

Fairy Godmother's Assistant

Narrator: When you need help, don't you wish a fairy godmother would suddenly appear to make things right? Well, don't hold your breath. She doesn't do that kind of thing anymore. (She's getting on in years, you know.) So if you want some help-she still fixes anything from broken windows to broken hearts-you'll have to visit her little cottage in the woods and wait your turn, just like everyone else. And when you knock on the door, I'll let you in and make you comfortable. I'll even serve you a nice cold glass of lemonade. You see, I'm the fairy godmother's assistant.

My job was quite simple, really, until the fairy godmother announced she would be taking a much-needed vacation. I was scared stiff! What would I say to people who came for help? I didn't know any magic. I couldn't have turned a pumpkin into a glittering coach if my life depended on it. I remember exactly what she told me as she was leaving. She said: "You're very sensible. I'm sure you'll find a way to handle whatever comes up. And besides, I'll only be gone for a few days. Don't worry".

Easy for her to say!

To be honest, I didn't get much sleep that night. I kept wondering how I could possibly fill her shoes.

(the assistant enters the "stage" stretching and yawning)

I got up the next morning and went to the kitchen to make a fresh pitcher of lemonade. When I heard a knock on the door, I opened it and found a young woman with a tear-strained face, wearing a tattered apron. I explained that the fairy godmother would be gone for a few days and that I was her assistant. But she looked so sad that I invited her in for a glass of lemonade to cheer her up.

(she sits down and starts to cry. Assistant sits beside her and gives her a handkerchief to dry her eyes.)

Assistant: First wipe away your tears. Then tell me what's bothering you.

(The young woman took a few breaths before speaking.)

Ella: My name is Ella, but my stepmother and stepsisters call me Cinder-Ella, because my apron is always covered with cinders from cleaning the fireplace. They are mean to me and make me clean the house, cook, sew, and run errands all day while they have fun. Now I have to make them new gowns for the royal ball. But I want to go too.

(she starts to cry again)

Narrator: As she started to cry again, I could guess where this was leading.

Assistant: I'm very sorry to hear that. I suppose you came to ask the fairy godmother to get you to the ball. Is that it?

(She nods)

Assistant: I wish I could help you, but I make lemonade not magic.

(Ella begins to cry again.)

Ella: Can't you do anything?

Assistant: There's not much I can do. It's really up to you.

(She dries her eyes with the handkerchief and stares at me in amazement.)

Ella: Up to me?

Assistant: It's really very simple. If you want to go to the ball, go. And don't let anything or anyone stand in your way.

Ella: But how can I go to the ball without an evening gown?

Assistant: Don't look at me - you're the seamstress. If you can make beautiful gowns for your two stepsisters, why not make another for yourself?

(Ella ponders this for awhile, then shakes her head.)

Ella: But I can't afford to buy silk or velvet. How can I make a gown without any fabric?

Assistant: Are there any velvet curtains in your house? Or silk bed sheets?

(Ella starts to smile)

Ella: There sure are!

(Ella starts to frown).

Ella: But what about dancing slippers? I don't have any.

Assistant: Then don't wear any.

Ella: You mean I should go to the royal ball barefooted?

Assistant: What choice do you have, unless you want to wear those ugly boots you're wearing?

Ella: How am I supposed to get to the ball? The royal palace is almost a mile from my house.

Narrator: This young woman certainly could think up problems!
I knew Ella wouldn't like my answer.

Assistant: I suppose you'll just have to walk.

Narrator: A big frown appeared on her face. I knew this wasn't the kind of help she had hoped to get from her fairy godmother.

Ella: (whiney voice) But they'll never let me in if I don't arrive in a fancy, horse-drawn carriage.

Assistant: You're right. They may not let you in through the main gate, but I don't think there's anyone guarding the door to kitchen. Do you?

Ella: I guess not. At least, I hope not!

Narrator: Ella seemed uncomfortable with my answers. She'd never done anything so daring before. I wasn't surprised when I heard another "but."

Ella: But if a prince asks me to dance, what should I say?

Assistant: Ask him to be careful not to step on your toes. Ella laughs hard

Narrator: Sensing she was close to deciding in favor of going to the ball, I gave her one more push.

