Cinderella,  
or The Little Slipper Made of Glass*

There was once a gentleman who was widowed, and married again. His second wife was the proudest and haughtiest woman who had ever been seen. She had two daughters, and they were just the same; they resembled her in everything. For his part, the husband had a young daughter, who was amazingly sweet-natured and kind, which gifts she got from her mother, who had been the most charming person you could imagine.

No sooner was the wedding over than the stepmother gave free rein to her bad temper. She could not endure the child’s good nature, which made her own daughters appear even more detestable. The worst of the household chores were given to her stepdaughter: it was she who washed the dishes and scrubbed the stairs, she who cleaned out the mistress’s bedroom, and the bedrooms of the young ladies her daughters. She slept right at the top of the house, in an attic, on a dirty mattress, while her sisters in their bedrooms had parquet flooring, beds of the most fashionable design, and looking-glasses in which they could see themselves from head to foot.* The poor girl put up with it all patiently, not daring to complain to her father, who would have scolded her, because he was completely under the thumb of his wife.

When she had done all her work, she would go to a corner of the fireplace, and sit among the cinders on the hearth, so that she was commonly known, in the household, as Cinderbum. The younger stepsister, though, who was not as rude as the elder one, called her Cinderella. Even in her ragged clothes, she looked a hundred times more beautiful than either of her sisters, despite their splendid dresses.
One day it happened that the Prince gave a ball, and he invited everyone who was of good family. Our two fine young ladies were included, because they were very important people in those parts. They felt extremely pleased with themselves, and kept themselves busy choosing dresses and hairstyles to suit them, which meant more trouble for Cinderella: for it was she who ironed her sisters’ clothes and pleated their cuffs. They could talk of nothing but what they were going to wear. The elder one said: ‘I shall put on my red velvet dress and my English lace.’ The younger one said: ‘I shall put on the skirt I always wear, but to make up for it I shall have my cape with golden flowers and my diamond hairpin, which is something you won’t see every day.’

They sent for the best hairdresser in town, to put their hair into double rows of curls,* and went to the best supplier of beauty spots.* They summoned Cinderella to advise them because she had good taste; the advice she gave was perfect. She even offered to do their hair, which they gladly accepted.

While she was doing it, they said: ‘Cinderella, wouldn’t you like to go to the ball?’

‘For pity, sisters—you are making fun; that kind of thing is not for me.’

‘Quite right—how everyone would laugh, to see Cinderbum going to the ball!’

Anyone but Cinderella would have done their hair all askew, but she was good by nature and did it very nicely. They were in such transports of happiness that they ate nothing for almost two days, and more than a dozen laces got broken while they were being laced into their corsets to make their waists look thinner.

At last the happy day arrived; they set off, and Cinderella watched them on their way for as long as she could; seeing them no longer, she began to cry.

Her godmother saw that she was all in tears, and asked what the matter was.
‘I wish . . . I wish . . .’; but she was crying so much that she could not finish. Her godmother, who was a fairy, said: ‘You wish you could go to the ball—is that it?’

‘Alas!—yes,’ said Cinderella with a sigh.

‘Very well; will you be a good girl?’ said her godmother; ‘then I shall see that you go.’

She took Cinderella to her room, and said: ‘Go into the garden and fetch me a pumpkin.’

Cinderella went at once to pick the best one she could find, and took it to her godmother, but could not guess how the pumpkin would get her to the ball. Her godmother scooped out the inside, and when only the skin was left, she tapped it with her wand, and suddenly the pumpkin was transformed into a beautiful golden coach. Then she went to look in the mousetrap, and found six mice all alive. She told Cinderella to lift the trap-door a tiny bit, and as each of the mice ran out, she touched it with her wand, and the mouse changed instantly into a beautiful horse, which made a fine team of six horses, with prettily dappled mouse-grey coats.

As she was puzzled about what to turn into a coachman, Cinderella said: ‘I’ll go and see if there is a rat in the rat-trap—then we could make a coachman out of him.’

‘That’s a good idea,’ said her godmother; ‘go and see.’

Cinderella brought her the trap; there were three big rats in it. The fairy chose the one with the longest whiskers, and when she touched him he turned into a great fat coachman, with one of the finest moustaches that had ever been seen.

Then she said: ‘Go out into the garden, and behind the watering-can you will find six lizards; bring them here.’ No sooner had she brought them in than her godmother changed them into six footmen, their uniforms covered in gold braid, and they immediately got up behind the coach and held on, as if they had never done anything else all their lives.

Then the fairy said to Cinderella: ‘Well, that is what you need to get you to the ball; aren’t you pleased?’
‘Yes I am; but must I go like this, in these horrid clothes?’

Her godmother just touched her with her wand, and her clothes were changed at once into a dress made from cloth of gold and silver, gleaming with jewels. Next she gave her a pair of slippers made of glass, as pretty as could be. When she was all dressed up, Cinderella stepped into her coach. Her godmother told her that she must take care, above all else, not to be out later than midnight, and warned her that if she stayed at the ball even a moment longer, her coach would change back into a pumpkin, her horses into mice, her footmen into lizards, and her dress into dirty old rags. She promised her godmother faithfully that she would leave the ball before midnight, and set off hardly able to contain herself for joy.

When the King’s son was told that a great princess whom nobody knew had arrived, he hurried to welcome her. He offered her his hand to help her out of her coach, and took her into the ballroom where all the guests were. A great silence fell; the dancers stopped their dancing, the musicians stopped their music, so eagerly were they gazing at the great beauty of the unknown girl. The only thing that could be heard was a murmur of voices exclaiming: ‘How beautiful she is!’ Even the King, old though he was, could not stop looking at her, and said quietly to the Queen that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and charming a girl. All the women were studying her hair and her dress, so that next day they could look the same themselves, provided they could find cloth sufficiently fine and dressmakers sufficiently skilled.

