

The Truth About Cinderella And Her Evil Stepsisters.

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Once upon a time there was a beautiful young girl named Cinderella. She lived in a lovely house with her father, a famous fashion designer, and her mother, who taught her how to play the harp, arrange flowers, and keep a spotless house.

When Cinderella was still quite young her mother died, in a tragic fire caused when a careless butler carried a flaming desert too close to the lace curtains. Cinderella's father remarried, and when he went on a long business trip, she was sent to live at her new stepmother's house in the country.

Even though her indulgent stepmother gave her the nicest bedroom in the house, and her generous stepsisters offered to share all their toys with her, Cinderella was not at all happy with country life. The furniture was very old and out of style, and, to be blunt, the toys were rather shabby. (Picture of C in her elaborate french provincial bedroom, with balcony, writing in her diary. "They've put me in a horrid little garret. It's dark and drafty, and these horrid little birds are always flying in the windows.")

Not only that, but her new stepsisters were quite uncouth. They constantly tramped through the house in their muddy riding boots, and they had no idea which fork to use when at dinner, despite Cinderella's patient explanations. Time and time again Cinderella would complain to her stepmother about their lack of manners, only to be told

"Well Cinderella, girls will be girls you know. Really, it's just a little dirt. I don't mind if the house looks lived in. Perhaps *you* should try playing outside someday."

The stepsisters desperately wanted her to join in their games, but Cinderella was afraid she might get sweaty. Besides, hang-gliding looked so very dangerous. So, she spent most of her time doing her best to keep the house looking prim and proper. It was quite a chore.

One day, when Cinderella was scrubbing the remains of her younger stepsister's chemistry experiment off the parlor ceiling, she heard a knock at the door. It was the Prince's herald, bringing an invitation for the whole family to attend the annual Ball.

"Oh no", said the older stepsister when she heard the news, "not another boring party! Mom, can't we skip this one and go on a camping trip?"

"Hmm," said her mother, "I think we did that last year. The Prince will think we're trying to avoid him. Really, he's such a nice boy. Still, the other guests *are* such twits. What can we do?"

"I know," said the younger stepsister "Let's tell him we've all come down with the bubonic plague!"

"Oh, that's perfect, I don't know why we haven't thought of that one before." said their Mother. "Find me a pen and I'll write a note."

Suddenly, the three of them heard a piercing shriek. Naturally, it was Cinderella.

"*Aargh!* What is wrong with you people? I've been living out here in the *sticks* for 6 months with absolutely *nothing* to do. No shopping malls, lousy TV reception, just nothing. You don't even have cable! Then I finally get a chance to buy some new clothes, go to a fancy ball, and dance with a real *Prince*. It's every girl's dream! But no, you three *hicks* want to tell everyone that I've got a *fatal disease!*" She threw down her mop and stormed up the stairs to her room.

“Goodness,” said the Mother. “Perhaps we’re being a little selfish here. I suppose it wouldn’t be that hard to go, just for an hour or two.”

“I guess,” said the younger stepsister, “but just for the food. As soon as they run out of sweets, I’m leaving.”

Cinderella was very happy to hear the news.

“If only Father had been brave enough to rescue my collection of original designer gowns from the fire. I don’t have a thing to wear.”

“Don’t worry”, said the stepsisters. “We’re very good at making things. We’ll help you make a dress. You can use the silk from our hot air balloon.”

“It’s not a very becoming shade,” said Cinderella, “but I suppose it will have to do.”

The stepsisters stared at her, aghast. “OK, that’s it Cinderella!” they said. “We’ve been trying our best to be nice to you, seeing as how your Mother died and everything, but we are really fed up with your persnickety behavior. You can just make the dress by yourself. Honestly!”

Cinderella didn’t know what to do. She had never had to make anything. Before, she would just drive her BMW to the mall and charge whatever she wanted to her parents’ credit card. She cried herself to sleep, thinking of how unfair life could be.

Later that night, as Cinderella slept, a sparkly mist drifted in through the balcony doors. It was Cinderella’s Fairy Godmother. She gazed down at the sleeping child.

“How sad”, she thought, “to see my precious Cinderella treated like a commoner. I must help her.” So, next to Cinderella’s silver hairbrush, the godmother left a magic gold credit card, and a note.

(Picture of sparkly mist leaving through balcony doors, with note in very elegant script: “Dear Cinderella: I’m so sorry to see you living in such dismal poverty. Use this magic credit card to buy whatever you want for the Ball. Just remember, however, that at the last stroke of midnight the magic will end and whatever you have charged on it will turn into rags.”)

