

RASHIE COAT



There was once a king who had a bonny daughter who was called Rashie Coat. When Rashie Coat had grown up to be a young woman her father called her to see him and told her that it was about time that she got married, and that he had chosen a husband for her. Being a princess meant that she couldn't marry for love but had to marry a prince whose kingdom would be bound to her father's own kingdom with bonds of kinship. When Rashie Coat was told that she was to be married to a stranger, and was shown a small portrait of him, she recoiled in horror. Not only was he rather ugly, but he had a bad reputation for being mean and cruel. She refused to marry him, but the king said that she had no say in the matter, and she went off weeping.

Rashie Coat slipped out of the castle and went to see the hen-wife, who it was said knew magic and was very wise. When she went into the small, tumbled-down cottage she told the hen-wife about her proposed marriage to a man that she did not love. The hen-wife looked serious, thought for a while and then said, 'Tell your father, the king, that you'll only marry that man if you are given a coat that is made of beaten gold.'

So, Rashie Coat went back to the king and told him that she would only marry that man if she was given a coat that was made of beaten gold, and the king agreed. After a few days Rashie Coat was called to see the king, who gave her a coat made of beaten gold. It shone like the sun and was so finely made that it moved like it was silk. But still Rashie Coat didn't want to marry the man that had been chosen for her.

Rashie Coat went back to the hen-wife and told her that the coat of beaten gold was now hanging in her wardrobe, but she still didn't want to marry that horrible man. The old hen-wife thought for a while and said: 'Tell your father, the king, that you'll only marry that man if you are given a coat that is made from the feathers of all the birds of the air.'

So Rashie Coat went back to the king and told him that she would only marry that man if she was given a coat that was made from the feathers of all the birds of the air, and the king agreed. The king sent out his messengers with sacks of corn, which they poured onto the ground. Then, after blowing a fanfare on the horn, the royal messenger read out this proclamation: 'Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye! Every bird of the air is ordered by the king to give one of their feathers in return for one grain of corn. One feather for one grain of corn.'

The air whirled with the sound of birds' wings, as thousands and thousands of birds flew to the centre of the town and plucked out one of their feathers and placed it on the ground, then they picked up a grain of corn in their beaks and flew away. Soon there was a heap of feathers from every bird of the air and the court tailor was given the task of making them into a coat. The king called Rashie Coat to see him and gave her the coat made from the feathers of every bird of the air. But still Rashie Coat didn't want to marry the man that had been chosen for her.

Rashie Coat went back to the hen-wife and told her that the coat made from the feathers of all the birds of the air was hanging in her wardrobe, but she still didn't want to marry that horrible man. The henwife thought long and hard for a while, then said, 'Tell your father, the king, that you'll only marry that man if you are given a coat and a pair of slippers that is made from woven rushes.'

So, once again Rashie Coat went to the king and told him that she would only marry that man if she was given a coat and slippers that was made from woven rushes, and the king agreed. He sent his servants to pull rushes, clean them, polish them and weave them into a fine coat and a pair of dainty little slippers. The king called Rashie Coat to see him and he gave her the coat and slippers made from rushes. But still Rashie Coat didn't want to marry the man that had been chosen for her.

Rashie Coat went back to the hen-wife and told her that the coat and slippers made from the woven rushes were hanging in her wardrobe, but she still didn't want to marry that horrible man. The old henwife looked sadly at Rashie Coat and then shook her head, saying, 'I'm sorry my dear, but I can't help you anymore.'

So, Rashie Coat returned to the castle and put her three coats and the slippers into a sack and then slipped out of her father's castle and ran away. She walked and walked, mile after mile, far, far away

from her father's castle and from his kingdom. On and on she went, for such a long time. Eventually she saw another castle and she went up to it and knocked on the door. 'What do you want?' snapped a voice from inside. 'I am just a poor girl looking for work,' said Rashie Coat. 'Well,' said the voice, a bit kinder now, 'I think they need a helper in the kitchen. Come in.'

Rashie coat was taken to the kitchen and set to work, peeling vegetables and sweeping the floor. When it was the Sabbath Day the king, his son, the noblemen, knights and all the servants went to the kirk, leaving Rashie Coat behind to cook the dinner ready for their return. As she sat sadly by the fire there was a brilliant flash of golden light and a fairy appeared before her. 'Greetings, Rashie Coat. Why are you sitting by the fire when everyone else is at the Kirk?' 'Oh, I have to cook the dinner,' said Rashie Coat. 'Nonsense,' said the fairy, 'put on your coat made of beaten gold and go to the kirk as well.' 'But what about the dinner?' 'I'll look after the dinner for you,' said the fairy, 'and when you get back it will all be ready for you to eat.'

Now, maybe Rashie Coat had learnt a bit of magic from the hen-wife, but she stood over the bubbling pot that hung over the fire and spoke this rhyme: 'One peat make another peat burn, One spit make another spit turn, One pot make another pot play, Let Rashie Coat go to the kirk today.'

