

# **Feminist Fairy Tales for the Armenian Children**

Written by Margarita Nahapetyan

Illustrations by Marcella Nahapetyan

## Introduction

As a child I was fond of fairy tales. I read fairy tales; I listened to fairy tales; I watched fairy tales; and I made up fairy tales. I used a part of my childhood diary as a space to write a fairy tale about a girl who occasionally turned into a fairy and saved the day. Moreover, I included illustrations to go with the plot. Although most of the fairy tales I read portrayed girls as timid-hearted creatures who waited for their male patrons to save the day, I created a female character that was strong, brave and athletic.

As years passed by, my love for fairy tales and children's literature, in general, did not pass away. It led me to take a course in children's literature. Thanks to that course, I realized how my favorite fairy tales distort my societal roles and create false perception about my nature. I saw that Cinderella is naïve and timid, while her step mother is evil and bossy. Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks are disobedient trouble makers. Snow White and Sleeping Beauty need a Prince to save them from evil Queens and fairies. Women in fairy tales are not good team players. Protagonists do not always have the freedom of choice. Female protagonists must be extremely beautiful. If a female character is ugly most likely she is a bad person. Fairy tales portray marriage as a woman's best accomplishment.

Therefore, I combined my childhood perceptions about women's abilities with the knowledge I gained at AUA in order to offer Armenian children a fairy tale book that will not distort their roles in the society. My book tries to address some of the issues mentioned above and encourage girls to fulfill their potentials despite what the society thinks. The collection includes six fairy tales, designed for two different audiences. The first three fairy tales are designed for children who are at least 10 years old. The last three fairy tales are written for children under the age of 10. Fairy tales targeted at younger children also include some illustrations.

I hope these fairy tales will break down many stereotypes regarding women's role in the society.

Yours,

Margarita Nahapetyan

P.S. The illustrations are provided by my younger sister – Marcella Nahapetyan. Her participation in this project symbolizes two of the aims of the book – encouragement of women empowerment and female cooperation.

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# 7 Days, 7 Nights

**Warning**

*Children*

*who are at least 11 and have read at least 7 famous fairy tales are only allowed to read this odd tale*

*P.S. Those who would like to find a moral in this tale will get disappointed.*

In the largest continent there is a small country called Armenia, where once lived a girl who loved fairy tales as much as she loved ice-cream and chocolate. Her name was Elvira. However, her mother nicknamed her Elfa to create a kind of fairytale image for her fairy-tale-lover girl.

Elfa was almost eleven, but since she was the only child in the family she was to help her parents with housework. She helped them to wash dishes and the car, or to clean the floor and remove the dust. In short, she was her Mama's and Papa's big helper. But there was a problem. Elfa did not enjoy what she was doing. So, every time she was unhappy with the work her parents assigned her, she would dream of a life she thought princesses had and then say, "Oh, I wish I was a princess. I would not wash dishes or cars; I would not need to do any kind of housework. Instead I would read a book, dance or walk in the garden of my castle. All of the housework would be done by my servants and helpers. I would also have colorful and glittering dresses, and shoes from glass.

Her mother would silently listen and just smile without articulating a single word like she knew what was to be done.

Soon it was Elfa's eleventh birthday anniversary. Therefore, Mom had prepared a very special present for her. She gifted her an illustrated fairy tale book. The book did not include any new fairy tale, but there was something extraordinary about it. The book was titled "Seven Days, Seven Nights" and instead of a preface, it introduced the reader with a recipe of how to read it. It said:

### *Recipe*

*This book covers seven beloved and famous fairy tales. The book must be read in a week: one fairy tale per day.*

*P.S. One tale a day, keeps illusions away.*

After Elfa read the "recipe" Mom said to her, "Elfa, this is your last fairy tale collection. You are a big girl now and this book will help you to grow up with the help of your favorite fairy tales. You can start reading it tonight. But, please, keep in mind that you need to read one fairy tale per day. Otherwise, you will miss the magic."

Elfa thanked her mother, but still did not understand how children's tales could help her grow up.

Finally, it was time to go to bed. Elfa turned the lamp on, made herself comfortable in the bed and opened the book. The first tale to be read was Snow White's story. Although Elfa had read the tale and watched the Disney animated movie at least ten times, she read the tale with greatest pleasure. Afterwards, she felt asleep.

Suddenly Elfa's room got filled with a bright light. The light was so strong that Elfa immediately woke up. As seconds passed, there was a big bright globe in the room. Then suddenly, a marvelous beauty came out from it. She had big blue eyes, but that tone of the blue was still unknown to the world and her hair were more orange than the orange itself. She immediately approached Elfa and introduced herself.

- Don't be afraid, little girl. I am an elf and my name is Meira.
- You are... an elf?! But you look like a regular human being, except for your hair color. I always thought elves have sharp ears, but yours don't differ from ours at all.
- Indeed, I am a real elf. And your parents nicknamed you an elf, without knowing who we are and how we actually look like. Anyway, hurry up, Elfa, we have little time.
- What do we have little time for?
- We need to go to a totally different place now and manage to come back before the sun comes out. Follow me and I will explain the rest on our way.

Elfa not only loved fairytales, but adventures as well. She understood that the elf was kind and that she could trust her. She held Meira's hand and together they entered into the bright globe.

- Are we in a castle? – asked Elfa.
- Yes, we are! This is a German castle, but keep in mind that it is the year of 1571 here. Let me ask you a question. What fairy tale did you read before bed?
- Snow White.
- So, now you are going to meet her. Let's open the door behind us.
- Are you serious?
- Let's not waste time on questions. Follow me, sweetheart.

Meira opened the door. They saw a pale girl sitting on her rocking chair. “See there she is. Now go and talk to her. Remember, you can ask her just one question which can be about anything you would like to know. Listen to what she will tell you carefully,” – said Meira.

“Is this girl Snow White? But where is her fine colorful dress?” – asked Elfa.

“I think that is a good question to ask her,” – answered Meira.

Both of them approached Snow White and Elfa started to talk to her:

- Hello, Snow White! I am Elfa. I would like to ask you a question.
- Call me by my real name, sweetheart. I'm Gretchen. I do not like the nickname I acquired due to anemia – the disease that makes my skin so pale.

