

The Dower

Once there was a king who had three daughters. When the first child was born, the king was disappointed. He had wanted a son; but he felt a little better when his wife informed him that this particular child was a special one: wherever she walked, flowers would sprout. When her second daughter was born, the same thing happened. This time the queen told her husband that wherever the child walked, pearls would be found. Again he felt better. But when the third time around another daughter was born he was really rather angry, and this time unfortunately there was no consolation, because the queen, her mother, had died in childbirth. The three little princesses were not very happy, but they grew up somehow. And, in time, the first and the second married the princes of neighbouring kingdoms. But the marriage of the third presented a problem: she had nothing to offer.

fell down and cut her foot and a ruby formed where the blood appeared. The king was gratified; the people were stunned. It was forthwith decreed that the third princess must always walk barefoot. Never was the king richer or happier; never were the people more likely to be prosperous; and, as for the princess, her feet were in ribbons, and her path was strewn with glass and stones.

Alternative Ending

Before the miracle happened, the king, in sheer desperation, married the third princess off to a poor swineherd who lived on the very borders of the kingdom. She and the swineherd were very poor, so her shoes got worn out and she cut her foot. Sure enough, a ruby formed where the blood appeared.



Inge Morath, from Women See Woman

It was, of course, possible that the third princess also had a talent, but nobody knew just what it was. Certainly, when she walked, absolutely nothing happened. The king, her father, got more and more exasperated. People started whispering that his third daughter was not a real princess, because when a princess walked, something should happen. Things were going from bad to worse, but then, suddenly, a miracle happened: the princess

Fortunately for her, the swineherd was sensible. He sold the jewel and bought her some shoes.

Still Another Ending

The first princess became a florist. The second princess dealt in pearls. And the third princess occasionally produced a ruby, but only when it suited her.☺

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