

The Turnip Princess

One day a prince lost his way in the woods. He found shelter in a cave and slept there for the night. When he woke up, an old woman was hovering over him. She had a bear by her side and treated it like a pet dog. The old woman was very kind to the prince. She wanted him to live with her and become her husband. The prince did not like her at all, but he was also unable to leave.

One day the prince and the bear were alone together in the cave, and the bear said to him: "If you pull that rusty old nail out of the wall, I will be set free. Then take the nail and put it under a turnip out in the meadow. Your reward will be a beautiful wife." The prince yanked the nail so hard that the entire cave began to tremble. There was a sudden clap of thunder, and the nail popped out of the wall. The bear rose up on its hind legs and turned into a man. He had a long beard and on his head there was a crown.

"And now I am going to go find the beautiful maiden," the prince shouted after him, and he ran out the door. Nearby he discovered a field of turnips and was just about to put the nail under one of the turnips when, out of nowhere, a monster appeared. The nail flew out of the prince's hand, and he braced himself on a hedge. Thorns pierced his hands, and his fingers were bleeding so badly that he passed out.

When the prince came to, he found himself in an entirely strange new place. Touching his chin, he discovered that he had grown a blond beard. That's how he knew that he must have slept for quite a while. He stood up, crossed the meadow, and passed through the woods, all the while searching for a place where turnips might be growing. But he searched in vain and found nothing.

Some time passed, and one evening he decided to lie down on a grassy knoll near a shrub. The shrub was a blackthorn bush in full bloom, and one branch of it had a red blossom on it. The prince snapped off the branch. He found a big white turnip growing in the fields right next to him, and he stuck the branch with red flowers into the turnip and fell fast asleep. When the prince awoke the next morning, the turnip had turned into a gigantic bowl, and the nail was lying right in the center of it. The interior walls of the turnip bowl looked just like a nutshell, with the imprint of the nut still on it. He looked carefully and saw the little feet, the tiny hands, the fine hair, and then the entire body of a wondrously beautiful maiden.

The prince left to search for the cave in the woods, and he had no trouble finding it. It had been abandoned. The rusty nail was still lying on the ground. He picked it up and hammered it back into the wall. Suddenly the old woman and the bear reappeared. "Tell me now, and don't try to deny that you have the answer," the prince shouted at the old woman. "What did you do with the beautiful maiden?" The old woman just giggled: "I'm here right now. Why do you keep rejecting me?"

The bear nodded in agreement and looked at the nail in the wall. The prince said to him: "At least you are honest. But I won't be fooled by the old woman a second time." "Just pull on the nail," the bear growled. The prince tugged at the nail and managed to get it halfway out. He turned around and saw that the bear was partly human and the disgusting old woman was half ugly and half beautiful. He pulled the nail all the way out. Lo and behold, man and maiden stood there, completely unharmed. He flew into the arms of the beautiful woman, for the spell had been lifted. The two of them took the rusty old nail and destroyed it.

The prince and his bride had no trouble finding their way back to the castle. The king was elated to see his son again and to meet his beautiful bride. The jubilant wedding guests held a feast for the couple, and the two lived a long, happy life.