slipper had some letters upon it which said, "This shoe will only fit its owner."

The whole kingdom was searched to find the lady whose foot would be found to fit the slipper exactly, yet no one was found. The schoolmistress went to the palace to try the slipper on, but all her efforts were in vain. After her, her daughter followed, and endeavored her best to fit the slipper on, but with no better success. There only remained the hearthcat.

The king inquired who was the next to try on the slipper, and asked the mistress if there was any other lady left

in her house who could fit on the slipper.

The schoolmistress then said that there only remained a hearth-cat in her house, but that she had never worn such a slipper. The king ordered the girl to be brought to the palace, and the mistress had no alternative but to do so. The king himself insisted on trying the slipper on the girl's foot, and the moment she put her little foot into the slipper and drew it on, it fitted exactly. The king then arranged that she should remain in the palace and married her. And he ordered the mistress and her daughter to be put to death.

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