

The Egyptian Cinderella

Beginning

Long ago, in the land of Egypt, where the green river Nile widens to meet the blue sea, there lived a maiden called Rhodopis. Rhodopis had been stolen by pirates and sold as a slave.

Like the other Egyptian girls, Rhodopis used to go to the water's edge to wash the clothes or to gather reeds but Rhodopis looked different from the other Egyptian girls. Their eyes were brown and hers were green. Their hair hung straight to their shoulders, while the breeze blew hers into tangles. Their skin glowed like copper but her pale skin burned red beneath the sun. That was how she got her name, Rhodopis meant 'rosy-cheeked' in Greek.

Build Up

"Rosy Rhodopis!" scoffed the servant girls, hissing her name beneath their teeth.

Although her master was kind, he liked to doze beneath the fig tree on hot sunny days and he seldom heard the servant girls tease Rhodopis.

"Hurry up, mend my robe, I'm hungry, bake me some bread!"

Rhodopis found friends among the animals instead. Sometimes when her chores were done and the day had cooled, Rhodopis would dance for her animal companions on the green river banks. One evening, her master awakened to see her dance.

"No goddess is more nimble. Such a gift deserves reward. You shall go barefoot no longer." He declared.

Her master ordered a new pair of dainty slippers be made for her. The soles were leather and the toes were gilded with rose-red gold. Now when she danced in the sunlight, her feet sparkled like fireflies. The Egyptian girls, however, were jealous and out of spite, they found new jobs for her to do.

Problem

One evening, Kipa, who was chief among the servant girls announced that they would all sail for Memphis where the Pharaoh was going to hold court for his subjects.

"There will be musicians and dancing!" said one girl, eyeing the rose- red slippers.

"Poor Rhodopis. You must stay behind to wash the linen and grind the grain and weed the garden."

The next morning, just as Ra the sun was climbing into the sky, Rhodopis followed the servant girls to the riverbank and watched the other servant girls set off up the river. Suddenly, a hippopotamus jumped up and splashed mud on her beautiful slippers. Rhodopis polished them and put them on the bank behind her to dry. Out of nowhere, a great falcon, the symbol of the God Horus, cast a shadow with his huge outstretched wings. "Greetings to you, Horus!" Rhodopis murmured and bowed her head. When she looked up she saw that the falcon had flown off carrying one of her slippers. He flew off towards the sun, a small black speck on the horizon. Rhodopis took off her other slipper and returned to her work, salting the river with her tears.

Solution

The falcon had flown straight to the city of Memphis and there he watched and waited. Amasis was the name of the Pharaoh. He was bored holding court, at that moment the falcon dropped the slipper in his lap. It was so bright, the Pharaoh thought that it was a scrap from the sun. Then he saw the falcon.

"The god Horus has sent me a sign!" exclaimed the Pharaoh. "Every maiden in Egypt must try on this slipper. She whose foot it fits will be queen."

The Egyptian servants were so cross that the Pharaoh had gone. He journeyed to different cities. He tracked the desert where pyramids tower over the sand, and he climbed the steep cliffs where falcons nest. The rose red slipper was always in his hand but wherever, he went he could not find the owner of the slipper.

The servant girls ran to try on the shoes and Rhodopis hid in the reeds. When the servant girls saw the slipper, they recognised Rhodopis ' slipper but they said nothing and still tried to force the slipper on. The pharaoh spied Rhodopis hiding and asked her to try on the slipper. She slid her foot perfectly in and took the other from her tunic.

Ending

The pharaoh announced that she would be his queen but the servant girls screamed " She's a slave – she's not even Egyptian!"

"She is more Egyptian than all you!" cried the Pharaoh. " Her eyes are as green as the Nile, her hair as feathery as papyrus and her skin the pink of a lotus flower.'

Together they lived happily ever after.