Elfa felt sorry for Gretchen, but she did not want to ask her anything about the disease in order not to make her more upset. So she asked her about her dress:

- Why, do you wear this dark and modest dress instead of luxury, glittery and colorful one?
- Oh, dear! I didn't even have a chance to wear such a dress on my wedding day. Years ago, several religious reformations were made in our country. According to the laws accepted after the reformations, women are supposed to wear austere and dark garments. That is why I have never felt the softness of a light colorful dress.

“We need to leave,” – interrupted Meira the Elf.

“Gretchen, thank you for your answer! I must leave now. Good bye!” – said Elfa.

“Goodbye, sweet girl,” – said Gretchen or so-called Snow White.

Both left the room and saw the bright globe. Meira put her hand on Armenia and in seconds both were in Elfa’s room again. Before leaving, Meira said to Elfa:

- Elfa, our journey is over for today. Go to bed now and get some energy. I will come back tomorrow and we will visit another princess.
- Meira, am I going to see the princess I read about before bed each day?
- Yes, Elfa. Good night for now. See you tomorrow.
- See you!

As soon as Meira left, Elfa rushed to her bookshelf, got the book with recipe and opened the second fairy tale. She wanted to see which princess she was about to meet. The princess she was going to meet next was Cinderella.

Next night, Elfa again made herself comfortable in the bed to read the well-known story of Cinderella. She again felt happy for the kind protagonist’s victory and decided that she would ask Cinderella to see her glass slipper. Elfa was so anxious to meet Cinderella that she could not sleep for a long time. However, after endlessly moving around in the bed, she finally felt asleep. That was when the bright globe appeared and Meira came out. Elfa jumped from bed and together they went to Kingdom of Naples, which was in today’s Italy. They approached Cinderella who was having breakfast in the garden. Elfa asked her to see the shoe that helped the prince to find her. Cinderella agreed. She went to her bedroom and came back with a fur shoe. Elfa looked at it with her mouth and eyes wide open. It was hard to guess whether she was surprised, disappointed or sad.

On the third day Elfa read the tale of Beauty and the Beast. After she felt asleep, Meira came and they together went to France. It was the middle of 1700’s when they arrived there. Elfa was so surprised when she saw Belle in a highly extravagant dress and in a heavy wig. It was not the Belle Elfa read about in books or saw on Disney movies. In those books and movies, she had beautiful and natural brown hair and wore soft dresses. Elfa approached Belle and said:

- Hello, Princess Belle. I am Elfa. I would like to give a question.
- Hi, Elfa. Ask whatever you want to.
- Why do you wear that heavy dress and the wig?
- Just like other royalties, my husband dresses extravagantly to display his high status in the society. As his wife, I am ought to dress similarly to his style and it is not important if I want to or not.

After the conversation, Elfa again landed in her room. She was so tired of the recent disappointments that she immediately felt asleep. However, when she read about Sleeping Beauty the next night, she was again happy for the happy ending of the tale. When Meira arrived at her

room, they went to England of 1300's. They found Sleeping Beauty in her library. In order not to waste time, Elfa approached her immediately and said:

- Hello, princess Aurora. I am Elfa. I would like to ask you a question.

- Hi, dear Elfa. Ask anything you would like to know.

- After living a peasant life for years and working hard, you now enjoy freedom with hundreds of helpers and servants always at your service. You are happy now, aren't you?

- No, I am not happy at all. I am not free either and I dream of my peasant life all the time. Although now I am literate and have acquired knowledge about arts and sciences, I have a restricted and limited lifestyle. I cannot leave the castle without my husband. I also need to attend boring royal meetings and balls which I am awfully exhausted of.

Elfa was again disappointed when she arrived at her room. When she read the next fairy tale, she was not happy for the princess anymore, because she anticipated the potential disappointment after meeting the real princess. The tale she read was about the princess who overcame the challenges of Rumpelstiltskin.

When Meira arrived at Elfa's room, they again approached the globe and this time they travelled to Germany of 1600's. Not much was changed in Germany after their last visit. The princess was again wearing a dark, heavy and modest dress. After introducing herself, Elfa said to the princess:

- I think that you do not have any reasons not to be happy. You were born as a peasant, but later you became the prince's wife and also saved your firstborn from the kidnapper Rumpelstiltskin. Tell me, please, aren't you happy?

- I am happy that I was able save my beloved child. However, the illnesses I got after spending restless days and sleepless nights when my baby was taken from me, don't let me live a happy life now. Imagine, what would happen to you if you saw that someone had taken your baby and you did not know what was happening to her or where you could find her. And now I do not know how much time I have to live. Doctors do not promise much. My child will be left without a mother, - answered the princess.

Elfa again got disappointed.

The sixth tale was about Aladdin. Obviously, Elfa was going to see the heroine of the tale – princess Boudour. On the sixth night, they went to the Arabian Peninsula which is the biggest in the world. They arrived at an Arabian castle. Elfa saw Aladdin's wife Princess Boudour. At first, Elfa doubted if the girl she saw was a princess because the girl was dressed in loose and shapeless clothing. But Meira assured her that the girl in the room was the princess. So Elfa approached princess Boudour and asked.

- Why is your dress so loose and shapeless when your dresses are supposed to be light and semi-open?

- I never had such dresses. Our kingdom is quite modest. Moreover, women in our kingdom ought to dress modestly, especially when they are around men.

When Elfa was home, she was very disappointed. She did not have any desire to read the last fairy tale. However, at night she decided to read it, hoping that the last princess would be as happy as it is written. The last fairy tale was about the princess who could not sleep because of a tiny pea under the twenty mattresses she lay on. When Meira came that night, they moved to Denmark to meet the princess whose name is never mentioned in the tale. When Elfa saw the princess walking with her little daughter, she immediately ran to her and asked her with tears on her face.

- Aren't you happy as it is written in thousands of books? You must be happy because you were the princess the prince had dreamed of and indeed you became his wife.

- No, I am not happy at all. Yes, I was the girl of his dreams, but he was not the prince I dreamed of. I was in love with Prince Herald. However, I did not have freedom of choice. So, my father arranged my marriage to a man who chose me over other princesses, -- answered the princess and started to cry.

Suddenly, everything around Elfa started to fade and she was in her bedroom again. She was very disappointed and sad. She realized that princesses were unhappy and could not live the life they wanted. Elfa also understood that she had something those princesses could only dream of. And that was the freedom of choice. She could decide what to wear or what profession to choose in the future. She could also choose who to marry, unlike many princesses. Thus, she decided to be happy with her life. She was ready to help her parents and later they helped her to pursue her dreams. And so she lived happily ever after, unlike many princesses.

