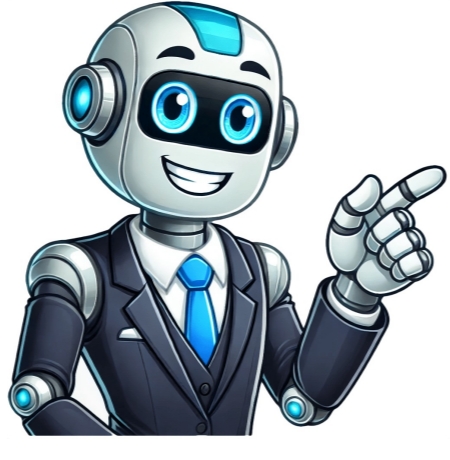


I'm not a bot





There was once a wealthy man whose wife lay gravely ill. In her final moments, she called for her only daughter and implored her to be pious and good, for God would always look down on her and she would look down on her from heaven. After the mother's passing, the maiden continued to visit her grave daily, weeping and living a virtuous life. When winter arrived, the man took another wife who brought two beautiful but wicked daughters into his home. The step-daughter was treated harshly by her new family members, who forced her to wear old clothes, do heavy chores, and sleep among the cinders at night. They mocked her, calling her Cinderella. One day, the father asked his step-daughters what they would like him to bring back from the fair, but when he asked Cinderella, she replied that she would be content with whatever twig struck his hat on the way home. The father brought fine gifts for the step-daughters and a hazel-twig for Cinderella, which she planted at her mother's grave. She tended the tree daily, weeping and praying, and it began to flourish. Three white birds would emerge from the tree each day, responding to Cinderella's wishes by bringing her whatever she desired. When Cinderella heard this, she burst into tears because she too longed to attend the dance, and begged her stepmother to let her go. However, the stepmother scoffed at the idea, saying "You, Cinderella, covered in dust and dirt, want to attend a fancy festival? You have no dress or shoes, what could you possibly do there?" But despite the stepmother's dismissal, Cinderella continued to plead her case, eventually leading the stepmother to propose a test: if she could pick up all the lentils scattered in the ashes within two hours, she would be allowed to join them. Cinderella, determined to prove herself, called upon the birds for help. She cried out to the doves and other birds that flew into the garden, saying "Pick up the good lentils and put them in the dish, but feel free to eat the bad ones if you wish." The birds obediently began to pick and peck at the ashes, sorting the good grains from the bad. Within an hour, they had finished the task, and Cinderella proudly presented the cleaned-up dish to her stepmother. But instead of being satisfied with Cinderella's accomplishment, the stepmother found fault in it, saying "You still have no proper clothes or dancing skills; you'll only embarrass us." Defeated but not giving up, Cinderella cried out once more, and the birds came again to help her. This time, she was able to collect two full dishes of lentils within half an hour. Still unconvinced that Cinderella should be allowed to attend the festival, the stepmother turned her back on her and set off with her daughters. Meanwhile, Cinderella went to her mother's grave under the hazel bush and cried out for help once more. This time, a bird threw down a beautiful gold and silver dress and a pair of elegant slippers embroidered with silk and silver. Cinderella quickly put on the new clothes and hurried off to the festival. At the ball, however, no one recognized Cinderella as her stepmother and sisters thought she must be some sort of foreign princess. So breathtakingly lovely was Cinderella in her golden finery that no one thought of Cinderella at all. Instead, they assumed she was at home, toiling away amidst the ashes, sorting lentils from the soot. The King's son arrived and swept her off her feet, refusing to dance with anyone else, lest he be forced to release her hand. As night fell, Cinderella yearned to return home but the prince insisted on accompanying her, eager to learn where this enchanting maiden resided. However, she cleverly evaded him, leaping into a nearby pigeon-house. The prince waited patiently until the father arrived, then shared his strange tale of the mysterious maiden fleeing into the bird's abode. The father was skeptical, thinking it couldn't possibly be Cinderella. He called for axes and hatchets to cut down the pigeon-house but found no one inside. When they entered the household, Cinderella sat amidst the cinders in her tattered attire, a faint oil lamp burning in the chimney. This was all part of her cunning plan, as she had swiftly escaped the pigeon-house, donned her humble grey kirtle once more, and returned to her domestic duties. The next day, with the festivities renewed and the parents and step-sisters absent, Cinderella visited the hazel tree, crying out for its assistance. The bird obligingly showered her in silver and gold, adorning her in an even more resplendent dress than