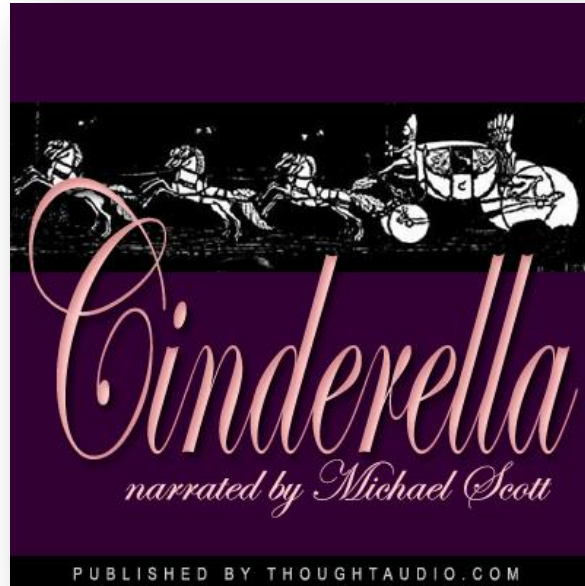


THOUGHTAUDIO



CINDERELLA
OR THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER

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Once there was a gentleman who married for his second wife the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had by a former husband two daughters of her own humor, who were, indeed, exactly like her in all things. He had likewise, by another wife, a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over but the mother-in-law began to show herself in her true colors. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl, and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious. She employed her in meanest work of the house: she scoured the dishes, tables, etc., and scrubbed madam's chamber and those of misses, her daughters; she lay up in a sorry garret, upon a wretched straw bed, while her sisters lay in fine rooms, with floors all inlaid, upon beds of the very newest fashion, and where they had looking-glasses so large that they might see themselves at their full length from head to foot.

The poor girl bore all patiently and dared not tell her father, who would have rattled her off; for his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work she used to go into the chimney-corner and sit down among cinders and ashes, which made her commonly be called a cinder maid; but the youngest, who was not so rude and uncivil as the eldest, called her Cinderella. However, Cinderella, notwithstanding her mean apparel, was a hundred times handsomer than her sisters, though they were always dressed very richly.

It happened that the King's son gave a ball and invited all persons, of fashion to it. Our young misses were also invited, for they cut a very grand figure among the quality. They were mightily delighted at this invitation, and wonderfully busy in choosing out such gowns, petticoats, and head-clothes as might become them. This was a new trouble to

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Cinderella, for it was she who ironed her sisters' linen and plaited their ruffles. They talked all day long of nothing but how they should be dressed.

"For my part," said the eldest, "I will wear my red velvet suit with French trimming."

"And I," said the youngest, "shall have my usual petticoat; but then, to make amends for that, I will put on my gold-flowered manteau and my diamond stomacher, which is far from being the most ordinary one in the world."

They sent for the best tire-woman they could get to make up their headdresses and adjust their double pinnars, and they had their red brushes and patches from Mademoiselle de la Poche.

Cinderella was likewise called up to them to be consulted in all these matters, for she had excellent notions and advised them always for the best, nay, and offered her services to dress their heads, which they were very willing she should do. As she was doing this they said to her:

"Cinderella, would you not be glad to go to the ball?"

"Alas!" said she, "you only jeer me. It is not for such as I am to go thither."

"Thou art in the right of it," replied they. "It would make the people laugh to see a cinder wench at a ball."

Any one but Cinderella would have dressed their heads awry, but she was very good and dressed them perfectly well. They were almost two days without eating, so much they

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were transported with joy. They broke above a dozen of laces in trying to be laced up close, that they might have a fine, slender shape, and they were continually at their looking-glass. At last the happy day came. They went to Court, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could, and when she had lost sight of them she fell a-crying.

Her Godmother, who saw her all in tears, asked her what was the matter.

"I wish I could--I wish I could--"

She was not able to speak the rest being interrupted by her tears and sobbing.

This Godmother of hers, who was a fairy, said to her: "Thou wishest thou could'st go to the ball. Is it not so?"

"Y--es," cried Cinderella, with a great sigh.