## *The Real Princess*

Once upon a time, there lived a princess in the Kingdom of Armenia. Her name was Alana. Alana was not a typical princess. As a child, she was fond of literature, especially of stories about outstanding women. She read books about ordinary women who were strong enough to make independent decisions and change their future. She dreamed of being strong and courageous like them when she grew up. Moreover, her father – King Leon – was happy to see that his little daughter wanted to become independent and fearless.

In fact, King Leon was feminist. This means that he never thought of himself as dominant and superior over his wife – Queen Mora. In all of his decisions, he always considered his wife's advice. He always valued her opinion. He never forbade his wife from organizing royal meetings and participating in the royal matters.

As years passed, Alana grew up into a beautiful young lady. Her beauty did not depend only on her looks, but also on her beautiful soul. She was not interested in hanging out in a company of royalties at posh balls. The fact of getting married to a rich prince and living in unbelievable luxury never tempted her. Rather, she would often leave the palace to visit the city and give some money and presents to the poor. But she never revealed herself during the visits. She rather got dressed up as a regular citizen and went to the city to see how she could be helpful to others.

One day Alana decided to organize another visit to the city in her modest and simple clothing so that no one thought that she was a princess. After the visit, she was going to take a trip to the forest with some of her friends from the city. She had confidentially told them that she was a princess because she believed that true friends should not keep any secrets from each other. However, she had asked them to keep her true identity a secret. And so they did as true and loyal friends. Indeed, Alana enjoyed the company of honest and true people than of the rich and vain ones who pretended to love her only because of her royal status. But her friends from the city loved her not because she was a princess but because she was kind and selfless.

Alana left all of her belongings that would resemble her as a princess in the palace. Hence, she had no tiara or precious jewelry with her. All she had was aid to give to the poor and some food to keep her fed during the trip.

When she arrived at the city, she went to the districts where the neediest citizens lived. She gave them money and presents to the small ones. Alana got overwhelmed by joy when she saw their smiles and excitement. She knew that life was not only about her. Life was not about having enormous possessions, enjoying daily comfort and being selfish. There were many people in her kingdom that did have the opportunity to buy a piece of daily bread. Alana considered that she was responsible for them. She considered that life was about helping those in need.

Soon after she spent some time with the poor, she went to meet her friends in the other part of the city. They were waiting for her to go the forest together. As soon as she arrived, they got ready and

into the woods they went. They were supposed to come back before the sunset. During the trip, they traveled through the forest, speaking and laughing together.

Suddenly, the weather changed. Black clouds quickly covered the sky and a curtain of rain beat down into the land. Thunder roared and lightning flashed throughout the sky. Meanwhile, Alana and her friends started to run, hoping to get back to their starting point. Alana was covering her head with her cape and running as fast as she could, thinking that she was following the group. All of a sudden, she noticed that she was all alone in the woods. She called her friends but there was no response. She had got lost in the woods.

The weather got even stormier. Alana was endlessly running, with the expectation to find a small shelter where she could spend the night.

When it got darker, Alana became completely hopeless to find a place to stay overnight. Strong wind was blowing and her clothes were all wet. There was a high chance that she could catch a cold. She sat under a tree, put her head on her knees and thought of her friends. She wondered if everything was fine with them. She hoped that everybody was together, already at their homes.

Suddenly Alana noticed that her surrounding irradiated. When she turned her head up, she saw the most enchanting thing she had ever seen – a group of fireflies right in front of her. Her eyes grew wide and she stood up. As she was studying them in amazement, they changed their direction and flew towards it. Curious Alana decided to follow them, hoping that they would lead her to a safe shelter. Although it was still raining, Alana felt some warmth coming out from the fireflies. They led her to the end of the forest. However, it was not Alana's starting point. Probably, they took her to the other end of the forest. Just as they took her out of the woods, they turned off their lights and disappeared in the dark.

Alana continued walking in the same direction. Soon she came across a hill. She climbed it and what she saw afterwards came as a sweet surprise to her. Right at the other edge of the hill there was an enormous castle. So, she carefully moved down and ran to the gates. She knocked on the door, waiting for someone to open it.

The castle belonged to Prince Henrick. Prince Henrick was very charming. Many princesses dreamt of becoming his wife. However, he did not like any of them. He looked for a true and real princess. It was very hard to understand what exactly he meant when saying "true princess." However, his mother – Queen Regina – believed that his son wanted an honest and modest wife of royal descent. Indeed, she was right: her son wanted a kind, respectful and faithful royal spouse who would truly love him. Little did he know that the girl of his dreams was right at his door.

Soon after knocking on the door, Alana heard the guard's voice.

- Who's knocking on the door at this late hour? – he asked.
- I am Princess Alana from the nearby kingdom. I got lost because of this storm. Could you please let me stay at the castle until the morning? I really need a shelter to spend the night.
- Miss, you need to wait. I can't open the door to everyone who claims to be a royalty. I need the prince's permission.

Alana waited for a while until the man came back. However, he was not alone. The Prince was with him. The prince asked Alana:

- Who are you and what do you want?
- As I have already stated – I am Princess Alana from the Kingdom of Armenia. I got lost from my friends because of this horrible storm. Now I need a safe and warm place to spend the night. Could you please let me stay at your castle?
- Miss, I have seen a lot of princesses, but none of them looked at least a bit closer to you. Where are your crown, royal dress and jewelry? You look like a regular beggar from my city.

Alana was speechless. She had never encountered such a rude man, be he a royalty or a commoner. She would prefer to leave, but she needed a warm shelter urgently. Because of the storm her whole body was trembling and her clothes were all wet. She was afraid of catching a cold. So, she decided to state that she is a real princess again.

- I said I am a true princess and I need a shelter for only tonight. No one is allowed to reject a royalty to stay at their castle when the royalty is not an enemy to you.

Suddenly the prince's mother came and intervened:

- My dear Princess, you can stay here as long as you want. Come in!

The Queen ordered the guard to open the gates. And so he did!

Alana entered into the yard and the guard accompanied her into the castle with an umbrella.

The prince was very disappointed with her mother's generous act. Therefore, he whispered to her ear:

- Mother, what are you doing? How can you let a random vagrant girl enter our castle? We cannot know if she is a princess for sure.

