

The Princess Mouse

A Finnish Folk Tale

A folk tale is a traditional story told by a particular culture or people. Most cultures have them, and some tales can be traced back hundreds of years! Read the folk tale, then answer the questions on the next page.

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had two sons. When they were old enough to marry, he told them, "You must each cut down a tree. Walk in the direction it points, and you will meet your beloved."

The older brother knew whom he wanted to marry, so made sure his tree fell in the direction of her cottage. Mikko, the younger brother, did not have this skill. His tree pointed into the forest.

Mikko walked through the forest until he found a cottage. He went inside, but the cottage was empty. "I'll never find my beloved," he lamented. "Don't be so sure," said a small voice. Mikko looked around and saw a mouse.

"You are only a mouse! How can you be my beloved?" Mikko asked. "Once you get to know me, you might like me," the mouse replied. Mikko stayed and talked with the mouse. She was kind and smart, and Mikko liked her very much.

When Mikko got home, the farmer had more to tell his sons. "Your brides must weave a cloth for me. If it is good, you may be married," he said. Mikko went back to tell the mouse this news. "You cannot weave, you are only a mouse," Mikko said sadly.

"All will be well," said the mouse. Mikko sat down and soon fell asleep. The mouse called over all her mouse and rat friends. Together, they wove a cloth, which they then folded into a nutshell. When Mikko woke, the mouse gave him the shell, and he carried it home to his father.

When his father opened the shell, everyone watched in amazement as he pulled out yard after yard of fabric. "Your beloved is a great weaver!" exclaimed his father.

The next day, Mikko returned to visit the mouse. "Is today the day we marry?" she asked.

"Yes it is, little mouse," said Mikko. "Though, I am worried. What will my family think when I bring home a mouse to be my bride?"

"All will be well," said the mouse. She whistled, and a tiny carriage made of a nutshell pulled up to the cottage! It was pulled by rats instead of horses, and driven by a mouse with another mouse footman

behind. Mikko's bride climbed into her carriage and he followed. As the little carriage pulled up to Mikko's house, everyone stared. Mikko had brought a mouse for his bride!

"This won't do," said Mikko's brother, and he kicked the carriage into the river!

"What have you done?" cried Mikko. "You killed my beloved! You may think she was only a mouse, but I loved her!"

Mikko began to cry, but then his father gasped in amazement. "Look!" he said, pointing to the river. Out climbed two men, four horses, and one wet but beautiful princess.

"A witch put a spell on me and turned me into a mouse," said the princess. "She said the spell could only be broken by one brother who loved me and another who hated me. I did not think it would ever happen, but now it has!"

So the two brothers were married, and both were happy. When Mikko returned to his bride's cottage, he found it had turned into a beautiful castle! There they lived, happily ever after.

Now, use what you read to answer the questions below.

1. What are some of the differences between Mikko and his older brother?

2. Which of the things that happen in the story might actually happen? Which could not happen, and why?

3. Have you ever had a friend you were worried no one else would like? What did you do?