"Well," said her Godmother, "be but a good girl, and I will contrive that thou shalt go." Then she took her into her chamber and said to her: "Run into the garden and bring me a pumpkin."

Cinderella went immediately to gather the finest she could get and brought it to her Godmother, not being able to imagine how this pumpkin could make her go to the ball. Her Godmother scooped out all the inside of it, having left nothing but the rind; which done, she struck it with her wand, and the pumpkin was instantly turned into a fine coach, gilded all over with gold.

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She then went to look into her mousetrap, where she found six mice all alive, and ordered Cinderella to lift up a little the trapdoor, when, giving each mouse as it went out a little tap with her wand, the mouse was that moment turned into a fine horse, which altogether made a very fine set of six horses of a beautiful mouse-colored dapple-gray. Being at a loss for a coachman, Cinderella said:

"I will go and see if there is never a rat in the rattrap--we may make a coachman of him."

"Thou art in the right," replied her Godmother. "Go and look."

Cinderella brought the trap to her, and in it there were three huge rats. The fairy made choice of one of the three which had the largest beard, and having touched him with her wand he was turned into a fat, jolly coachman, who had the smartest whiskers eyes ever beheld. After that she said to her:

"Go again into the garden, and you will find six lizards behind the watering-pot. Bring them to me."

She had no sooner done so but her Godmother turned them into six footmen, who skipped up immediately behind the coach, with their liveries all bedaubed with gold and silver, and clung as close behind each other as if they had done nothing else their whole lives. The fairy then said to Cinderella:

"Well, you see here an equipage fit to go to the ball with. Are you not pleased with it?"

"Oh! yes," cried she; "but must I go thither as I am, in these dirty rags?"

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Her Godmother only just touched her with her wand, and at the same instant her clothes were turned into cloth-of-gold and silver, all beset with jewels. Ah! who can describe a robe made by the fairies? It was white as snow, and as dazzling; round the hem hung a fringe of diamonds, sparkling like dewdrops in the sunshine. The lace about the throat and arms could only have been spun by fairy spiders. Surely it was a dream! Cinderella put her daintily gloved hand to her throat, and softly touched the pearls that encircled her neck.

"Come, child," said the Godmother, "or you will be late."

As Cinderella moved, the firelight shone upon her dainty shoes.

"They are of diamonds," she said.

"No," answered her Godmother, smiling; "they are better than that--they are of glass, made by the fairies. And now, child, go, and enjoy yourself to your heart's content."

But her Godmother, above all things, commanded her not to stay till after midnight, telling her at the same time that if she stayed one moment longer the coach would be a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her coachman a rat, her footmen lizards, and her clothes become just as they were before.

She promised her Godmother she would not fail of leaving the ball before midnight, and then away she drives, scarce able to contain herself for joy. The King's son, who was told that a great Princess, whom nobody knew, was come, ran out to receive her. He gave her his hand as she alighted out of the coach; and led her into the hall among all the company. There was immediately a profound silence, they left off dancing, and the

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violins ceased to play, so attentive was every one to contemplate the singular beauties of the unknown newcomer. Nothing was then heard but a confused noise of "Ha! how handsome she is! Ha! how handsome she is!"

The King himself, old as he was, could not help watching her and telling the Queen softly that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and lovely a creature.

All the ladies were busied in considering her clothes and headdress, that they might have some made next day after the same pattern, provided they could meet with such fine materials and as able hands to make them.

The King's son conducted her to the most honorable seat and afterward took her out to dance with him. She danced so very gracefully that they all more and more admired her. A fine collation was served up, whereof the young Prince ate not a morsel, so intently was he busied in gazing on her.

She went and sat down by her sisters, showing them a thousand civilities, giving them part of the oranges and citrons which the Prince had presented her with, which very much surprised them, for they did not know her. While Cinderella was thus amusing her sisters, she heard the clock strike eleven and three-quarters, whereupon she immediately made a courtesy to the company and hastened away as fast as she could.

Being got home, she ran to seek out her Godmother, and after having thanked her she said she could not but heartily wish she might go next day to the ball, because the King's son had desired her.

