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**SCARLET
FLOWER**



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ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ БЮДЖЕТНОЕ
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S. T. Aksakov "Scarlet Flower"

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived a rich merchant. His wealth was legendary, consisting of pearls, gold, and silver jewelry. But more precious to him than his treasures were his three daughters, each a remarkable beauty. The youngest was the fairest of them all, and he loved her more dearly than the rest. She was, as they say, the apple of his eye.

One day, the merchant announced that he had to travel overseas for business. Gathering his daughters, he said, "My dear daughters, my lovely beauties, I am setting off on a long journey and do not know when I shall return. If you behave well in my absence, I shall bring back gifts for each of you. Take three days to decide what you would like."

After three days and three nights, the daughters approached their father to share their wishes. The eldest bowed and said, "Dear father, bring me not gold or silver brocade, nor sable fur or pearls. Instead, I wish for a golden diadem adorned with multicolored precious stones that shines as brightly as the Sun and Moon, lighting up the dark night like day."

The merchant nodded thoughtfully and replied, "Very well, my dear daughter. I know a merchant who can procure such a diadem. Your wish will be granted."

The middle daughter stepped forward and said, "My dear father, bring me not gold or silver brocade, nor sable fur, pearls, or even a diadem. Instead, bring me a crystal dressing table, one which mirror would enhance my beauty."

The merchant pondered her request and said, "Your wish is harder than your sister's, but I will fulfill it. I know a merchant across the sea who can provide such a dressing table."

Finally, the youngest daughter approached and bowed deeply. "My beloved father," she said, "bring me not gold or silver brocade, nor sable fur, pearls, a

diadem, or a dressing table. Instead, I wish for a scarlet flower, the most beautiful one in the entire world.”

The merchant sighed heavily and kissed his youngest daughter. “Your request is the most difficult of all,” he said. “A scarlet flower may not be hard to find, but how will I know it is the most beautiful? Still, I will try my best.”

Thus, the merchant set off on his journey. He soon found the diadem for his eldest daughter, its stones gleaming like the Sun and Moon. For his middle daughter, he procured a crystal dressing table, whose mirror seemed to enhance beauty with every glance. But no matter how far and wide he searched, he could not find a scarlet flower that surpassed all others in beauty.

His quest eventually led him deep into a dark forest, where robbers ambushed him. Fleeing down a narrow path, he stumbled upon a light, which he mistook for a fire. Fearing the end was near, he pressed on, only to discover a magnificent palace, glowing as if made of gold and precious stones.

The merchant cautiously entered the palace, marveling at its richly decorated interior. Room after room lay empty, yet each was filled with treasures and splendor. Finally, a grand table laden with food appeared before him. Though puzzled by the absence of a host, hunger overcame him, and he ate his fill. Soon after, he found a luxurious bed, where he fell into a deep sleep filled with dreams of his daughters.

When he awoke, he continued exploring the palace and descended a grand malachite staircase into a stunning garden. There, on a hillock, he found a scarlet flower of unparalleled beauty—a bloom so exquisite it defied words or imagination. Overjoyed, he exclaimed, “At last! The scarlet flower, the most beautiful in the world!”

But as he plucked the flower, the sky darkened, and thunder roared. A voice boomed from the heavens, “Foolish man! What have you done?”

Terrified, the merchant turned to see a monstrous figure emerging from the shadows. In a trembling voice, he explained, "My youngest daughter asked for the most beautiful scarlet flower in the world. I took it for her."

The monster's voice growled, "You have taken the flower I have cherished for so long. In return, I demand your life."

The merchant fell to his knees and pleaded, "Noble lord, I beg your mercy. I have three daughters, kind and good, to whom I promised gifts. Let me return to them one last time to deliver their presents and bid them farewell. If none of them agrees to come in my place, I shall return to meet my fate."

The monster considered this and replied, "Very well. Go to your daughters. If one of them comes willingly, you shall live. But if not, you must return within three days."

With a heavy heart, the merchant departed, vowing to keep his word. When he reached home, his daughters noticed his sorrow. The eldest asked, "Father, have you lost your wealth?"

The youngest, however, said, "I care not for wealth, dear father. Tell us what troubles you."

The merchant hesitated but eventually revealed the monster's demand. His two eldest daughters refused to go, but the youngest said, "It was I who asked for the scarlet flower, and it is I who must pay the price. I will go to the monster."

Though the merchant wept, he had no choice but to let her go. The youngest daughter, brave and resolute, journeyed to the palace, where she was greeted by unimaginable luxury. She got scarlet flower and went to the garden. She never saw so beautiful garden. And she found a hillock and planted a scarlet flower. She was delighted with her flower and went back to room.

She found a table with food and thought that the monster made it for her. She thought that as a master he would be merciful to her. Suddenly the words

from the fire appeared on the white wall: "I am not a master, but an obedient slave. You are my mistress and I'll do whatever you want"

She read it and wanted to send a letter to her parent. And suddenly a golden pen with a paper appeared. She wrote a letter to her father and sisters. There a letter:" Don't cry about me, dear family. I live like a queen in the monster's palace. I can't see nor hear him. But he write to me words from fire on the wall. He knows all my thoughts and do whatever I want. He don't want to be my master because he wanted me to be his mistress"

And suddenly she saw that letter disappeared. And a table was set with tea and snacks. She drank, ate, and then went to sleep. After sleep she went to for a walk in the garden and was walking untick the evening. She went back then she saw table with food. After the dinner she saw words of fire : "Is the mistress happy?"

