



## THE THREE-BLOSSOMED ROSE

Once upon a time, there lived a wealthy merchant and his three daughters. He often travelled to the faraway lands beyond the sea to buy his goods. One day he was preparing for such a voyage and before he left, he went to say goodbye to his family.

“My dear daughters, what can I bring you from my trip? Tell me, what would make you happy?” he asked his daughters.

His two older daughters didn't have to think long. One of them asked for a beautiful expensive dress and the other for a ring inlaid with precious stones. Only the youngest daughter, who was always very quiet, stood silently and didn't ask for anything.

“And what can I bring for you, my girl? Tell me,” asked her father.

“My dearest daddy, just make sure to come safely back home to us, that will make me happier than anything in the world,” told him the girl.

But the merchant insisted, saying he wouldn't leave until she asked for a gift.

“Then bring me three rose blossoms growing from a single stem, if you come across any on your travels. That would make me happy.”

Her sisters laughed at her. What a worthless thing she was asking for! But their father promised all three of them he would be back with their gifts. They said goodbye and he sailed out into the sea.

## THE THREE-BLOSSOMED ROSE

After the merchant bought all sorts of odd and unusual goods in the distant lands, he headed back home again. He didn't forget his daughters' wishes and bought precious dresses and rings for them. But he couldn't find a three-blossomed rose anywhere. It grieved him that he wouldn't be able to keep his word, but no matter how hard he searched, there was not a single rose like the one his youngest daughter had asked for.

The merchant's ship was already nearing the shores of his home when suddenly a terrible storm broke out. All of his precious cargo rolled down into the sea and the ship broke into pieces. Luckily, the merchant managed to catch hold of a wooden plank and floated to the nearby shore. In the darkness of the night, he made his way through a thick forest. He walked for a long time, then all of a sudden the ground shook and he saw a castle in front of him. The merchant headed towards it to get a little rest inside. He noticed the guards standing at the gate and shouted at them from afar to let them know he had no bad intentions. But nobody answered. Silence was the only response he got. When he came closer, he found they had been turned to stone – as well as everyone else in the palace. There wasn't a living soul in the entire castle. All the windows were dark and silent. All except one, where he spotted a shimmering light.

The merchant went to take a look inside. Peeping in, he saw a set table and a bed right next to it.

Suddenly a strange voice spoke to him: "Everything you see is prepared for you. Help yourself to all the food and drink you want and if you'd like, you can rest in the bed afterwards."

The merchant looked around, but he couldn't see anyone. But since he was very hungry and tired, he plucked up courage and sat down at the table. After he ate as much as he could, he lay down in the bed and soon he was fast asleep.

When he woke up in the morning, he found a full plate of food lying on the table. After finishing the breakfast, he wanted to get back on the road, but he also wanted to thank the mysterious stranger who took such good care of him. But who was it? He searched the whole castle once again, hoping to find somebody after all, but he was out of luck. When he went outside, he noticed a beautiful

## THE THREE-BLOSSOMED ROSE

blooming garden next to the castle. He searched for his hosts in the garden as well, but he didn't find a living soul. Instead, he noticed three rose blossoms growing from a single stem on one of the bushes.

"Oh look! That's the three-blossomed rose I was looking for! It's so beautiful! I'm sure my little girl will love it. At least one of my daughters will get the gift I promised her," rejoiced the merchant.

He reached for the rose and carefully plucked it from the bush. As soon as he did so, a roaring thunder rumbled. He took such a fright, he nearly fell on the ground. A giant bear appeared in front of him and growled: "How dare you take what isn't yours? You won't leave here alive!"

The merchant was scared to death, but he managed to mutter for whom he was taking the flower.

"Fine, I'll let you live, but only if you promise you'll bring your daughter here and let me marry her," said the bear.

The merchant didn't want to lose his life so he promised the bear everything he was asking for. Then he left the castle and headed back home.

His two older daughters almost didn't recognise him. The wealthy merchant now looked like a poor beggar. When they found out he returned without the promised gifts, they turned away, stamped their feet and walked away from him. Their younger sister welcomed him with a loving embrace.

"I'm so glad you're finally back, daddy. The roses are beautiful and I'm grateful for them, but most of all I'm just happy you're safely home. Who cares about money and expensive clothes! I'm sure we'll manage somehow," she said.

The merchant's heart sank when he remembered he would soon lose his darling girl. He was filled with sorrow and grief for bringing her such a horrible fate. She noticed his troubled face and asked him why he looked so worried. At first, he didn't want to tell her, but as time went by, the day was coming when he had to take his daughter to the bear. He had no choice but to tell the girl everything.

"Don't worry, dad. After all, a bear is God's creature, too. I don't mind going to him. It's all my fault anyway, it was me, who asked you for that rose," she tried to comfort him.

## THE THREE-BLOSSOMED ROSE

She packed her things and together they set out to the bear's dark castle. They waited there for a day, then another one, but the bear did not show himself. On the third day, the girl sent her father home and waited for the bear alone. The castle remained lifeless, only the table mysteriously set itself with different meals and drinks every day.

One day, the girl went for a stroll in the garden and just as she was passing the prettiest roses, she heard a clap of thunder and a huge bear appeared in front of her. She was scared, but the bear gently spoke to her:

“Welcome, dear girl. Are you going to stay here with me?”

“Indeed, I am. You are a God's creature after all,” answered the girl.

The bear was happy to hear that and treated her kindly in the following days. They walked together in the garden and talked. But sometimes, the strange thunder rumbled and the bear disappeared.

Day after day passed during which they enjoyed each other's company and became good friends. The girl got used to her host so much, she would feel sad when he would disappear.

One day the bear was gone and no matter where the girl looked for him, she couldn't find him. She looked everywhere, but the bear had simply vanished. She was lonely in the castle and kept searching every corner to find her friend.

She went to the garden, to the place where they had met for the first time, and there she saw the bear lying motionless on the ground. She leapt over to him: “My dearest bear, what happened to you? We were so happy together!”

But the bear still wouldn't move. She wept beside him for a long time. When she was finally going to stand up and go, she stroke his hair once more and gave him a kiss. Suddenly, a deafening scream shook the ground beneath her feet.

When the noise faded away, a beautiful young lad was standing before her. “Thank you, my dear, for setting me free,” he said.

He told her he was a prince cursed into a bear. Soon they noticed the castle around them waking up to life; the people started moving and cheering for their king and the girl who had saved them.

Not long after, they got married. The wedding lasted for three days and three

## THE THREE-BLOSSOMED ROSE

nights and the entire kingdom came to dance and feast. Then they rode in a beautiful carriage to the girl's father to tell him the wonderful news.

The merchant was overcome with joy when he saw his daughter was safe and sound and everything ended up well for her. Ever since then, the castle was not a dark and desolate stronghold anymore. Instead, it became the liveliest and happiest place anyone could ever find.