

## Princess Blondie, Doe and Looker

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, a king got a letter from his subjects.

*Dear King Kindly,*

*We earnestly request that you marry again.*

*Our reasons are:*

1. *We do not like to see you so sad.*
2. *You have no son to rule after you. (We know other lands have queens but we have always had a king. And we have the robes and things for a king already.)*
3. *Your daughter, Princess Blondie, needs a mother.*

*First Minister Slight is happy to offer his assistance. (He is not himself married, but is sure he will be able to choose a good wife for you.)*

*(Signed) Your subjects*



The king, who loved his little daughter, agreed. Slight set off. Unfortunately, there had been a lot of kings and princes looking for wives recently. All the good ones were taken. At last he found a beautiful princess for the king to marry.

A month or two later, Slight got a letter from the king.

*Dear First Minister Slight,*

*Thank you for looking for a wife for me. I am sure you did your best.*

*Should **you** consider marrying in the future, I suggest you also find someone else to choose a wife for you.*

*Please let everyone know that Queen Nasty is not to be bothered with Princess Blondie. In fact, Princess Blondie is not to be left alone with the queen.*

*Also, of course, the princess must never go into the enchanted forest. We do not want her disappearing like everyone else who has gone there.*

*(Signed) King Kindly*

A year later, Queen Nasty had a baby – another girl. (“We might have to get queen robes after all,” said First Minister Slight.) She was as dark-haired as Princess Blondie was fair, so her parents called her Brunette. Sadly, Princess Brunette grew into a mean little girl, who played tricks on her big sister. Princess Blondie said it was just because Brunette was little. King Kindly saw what was happening. He was sad and loved Blondie even more for being kind to her sister. Queen Nasty was jealous. She wanted her daughter to be the most loved. She decided to get rid of Blondie.

She started giving sweets to the boy who drove Blondie's carriage. A bit later, she wrote him a letter.



Dear Piggy, (for that was his nickname)

*I have a huge box of chocolates for you. All you have to do is drive Princess Blondie near the enchanted forest. If you don't, there will be no more sweets.*

(Signed) Queen Nasty

Piggy thought and thought. He wanted those sweets. He was afraid of the queen. But he liked Princess Blondie. In the end, he did what the queen said. He got his chocolates but he felt terribly guilty. He left the palace, wandering the land sadly.



When Piggy drove her near the forest, Princess Blondie saw pretty purple lilacs growing in there. She ran in to pick some for her father. She went further and further, picking one here and one there. Suddenly she realised she was lost. She tried to find the path but to no avail. Hungry, scared and tired, Blondie sat down and cried herself to sleep.



When she woke up, Princess Blondie saw a white cat. “Here, Looker,” she said. “Aren't you beautiful?” She stroked his soft fur. She asked, “Can you lead me home to my father?” The cat shook his head and started to walk away. He looked over his shoulder at Blondie. Blondie jumped up and followed him until they reached a high wall.

“Thank you, Looker,” she said, as they went through some fancy gates.

Inside there was a paved courtyard. Beyond that was a most splendid palace. Blondie pushed the door of the palace open and followed the cat into a large room. It had sky-blue walls and lots of golden-framed mirrors. There was a doe sitting on a pile of fresh grass.



“Welcome to our house,” said the deer. “My son, the cat, and I have been waiting for you. I know you would like to go home but we are all held here by the Magician of the Lilac Forest. Be wise and patient and you will go home yet.”

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"Thank you, good Doe," said Blondie.

She was shown a room with green wall hangings with every kind of bird embroidered on them. Delicate gazelles brought her food and a nightgown. When they had gone, Blondie cried with loneliness and homesickness. Then she decided she must be cheerful and patient, while she waited to go home.

Diary entry by Princess Blondie:

*Dear Diary,*

*A very strange thing has happened. I went to bed last night seven years old with hair to my shoulders. This morning I find myself much taller and with hair to my feet. Yesterday I could write a little. Now, look at this! I find my head full of all sorts of things: I know where different countries are and who their rulers are; how to make an apple pie; how to paint a picture and how to play the piano. I even know how to speak French and do maths – including fractions! This forest surely is enchanted!*

*The gazelles are coming in with clean clothes for me. It's a good thing. My old ones wouldn't fit me now. Gazelles are odd maids. Another thing – how can a cat be the son of a deer?*

Downstairs, Doe and Looker told her she had been asleep for seven years. They had watched over her, while she had magically learned all she needed to know.