When Cinderella awoke and saw her Fairy Godmother’s gift, her heart was filled with joy. She rushed to the phone and ordered a limo to take her to the mall. There she bought a gorgeous velvet gown, dancing slippers, had her hair permed and, of course, a complete makeover.

Meanwhile, her stepsisters had begun to feel guilty about what they had said to Cinderella. They told their mother what they had done.

She said “Now girls, Cinderella is a few years older than you, after all. I seem to recall reading that girls her age get very concerned about their appearance for some reason. Maybe you shouldn’t take it so personally.”

“She’s really not so bad, sometimes.” said one stepsister.

“Yes,” said the other, “It’s not her fault her parents were so overprotective and never let her use power tools or sewing machines.”

So to make up they decided to make a beautiful gown for her after all. The younger stepsister gathered wild plants and made a dye in a becoming shade of aubergine, while the older one surfed some fashion sites on the internet and starting cutting up the silk from their balloon. In no time at all they made a stunning party dress, and proudly spread it out on Cinderella’s bed for her to see.

As the day wore on without a sign of Cinderella, the family began to worry more and more. Finally, the hour of the Ball arrived. They had no idea where Cinderella had gone, and

the stepsisters feared that their harsh words had caused her to run away. But, since they had agreed to attend the ball, in the end they drove off to the Palace.

(Picture of them driving off in VW van with canoe on top.)

Cinderella finally arrived at the Ball after the mall closed. With her makeup on neither the stepsisters or their mother recognized the radiant young beauty who strode confidently into the ballroom. The awestruck Prince would dance only with Cinderella.

(Picture of the family, standing by the punch bowl, staring openmouthed at Cinderella dancing with the Prince.)

“Wow, you sure can dance. I’ve never met a girl like you before,” the Prince said “you’re not from around here, are you?”

Cinderella smiled, trying to think of something clever to say in reply. But before she could, the clock began to strike 12 midnight. Remembering her Fairy Godmother’s warning, Cinderella turned from the Prince and began to run from the palace, losing a slipper as she fled. The Prince picked up the slipper. He stood staring after her, trying to think if he had done anything rude or stupid. You could never be sure with girls, he thought to himself.

By the time Cinderella got to her Limo, it had turned into a mountain bike. She pedaled madly home and rushed up to her room, crying in disappointment.

There on her bed was the gown that her stepsisters had cut up their balloon to make. (Picture of ruined balloon outside.) Cinderella stared at it. She thought of all the things her new family had given her, and how ungrateful she had been. Then and there she decided to do her best to be more fun.

The only thing left from the mall was the single bejeweled slipper. For some reason it and it alone was unchanged by the ending of the Fairy Godmother’s spell. The next morning,

Cinderella pedaled off to the mall. She had decided to return the jewel-encrusted slipper and use the money to buy something nice for her stepsisters, like maybe a telescope, or a new snake for their herpetarium.

Meanwhile, the Prince had become quite obsessive about Cinderella. He had decided that he could not rest until he had found the beautiful girl from the Ball. He took the slipper she had dropped to every shoe store in the mall, asking the clerks if they could remember who had bought it. No one could.

(Picture of Prince, in royal costume, asking dorky looking shoe salesman.)

Finally, as he entered the last store, he saw Cinderella standing at the counter, returning the matching slipper. Even in her bike riding clothes he recognized her instantly.

(Picture of Cinderella in bike shorts, helmet, gloves, etc.)

The Prince dropped to his knee and kissed the surprised Cinderella's hand.

"Cinderella, may I have your hand in marriage?" he asked. Cinderella gazed deep down into his adoring eyes.

"Are you kidding?" she replied. "We've only been on one date. Sure, you're a great dancer, but we hardly talked and anyway the music was so loud I couldn't hear a word you said. I don't even know if you like cats, or if you care about the environment, or what kind of books you read. This doesn't seem a little sudden to you?"

Now it's true that the Prince was a little awkward around girls, but he was a quick thinker, and not the sort to give up easily. He jumped to his feet. "Well, will you walk down to the bookstore with me then?" he asked. "I've been wanting to buy a book on the significance of cats in early Egyptian religion, and then we could get a cappuccino and I could tell you all about my new plan to increase the Kingdom's recycling rate by 15%."

“Sure,” said Cinderella, “now that sounds fun. And I’ll tell you what *really* happened at the Ball. You won’t believe the story!” She put the money from the slipper in her backpack and the two of them strolled off together.