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As she was eagerly telling her Godmother what had passed at the ball her two sisters knocked at the door, which Cinderella ran and opened.

"How long you have stayed!" cried she, gaping, rubbing her eyes, and stretching herself as if she had been just waked out of her sleep. She had not, however, had any manner of inclination to sleep since they went from home.

"If thou hadst been at the ball," said one of her sisters, "thou would'st not have been tired with it. There came thither the finest Princess, the most beautiful ever was seen with mortal eyes. She showed us a thousand civilities and gave us oranges and citrons."

Cinderella seemed very indifferent in the matter. Indeed, she asked them the name of that Princess, but they told her they did not know it, and that the King's son was very uneasy on her account, and would give all the world to know who she was. At this Cinderella, smiling, replied:

"She must, then, be very beautiful indeed. How happy you have been! Could not I see her? Ah! dear Miss Charlotte, do lend me your yellow suit of clothes which you wear every day."

"Ay, to be sure," cried Miss Charlotte; "lend my clothes to such it dirty cinder maid as thou art! I should be a fool."

Cinderella expected well such answer and was very glad of the refusal, for she would have been sadly put to it if her sister had lent her what she asked for jestingly.

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The next day the two sisters were at the ball, and so was Cinderella, but dressed more magnificently than before. The King's son was always by her, and never ceased his compliments and kind speeches to her, to whom all this was so far from being tiresome that she quite forgot what her Godmother had recommended to her, so that she at last counted the clock striking twelve when she took it to be no more than eleven. She then rose up and fled as nimble as a deer. The Prince followed, but could not overtake her. She left behind one of her glass slippers, which the Prince took up most carefully. She got home, but quite out of breath, and in her old clothes, having nothing left her of all her finery but one of the little slippers, fellow to that she dropped. The guards at the palace gate were asked if they had not seen a Princess go out.

They said they had seen nobody go out but a young girl, very meanly dressed, and who had more of the air of a poor country girl than a gentlewoman.

When the two sisters returned from the ball Cinderella asked them if they had been well diverted and if the beautiful Princess had been there.

They told her yes, but that she hurried away immediately when the clock struck twelve, and with so much haste that she dropped one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, which the King's son had taken up; that he had done nothing but look at her all the time at the ball, and that most certainly he was very much in love with the beautiful person who owned the glass slipper.

What they said was very true, for a few days after the King's son caused it to be proclaimed, by sound of trumpet, that he would marry her whose foot this slipper would just fit. They whom he employed began to try it upon the Princesses, then the Duchesses

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and all the Court, but in vain. It was brought to the two sisters, who did all they possibly could to thrust their feet into the slipper, but they could not effect it.

On the following morning there was a great noise of trumpets and drums, and a procession passed through the town, at the head of which rode the King's son. Behind him came a herald, bearing a velvet cushion, upon which rested a little glass slipper. The herald blew a blast upon the trumpet, and then read a proclamation saying that the King's son would wed any lady in the land who could fit the slipper upon her foot, if she could produce another to match it.

Of course, the sisters tried to squeeze their feet into the slipper, but it was of no use--they were much too large. Then Cinderella shyly begged that she might try. How the sisters laughed with scorn when the Prince knelt to fit the slipper on the cinder maid's foot; but what was their surprise when it slipped on with the greatest ease, and the next moment Cinderella produced the other from her pocket! Once more she stood in the slippers, and once more the sisters saw before them the lovely Princess who was to be the Prince's bride. For at the touch of the magic shoes the little gray frock disappeared forever, and in place of it she wore the beautiful robe the fairy Godmother had given to her.

The sisters hung their heads with sorrow and vexation; but kind little Cinderella put her arms round their necks, kissed them, and forgave them for all their unkindness, so that they could not help but love her.

The Prince could not bear to part from his little love again, so he carried her back to the palace in his grand coach, and they were married that very day. Cinderella's stepsisters were present at the feast, but in the place of honor sat the fairy Godmother.

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So the poor little cinder maid married the Prince, and in time they came to be King and Queen, and lived happily ever after.

THE END