The King’s son saw her to a place of honour; then he asked her to dance. She danced so gracefully that she was admired even more. A splendid supper was brought in, but the young Prince ate nothing, because he was so busy looking at her. She went to sit next to her two sisters, and paid them all sorts of attentions; she gave them a share of the oranges and sweet citrons* that she had been given by the Prince, which surprised them...
very much, since they did not know who she was. While they were talking, Cinderella heard the clock strike a quarter to midnight: at once she made a deep curtsey to all the guests, and went away as quickly as she could.

As soon as she was back home, Cinderella went to find her godmother, and when she had thanked her, she said that what she really wanted was to go to the ball again, on the next evening, because the Prince had asked her. While she was busy telling her godmother about everything that had happened at the ball, her two sisters knocked on the door. Cinderella went to open it.

‘What a long time you have been!’ she said, and yawned and stretched herself, rubbing her eyes as if she had only just woken up; all the same, she had not been the slightest bit sleepy since she had last seen them.

‘If you had come to the ball,’ said one of the sisters, ‘you wouldn’t have found it boring: a beautiful princess was there, the most beautiful you could ever see; to us she was politeness itself, and she gave us oranges and citrons.’ Cinderella was beside herself with joy, and asked what the princess was called; but they told her that nobody knew her name, which had made the King’s son very unhappy, and that he would give everything he possessed to know who she was.

Cinderella smiled and said: ‘She was very beautiful, then, was she? Goodness, how lucky you are! I wish I could see her. Oh please, Miss Javotte, lend me your yellow dress that you wear for everyday.’

‘Surely,’ said Miss Javotte, ‘you don’t expect me to agree to that? Lend my dress to an ugly Cinderbum like you? I’d have to be out of my mind.’

Cinderella was expecting to be refused, and she was glad, because it would have made things very difficult for her if her sister had agreed to lend her the dress.

The next evening the two sisters went to the ball again, and Cinderella also, in a dress that was even more gorgeous than the
first time. The King’s son was always at her side, and paid her compliments all the evening. The young lady herself was far from being bored, and she forgot what her godmother had told her, so that she heard the clock strike the first stroke of midnight when she thought it was not yet eleven o’clock: she got to her feet and ran away as fast as a young deer. The Prince went after her and could not catch her; but one of her glass slippers fell off, and he very carefully picked it up.

Cinderella arrived back home quite out of breath, without her carriage or her footmen, and dressed in her old clothes: nothing remained of all her magnificent things, except for one little slipper, the pair of the one which had fallen off. The guards at the palace gate were asked if they had seen a princess leaving; they said that nobody had been seen leaving except a shabbily dressed girl, who looked more like a peasant than a lady.

When her two sisters came back from the ball, Cinderella asked them if they had enjoyed themselves just as much, and whether the beautiful lady had been there. They said that she had, but that she had run away when midnight struck, and in such haste that she had dropped one of her little glass slippers, which was as pretty as could be; that the Prince had picked it up, that throughout the rest of the ball he had done nothing but look at it, and that he must surely be deeply in love with the beautiful girl to whom it belonged.

They were right in what they said, because a few days later the Prince had an announcement made, to the sound of trumpets, that he would marry the person whose foot the slipper fitted. To start with they tried it on princesses; then on duchesses; and then on all the other ladies of the court, but all to no purpose. They brought it to the two sisters at their house, and they did everything they could to get their feet into the slipper, but they could not do it. Cinderella was watching, and recognizing her slipper she laughed and said: ‘Let me see if it fits me!’ Her sisters began to giggle and make fun of her. The gentleman who
was fitting the slipper looked carefully at Cinderella and, finding her very beautiful, said that she was right to ask, and that his orders were to see that the slipper was tried on every girl there was. He asked Cinderella to sit down, and when he brought the slipper to her foot he saw that it went on as easily as if it had been moulded to fit.

The two sisters were completely amazed, and even more when Cinderella took the other little slipper out of her pocket and put it on. At that moment her godmother arrived, and touching Cinderella’s clothes with her wand she made them even more splendid than all her other dresses.

Then the two sisters recognized her for the beauty that they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet and asked her pardon for all that she had suffered when they had treated her so badly. Cinderella made them get up, embraced them, told them that she forgave them with all her heart, and said that she begged them to love her kindly always. She was taken to the young Prince, dressed as she was in all her fine clothes: he thought that she was more beautiful than ever, and a few days later he married her. Cinderella, who was as good-natured as she was beautiful, arranged for her two sisters to live in the palace, and married them on the same day to two great lords at the Court.

THE MORAL OF THIS TALE

Though beauty’s a treasure that women desire,
For everyone’s fond of a pretty young face,
Cinderella had gifts with a value much higher,
As she showed in behaving with charm and with grace.

Some say, when they’re asked what this story might mean,
That these were the gifts that her godmother gave;
Cinderella had learned from her how to behave
With such grace and such charm that it made her a queen.
Young ladies in quest of a prince, you’ll discover
That in winning and keeping the heart of a lover
These gifts from the fairies are always the best,
And count for much more than the way you are dressed;
For with them you will get what you’re after with ease,
But without them whatever you do will displease.

ANOTHER MORAL

You have a great advantage, I admit,
If you receive from Heaven at your birth
Good breeding, courage, sense, a ready wit,
And other things of comparable worth;
But that is not enough, unless you know
How best to use such precious gifts: you need
A godfather or godmother* to show
What you must do in order to succeed.

*The slipper fits Cinderella’s foot perfectly