Assistant: What have you got to lose?

Ella: (with a big smile) Nothing. Nothing at all.

(she stands and shakes assistant's hand).

Ella: Thank you for all your help. I've got to go now. I've got so many things to do!

Narrator: before she left, I offered her some final advice.

Assistant: If you don't want your stepmother and stepsisters to know you've been to the ball, be sure to leave by twelve o'clock sharp. That way you'll be back in bed by the time they get home.

Narrator: I was quite pleased with myself for helping Ella. Relaxing for a moment with a glass of lemonade, I wondered if the fairy godmother with all her magic could have done a better job. I spent a good part of the day congratulating myself and feeling thankful I'd gotten through my first visitor without messing up.

After dinner I was surprised by a knock at the door. When I opened it up, I discovered a distinguished-looking elderly gentleman. He looked ever-so-much like the king, as pictured on every postage stamp in Bavaria, except that this man looked very worried. He must have been trying to keep his visit a secret; no guards or footmen were with him. I **curtsied deeply** as soon as I let him in.

(assistant goes to edge of “stage” to let in king and curties)

King: Enough of that. I must see the fairy godmother at once!

Assistant: I'm sorry, Your Highness. She's away. Can I help you?

King: Perhaps. Do you know where she keeps her magic potions?

Assistant: If you tell me which potion you'd like, I'll be happy to look.

(the king hesitates)

King: Well, actually, I'm looking for a potion that would enable me to, well... live forever.

Narrator: I offered the king a comfortable chair, excused myself, and went to the cabinet where the fairy godmother kept her potions. In a short time I returned with a handful of bottles.

Assistant: I've found a potion to keep your breath fresh longer, and one to make your suntan last longer. But I can't find anything to help you live longer, not even for a day.

King: In that case, I'll wait here till the fairy godmother returns. You see, I'm not feeling well, and the royal doctors haven't been much use.

Assistant: I'm sorry to hear that, Your Highness. What seems to be the problem?

King: My back, for one thing. It's killing me. And I can't sleep at night because of terrible gas pains, not to mention splitting headaches. My eyesight's growing dim. I'm deaf in one ear. I'm growing forgetful... or did I mention that already? But worst of all, my twin sons are driving me crazy! Aside from that, I'm fine-just fine.

Assistant: I think you must be terribly uncomfortable, Your Highness. But why would you want to live forever? Surely your health will continue to get worse as you grow older. In a few years, you'll be confined to bed. Would you enjoy living forever in bed?

King: I never thought of it that way. But at least if I lived forever, I wouldn't have to worry about how to divide the kingdom between my sons, Prince Sherman and Prince Herman. They're identical twins, you know. Even I can't tell them apart. You see, no matter how I divide it, one or both of them will be angry with me. Their squabbling is driving me crazy... or did I mention that already?

Assistant: Your memory serves you well. But I wonder, if two sons' squabbling is driving you crazy, how will you like it when you have eight grandchildren arguing over how to divide the kingdom? Or thirty-two great-grandchildren? Or a hundred-and-twenty-eight great-great-grandchildren? If you're not crazy yet, that should do it.

Narrator: The king appeared lost in thought.

King: Come to think of it, the longer I put off making a decision, the worse it will get. I suppose I'll have to make the best of my situation for as long as I can. You've been more helpful than you can imagine. I'm glad the fairy godmother was away.

Narrator: He smiled as though a great burden had been lifted from his back. With more energy than he'd displayed since he arrived, he got up from his chair.

King: I must be on my way.

(Walk towards away as if leaving, turn and say:)

King: I want you to forget that I was ever here... or did I mention that already?

(King reaches into his pocket and pulls out a bag of gold coins, which he hands to assistant and exits stage)

(Assistant collapses in chair and "wipes" his sweaty face)

Narrator: This had been a most unusual day, and I was anxious to relax in a tub full of hot water and the bubble bath I'd found in the fairy godmother's potion cabinet.

(Assistant walks off "stage")

Narrator: The next morning was uneventful. I'd slept well and was ready for anything.