"Thank you," said Blondie. "There is one more thing I need to know, though. How is my father, King Kindly?"

Doe had Blondie look in a magic mirror. Instead of seeing her reflection, she could see her father. Queen Nasty was telling him Blondie had driven her carriage into the forest. She saw her father rush towards the forest only to be stopped by his advisors. Now he was weeping. Next she saw that he was dreaming of her, safe with the deer and the cat. Last of all, he was in the castle looking sad, old and alone.

Doe told Blondie that Queen Nasty had gone back to her own father and had since died. Princess Brunette had been sent away too and was learning to be kind.

"Be wise and patient and you will see your father when you are fifteen. It's not so long now," said Doe.

Blondie was very sad that her father was heart-broken and alone. However, she did not want to appear ungrateful, so she tried hard to be patient. She amused herself playing the piano, painting, writing in her diary and talking to Doe. The other creatures could not speak but Looker walked with her in the colourful gardens. He led her away, if she was tempted to go back into

the deadly forest. Everything looked very lovely but it was a lonely and monotonous life with no one her own age to talk to and play with.

One day something new happened.

Poem in Princess Blondie's diary:

*Today I saw a parrot,  
A brightly coloured parrot,  
It flew in through the window  
And came to talk to me.*

*Would you like to chat? he said.  
Would you like some news?  
You're looking very beautiful.  
I'd like to talk with you.*

*There's something of your father  
I could tell you, don't you know?  
I can get you out of here  
So you can go back home.*

*This palace is a prison  
You cannot wander free.  
I can get you out of here  
If you will follow me.*

*You think that you are with your friends  
But they have worked a charm.  
Will you really see your father  
If you stick around with them?*



The parrot told Blondie not to tell her friends about him. She didn't believe her friends were holding her prisoner at first. Then Blondie started to wonder if the parrot was right. Maybe she would have to stay in the palace with the deer and the cat forever. Maybe she would never see her father again, if she did what they said.

The parrot said it would be easy to break the charm she was under. All she had to do was find a rose. Blondie searched the palace garden for one. There were very many different flowers: dahlias and gardenias, daisies and geraniums, freesias and begonias, but nary a rose. She asked Doe where she could find one.

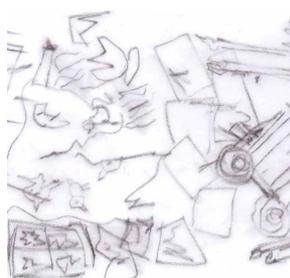
"Roses are treacherous. We do not grow any here," said Doe. "Be wise: do not hanker for what could kill you."

Blondie told the parrot. He said, "There you are then – she doesn't want you to escape. I know where there is one. You just have to follow me into the forest and I'll show you."

I am sorry to tell you that Blondie forgot what had happened the last time she'd gone into the forest. She forgot all the things that Doe and Looker had done for her. She forgot she was trying to be cheerful and patient. She followed that parrot into the forest. She even kicked Looker so she could escape.

No sooner had she picked the rose the parrot showed her, than the rose bush swirled up before her and turned into an evil magician.

"You are mine," he hissed, looming over her. "Your friends had me imprisoned in this bush. Now you have released me and destroyed them."



Horrified at what she'd done, Blondie turned and ran. The briars caught her clothes and scratched her arms but they did not stop her. She raced back to the palace. When she got there, she sank to the ground in despair. Before her, she saw nothing more than ruins. Holes gaped where there had been windows. Weeds had pushed their way up between flagstones. The roof had fallen in on the beautiful drawing room and the rain had spoiled it all.

As she sat there, crying once more, a toad hopped up to her.

"You are unwelcome here," the toad croaked. "Your ingratitude has killed your friends."

Blondie limped away, weeping. She felt she deserved no shelter, no food, no friends ever again.