- Don't worry my son. I know how to check if she is a true princess. Who knows, maybe she is the one you were looking for all this time.

The prince grinned.

- Well, if she is a real princess, she becomes my wife. But if it turns out that she has lied, she is going to be executed, - he said.

- Deal, my son, - said the Queen.

The Queen ordered her servants to take Alana to the bathroom, give her new clothes and make some delicious food for her. However, Alana told the Queen that there was no need to make anything special for her. She insisted that a cup of hot black tea with honey would be enough for her. But the Queen stated that they could not mistreat a real princess in their kingdom. So, Alana thanked her for her kindness. Little did she know that the Queen agreed to kill her if she was not a real princess.

The Queen had made a special plan to check if Alana was a real princess. She knew a story about a queen in Denmark who prepared a bed of twenty mattresses and put a pea on the bottom to check if the girl who claimed to be a princess was not lying. The girl was supposed to sleep on those mattresses and if she was a real princess she would feel the tiny pea all night long. Only real princesses could be so sensitive to feel the tiny seed under that mass. The girl did not know that there was a pea under her mattresses, but she felt the presence of something unpleasant under the mattresses and thus could not sleep. Now Queen Regina was going to make the same test for Alana. Poor Alana had no idea that she was about to spend the worst night of her life.

When the Queen's servants made Alana's bed just as she had ordered, the Queen put an okra under the mass of mattresses because they had run out of peas. Poor Alana: the test was going to be even worse. The okra was much bigger than a tiny pea. If the tiny pea exhausted the Danish princess so bad, imagine what the okra could do to Alana.

The Queen then approached Alana and said:

- My dear Princess, your bed is ready. I ordered my servants to put twenty mattresses on your bed so that you spend the most comfortable and peaceful night of your life.
- Oh, thank you. But there was no need to make such efforts for my comfort. One mattress was completely enough for me.
- My dear, your comfort is a priority to us. Sweet dreams, Princess Alana.
- I am thankful to you for everything, Your Highness. Good night.

Alana was happy to see Queen's attention and careful attitude. Unfortunately, she did not know what a nice surprise the Queen had made for her. As soon as she climbed to the twentieth mattress through a ladder, she lay down. However, she immediately felt something disturbing under her mattresses. She turned left and then right but that did not help. She constantly felt something that was disturbing her from getting asleep. So, Alana was not able to sleep the entire night.

In the morning Alana got of the bed, dressed up into her traveling dress and went to the dining hall to have some breakfast. The Queen and the Prince were already waiting for her there. So, just as she arrived, the Queen said to her:

- Good morning, my dear, how did you sleep?
- Yes, tell us how you slept? – repeated the Prince.
- I am very thankful that you wanted to provide me with the best possible comfort, but something was wrong with those mattresses. I think there was a tiny rock under them and no matter how I twisted around it still disturbed.
- Oh, congratulations, my dear! You passed the test, - said the Queen joyfully.
- Yes! I found her finally, – said the Prince.
- Wait, wait! What is going on? What test are you talking about? – asked Alana.

- Princess Alana, we prepared a special test to see if you are a real princess. Only a real princess could be sensitive enough to feel the okra under all those mattresses. You felt it and so we all know that you are real princess, - said the Prince.

- What? You know that I was exhausted and I needed a place with good conditions to spend my night. And you dared to give a test to me, instead. Probably, you even planned to kill me if I failed the test.

- My darling, but you passed it! And as a reward you are going to get married to my son.

- What?! We are not getting married ever! Thank you very much for everything but I am leaving this place.

Alana stood up and went to the entrance doors of the palace.

- How can a respectful and polite woman refuse a man? – asked the Prince.

- How can a respectful man treat a woman so disrespectfully? - answered Alana and left their castle forever.

Alana went back to the forest where she got lost the other day. The weather favorable: so she easily found the way back to her kingdom. When she reached her castle she found out that her parents and friends had been looking for her the entire night. All of them were happy to see her safe and sound. So, they immediately embraced her in turn. The King and the Queen organized a royal feast in the town for Alana's safe return to the kingdom. All of the people in the kingdom including the poor were invited. The poor people got surprised when they learned that the modest girl who always helped them was in fact the princess. They were very thankful to her.

Soon Alana decided to get more advanced courses in science, literature and royal management. After completing the courses, she started to organize royal meetings just like her parents. During one of those meetings she met a very real prince who would never mistreat her. They liked each other very much and after dating for a year or two they got married. After Alana's parents got retired, Alana and her husband started to rule over the kingdom together. They were able to eliminate poverty in their kingdom. And they really lived happily ever after because everyone else was happy...

# The Beast Within

*Take care of your inner, spiritual beauty. That will reflect in your face.*

*-- Dolores del Rio*

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It was an ordinary early morning. The birds were singing their daily songs after they had some leftovers for breakfast. The water cannons had just washed the streets so that the citizens could make them dirty again. The hungry and thirsty street dogs and cats were wandering around the city to find something to eat. Meanwhile, a 22-year-old girl named Isabella or just Bella lay in her queen sized bed with her iPhone X in her hands. She was scrolling down her Instagram feed to see some new photos from yesterday's party she attended with her friends. "Gosh, I am the prettiest among them all. John must be the luckiest man on earth to have me as his girlfriend," – thought Bella. Then as usual she decided to open the camera app and admire her beauty without any make up on.

"Aaaaargg," – she screamed very loudly all over the house.

Her Mom and sister immediately rushed into her bedroom to see what had happened. Just as they opened the door two more "aaaaarggs" were heard all over the place.

Bella was turned into the girl she looked like in high school and that left them horrified, especially Bella. Everything she acquired in terms of her pretty appearance during all those years was merely gone. She again weighed about 80 kilograms (~175 pounds) just like in high school years. The nose job she got years ago was gone. Her upper lip was so thin like it had never been injected. Her long hair had become shorter and messy.

"Mom, what is going on? Why did this happen to me? How is this even possible?" – asked Bella with tears on her face.

"Bella, I am neither a plastic surgeon nor a dietician. I can't tell what is going on. Wait until I contact a doctor," – said her mother very worriedly and left the room.

Bella could not help crying, but she still hoped that the doctor would change the situation for the better. While she was crying her little sister sat near her and said:

-- Bella, no matter what you look like I will always love you just as you are.

