

CINDERELLA BULGARIAN TALE

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Once upon a time, a number of girls were assembled spinning round a deep rift or chasm in the ground. As they spun they chattered together and told stories to each other. Up came a white-bearded old man, who said to them:

“Girls! as you spin and chatter, be circumspect round this rift; or, if any of you drops her spindle into it, her mother will be turned into a cow.”

Thus saying he departed. The girls were astonished at his words, and crowded round the rift to look into it. Unfortunately, one of them, the most beautiful of all, dropped her spindle into it. Towards evening, when she went home, she espied a cow—her mother—in front of the gate, and drove her out with the other cattle to pasture.

After some time the father of the girl married a widow, who brought a daughter with her into the house. The second wife had a spite at the man’s first daughter, especially because she was more beautiful and more industrious than her own, and she allowed her neither to wash herself, nor to comb her hair, nor to change her clothes. One day she sent her out with the cattle, gave her a bag full of tow, and told her:

“If you don’t spin this tow into yarn today, or if you don’t wind it into a ball, you had better not come home at eventide.”

It was sad for the poor girl, as she went after the cattle, endeavouring as well as she could to keep them together. In the afternoon, when the cattle lay down to chew the cud, she began to look at the bag to see how to perform her task upon it; but when she saw that she could not make out what to do with it, she began to cry. When the cow which was her mother saw her crying, she asked her why she was crying. She told her how it was, and what it was. Then said the cow to her:

“Don’t be afraid; I will help you. I will take all the tow into my mouth, and will chew it, and yarn will come up into my ear. You must take it and reel it into a ball, and you will finish it in good time.”

As she said, so it was. She began to chew the tow, piece after piece; yarn came up, into her ear, and the girl wound and reeled it, and finished the task. In the evening she departed and went to her stepmother, who was amazed at seeing so much work completed.

The next time she gave her as much tow again. The girl spun till noon, and then in the afternoon, when the cattle lay down to chew the cud, the cow came up to her and began to chew the tow; yarn came up into her ear, and the girl wound and reeled it, and finished in good time. In the

evening she went home and delivered to her stepmother all the tow spun and wound. She was astonished at seeing so much work completed.

The third time she gave her still more tow, and sent her own daughter to see who helped her. The daughter went and concealed herself apart, and saw how it was and what it was, that the girl completed so much work in the day; she saw how the cow took the tow into her mouth, how yarn came up into her ear, and how the girl wound and reeled it. She went home to tell her mother. When she heard this from her daughter, she urged her husband to kill the cow. He endeavoured in every way to persuade her not to kill the cow, but could not over-persuade her. At last, when he saw that there was no escape, he promised to kill it on a certain day. When the girl heard that they were going to kill the cow she began to cry, and told the cow secretly that they were going to kill her. She said to the girl:

“Be quiet—don’t cry! If they kill me, you must not eat any of my flesh, but must collect the bones and bury them behind the cottage. Then if need comes to you, you must go to the grave, and help will come to you there.”

Soon afterwards they killed the cow, boiled her flesh and began to eat. The girl alone did not eat of it, but collected the bones, and then, without anybody seeing her, took them and buried them behind the cottage, where the cow had ordered her so to do.

The girl was named Mary; but at length, when they had put all the work in the cottage upon her, she had become dirty and begrimed with ashes and cinders from excessive work at the fireplace; and therefore her stepmother nicknamed her Cinderella, and this remained her name afterwards.

One Sunday her stepmother got ready to go to church with her daughter, but, before starting, took a wooden dish of millet, scattered it on the ground in the cottage, and said to Cinderella:

“Here you, Cinderella! if you don’t pick up this millet, and if you don’t get dinner ready by the time that I return from church, don’t come before my eyes.”

Then they went away. Poor Cinderella, when she looked at all the millet, cried out weeping and wailing:

“I will cook, I will sweep, I will attend to everything, but what poor girl can pick up all this millet?”

