

Gluttonia

1

There once lived a woman who had a daughter. The daughter ate very much.

She ate soup and meat and potatoes and cake.

She ate breakfast and lunch and dinner and supper. And once or twice in between.

She ate fruit and vegetables.

She ate boiled food, roasted food, fried food, and raw food.

She ate everything.

So people called her Gluttonia.

The girl didn't mind one bit. She loved to eat, and when she looked at herself in the mirror, she had every reason to be very pleased – for she was beautiful and all that eating did not show.

The mother and the daughter had a cat.

And a kind-hearted neighbour.

2

One day the mother put seven pieces of bacon into a large pot to cook for the field labourers. And then she went to them to see how the work was coming along.

When she came back home – the pot was empty! The daughter had eaten all that bacon!

There was a terrible quarrel because of it that day in the cottage. The mother scolded the daughter, the daughter protested her innocence, and their angry voices carried to the neighbouring houses and all the way to the nearby road.

3

At that exact moment the royal coach was passing by. And the passenger in the coach that day was not the old king, but his son, the Prince, who was a handsome young man.

Normally, the coach would just drive on, since there wasn't anything worth stopping for in that part of the kingdom. However, the coach did stop. Due to a broken rear axle. Would you believe this – even the royal coaches break down sometimes.

And the Prince, whether he wanted to or not, had to step out of the coach, so that the coachman and his assistant might mend the axle.

4

As those two were going about their task, the Prince walked to and fro along the edge of the road bored out of his wits. And as he was whiling away his time in boredom, he happened to hear the ruckus from Gluttonia's cottage.

– What is this awful racket? – the Prince asked the kind hearted neighbour who was hanging out the laundry in her yard. – What's the matter in that house?

The woman did not want to disparage her friends, so she said:

– Oh, there is this mother with a daughter who eats and eats, I mean: spins and spins. She spins and spins from dawn to dusk! And her mother is yelling at her because she is wasting her youth in all that spinning and she is going to make herself ill, the poor girl.

And the Prince said:

– It is not right that she is scolded so for being a hard-working girl. If she is indeed so, I shall ask her to be my wife! Such a girl is a rare treasure nowadays!

So he went to Gluttonia's cottage and knocked on the door.

5

And they were married.

(Of course, things did not happen so quickly, but the betrothal and the wedding bells are not important for our story.)

For a while, the Prince and Gluttonia were very happy together. She lived in comfort at the castle, and she still ate and ate, but she never spun. She was cheerful by nature and she made others happy. So, everyone around her were in good spirits, and none more so than her husband, the Prince.

6

But, one day, the Prince said:

– Dearest Wife, I will be going hunting tomorrow, and for you there are three rooms full of wool to spin until I return.

– Fine – said Gluttonia calmly, even though she had no idea of how she might accomplish that.

7

The next day the Prince went hunting, and Gluttonia opened the door to the first room.

When she saw all that wool, she realized that she could not spin all of it even if she had ten days to do it, so what would be the point of even starting the job? Instead, she sat at the window and looked out at the beautiful sunny day.

Her cat sat next to her, also enjoying the sunshine – and it purred, as cats do.

And so, the two of them lazed about all day, wondering what the future might bring.

8

And on that very day, three very peculiar fairies came by the castle: one had poor eye-sight, one was hard of hearing, and one limped.

As soon as she saw them, Gluttonia grabbed two pairs of sausages and hung them on her ears. She leaned out of the window and swung her head left and right. She swung her head to one side and – crunch! she took a bite of the sausage hanging from her left ear. She swung her head to the other side and – crunch! she took a bite of the sausage hanging from her right ear. Crunch, crunch! Juicy and tasty, salty and greasy!

9

The fairy who had poor eye-sight strained her eyes to better see such a wonder. As she strained, she began to see better and better. And before the sausages were eaten up, she could see better than ever before.

The fairy who was hard of hearing strained her ears to better hear all those wonderful munching noises. As she strained, she began to hear better and better. And before the sausages were eaten up, she could hear just fine on both ears.

The fairy who limped strained her feet to get closer to this never-before-seen wonder. As she strained, so she began to walk better and better. And before the sausages were eaten up, her limp was gone.

10

– Darling girl, we are at your service – said the three fairies to Gluttonia. – You cured us of our feebleness and in return we will fulfil your every wish.

– I only need you to spin the wool in those three rooms – said Gluttonia. – I can deal with the rest myself.

– No sooner said than done! – said the fairies and got down to spinning. All the wool was spun before the sun set.

11

The Prince came back from the hunt in the early evening. He showed his wife his catch, and she showed him the sacks full of spun wool. The Prince praised her and promised to get more yarn for her.

– But, dear Husband, I’ve got such pains and aches from all that spinning – said Gluttonia with a heavy sigh.

– How can you have pains and aches? – asked the Prince. – It’s what you’re used to, isn’t it?

Gluttonia said nothing to that, but she thought to herself: “He doesn’t care how hard that work is for me. If I had really spun three rooms of wool, he would think it a mere trifle.”

12

She considered her predicament, then she went up to the attic to get a sack of walnuts.

When no one was looking, she put the sack of walnuts under their bed mattress.

That night there were constant cracking noises from the bed. Every time Gluttonia moved something squeaked and crackled. The noise woke the Prince.

– What is this, Wife? – he wondered. – What is this endless squeaking in our bed?

– Oh, dear Husband, it is only my bones. – said Gluttonia in a weak voice.

– This is terrible! – said the Prince. – They never used to squeak before. Why are they suddenly making these dreadful noises?

– It is from all that spinning – said Gluttonia. – And in time they will sound even worse.

– Oh, no, no! – declared the Prince. – I cannot endure such noises every night. You are not to spin anymore! We can live just fine without your spinning.

And they did.

They lived happily ever after.