-- Oh, Maggie! You will always love me no matter what because you are my sister. But John may not. We did not know each other when I was at high school. He never saw me like this. So, if he sees me this way, he may get disappointed and dump me.

-- No way, Bella! Remember he said that he truly loves you. And true love does not look at your face or your body, rather at your heart. So he will love you even like this.

-- Maggie, I am not going to stay like this. So, John would not need to love me like this.

-- Of course! Mom arranges a meeting with a doctor for you now. Everything will be OK. But remember that true love looks at your heart, so you don't need to worry.

-- Ok, thanks for advice.

Bella's Mom entered the room again and said that she had arranged a meeting with the best plastic surgeon in the country and they needed to visit her as soon as possible.

When they arrived at the doctor's office and told her what had happened, the doctor was horrified as never before. She had never encountered such a case when the patient had become so unrecognizable overnight.

At first, the doctor tried to inject Bella's upper lip with a new filler. However, the size of the lip did not increase even by an inch. Then she asked her to run on a treadmill, but she did not lose a single calorie. So, the doctor decided that there was no need to arrange a new nose job for Bella because it would not help. The doctor said that she could not help them with anything. Bella and her Mom were frustrated.

They left the doctor's office and went back home. Bella was very confused and barely understood what was going on around her. So, she fell on the bed and started to cry because of her hopelessness. Suddenly she heard a stranger's voice in her room which called her name. When she looked around, she saw a woman sitting on her wardrobe.

"Who are you? How did you get here?" asked Bella, her eyes wide open.

"I am neither a Victoria's Secret model nor a member of Kardashian's family. And I didn't get here on Porsche or Bentley," – said the stranger.

"I can't understand what you are getting at," – said Bella.

"If you learned that I was a famous and rich woman, your attitude towards me would change immediately, wouldn't it?" – said the woman.

"I still don't get what you are driving at," – said Bella.

"Oh, don't be so naïve, girl!" – said the woman. "Don't you only want to be friends with rich and cool guys?"

"Wo, wo, wo, lady! Who are you to talk to me like that?!" – asked Bella as she frowned.

"If you knew who I am you would not dare to talk to me like that." – said the woman. "I am the one who changed your appearance."

"Witch, give me back my beautiful looks! What do you need out of me?" – asked Bella.

“Darling, I don’t need anything. It is you who needs to find someone who will break the spell I put you under.”

“What do you mean?” – asked Bella.

“The spell will be only broken if someone truly loves you despite your looks.” – stated the woman.

“Oh, then you have lost the game, lady. My boyfriend truly loves me no matter how I look.”

“Good luck then, girl.” – said the woman and disappeared.

Bella ran out of her room to tell her mother what had just happened. Her mom told her to call John immediately.

“Call John right now and tell him that you need to see him. When he sees you and accepts you just as you are now, your beautiful appearance will be back again. He is our last hope.”

Bella did just as her mother said. She and John decided to meet up at their favorite café where they had their first date. Bella arrived at the café earlier than John. When John came in and saw Bella he did not even think that it was his girlfriend. So, he sat at another table, waiting for his beautiful girlfriend to arrive. Bella moved to his table. John thought she was a poor girl who would ask for money. So he told her to leave his table and that he was waiting for his girlfriend. After hearing John’s word, Bella started to cry and told John what had happened to her since the morning. In order to prove him that she was not lying, she even showed him the heart-shaped pendant he gave her as a symbol of his love towards her. However, John felt very uncomfortable with being around a not attractive girl. He stood up to leave and said to Bella:

“I honestly feel very sorry for you, Bella, but I don’t think I can help you. I wish you all the best of luck. Bye!” - said John and left the café.

Bella was left heartbroken. The café that once symbolized the start of their love story would now remind her of its end. She felt so worthless. She put her head down into her hands and wept hopelessly. Then she remembered the day she dumped her first boyfriend – Arthur – in a café just like that one to find someone with more money. She knew that Arthur loved her with all his heart but still she dumped him because she cared more about money. Now sitting there she realized how painful it was for Arthur when she left him. For the first time in her life she felt really sorry for the way she treated Arthur that day. She finally understood what it feels like to be dumped by a loved one.

When she raised her head she saw Arthur entering the café with a beautiful girl. They were holding each other’s hands and smiling at each other. As soon as Bella saw him, she turned her face to the wall so that he did not see her. When Arthur and his girlfriend sat at a table, Bella covered her face with her hair and left the café as soon as possible. If Arthur noticed her, he would immediately realize that it was Bella because he liked her before she changed her looks. Bella and Arthur were close friends at high school and after graduation they dated for a while until Bella left him.

When Bella got out, she went to the other part of the building where the kitchen door was located. There she started to secretly observe Arthur and his girlfriend through a window. She saw them chatting and laughing. Both were very happy and truly loved by each other. Arthur's girlfriend had no special looks but her kindness and simplicity made her look like the most beautiful woman on earth. Observing the scene, Bella started to cry again. This time she did not cry because of her looks or John's betrayal. She cried because she behaved like a beast for the last three years of her life. She left people who loved her the most just because they were not cool and wealthy enough to be beside her. She left Arthur, her best friend Ann and many other childhood friends. Instead she made friends with the rich and cool in order to fit into them.

Bella was weeping, her head facing the wall so that no one noticed her. Suddenly one of the waiters passed by to go to the kitchen and noticed her crying. He approached her and asked if he could be helpful.

"Hi. Why are you crying? Can I help you with anything?"

"No you can't. I am sorry for bothering you but I won't stay here any longer and disturb you," – said Bella and got ready to leave.

But the boy did not want to let Bella go. He grabbed her arm and invited her to the kitchen in order to talk to her. At that moment, Bella's biggest wish was to talk to somebody. So, she agreed. When they entered the kitchen, he offered her some water and then asked her to tell him why she was crying. Bella told him everything besides the magical part of her story. She did not tell the boy that a witch put a spell over her or that she used to be beautiful. She thought that the boy was not going to believe her anyway. So, she only told him that John left her to find a more attractive girlfriend and that she treated the same way her ex-boyfriend years ago.

"All this time I was a horrible person with an ugly heart and my inner ugliness is shown on my face," – said Bella.

"Stop it, you are beautiful. And your heart becomes as beautiful as your looks," – said the boy.