A crow flew by. "True repentance can make up for the worst of crimes," he cawed. Blondie stumbled along a path she'd come across, until she fell down with weariness.

A frog hopped up to her.

"Have courage! There is hope yet!" Blondie heard as she fell asleep.

*Memo*

*From: the High Queen of the Fairies*

*To: the Fairy Queen Good Courage*

*Re: Princess Blondie*

*I have received your letter asking for the release of Princess Blondie from the enchanted forest and the evil magician. Princess Blondie has been disloyal to you and your son. She has been unwise in her choice of friends. She has been impatient. I suggest more tests will help her be a better person.*

*In the meantime, she had better live in the forest. I see you have sent her two messages of hope. You may also send a cow to give her good milk to drink.*

*We will review the situation in six months.*

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When Blondie woke, she found a cow standing in the glade. She was glad of the milk it gave her, for she was famished. She was very ashamed that she had been tricked by the parrot and that she had caused her friends harm.

She gathered some branches and wove them into a shelter. She looked for berries. Morning and night the cow came and gave her milk and encouragement. So her days passed.

After six months a giant tortoise came by.

"If you get on my back and never moan and never get off until we arrive, I will take you out of the forest," said the tortoise.

"My friends Doe and Looker can't leave, so I don't want to either," said Blondie.

"You know," said the tortoise lugubriously, "you shouldn't believe everything you're told. Perhaps they are just prevented from coming to you."

"Do you think so?" asked Blondie hopefully.

"Yes, I do," said the tortoise. "Now are you going to believe **me** and come with me?"

Blondie thought about what the tortoise had said. She thought of the animals that had helped her. They had sounded like her father and Doe. They had told her to learn patience, wisdom, courage and hope. The parrot and the toad had not sounded like that.

"Yes, I will come with you!" she declared.

"Get on then," said the tortoise. "Now, remember, no moaning and no getting off – even when you can see the castle we're going to."

Oh, how long that journey seemed! Indeed, how long that journey was! Have you seen a tortoise walk? They are very, very slow. But every time Princess Blondie felt impatient, she remembered her promise. She did not moan and she did not get off.

After about six months they got to the end of a long driveway bordered with oak trees. At the far end was a castle.

"I could run up there in no time," thought Blondie and she almost got down from the tortoise. But then she remembered what the tortoise had said. She remembered her promise and she gritted her teeth.

They ambled up the drive for another three weeks. Finally they got to the castle gates.

"You may descend," said the tortoise. "You have been patient and courageous and have listened to your good friends. Go in and meet the Fairy Queen Good Courage. Do not despair whatever you see!"

"Thank you, dear tortoise," called Blondie as she ran lightly across the courtyard of the castle. (You would think Blondie would be stiff after all that sitting still, but she wasn't!)

She pushed the doors of the castle open and went into a room just like Doe's room in the enchanted forest. No one was there. Princess Blondie wandered round the room and ended up in front of the magic mirror. The mirror asked her what she would like to see.

Blondie reached for her bravest self. "I would like to see what happened to my friends, Doe and Looker," she said. "Did I really destroy them?"

The mirror showed her the skins of her friends in a pile on the floor.

"Oh no!" cried Blondie. Just then she heard the door creak open. In came a handsome prince and a very lovely woman.

"It's all right," said the prince, hurrying over and touching her lightly with his wand. (He was a **fairy** prince, you see). "They are but our skins. We are here safe. I am Looker and this is my mother, Doe. Our real names are Prince Perfect and the Fairy Queen Good Courage. We were enchanted by the evil magician too. The High Queen of the Fairies says you have passed all your tests. You are free of the magician! Now we can take you home to your father."

They all climbed into a golden coach drawn by six white swans. They flew off to the castle of King Kindly, who was filled with joy to see his daughter again.



A few months later, invitations were sent out to all the kingdom.

*You are invited to the marriage  
of  
King Kindly to the Fairy Queen Good Courage  
and of  
Princess Blondie to Prince Perfect.  
Please bring flowers to decorate the hall –  
anything except lilacs and roses, thank you.*

One more nice surprise was that Princess Brunette came to visit for the wedding. She was a much kinder person now.

And so they all lived happily ever after.

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