(Assistant comes in stretching and looking energetic).

Narrator: Around noon, "anything" happened. Who do you think knocked at the fairy godmother's door just as I was starting to think about lunch? Prince Sherman and Prince Herman! The first thing I noticed when I let them in was how angry they looked. They were

arguing about something on the doorstep, and they continued to argue as I opened the door.

Sherman: I want the horses and the stables so I can play polo.

Herman: No way.

Herman: I like to ride, too.

Assistant: Excuse me, Your Highnesses.

(assistant curtsies).

Assistant: I'm afraid the fairy godmother isn't here. I'm her assistant.

Sherman: That's all right. Our father, the king, sent us to see you.

Assistant: He sent you to see me?

Herman: That's right. You see, he told us he's very sick and doesn't have long to live. And he said we'd have to figure out how to divide up the kingdom ourselves.

Sherman: And... he said if we couldn't figure it out, to come and see you. Which is why we're here.

Assistant: What do you expect me to do? You know, I'm just the fairy godmother's assistant. I don't do magic.

Herman: We know all that. But father said that what you do is better than magic.

Narrator: I was surprised... no, stunned... no, shocked!

Assistant: I-I- I'm fl-flattered.

Sherman and Herman: So we'd like you to divide up the kingdom for us.

(assistant hesitates)

Assistant: I don't suppose I can refuse a royal command?

Sherman: What do you mean?

Assistant: You see, if I decide how to divide the royal kingdom, then you'll both be mad at me, because I can't possibly make you both happy. But I do have a few suggestions.

Sherman and Herman: Such as?

(assistant hesitates)

Sherman and Herman: Yes?

Narrator: They were obviously waiting for a brilliant pronouncement.

Assistant: Well, you could both renounce the throne and let your cousin Fritz rule.

(The twins looked at each other, wondering whether the other would seriously consider such a proposal.)

Sherman and Herman: Nah!

Assistant: Or you could share the throne and rule together.

Sherman: Impossible!

Herman: Disastrous!

Sherman: We can't agree about anything. Well, almost anything. We both agree that's a stupid idea.

Assistant: Then there is only one other option.

(pause for dramatic effect.)

Assistant: Prince Sherman, you divide the kingdom as evenly as you can. Prince Herman, you choose which half you want.

(Prince Sherman looks at Prince Herman. Prince Herman looks at Prince Sherman. They smile and both reach into their pockets, pull out bags of gold coins, and hand them to assistant and then walk out the door with their arms on each other's shoulders.

(princes walk off "stage")

Assistant: I can't believe it!

Narrator: I collapsed into the armchair again. Thank goodness there were no more visitors that day. I'd had all the excitement I could handle.

(Pause) I wondered whether Ella ever went to the royal ball.

(Exit "stage")

Narrator: The next day I found out.

(assistant comes in stretching again).

Narrator: Just before noon she knocked on the front door. She was carrying a satchel and looking tired but happy. I was about to ask, "How was the ball?" but she started talking before I could say a word.

Ella: The ball was great! The music! The food! The dancing! Everything! I would never have gone without your help!

Assistant: Thanks. But I can't take any credit. You did it all yourself. By the way, what's in your satchel?

Ella: All my belongings. After attending the royal ball, I really couldn't go back to living with my stepmother and stepsisters. So I decided to move to town and open up a dressmaker's shop. I really am a good seamstress, you know. I just came by to thank you and to tell you the latest news from court. Last night, the king announced he was stepping down from the throne so he could travel. He turned the throne over to Prince Herman-all except the stables. Apparently, Prince Sherman had decided to devote himself to polo.

(she turns and starts to walk away)

Assistant: Ella, I'd like to be your first customer. I'll be in to see you for a fitting next week.

Ella: Thanks. Maybe we can go to the royal ball together next year.

Assistant: I'd love to. But next year we'll go in style. We'll rent a coach for the evening. And we'll both wear dancing slippers, too.

(Ella walks out the door laughing.)

Narrator: The fairy godmother returned the next day. She didn't seem surprised when I told her all the things that had occurred while she was away. She said: "I told you when I left that you could handle whatever came up." I wonder if those were magic words.