"You don't need to tell me such things out of pity for me."

"I don't even try to say pleasant things to you. Whatever I said was from the bottom of my heart."

"Ok. Thank you for listening to me! But I think I need to leave already. It's becoming late," – said Bella.

"OK. Promise me to come back tomorrow. We will talk again and have some sweets. I will treat you to delicious ice-cream," – said the boy.

"Oh, thank you. I will be back then to have some ice-cream: I promise. By the way, you did not introduce yourself and neither did I."

"I am Hamlet, a law student, making some money as a waiter," – said the boy.

“And I am Bella, a 22-year-old business student.”

“Nice to meet you, Bella.”

“Nice to meet you, too, Hamlet. See you tomorrow.”

“See you then, beauty,” – said Hamlet and smiled.

Bella smiled back and left the kitchen. She went back home and told her mother that John had dumped her. She also told her Mom that she met Hamlet. Her mother hugged her and said that she would definitely find someone who would love her just as she was.

Tired of the recent changes, Bella went to bed, wishing all of that was merely a nightmare.

When she woke up it was an ordinary early morning. The birds were singing their daily songs after citizens left some bread for them in nest boxes. The water cannons had just washed the streets so that the citizens walked in a clean environment and continued keeping it clean. The hungry and thirsty street dogs and cats were enjoying food which citizens left for them in the evening. Meanwhile, Bella woke up, got out of the bed and went to the bathroom.

She entered the bathroom and looked at the mirror.

“Aaaaargg,” – she screamed loudly all over the house.

Her Mom and sister immediately rushed into her bedroom to see what had happened. Just as they opened the door, they got paralyzed with amazement. Bella was changed again. She was changed into a naturally beautiful girl, just as girls do after they pass the juvenile period.

“Bella, you are beautiful like never before,” – said Maggie.

“But how is this even possible?” – asked Bella.

“Does it mean that somebody has loved you just as you were yesterday?” – asked her Mom.

“Gosh, that’s right. It means that the guy that I met yesterday has loved me, even though I was not attractive” – said Bella.

“Do you mean that waiter?” – asked Mom.

“Yes, Mom! I mean that waiter and I’m going to see him today,” – stated Bella.

“Good luck then, sweetheart! I think you better make yourself ready for the special meeting,” – said Mom.

In the evening Bella went to the café as she had promised to Hamlet. Hamlet immediately recognized her, but still wondered how she was able to change so dramatically overnight. When Bella told Hamlet the whole story, he got blushed because he realized that Bella knew about his secret love towards her. So, he decided to confess his feelings towards her and asked her out for a date. Bella agreed. Then, Hamlet treated Bella to delicious vanilla ice-cream on the roof of Bella’s

favorite café. Indeed, that café again reminded Bella of the start of her love story, but this time it was a true love.

## Little Smart Head

It was a gloomy rainy day. Twelve-year-old Maria was enjoying her fall break. She woke up early, ate some delicious pancakes and went to the living room to read a fairy tale. She took a collection of Grimms' Fairy Tales from the bookcase and opened the page where she left a bookmark. It was time to read the tale of Little Red Riding Hood. She sat down on the sofa and read the whole tale in the blink of an eye. Indeed, Maria was a book worm. She loved reading books. So, usually she spent her free time reading different children's books. That rainy day was not an exception.



The tale was about a little girl whose mother gave her a red hooded cape. The girl loved it so much that she wore it all the time. So, everybody started to call her Little Red Riding Hood. One day her mother said to her, "Take this basket of goodies to your grandma because she feels ill and don't talk to any strangers on the way!" On the way to Grandma's house, she met the Big Bad Wolf. He asked her where she was going. Unfortunately, she had forgotten about her mother's warning and told the Wolf where the Grandma lived. The Wolf told the girl to stop and pick some flowers for her sick Grandma. Meanwhile, the Wolf quickly ran to Grandma's place and ate her. Then he dressed into her pajamas and waited for Little Red Riding Hood to arrive. When she arrived at the house, she did not realize that it was the wolf in the bed not her Grandma. So the Wolf ate her as well and shortly felt asleep. Fortunately, a huntsman passed by the house and heard a strange snoring. He entered the house and saw the wolf sleeping on Grandma's bed with his big stomach. The huntsman was very smart and guessed what had happened. So, he opened the wolf's stomach with a knife and freed Little Red Riding Hood and her Grandma.

Maria, however, did not like the fairy tale very much. She thought that the tale showed girls to be naive and stupid. "If I was Little Red Riding Hood, I would tell the Big Bad Wolf where my Grandma only if I set a trap for him there," - she thought. While Maria was still thinking about the tale, she heard her mother's voice.

- Maria, I just talked to your Grandma, - she said.
- Oh, great! How is she? - asked Maria.
- Grandma said she has a fever and feels very weak. She can't even get out of the bed.
- Oh, poor Grandma. Then she needs some help!

- I have an important meeting with our client and I need to be in the office as soon as possible. So, you need to visit Grandma instead. Take some pancakes, honey and herbal tea to her. You will find them in an eco-bag on the table. Be careful and do not talk to strangers on the way.

When her mother was about to leave, she again said to Maria, “Sunshine, be especially careful of David Wulf. He has kidnapped several children and also robbed many houses during last two months. The police are looking for him but haven’t been able to find him yet. They say he has a beard, long brown hair and light blue eyes.”

“Ok, Mom. Don’t worry about me and good luck with your meeting,” – said Maria and kissed her Mom on the cheek.

After her Mom left, Maria got dressed in her favorite rain jacket. She took the bag for Grandma as well as her favorite red umbrella and left the house as soon as possible.

While Maria was walking to the bus stop, a man approached her and said:



“Hello, sweet girl. You seem to be lost. How can I help you?”

“Hello. Thanks, but I am not lost. I am going to my Grandma’s house,” – said Maria.

“Oh, thanks goodness you aren’t lost. Where does your grandma live? I can drop you off there,” – said the man.

“Thanks, sir, but I can get there by myself.”

“Oh, what a brave girl you are. But, why are you going to your Grandma’s place on this rainy day?”

“She is ill and in bed. I need to take her this bag with food as soon as possible. Thanks for your wish to help me, but I need to hurry. Bye,” – said Maria and tried to run away from the man. She knew that she should not talk to strangers who approach children,

because usually they can be dangerous.