Rashie Coat ran to her sack and brought out the coat that was made from beaten gold and she put it on and went to the kirk. When she walked through the door of the kirk dressed in her fine golden coat everyone turned their heads and stared at her. The prince stared harder than anyone else, because Rashie Coat was such a beautiful girl, and his heart melted when he saw her. But she slipped away quietly before the sermon ended, and the prince didn't see her again. When she got home the fairy was as good as her word and the dinner was ready. All the talk in the kitchen that evening was about the beautiful girl who had been seen in the kirk that day. Rashie Coat smiled to herself but said nothing. No one knew that she had ever left the castle.

The next Sabbath Day saw great excitement in the castle; would the beautiful girl be back at the kirk today? Everyone left, leaving Rashie Coat behind to cook the dinner for their return. The fairy appeared, just the same as the previous week, telling Rashie Coat to put on her coat made of feathers from all the birds of the air and go to the kirk. Rashie Coat ran to her sack and put on the coat of feathers. She stood over the bubbling pot that hung over the fire and said: 'One peat make another peat burn, One spit make another spit turn, One pot make another pot play, Let Rashie Coat go to the kirk today.'

When Rashie Coat entered the kirk wearing her coat that was made from the feathers of every bird of the air the crowd gave a gasp of wonder. The prince gasped louder than any of them, and his love for this strange girl grew deeper and deeper. He seldom took his eyes off her throughout the whole sermon, and he was determined to speak to her before she left. But the prince was too slow, for before the sermon ended Rashie Coat got to her feet and ran out of the door, followed by the prince. But by the time the prince reached the door she was gone.

The next Sabbath Day saw even more excitement than ever, and the prince was in such a hurry to go to the kirk that he paced the floor until the king and queen were ready to leave. The same thing happened this Sabbath Day as the previous two; the fairy came to Rashie Coat and told her to dress in her coat made of woven rushes and to put the small, dainty slippers on her feet. Rashie Coat stood over the bubbling pot that hung over the fire and said: 'One peat make another peat burn, One spit make another spit turn, One pot make another pot play, Let Rashie Coat go to the kirk today.'

When Rashie Coat entered the kirk wearing the coat and slippers of rushes there was a cry of astonishment from all the crowd who were gathered within. The prince cried out louder than the rest, as she seemed even more beautiful every time that he saw her. The green rushes made her look like summertime was walking among them, and some thought that she must be the queen of the fairies herself. The prince sat near to the door and watched his chance, and as soon as Rashie Coat stood up to leave he ran after her. Rashie Coat ran too, but as she ran one of the tiny, dainty slippers slipped off her foot and was left behind. The prince couldn't catch her, but he saw the slipper lying there and he picked it up and examined it carefully. He had never seen such a small slipper, so beautifully made, for such a tiny and beautiful foot.

Back at the castle there was such a buzz of excitement in the air as the prince held up the slipper and decreed, 'Whoever this slipper fits I will marry!'

All the noble ladies tried it on, but it was far too small for them. Then the ladies-in-waiting tried, but without any luck. The proclamation was read throughout the kingdom, that the prince would marry the girl whose foot fitted the slipper. Rich merchants sent their daughters; farmers, craftsmen, servants and labourers all sent their daughters, but they all had to return home disappointed.

Now this kingdom had a hen-wife too, who tended the king's hens and practiced a bit of witchcraft on the side. She had a daughter, who was very ugly, and had big horrible looking feet. This girl nipped off her heel and clipped off her toes so that her foot was small enough to fit the slipper. The prince had ridden throughout the kingdom with the slipper, letting every girl try it on, but without any luck.

He now arrived at the hen-wife's house and he stood and watched in horror as the hen-wife's daughter quickly tried on the slipper and it fitted. In the darkness of their small tumbled-down cottage he never

saw the awful sight of that foot. But, he had made a promise to marry the girl whose foot fitted the slipper and so he took the hen-wife's daughter up behind him on his horse and he rode home with her.

As they were passing a wood the prince could hear a bird singing, and to his surprise he could understand its speech. It was singing this rhyme: 'Nipped foot and clipped foot Behind the King's son rides; But bonny foot and true foot Behind the cauldron hides.'

The king's son stopped and looked at the hen-wife's daughter's foot, and when he saw the mess that it was in, he threw her off his horse and rode back to the castle as fast as he could. He ran down the stairs and burst into the kitchen and headed over to the big cauldron, and there he saw Rashie Coat.

He held the slipper out to her, and she smiled and slipped it onto her tiny, beautiful foot. Then she took the matching slipper and put that one on too. The prince took her in his arms and asked her to marry him, and this time Rashie Coat had no problems about saying yes.

They were married soon after and lived long and happily together, and never drank from a dry cup.

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