

The story of the Princess, the Sea Horse & the Stone.

This story was written for a little girl for her seventh birthday, and given to her with a little dried sea horse, a beautiful pink shell and a shiny round stone, with the hope that she too would learn to be generous, patient and fair. Indeed, now that the little girl has grown up, we can confirm that she did become generous, patient and fair.

Deep in the sea, in the castle of the King of the Billowing Grasses, lived a little princess. She was a waspy, willowy little princess, with long beautiful hair, but with sadness in her eyes, for she often felt out of sorts and argued with those around her. The king, who loved his little daughter very dearly, hated to see her make herself miserable but did not know what to do to help her. So he spoke to his wise old counsellor about the problem. The counsellor advised the king to send the Princess of the Billowing Grasses to seek for the magic Stone that was given to her when she was born, to seek when she was old enough. The Stone was kept for her in a cave high in the Sea Mountains, and guarded by a beautiful sea fairy, her godmother, the Guardian of the Stone.

The little princess was pleased to be entrusted with the task of bringing back her Stone. Although she felt a little frightened of the task, she took courage and prepared for her journey. She chose to take as her companion her favourite sea horse, Pensiero. Waving goodbye to her family and friends, she at last she climbed onto Pensiero's back and began her long journey into the Sea Mountains.

They journeyed through many wonderful lands, through valleys of waving red sea plants, past the homes of enormous pink and blue sea anemones and over the mountains where the

starfish lived. At last she came to the Sea Mountains and the Cave of the Stone. There she met her fairy godmother, who smiled warmly as she greeted the little princess. However, her godmother told her that she could not have the Stone unless she could prove that she was worthy of it.

The little princess felt very cross about this, that she had travelled all this way and now she could not have the Stone immediately. She was about to stamp her feet and yell, when suddenly she caught a glimpse of her fairy godmother's face. She was looking at the princess with such love in her eyes, that the princess held back for a moment and thought a little- perhaps she had better try harder to show that she was worthy of the Stone. She asked her godmother what she must do. Her godmother told her that she must complete three tasks. If she was successful she might take the Stone home with her, but if she failed in even one task she would have to go home without the Stone and come back again when she was older.

So her godmother, the Guardian of the Stone, told her the first task. She was to bring back the most beautiful of the three sacred pink shells, which she would find in the seagrass forest at the foot of the mountains. With the help of her trusty sea horse Pensiero and after many adventures, she found the three sacred pink

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shells, one a large bright pink shell, one a spotted middle sized shell and one small, fragile, pale pink shell.

The little princess thought, "Hah, that big shell is certainly the shell I need." She was just climbing off Pensiero to get the bright pink shell, when she was stopped by a beautiful fish, glittering silver with blue spots, and followed by ten little fish all looking the same. The fish said to her, "Please don't take that shell! I really need it to protect my little ones from the bigger fish who would eat them!" The princess looked again at the biggest shell and felt certain that that was the very shell that she needed also. She was just reaching out to take it, when she looked again at the beautiful little fish, and saw that they needed it so much more than she did. Her heart went out to the mother fish and her family and she knew that she could not take the shell from them.

So she reached instead for the next biggest shell, which, with its beautiful spots might still be beautiful enough to please the Guardian of the Stone. But just as she touched it, a small speckled crab poked its little claw at her and cried, "Please, please little princess, don't take this shell! I have broken my other claw and I need the shell to hide in." The princess looked at the little crab and felt so sorry for him that even though she really wanted that shell, she told him he could keep it.

So she was left with the tiniest shell. She was afraid that the Guardian of the Stone would not be pleased with it, but as she picked it up, she noticed that it had a beautiful delicate form, although it was so small. So she kept it carefully in her hand and carried it back to the Guardian of the Stone. Her godmother smiled gently at her and took the shell from her hand saying, "You have done well little princess. You have shown that you can be generous and can give to

others when their need is greater than your own. You have passed the first test."

