



STORY: THE LONG-NOSED PRINCESS, A KOREAN FOLKTALE

Retold by Dianne de Las Casas

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Long ago, in the land beyond the stars, there lived an old woman and her three sons. They were not rich or poor, they lived within their means. The old woman knew that her days on earth would soon come to an end so she called her three sons. “I will soon be leaving this earth but before I do, I want to bestow upon you the family treasures.”

The three sons watched as their mother pulled out a small bundle of silk. In it, she had wrapped a clear marble, a bamboo flute and a ragged old coat. The oldest son cried out, “These are the family treasures? They are but worthless, ordinary objects!”

The second son said, “Mother, they look like nothing but junk!”

But the third son remained silent, eager to see what his mother had to say. “Sssh, sons. Yes, they do look like ordinary objects, even junk. But the treasure lies beyond what the eyes can see.”

She rolled the clear marble across the floor and a trail of gold coins flowed behind it. She played the flute and a regiment of soldiers appeared, ready to follow orders. She donned the worn coat and disappeared. The coat made her invisible. The three sons were astonished and they heard their mother’s voice floating in the air. “These treasures are precious and you must never tell a soul about them for there are many jealous people in this world. Jealousy breeds greed and greed will snatch your treasures from you.”

The old woman gave the marble to her oldest son, the flute to her second son, and the worn coat to her youngest son. Not long after, the old woman closed her eyes for the last time. The three brothers grieved but their mother had left them lasting gifts.

It didn’t take long before the oldest brother began bragging of his great gift. Word reached a selfish princess and she sent the oldest brother boy an invitation to show the court his wonderful marble. He was honored and accepted the invitation. Once at the palace, he showed the princess and her court his wonderful treasure. A trail of gold coins followed the marble every time he rolled it. As it was rolling across the floor for the seventh time, the princess jumped up and snatched it. She then sent the young man to the dungeon.

Like his brother before him, the second brother began bragging of his great gift. Word reached the selfish princess and she sent the boy an invitation to show the court his wonderful flute. The second brother was honored and accepted the invitation. Once at the palace, he showed the

princess and her court his wonderful treasure. He said, “When I put this flute to my lips, a regiment of soldiers will appear, ready to take my commands.”

“Oooh!” squealed the princess. That is marvelous! Do you mind if I try?” Without thinking, the second brother handed the princess his magic flute. When she pressed the flute to her lips and blew, a regiment of soldiers appeared at her command.

“Take that silly fool to the dungeon!” she cried and the soldiers took the young man to the dungeon.

Days passed and the youngest boy began to wonder what happened to his brothers. He decided to go to the palace to find out. He put on his magic coat and, invisible, snuck into the palace without being seen. He saw the princess in her chamber playing with the marble and counting her gold coins. Next to her was the flute.

He carelessly knocked over a table and brushed the princess’ leg. She cried out, “Guards, guards! Someone is in my chambers!” As the guards were searching, the young boy snuck out of the window in the palace garden. There he saw an apple tree bearing red and yellow fruit. Feeling hungry, he reached up and grabbed a red apple. He began eating the apple and a strange thing happened. His nose grew and grew until it was nearly as long as his arm!

Wondering what he should do, he grabbed a yellow apple and bit it. Much to his delight, his nose shrank with each bite. Realizing what a treasure he had, he began formulating a plan to help his brothers escape.

Knowing that the princess was greedy, the next day, he appeared at the palace with a basket full of red apples. “Apples! Apples! Red juicy apples! Who will be the first to buy a red juicy apple?”

The princess looked out of her window and said, “I want those apples! Guards, seize those apples!” The guards brought the apples to the princess and she greedily ate two as fast as she could. To her horror, her nose began to grow and until it was as long as a broomstick!

The youngest brother put on his magic coat and snuck into the palace again. He found the magic marble and flute, and took them. Then he searched the dungeons and found his brothers. He unlocked their cells with a key snatched from a sleeping guard. The guards soon realized what had happened. They began chasing the brothers. When brothers reached the palace gates, the youngest brother blew on the flute and a regiment of soldiers appeared. The soldiers protected the three brothers as they escaped to safety.

From that time forward, the brothers rejoiced in their gifts and shared them with each other. But they never told another soul about their family treasures.