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“Cindalisa the Beautiful”

In a certain kingdom, in a certain land there lived a merchant who had a daughter named Cindalisa the Beautiful. Cindalisa's mother passed away when she was a little girl. On her deathbed, Cindalisa's mom gave her beautiful daughter a very lifelike doll from under her coverlet which she was told to keep a secret. She also told her that whenever she was in trouble or needed help to give the doll food and ask it for advice. From then on, Cindalisa kept the doll with her at all times.

Cindalisa's father cared about her very much and didn't want her to grow up motherless so he set out to find a new wife. After meeting many lovely women, he felt he had found the one. She had two daughters of her own and appeared to be a wonderful mother. Little did he know that due to her and her daughters' intense jealousy of Cindalisa, she would turn out to be a horrible mother. Sadly, soon after the marriage, the father had to go trade in some far off lands and was gone for a very long time. With her husband gone, the stepmother filled poor Cindalisa's days with countless impossible chores. But miraculously the young girl completed the tasks flawlessly and continued to grow lovelier by the day. This only led the stepmother to become even angrier.

Now I'm sure you are wondering how this happened? Well Cindalisa had help from her magic doll. Each day she would feed her doll and tell it about her troublesome life. The doll would then tell her, "Don't worry Cindalisa, you just go outside and rest in the shade; I will take care of all the chores." This went on day after day until eventually the stepmother decided to send Cindalisa out into the woods where Baba Yaga lived. Baba Yaga was an ugly old witch who lived in a hut which stood on chicken legs, and if anyone came too close to her house she would cook them in her stove and eat them. Cindalisa was terrified to go out into the woods but she had no choice, so she turned to

her doll. The doll led her along a safe path which kept her far away from Baba Yaga so each day she came back unharmed.

Cindalisa's stepmother couldn't take it anymore so she decided to end this once and for all. She put out all the lights in the house and told Cindalisa that she had to go to Baba Yaga and get some light. Horrified, Cindalisa once again asked her magic doll for help. The doll told her that as long as she kept her in her pocket at all times she would protect Cindalisa from harm. So the next morning, the trembling little Cindalisa set out for the hut on chicken legs. On her way she encountered some strange sights. First a white knight on a white horse galloped past her just as the day was breaking. Next she saw a red knight riding a red horse right when the sun began to rise.

Finally Cindalisa approached Baba Yaga's hut. It was even more terrifying than she imagined. There were spears stuck in the ground with human skulls on top, a fence made out of bones surrounded the hideous house, and those chicken legs were just unbelievable. Then suddenly a black knight on a black horse rode past her and vanished; just at that moment, night came.

Almost immediately after that, who should appear but Baba Yaga. She rode in her mortar, holding a pestle, and sweeping her traces with her broom. The woods seemed to collapse around her as she flew by. When she got to the gate she smelled Cindalisa, for she could smell all Russians, and told her to show herself. The trembling girl made her way up to the scary old woman and told her how her stepmother and sisters sent her to get light. Baba Yaga agreed as long as Cindalisa promised to stay and work for her or else she would eat her up. Cindalisa agreed and followed Baba Yaga into the house.

Once inside Baba Yaga ordered Cindalisa to fix her something to eat and proceeded to tell her the chores for the next day, threatening again to eat her if everything was not done. Once Baba Yaga went to bed, Cindalisa took out her magic doll and asked for her help in completing the impossible tasks. The doll reassured her and told her, “Go to sleep; there’s nothing to worry about. I’ll make sure everything gets done in time.”

The next morning Cindalisa woke up to find that the doll had already completed all of the tasks. Once again the doll was her savior. There was nothing more for Cindalisa to do all day but sit around picking flowers, maintaining her beauty. When it came time for Baba Yaga’s return that evening, Cindalisa waited with no worries. To Baba Yaga’s amazement, everything was done perfectly and there was nothing to complain about. So after eating another hot meal prepared by Cindalisa, she told her that the next day she was to separate every bin of grain from the dust that someone apparently tossed into them, in addition to all of the chores she did the previous day. So once again Cindalisa went to her doll for help, and once again the doll told her not to worry; she would take care of it all by the morning.

That night when Baba Yaga returned, she was even more amazed when she saw that all the chores had been done. But as she sat down to eat, she noticed how silent Cindalisa was being. She asked why she was being so quiet. Cindalisa almost did not speak, but she eventually got the nerve to ask to leave, as long as she could ask Baba Yaga one question before she left. Baba Yaga said that would be fine, but not to ask too many questions, for it wasn’t good to know too much. So Cindalisa asked about the three knights on horses she saw on her way there. Baba Yaga told her that they were her

servants. The white one was the knight of day; the red one was the knight of the sun; and the black one was the knight of darkness.

Then as Cindalisa was getting ready to leave, Baba Yaga asked her a question. She asked how she got all of those chores done. In response Cindalisa told her that she was helped by the soul of her deceased mother. Upon hearing that, Baba Yaga told her to leave at once; she didn't want any enchanted people in her house. So she gave Cindalisa a skull of fire and sent her on her way.

When Cindalisa got close to her house she thought of tossing the torch away because she figured that her family didn't need light after all this time but a voice from above told her to keep going and give the light to her stepmother. So she decided to keep going and when she got close enough to see that the house still had no lights inside she brought the torch in. No sooner did she arrive than the eyes of the skull on the torch started to burn her stepmother and sisters to the ground, leaving Cindalisa unharmed. Scared to death by what had happened, Cindalisa immediately buried the skull, locked up the house, and headed to town. Soon she found a nice old lady who was willing to take her in. In order to pass the time Cindalisa decided to spin, but there was no loom made to weave her fine yarn so as always, she had her magic doll make her a special loom.

After many long months of weaving this beautiful cloth, Cindalisa asked the old lady to help her sell it. The old lady thought it only good enough for the tsar so she took it to him straight away. The tsar was very pleased with it and thanked the woman with many gifts. Then the tsar wanted to turn the fabric into shirts, but the only problem was he couldn't find anyone who was willing to sew them for him. Eventually he invited the little old lady to come back, and asked her if she would sew for him since she wove it

herself. That's when she told him about Cindalisa and how she was the one who wove this wondrous fabric. So the tsar asked her to have Cindalisa make him many shirts and then come and present them to him so he could thank her in person. Cindalisa went right to work making the most beautiful shirts she could. When the time came to meet the king, Cindalisa took a lot of time getting ready and wore her very best dress. As soon as the tsar saw her he fell madly in love. She was so beautiful; he immediately asked for her hand in marriage. Right before the wedding, Cindalisa's father came back from his journey and was happy to hear what had happened while he was away. The wedding was spectacular, and they had a magnificent feast afterward. I was at this feast; I drank wine and mead, but however much I drank, only my mustache got wet!