The Guardian then told her the second task. This was to take a message to an old woman, a friend of her godmother who lived on the other side of the Rolling Rock Gardens, but the princess would have to be there by sunset. The princess thought that this was going to be easy, for she set out in the early morning, but as the day progressed the path became partly blocked by rolling rocks and so narrow that no one else could pass her on the way. Then she came up behind a sea snail, crawling ever so slowly. She looked all around for a way to pass it but rocks blocked every way. Instead she had to ride on Pensiero very, very slowly behind it. She felt herself getting so cross and impatient. She wanted to step on its tail to hurry it along; but in her heart she knew that it was doing its best and could not go any faster. So instead she tried to be patient and sing little songs to herself and Pensiero. and though they moved so very slowly, it seemed to the princess that as she continued to sing the sun slowed its movement in the sky. Thus it was, that before sunset came, she was able to reach the old woman to give her the message, so completing the second task.

The little princess returned to the Guardian of the Stone, who once again greeted her with a smile, saying, "You have done well, little princess. You have shown that you can be patient, and the more patience you showed, the more time you had to complete your task well. You have passed the second test."

Then the Guardian gave her the third task. She gave her a gift to be taken to the Eldest Princess of the King of the Shimmering Sands. The gift was the most beautiful doll that the little princess had ever seen. "It is for the Princess because she has been so kind to my helpers," said the Guardian. But the little princess had

fallen in love with the doll and wanted it very badly. All along the way on her journey, she tried to think of ways that she could keep the doll for herself. "I have been kind too," she argued crossly to herself. She thought that perhaps she could keep this doll and give the Eldest princess another doll instead. But just as she thought these thoughts, she tripped and tumbled on the path. She bumped her head on the sharp rocks. The next she knew, her head was being lifted very gently onto a soft lap and a girl with a sweet face was gently bathing the bumps on her head. Then the girl gave her food and drink from her own basket. When she was sure that the princess had recovered, the girl helped her up and to collect her fallen gift. The girl admired the beautiful doll and asked the little princess if it were hers.

The princess only shook her head; for she was thinking of the Guardian and the task she had been given. So the girl left her. Yet the little princess continued to argue with herself that she wanted the doll and deserved it; but she knew in her heart that the right thing to do was to take the gift to the Eldest Princess who had earned it with her kindness. So she continued on her way.

At last she reached the palace of the King of the Shimmering Sands and asked to see the Eldest Princess. The little princess was taken to her chamber and there before her was the sweet faced girl who had helped her after her fall and had admired the doll so much. With tears in her eyes, the little princess gave the doll to the Eldest Princess of the Shimmering Sands and said, "You truly are kind and deserve this doll much more than me." The Eldest Princess took

the hands of the little princess in her own, in an understanding way and said, "Dear Princess, each good deed finds its own reward. My reward was this beautiful doll, but your good deeds will also bring you their rewards in good time, though it might not be in the way you expect."

So the little princess returned to the Guardian of the Stone, her godmother, who rose when she came in, holding out her hands to her with a smile saying, "Once more you have done well, little princess. You have shown you can be fair, for you gave up something you wanted for yourself, to give it to the person who deserved it. You have passed the third test, and you have shown yourself worthy of now possessing your magic Stone."

So the little princess returned to her father's castle with the Stone, which was to bring her new happiness. In her heart she also took with her new feelings of generosity, patience and fairness. When she arrived home, her family and friends could see that she was already changed and thought it was by the magic of the Stone. But as the little princess put her trusty sea horse Pensiero back into the sea pastures to graze, she whispered in his ear, "Dear Pensiero, thank you for giving me your help with my tasks. You and I know that the gift at my birth was not just the Stone, but also the help given to me by my godmother, the Guardian of the Stone and the lessons that the tasks of the Stone have taught me."

And when the little Princess of the Billowing Grasses went to bed that night, she sighed happily and felt very peaceful in her heart.