before. As she danced among the guests, everyone was awestruck by her beauty. The prince had been waiting patiently for her arrival, took her hand, and danced with her alone. When others approached to invite her, he firmly declared, "She is my partner." At the evening's end, Cinderella wished to depart but the prince insisted on accompanying her to learn where she resided. She cleverly broke away from him, fleeing into the garden at the rear of the house. The prince was left mystified as to her whereabouts, assuming she had vanished up a nearby pear tree. He waited until the father arrived then shared his tale of the enigmatic maiden's disappearance. The father was skeptical once more, thinking it couldn't possibly be Cinderella. He called for an axe and felled the tree, but found no one inside. When they entered the kitchen, Cinderella sat among the cinders as usual, having swiftly escaped down the other side of the tree, retrieved her beautiful attire from the bird on the hazel bush, and donned her humble grey kirtle once more. On the third day, with the parents and step-sisters departed, Cinderella visited her mother's grave and implored the hazel tree for assistance. The bird responded by bestowing upon her a dress of unparalleled splendor and golden slippers. When she appeared in this resplendent attire among the guests, all were left breathless by her beauty. The prince's ball was a night of wonder for all who attended. He danced alone with Cinderella, and when others inquired about her, he proudly stated that she was his partner. As evening fell, Cinderella wished to depart, but the prince intended to escort her home. She hastily left him behind, leaving only her left shoe stuck in one of the steps due to the oil used on them. The next morning, the prince visited the stepmother and father, declaring that only the bride whose foot fit into his golden shoe would be accepted. Cinderella's sister tried on the shoe but found it too small for her great toe. Her mother suggested cutting off her toe as a solution, so she cut it short, hid the pain, and attempted to wear the shoe again. However, upon closer inspection by the prince, he noticed blood on her shoe. Disheartened, he returned the first bride home, declaring that the other sister must try. She too tried the shoe but found her heel to be too large. Her mother suggested cutting off a piece of her heel, which she did in secret pain. The prince once again rejected this bride, citing the blood on her shoe. He ordered his father to fetch Cinderella's older sister, who was deemed unworthy due to her dirty appearance. Undeterred, Cinderella cleaned herself and appeared before the prince with a smile. She carefully removed her foot from the old wooden shoe and slipped it into the golden one, which fit perfectly. Upon seeing her again, the prince realized that this was indeed his true bride, and he proclaimed her as such. The stepmother and two sisters were left to ponder their misfortunes. As they rode off, the prince was thunderstruck and grew pale with anger; but he put Cinderella on his horse in front of him. They passed by the hazel bush where two white pigeons were perched, looking worried. The pigeons started crying out loud, "There they go! No blood on her shoe. The shoe's not too small, She's the right bride after all!" As the prince and Cinderella rode off together, the pigeons flew after them and perched on Cinderella's shoulders, one on each side. They stayed there like that. When it was time for Cinderella to get married to the prince, her wicked stepsisters showed up, hoping to get some attention. They walked on either side of the bridal procession as it made its way to the church. But little did they know, two white pigeons had been watching them, and those birds weren't just any ordinary birds - they were on a mission. The pigeons flew over the stepsisters' heads and pecked out one eye each. And then, when everyone was returning from the wedding ceremony, the pigeons flew back and did it again! Because of their wickedness, the two sisters went blind for the rest of their lives. A classic tale of Cinderella is introduced at the beginning of this collection of stories, showcasing her life as a mistreated servant and her ultimate transformation through the help of a fairy Godmother. The narrative sets the stage for themes of resilience, kindness, and the idea that good deeds will be rewarded. The collection includes various stories such as "Fanny's telephone order," "The raindrops' new dresses," and others, which aim to captivate readers with their unique blends of humor and moral lessons.