



The Lynx Queen

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Magic

There was once a man named Nojus who had a lovely wife named Lina and a beautiful daughter named Justina. Justina's life was perfect and had every luxury and comfort. She had a very beautiful fairy godmother named Ruta who brought her up in all knowledge. But Ruta had designs to marry Nojus and tried her best to curry favor with Justina. One day Ruta said to Lina, "Good sister, do me a favor and come walking with me in the garden" Lina gladly did and when they were some way out Ruta turned Lina into a bear and she ran into the woods. Nojus and Justina became distressed with her disappearance and Nojus searched for Lina to no avail. Ruta comforted Justina through her grief and Nojus took notice of this. "She would make a fine wife for me and a good mother for my child." So he married Ruta. But Nojus was still very sad and depressed at the loss of his first wife but the family was happy. After a year had passed, Ruta gave birth to a girl named Natasha who was more beautiful than Justina. From that point on, Ruta became very cruel to Justina and made her do all the chores of the house and quickly settled Natasha into her place. Nojus didn't know because he worked as a market seller in another town. Now Natasha became the princess of the house and Justina a slave. Natasha was jealous of Justina and would often play cruel tricks on her and Justina suffered in silence. Years later, one day, when Justina went to the woods to do the laundry and wept a giant bear came to her. "Don't cry sweet daughter, I am your mother". The bear told all that had happened and helped Justina with her chores. Justina was happy to see her mother again. Ruta and Natasha began to notice her cheerful behavior and went to spy on her and saw Lina as the bear. The wicked fairy ordered her husband to shoot the bear so she could have a magnificent coat. When the bear learned of this she said, "Bury my bones at the edge of this forest and your suffering will end, and I will come back to you." The Bear was killed but Justina followed her mother's orders.

From the spot a beautiful tree of lingonberries grew and it caught the eye of the passing king of the country. He ordered his servants to pick a few but they couldn't. He ordered all the people of the bordering villages to come and try to pick the berries. None could. "Is there anyone else?" "No" said Ruta "there is just my little stepdaughter." Bring her here". Commanded the king. So Justina came and easily picked the berries. The king fell in love with her kindness and beautiful heart. It was decided she was to be the king's bride and Ruta and Natasha watched with jealous eyes. Justina got into her carriage with her stepmother and sister and headed toward the palace to be the King's bride. But Ruta and Natasha stopped for a drink and Natasha held Justina down while Ruta turned Justina into a lynx by throwing a pelt in her. "She will never come back and my beloved daughter will become the bride in her place." When they arrived at the palace they said Justina had run away and Natasha was a far better bride to take. The king had no choice though it grieved his heart. Meanwhile Justina remained as a lynx and became sad and confused. She wept and slept in a cave and dreamed of her mother. "Daughter I know how much you hurt, but you will know joy soon enough. You can be released if your pelt is destroyed and I will help you but you must have patience." It was night and Justina saw she was a human." Her mother appeared glowing in the cave and said, "You only take lynx form in the day and human form when the sun sets. Go to the tree and you will find all that you need." It turned into morning and Justina ran to the city surrounding the King's palace and his marriage with Natasha was to be celebrated. Justina heard the messengers cry, "Come one come all to a grand night at the ball." Justina knew she could see the king at the ball and immediately ran to the berry tree and cried "Mother sprinkle a lovely gown and shoes of pearl for me" Immediately a fine gown and shoes fell from heaven and Justina rushed to the ball. All people assembled were amazed by Justina's beauty and the king asked to dance with her. This infuriated Natasha and her mother, and they were jealous of the new beautiful stranger. The handsome king recognized his beloved Justina and asked she leave him something to find her. She gave him one of her slippers and ran just as the sun was rising and was once again a lynx. The king tried the shoe on every maiden in the kingdom including Natasha but it fit none of them. Then he went to the woods hopeless with exhaustion but then he saw a lynx rush to the same tree he met Justina at and she immediately regained her human form. He grabbed the lynx pelt and burned it and embraced Justina as his true wife. They went to Nojus Justina's father and revealed all that the wicked fairy Ruta and Natasha had done. They returned to the palace to the fright of Ruta and Natasha and they were both impaled on iron pikes. Nojus was brought to the palace, finally at peace, and Justina became the King's true

bride and all her people loved her.

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