



# *The Little Grey Mouse Part IV: The Tree in the Rotunda*

Sophie Ségur  
French

---

*Intermediate*  
*5 min read*

Rosalie admired all the flowers very much but she waited with some impatience for the prince to remove the cloth which enveloped this mysterious tree. He left the green-house, however, without having spoken of it.

“What then, my prince, is this tree which is so carefully concealed?”

“It is the wedding present which I destined for you but you cannot see it until your fifteenth birthday,” said the prince, gayly.

“But what is it that shines so brilliantly under the cloth?” said she, importunately.

“You will know all in a few days, Rosalie, and I flatter myself that you will not find my present a common affair.”

“And can I not see it before my birthday?”

“No, Rosalie; the queen of the fairies has forbidden me, under heavy penalties, to show it to you until after you become my wife. I do hope that you love me enough to control your curiosity till that time.”

These last words made Rosalie tremble, for they recalled to her the little gray mouse and the misfortunes which

menaced her as well as her father, if she allowed herself to fall under the temptation, which, without doubt, her enemy the fairy Detestable had placed before her. She spoke no more of the mysterious case, and continued her walk with the prince. The day passed most agreeably. The prince presented her to the ladies of his court and commanded them to honor and respect in her the princess Rosalie, whom the queen of the fairies had selected as his bride. Rosalie was very amiable to every one and they all rejoiced in the idea of having so charming and lovely a queen.

The following days were passed in every species of festivity. The prince and Rosalie both saw with joyous hearts the approach of the birth-day which was to be also that of their marriage:—the prince, because he tenderly loved his cousin, and Rosalie because she loved the prince, because she desired strongly to see her father again, and also because she hoped to see what the case in the rotunda contained. She thought of this incessantly. She dreamed of it during the night and whenever she was alone she could with difficulty restrain herself from rushing to the green-house to try to discover the secret.

Finally, the last day of anticipation and anxiety arrived. In the morning Rosalie would be fifteen. The prince was much occupied with the preparations for his marriage; it was to be a very grand affair. All the good fairies of his acquaintance were to be present as well as the queen of the fairies. Rosalie found herself alone in the morning and she resolved to take a walk. While musing upon the happiness of the morrow, she involuntarily approached the green-house. She entered, smiling pensively, and found herself face to face with the cloth which covered the treasure.

“To-morrow,” said she, “I shall at last know what this thick cloth conceals from me. If I wished, indeed I might see it to-day, for I plainly perceive some little openings in which I might insert my fingers and by enlarging just a little——. In fact, who would ever know it? I would sew the cloth after having taken a glimpse. Since to-morrow is so near, when I am to see all, I may as well take a glance to-day.”

Rosalie looked about her and saw no one; and, in her extreme desire to gratify her curiosity, she forgot the goodness of the prince and the dangers which menaced them all if she yielded to this temptation.

She passed her fingers through the little apertures and strained them lightly. The cloth was rent from the top to the bottom with a noise like thunder and Rosalie saw before her eyes a tree of marvellous beauty, with a coral trunk and leaves of emeralds. The seeming fruits which covered the tree were of precious stones of all colors—diamonds, sapphires, pearls, rubies, opals, topazes, all as large as the fruits they were intended to

represent and of such brilliancy that Rosalie was completely dazzled by them. But scarcely had she seen this rare and unparalleled tree, when a noise louder than the first drew her from her ecstasy. She felt herself lifted up and transported to a vast plain, from which she saw the palace of the king falling in ruins and heard the most frightful cries of terror and suffering issue from its walls. Soon Rosalie saw the prince himself creep from the ruins bleeding and his clothing almost torn from him. He advanced towards her and said sadly:—

“Rosalie! ungrateful Rosalie! see what you have done to me, not only to me, but to my whole court. After what you have done, I do not doubt that you will yield a third time to your curiosity; that you will complete my misfortunes, those of your unhappy father and your own. Adieu, Rosalie, adieu! May sincere repentance atone for your ingratitude towards an unhappy prince who loved you and only sought to make you happy!”

Saying these words, he withdrew slowly.

Rosalie threw herself upon her knees, bathed in tears and called him tenderly but he disappeared without ever turning to contemplate her despair. Rosalie was about to faint away, when she heard the little discordant laugh of the gray mouse and saw it before her.

“Your thanks are due to me, my dear Rosalie, for having assisted you so well. It was I who sent you those bewitching dreams of the mysterious tree during the night. It was I who nibbled the cloth, to help you in your wish to look in. Without this last artifice of mine, I believe I should have lost you, as well as your father and your prince Gracious. One more slip, my pet, and you will be my slave for ever!”

The cruel mouse, in her malicious joy, began to dance around Rosalie; her words, wicked as they were, did not excite the anger of the guilty girl.

“This is all my fault,” said she; “had it not been for my fatal curiosity and my base ingratitude, the gray mouse would not have succeeded in making me yield so readily to temptation. I must atone for all this by my sorrow, by my patience and by the firmness with which I will resist the third proof to which I am subjected, no matter how difficult it may be. Besides, I have but a few hours to wait and my dear prince has told me that his happiness and that of my dearly loved father and my own, depends upon myself.”

Before her lay the smouldering ruins of the palace of the Prince Gracious. So complete had been its destruction that a cloud of dust and smoke hung over it, and hardly one stone remained upon another. The cries of those in pain were borne to her ears and added to her bitterness of feeling.

Rosalie continued to lie prone on the ground. The gray mouse employed every possible means to induce her to move from the spot. Rosalie, the poor, unhappy and guilty Rosalie, persisted in remaining in view of the ruin she had caused.

Note: The story continues in [The Little Grey Mouse Part V: The Casket](#)

**Read more fairy tales on [Fairytalez.com](http://Fairytalez.com)**