And she said:" Don't call me mistress! Be my kind master. Thank you for your service. How I can't be happy? There so many miracles in your palace. Though I'm a little afraid of being alone. There no people here."

The words of fire appeared:" Don't be afraid, beautiful mistress. Your maid is waiting for you in your room. There a lot of people here. But you can't see them. And we all care about you very much."

She went to her room. She saw that her loyal maid is waiting near her bed. Maid was very happy to see her mistress. And they spoke about family and merchant's daughter told her maid what happen to her. And so their life would be so rich.?

She began to weave gifts for her father. But best gift she gave to her master, the monster. And she started to spoke to him often. And he answered with words of fire.

That her life went on. She wasn't surprised at invisible servants. She was thankful and started to fell into her master.

She noticed that the monster call her mistress with love. She ask to hear his voice. He didn't agree at first , but she begged him. He wrote words of fire:"Come to garden. Sit in the gazebo and say "Speak to me, my faithful slave"

She run to the gazebo and said:" My sweet and tender monster, speak to me. I wouldn't be afraid". And she hear terrible hoarse voice and he spoke in a low voice. She trembled at first, but she fight her fear. She started to listen his speech.

From this time, they became friends. But she started to ask to see him. But he was afraid to frightened her. He was so terrible neither to tell in a fairy tale, nor to write with a pen. He said: "Don't ask me to see me, my beautiful mistress! I can't show you my terrible face and body. We live in friendship and harmony! If you see me so terrible me, you would hate me. And I die from sadness because of you.

The merchant's daughter never heard speech like that. After that she begged more than later. She said that she wasn't frightened and unlike her master. She said: "If you old –you would be my grandfather .if you young – you would become my brother. And you become my heart friend.

So long, monster didn't listen her speech, but he can't disobey her. He said: "I can't disobey you because I love more than myself. Of course, I fulfill you wish. But I know that I will destroy my happiness and die. Come to garden in evening and say: "Show me your face, my loyal friend «And I show you my terrible face. If you scared, then I let you go.

She wasn't scared and went to garden. She said: "Show me yourself, my faithful slave" .She caught a glimpse of him. The appearance of him was so terrible that she fainted.

She awoke and heard: "You've ruined me. Now you won't want to see me, and I'll die" The girl pulled herself together and said in a firm voice: " Don't fear, my dear master. We'll not part with you. Now I will not be afraid. "

And the girl saw fiery, terrible monster, they walked until dark night.

Next day she saw monster under sunlight. And they never be separated.

Time pass, soon the fairy tale quickly told, but doing was not quickly done. Merchant's daughter saw in her dream that her father get ill. She started to cry and grief. Monster asked why she cried. She told him about her dream and asked permission to see her family. Monster gave permission and asked her to return after three days. Otherwise, he'll die from grief. Because he loved her so much, he couldn't live without her.

The girl swore she'd be in three days. And she magically moved to her father. Everyone, servants and sisters were glad to see her and surprised by her royal appearance. And they took her to the father. He was unwell. But he was amused when daughter told him about her royal life.

Youngest daughter said that she isn't afraid of the monster . Her father couldn't remember monster himself without shuddering. But her sisters were jealous of their sister's rich life.

On the third day, sisters began to persuade their youngest sister not to return to monster.

The youngest sister was upset and said: "If I repay his kindness with his death then I will never forgive myself" Her father praised her for such speeches. And they decided that she would be back an hour before as three days pass.

But her sisters turned the clock back an hour. Youngest sister's heart began to ache when real hour came. She wanted to leave but her sisters detained her on purpose. But they didn't hold her back. She chose to follow her heart, returning to the palace to the monster. And a minute before the appointed hour she said goodbye to everyone and moved to the monster's palace.

However, no one met her. She screamed, calling for monster but silence was her answer. She ran all over the palace. Ran into the garden and saw that the monster was lying on a hillock, hugging a scarlet flower. It seemed to her that he had fallen asleep. And she began to wake him up. But after a while she realized that he was dead.

Her eyes filled with tears and she fell to her knees in front of him. She said : "Don't die ,because I love you as the desired groom. And suddenly the lighting flashed. The girl fell unconscious.

She woke up on a golden throne with precious stones. Handsome young prince hugs her. The father and sisters are around her. And the whole retinue are standing on their knees.

The young prince said to her: "You loved me in the form of a monster, now love me in the form of a human. Be my bride. The wicked witch cursed my father king. And kidnapped me and turned into a monster. To break a spell I needed to find a girl who would love me as a fiancé. And I've lived like that for thirty years. There no other girl who loved me. Except you. For your kind soul and love, you will be the prince's wife.

Everyone was surprised. But her father gave his blessing to his youngest daughter and the prince. And the eldest and envious sisters and all faithful servants congratulated them, And without any delay they began to cheerfully feast on the wedding. And they live a happily ever after.