When she had wept and spoken, immediately there came into her mind what the cow had told her, to go to the grave, and there help would be given her in trouble. Cinderella went off to the grave. When there, what did she see? On the grave stood an open box, filled with all manner of rich clothes, and on the lid were two pigeons, white as snow. They said to her:

“Mary! take the clothes out, put them on, and go to church, and we will pick up the millet and get the dinner ready.”

She put out her hands and took the upper ones, which were of pure silk and satin, put them on, and went to church. In the church people great and small marvelled at her beauty and her dress, especially because no one recognised her or knew who or what she was. Most of all did the emperor’s son marvel at her, and never took his eyes off her. When service was ended, she stole away and ran quickly home, undressed immediately, and put the clothes in the box, and the box immediately vanished from sight. She went to the fireplace, and what did she see there? The millet picked up, dinner ready—in one word, everything attended to! Soon afterwards her stepmother came with her daughter from church, saw everything in proper order, and was astounded.

Next Sunday, when she was about to go to church, taking a larger dish of millet and scattering it on the ground, she threatened Cinderella that she would turn her out of doors if she didn’t pick it up and get dinner ready. The stepmother went off with her daughter to church, and Cinderella betook herself to the grave of the cow. On the grave she found the two pigeons and the box with the dresses in it open. They told her to dress herself and go to church, and they would pick up the millet and get dinner ready. Taking a dress of pure silver, she dressed herself and went off to church. Now everybody, small and great, marvelled at her more than before, and the emperor’s son did not take his eyes off her for a moment. Service ended, she stole off amidst the multitude and got away home. There she undressed, and put the clothes in the box, and the box disappeared from sight. Soon afterwards, her stepmother came and looked about; the millet was picked up, dinner was ready, and Cinderella was at the fireplace. She was astonished at seeing so much work completed.

The third time her stepmother got ready to go to church, and before she started, taking a dish of millet thrice as large, and scattering it on the ground, she said to Cinderella:

“Cinderella, if you don’t pick up all this millet before we return from church, and if you don’t get dinner ready, don’t come before my eyes.”

Then she went off to church. After this Cinderella went to the grave of the cow, and found there the box open and the two pigeons upon it. They told her to dress herself and go to church; they would pick up the millet and get the dinner ready. Taking a dress of pure gold, she dressed herself and went to church. There, when the people saw her, they marvelled, but no one knew who or what she was. The emperor’s son never took his eyes off her, and planned, when service was over, to follow her closely, to see which way she betook herself. Service ended, she stole off amidst the crowd, hastening to get away before her stepmother; but as she was pushing through the crowd, she lost one of her shoes, and the emperor’s son took it up. She escaped from among them with one shoe, undressed very quickly, put the clothes in the box, and the box vanished. She went home and looked in the cottage; the millet was picked up, dinner was ready, and everything attended to. She sat down at the fireplace, and, lo! her stepmother came and looked about the cottage; everything was in order, the millet picked up, dinner ready; she had nothing to find fault with her or scold her about.

The emperor’s son left his people, disguised himself, took the shoe, and went from cottage to cottage to try it on, to find out whose it was; and wherever he went he made enquiries, and tried it on the foot of every girl, but it did not fit one. For some it was too large, and for others too small; for some too narrow, for others too broad. At last he came to Cinderella’s cottage. As soon as her stepmother saw him, she concealed Cinderella under a trough. He asked whether there was any girl in the house. She replied that there was, and brought her daughter to him. He tried the shoe on her, but it wouldn’t even allow her toes to go in. He then asked whether there wasn’t another girl there, and she told him that there wasn’t. The cock then flew on to the trough and crowed:

“Cock-a-doodle-doo! pretty girl under trough!”

The stepmother shrieked out:

“Shoo! eagles have brought you!”

But the emperor’s son, on hearing the cock say this, went up and took the trough off; and there was, indeed, the girl that he had seen in the church with those beautiful dresses, only on one foot she had no shoe. He tried the shoe on her; it went on, and was exactly the same as that on the other foot.

Then the emperor's son took her by the hand, conducted her to his court, married her, and punished her stepmother for her evil heart.

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