

## ASHIEPATTLE

There was a rich man, and his wife fell ill, and when she felt that her end was near she called her little only daughter to her bedside and said: 'My dear child, always say your prayers and be good, as you are now, and God will always stand by you, and I shall look down at you from heaven and protect you.' So saying, she closed her eyes and died. The little girl would go out every day to weep at her mother's grave, and she went on saying her prayers and being good. When winter came, the snow put a white coverlet on the grave, and when the sun had taken it off again in spring, her father remarried.

His new wife had brought two daughters into the household with her, who had beautiful lily-white faces but ugly black hearts. This was the beginning of a bad time for the poor stepdaughter. 'Is this stupid goose to sit with us in the parlour?' they said. 'Those who want to eat bread must earn it. Away with you to the kitchen, kitchen maid!' They took away her pretty dresses, put her into an old grey smock and gave her wooden shoes. 'Just look at the proud princess, how smart she looks!' they exclaimed; and they laughed at her and put her into the kitchen. So she had to do the rough work from morning till night, get up early before daybreak, fetch water, make the fire and do the cooking and washing. In addition her sisters tormented her and poured peas and lentils into the ashes, forcing her to sit there and pick them out again. At night when she had worked herself weary, she got no bed to sleep in but had to lie down in the ashes by the hearth. And because this made her always so dusty and dirty they called her 'Ashiepattle'.

It happened one day that their father was about to go to the fair; so he asked his two stepdaughters what they would like him to bring back for them. 'Fine dresses,' said one. 'Pearls and precious stones,' said the second. 'But what about you, Ashiepattle,' he said, 'what would you like to have?' 'Father, break off the first twig that brushes against your hat on the way home and bring it to me.' So he bought fine dresses and pearls and precious stones for the two stepsisters, and on his way back, as he was riding through a wood, a hazel twig brushed against him and knocked his hat off. So he broke off the twig and took it with him. When he got home he gave his stepdaughters what they had asked for, and to Ashiepattle he gave the twig from the hazel bush. Ashiepattle thanked him, went out to her mother's grave and planted the twig on it, and cried so much that her tears watered it as they fell. But it grew into a beautiful tree. Every day Ashiepattle went three times and stood under it and cried and said her prayers, and every time a little white bird came and perched on the tree, and when she uttered a wish the bird would drop whatever she had wished for at her feet.

Now it came about that the king decided to give a feast which would last for three days and to which all the good-looking young ladies in the country were invited, because he wanted his son to choose a bride. When the two stepsisters heard that they were to be there too, they were mightily pleased and called Ashiepattle and said: 'Comb our hair, brush our shoes and fasten our buckles; we're going to the wedding feast at the royal palace.' Ashiepattle obeyed, but she cried because she would

very much have liked to have gone to the dance as well, and she begged her stepmother to allow her to go. 'You kitchen slut,' exclaimed her stepmother, 'you want to go to the wedding, all dusty and grimy as you are? You haven't any dresses or shoes and want to go dancing?' But when her stepdaughter begged and begged she finally said: 'Look, I've poured this bowlful of lentils into the ashes: if you can sort out the lentils again in two hours, you shall come with us.' The girl went out into the garden by the back door and called: 'Oh, you gentle doves, you turtle doves, all you birds of the sky, come and help me do my sorting -

Into the pot if they're good to eat,  
And swallow the bad ones, nice and neat.'

Then two white doves flew in at the kitchen window, and after them the turtle doves, and finally all the birds of the sky came swirling and swarming in and settled on the floor round the ashes. And the doves nodded their little heads and began, peck peck peck peck, and then the others began too, peck peck peck peck, and sorted all the good grains into the bowl. In scarcely an hour they had finished and out they all flew again. Then the girl took the bowl to her stepmother, overjoyed at the thought that she would be allowed to go to the wedding feast now. But her stepmother said: 'No, Ashiepattle, you've got no clothes and can't dance, they'll only laugh at you.' Then when Ashiepattle burst into tears she said: 'If you can sort two bowlfuls of lentils for me out of the ashes in one hour, you shall come with us.' She'll never do it, of course, thought the stepmother to herself, and shook out two bowlfuls of lentils into the ashes. The girl went out into the garden by the back door and called: 'Oh, you gentle doves, you turtle doves, all you birds of the sky, come and help me do my sorting -

Into the pot if they're good to eat,  
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So when everybody had left the house, Ashiepattle went to her mother's grave under the hazel tree and called out:

'Shake your branches and leaves, my little tree,  
Drop gold and silver down on me.'

And the bird threw down for her a golden and silver dress and a pair of slippers embroidered in silk and silver. As fast as she could she put on the dress and went to the feast. But her sisters and her stepmother didn't recognize her and thought she must be a princess from a foreign land, she looked so beautiful in the golden dress. They never dreamt it could be Ashiepattle, they thought she was sitting at home in the dirt picking lentils out of the ashes. The prince came to meet her, took her by

the hand and danced with her. And he would dance with no one else, and never let go of her hand, and if another man approached to ask her for a dance he would say: 'She is my partner.'

She danced till it was evening, and then she wanted to go home. But the prince said: 'I'll come with you, I'll accompany you.' For he wanted to see whose daughter this beautiful girl was. But she gave him the slip and jumped up into the dovecot. So the prince waited until her father came, and told him that the unknown girl had jumped up into the dovecot. The old man thought; Could this possibly be Ashiepattle? And he sent for an axe and a pick to break into the dovecot – but there was no one there. And when they went indoors Ashiepattle was lying among the ashes in her dirty clothes, and a dim little oil lamp was burning at the fireplace, for Ashiepattle had jumped down from the far side of the dovecot and run to the little hazel tree; there she had taken off her beautiful clothes and laid them on the grave, and the bird had taken them away again. Then she had sat down in the kitchen among the ashes in her old grey smock.