“Don’t go yet, little girl. Won’t you tell me where your grandma lives,” – asked the man, stroking his beard.

“But why should I?” – asked Maria, looking at the man’s big blue eyes.

“Because I can take the bag to her and also see if she needs any other help,” – said the man, tightening his pony tail.

Suddenly, Maria realized that the man she was talking to was David Wulf. He totally matched Wulf’s description. He had a beard, his eyes were light blue and his hair was long, wrapped around a pony tail. “Gosh, this is David Wulf. He has kidnapped several children and the police are looking for him. Something must be done,” – thought Maria and then said to the man.

“Sir, it is beginning to rain very hard and I am afraid to get a cold. I want to go home. But my grandma is ill and there is no one to cook for her. She must eat something as soon as possible. Can you take this bag to her place? I will tell you the address.”

“Of course, I can. Just tell me the address.”

Maria told him the address and gave him the bag with grandma’s basket. Then he said to Maria.

“Don’t you want to come with me by my car?”

“No, sir. I want to go home. Please, just take the food to my Grandma. She is all alone and hungry.”

“Ok, little girl. Let it be as you want.”

“I was so lucky to meet you, sir. Thank you for your help. My grandma is very reach. I am sure she will ward you for your kindness,” said Maria, hoping to excite Wulf even more.

“Oh, I do not care about awards. I am happy to help your Grandma.” – said the man and smiled, thinking about the money he could rob from the Grandma.

“Thanks. Bye,” - said Maria and waved at the man while he crossed the street.

Maria was very smart and had designed a trap for Wulf. As soon as he left, she called her uncle who was a policeman and said to him:

“Hi, Uncle Dennis, I have something urgent to tell you. Please listen to me until I finish. Today I met David Wulf. Now he is heading to Grandma’s house from the Amiryan Street. I will call grandma and ask her not to open the door to anyone, while you reach to her place and arrest the villain.”

“What? Why is he heading to my Mom’s place? Is this a joke?” – asked the uncle.

“Uncle Dennis, do you think I would distract you from your work just for fun? Please, do as I said. I promise you won’t regret.”

“Ok, but if this is a prank, you will be punished.”

“Agreed. Just do as I said, please. There is no time to waste. I need to call Grandma now,” – said Maria and dropped the phone.

She then called her Grandma and said, “Grandma, a very bad man will knock on your door and tell you that I gave him food for you. Don’t open the door no matter what. The police are on their way to catch him. I will explain you everything later.”

Grandma got confused at first. She did not understand why would a bad man come to her house and then offer her some food to eat. But she knew that Maria was a smart girl. So, she trusted her. “Ok, Maria. But are you safe? Has anything bad happened to you? I know you were supposed to visit me.”

“I am fine Grandma and on my way to your house. Don’t worry!” – answered Maria.

After talking to Grandma, Maria ran to the bus station to take the bus to her Grandma’s house. Fortunately, when she arrived to the station, the bus she needed had just stopped. She got on and the bus left. Meanwhile, the police were on their way to Grandma’s house, but Wulf reached there sooner. He knocked on the door and rang the bell. Grandma got off the bed, went to the door and said:

“Who’s there?”

“Madam, please open the door. Your sweet granddaughter asked me to pass some food for you.”

“Sorry, but I don’t open the door to strangers.”

“But I am not a stranger. I am a friend to her parents.”

“Ok. Wait there until I find the key. I can’t remember where I left it,” said the Grandma.

Grandma was not going to open the door. She just wanted to make Wulf wait until the police arrived. She then called Uncle Dennis and said.

“Dennis, aren’t you coming. The man is in front of my poor, forcing me to open it.”

“Mom, don’t open it! We are almost there.”

“Ok, son, hurry.”



Uncle Dennis arrived there with other policemen in a minute. When Wulf noticed them, he dropped Grandma’s bag and ran, trying to escape from the police. However, the police ran after him and finally caught him. He was arrested immediately. When Maria arrived there, the police had already taken Wulf to jail. She took the bag which was at the ground and knocked on Grandma’s door. Grandma opened it and Maria went in. Finally, Grandma had her pancakes.

After Wulf’s arrest, all of the children that he kidnapped were found and returned to their families. Uncle Dennis apologized to Maria for not believing her and threatening to punish. Her parents were

proud of her. All of the news channels reported how she tricked a man who was hiding from the police for a very long time. Maria became the Student of the Year for her courageous act at her school. Moreover, she won the title of Women of the Year.

David Wulf is still in prison. He now understands that one should never underestimate what girls can do.

*Goldie and the Three Browns*

Once upon a time there lived a boy and a girl. They were neighbors and lived on the same floor in a block of flats. The girl's name was Emma but everybody called her Goldie because of her long blonde hair. Most of all she loved to play football (soccer) with her friends. The boy's name was Sam. Just like Goldie he also loved to play football most of all. Both of them played football together with other children from neighborhood. But Goldie was the best player among them all. She was really good at playing football and even wanted to join the school football team when the time was right.



One sunny day Goldie was playing football with her friends in the backyard. Suddenly, she saw Sam walking out of the building with his parents. When Sam saw her he waved at her. Goldie thought that he might want to play football too. So, she left the game and ran towards Sam and his parents.

- Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Brown. I would like to ask Sam if he wants to play football with us, - said Goldie.
- No, he doesn't want to. He will have a little walk with us until our lunch cools down. Thanks for asking, - said Mr. Brown.
- I will certainly join you after lunch, Goldie, - said Sam and went with his parents.

Mrs. Brown thought that Mr. Brown was not nice to Goldie.

- Darling, you spoke in a very rude way to Goldie. She did nothing wrong. She just asked if Sam wants to join them, - Mrs. Brown whispered in Mr. Brown's ear so that Sam could not hear.
- Mrs. Brown, please keep in mind that I don't like Goldie and I don't want my son to play with her, - said Mr. Brown.
- Why, Mr. Brown? She is one of the nicest and kindest girls I have ever met. She is such a sweet child.
- But sweet girls don't play football with boys.
- Hmm, that's why you don't like her. I think there is nothing wrong with a girl playing football. Girls can play football too if they want to.
- Don't deny what I just said. Girls play with dolls and kitchen play-sets to become caring and loving mothers just like you.
- Well, girls can become loving mothers even if they play football or go in for other sports.
- Don't deny what I said, Mrs. Brown, - said Mr. Brown and kissed his wife on her forehead.
- You can't change my opinion. Girls can be as sporty as boys. Boys can play with girls in a kitchen set if they want to. After all, I would not mind if you helped me in the kitchen. You know that it is hard to both take care of Sam and do the housework all by myself, - stated Mrs. Brown.