Next day, when the festivities began again and her parents and stepsisters had left, Ashiepattle went to the hazel tree and said:

'Shake your branches and leaves, my little tree,  
Drop gold and silver down on me.'

And the bird threw down a still more magnificent dress than on the day before. And when she arrived at the feast wearing this dress, everyone wondered at her beauty. But the prince had waited till she came, and at once he took her by the hand and danced only with her and no one else. If other men approached and asked her for a dance, he would say: 'She is my partner.' Then when evening came she wanted to leave, and the prince followed her and tried to see what house she would go to, but she eluded him and ran into the garden behind the house, where there was a beautiful big tree with fine pears growing on it. She climbed up among its branches as nimbly as a squirrel and the prince had no idea where she had gone. But he waited till her father came and said to him: 'That strange girl has given me the slip; I think she jumped up into the pear tree.' Her father thought: Could it possibly be Ashiepattle? And he sent for the axe and chopped the tree down, but there was no one in it. And when they went into the kitchen, Ashiepattle was lying there in the ashes as usual, for she had jumped down from the tree on the far side, given back her beautiful clothes to the bird that perched on the hazel, and put on her old grey smock again.

On the third day, when her parents and sisters had left, Ashiepattle went again to her mother's grave and said to the little tree:

'Shake your branches and leaves, my little tree,  
Drop gold and silver down on me.'

And now the bird threw down a dress that was so splendid and shining that she had never had one like it in her life, and the slippers were golden all over. When she appeared at the wedding feast in that dress, everyone was speechless with wonder. The prince danced with her and with no one else, and if anyone asked her for a dance he said: 'She is my partner.'

Then when evening came Ashiepattle wanted to leave, and the prince wanted to accompany her, but she leapt away from him so quickly that he couldn't follow. But the prince had

thought of a trick: he had had the whole staircase smeared with pitch, and as she sped down it the girl's left slipper had stuck there. The prince picked it up, and it was small and dainty and golden all over. Next morning he went with it to Ashiepattle's

father and said to him: 'I will marry no woman but the one whose foot this golden shoe fits.' Then the two sisters were delighted, for they had beautiful feet. The older one took the shoe to her bedroom to try it on, and her mother stood beside her. But she couldn't get her big toe into it, the shoe was too small; so her mother handed her a knife and said: 'Chop off your toe – when you're queen you won't need to do any more walking.' The girl chopped her toe off, forced her foot into the shoe, gritted her teeth against the pain and went back to the prince. So he took her as his bride and set her on his horse and rode off with her. But their way took them past the grave, and there the two doves were perching on the hazel tree, and they called out:

'Rookity-coo, rookity-coo!  
Her foot is bleeding in the shoe,  
Her foot's too long or her foot's too wide:  
He's left her behind, the rightful bride.'

Then he looked at her foot and saw the blood oozing out. He turned his horse round, took the false bride back home, and said she was not the right one and the other sister must try on the shoe. So the second sister went to her bedroom and managed to get her toes into it, but her heel was too big. So her mother handed her a knife and said: 'Chop a slice off your heel – when you're queen you won't need to do any more walking.' The girl chopped a slice off her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, gritted her teeth against the pain and went back to the prince. So he took her as his bride and set her on his horse and rode off with her. As they passed the hazel tree, the two doves were perching on it and they called out:

'Rookity-coo, rookity-coo!  
Her foot is bleeding in the shoe,  
Her foot's too long or her foot's too wide:  
He's left her behind, the rightful bride.'

He looked down at her foot and saw that the blood was oozing out of her shoe and making a red stain all over her white stocking. So he turned his horse round and took the false bride back home. 'She's not the right one either,' he said. 'Have you not got another daughter?' 'No,' said the man, 'the only other person is a dirty little kitchen girl my former wife left with me – she can't possibly be the bride.' The prince told him to send her up, and the stepmother answered: 'Oh no, she's much too dirty, she's not fit to be seen.' But he insisted, and Ashiepattle had to be sent for. So first she washed her hands and face clean, then went up and curtsied to the ground before the prince, who handed her the golden shoe. Then she sat down on a stool, drew her foot out of the heavy wooden clog and put on the slipper, which fitted as if it had been made to measure. And when she stood up and the prince looked into her face, he recognized the beautiful girl who had danced with him, and cried out: 'This is my rightful bride!' The stepmother and the two sisters trembled and turned pale with rage; but he set Ashiepattle on his horse and rode off with her. As they passed the hazel tree, the two white doves called out:

'Rookity-coo, rookity-coo!  
Her foot's not bleeding, it fits the shoe,  
It's not too long and it's not too wide:  
He has found her now, the rightful bride.'

And when they had sung this they both came flying down and settled on Ashiepattle's shoulders, one on the right and the other on the left, and there they remained.

When her wedding with the prince was about to be celebrated, the two false sisters came and tried to ingratiate themselves and have a share in her good fortune. So when the bridal pair were entering the church, the elder sister was on their right and the younger to their left – and the two doves flew at each of them and pecked out one of her eyes. Afterwards, as they were coming out of the church, the elder one was on the left and the younger on the right – and the doves flew at each of them and pecked out her other eye. And thus, for their malice and deceitfulness, they were punished with blindness for the rest of their days.