Mr. Brown said nothing. He looked at his watch and realized that it was time to go home and eat the delicious porridge Mrs. Brown has made for them. So they headed back to their apartment.

Meanwhile Goldie was waiting for the Browns at their door. After they left for a walk, Goldie went back home to drink some water. But when she reached to her apartment she saw that there was a key left in the Browns' door. Their door had three locks. The lowest one belonged to Sam. There was no key in it. The middle one belonged to Mrs. Brown which also did not have any key in it. The lock on the top belonged to Mr. Brown and that one had a key in it. Obviously, Mr. Brown forgot to take off the key after locking the door. So, Goldie decided to wait there until they arrived. Indeed all three locks were the same and could be opened with the same key. So if someone found Mr. Brown's key in the door, he could easily open the other locks and enter their apartment. That is why Goldie decided to guard the house from strangers until the Browns arrived. So, Goldie stayed there the whole time while Browns were out.

When the Browns finally arrived, they got surprised to see Goldie at their door. Mr. Brown thought that Emma wanted to take Sam out in order to play football with him. So, Mr. Brown said to her in a very rude way.

- Goldie, what are you doing at our apartment? I told you that Sam can't go to the backyard to play with you. He is hungry and needs to eat his porridge.
- Oh, I know Mr. Brown. I don't want to take him out now. When I came back home, I noticed that your key was left on your door. So, I decided to stay here and make sure that strangers don't see it. Fortunately, there were no strangers here and your apartment was safe, - said Goldie.

Mr. Brown felt very sorry that he spoke so rude to Goldie. He also understood that she had the kindest heart a child could have. So he apologized to her for his rude behavior.

- Oh, I am very sorry Goldie that I spoke so rude to you. Thank you for guarding our apartment while we were out. I forgot the key on the door and didn't even notice, but you spend your time guarding our apartment. Thank you very much.
- Yes, thank you very much, dear Goldie. We owe you. Why don't you join us for lunch? We are going to have delicious porridge, - said Mrs. Brown.
- Oh, please, Goldie, let's have lunch together, - added Sam.
- There is no need to thank me. And thank you for your invitation. But have your lunch together, please. I don't want to disturb you. I will go home. Later, Sam and I will go outside to play.
- No, Goldie, I insist that you come and have lunch with us. You need to try Mrs. Brown's tasty porridge. I bet you won't regret, - said Mr. Brown and smiled.
- Ok, then. Thank you very much, - said Goldie and also smiled.

They entered the apartment together and set around the table. All four of them had two bowls of Mrs. Brown's homemade porridge. Goldie liked it very much and was happy that she joined them for lunch. After everybody had eaten their porridge, Mr. Brown gathered the dishes and washed

them. Mrs. Brown was so happy and pleased that she kissed him on the cheek. From that day on, Mr. Brown always helped Mr. Brown with housework.

As years went by, Sam and Goldie grew up. Both of them joined the school football team. Again, Goldie was the best player in the team. So, the trainer made her the captain. Goldie's team always won the competitions and everybody was proud of her, especially Mr. Brown.

*The Power of Three Women*

Once upon a time there lived three sisters – Lulu, Mimi and Nana. Each of them inherited a big beautiful house from their great grandfather. The houses were located right next to each other. So besides being sisters, the girls were also neighbors. Each of the houses had a different color. Lulu’s house was colored in blue. Mimi’s house was orange, while Nana’s was red. Each of the houses had a balcony covered with flowers. The shape of the roofs was triangle. The entrance doors were small. The townspeople often called their home “the three sister’s fairytale houses.” Young townspeople loved to take photos near their houses. The houses also attracted many tourists who visited the town. But Lulu, Mimi and Nana loved their houses more than anybody else did and would never sell them even for billions of dollars.

One day Lulu heard someone knocking on the door. She opened it to see who was there. Right in front of the door she saw a tall man dressed in black. He told Lulu that both her and her sisters’ houses would be demolished soon. “Wolf Holding Co.” was going to build a new business center right there where the three sisters’ houses stood. The man said that the sisters needed to leave the houses in a week. He also added that “Wolf Holding Co.” was going to provide them with a new apartment.

Lulu told her sisters about the man’s visit. The three sisters were upset about the news. Their ancestors cherished those houses and wanted their future generations live there happily ever after. The sisters also loved the houses and wanted their own children to live there. So, Lulu decided that they would not leave their home and let “Wolf Holding Co.” demolish their beautiful houses. Instead, they would fight for their land and houses no matter what would happen.

Just a week later, the demolition equipment was in front of the beautiful houses ready to tear them down. However, the sisters decided that they would not leave the houses so that the construction workers could not destroy the houses. No one has the right to destroy a building if there is a person inside. So, the workers could not demolish the house that day. The girls knew that on the next day, the head of “Wolf Holding Co.” would tell the police to take them out of the house. So, Mimi decided to keep the townspeople aware that businesspeople wanted to get their houses demolished.

The next morning, Mimi got a loudspeaker and told the passerby that “Wolf Holding Co.” would tear down their three houses if the townspeople did not help them to prevent it from happening. The townspeople got angry at “Wolf Holding Co.” and decided to help the girls to protect their houses. Hundreds of townspeople surrounded the houses and did not let the construction workers to touch the houses that day as well. The police could not do anything. They had no right to take so many peaceful people to the police station.

For the third day, Nana decided to ask journalists to come to their houses and show other people what “Wolf Holding Co.” had planned to do to their home. So, on the third day journalists came with microphones and cameras and recorded everything that was happening at “the three sister’s fairytale houses.” During the evening TV program, the journalists showed that people surrounded the beautiful houses so that the sisters did not lose their home because of “Wolf Holding Co.”

The next morning some officials announced that “Wolf Holding Co.” had no right to take the land and houses from the sisters. The officials even required “Wolf Holding Co.” to pay a large amount

of money to the sisters for trying to take their houses from them. The sisters, however, decided to donate that money to the orphanage of their town because they wanted it to be spent for a good cause.

And the three sisters continued to live happily ever after in their beautiful houses.