



# Tonight's Bedtime Story

Fairy Tales for Sleepy Children

presents

## The Hind Of The Forest

*From "The Fairy Book" by Miss Mulock*



beautiful queen, whose subjects adored her, and whose husband thought her the best woman in the world, had but one sorrow, which was equally a sorrow both to the king and the country—she brought him no heir to the throne. She, at last, grew so melancholy, that she was ordered for her health to drink the medicinal waters that were found in a celebrated wood; and one day, sitting beside one of these fountains, which fell into a marble and porphyry basin, she sent all her ladies away, that she might the better weep and lament unobserved.

“How unhappy am I,” said she; “five years I have been married, and am still childless, while the poorest women in the land have children by the dozen. Am I to die without ever giving the king an heir?”

While she spoke, she noticed that the water of the fountain was slightly disturbed, and there issued thence a large cray-fish, who thus addressed her, “Great queen, you shall have what you desire; but first you must go to the fairy-palace which is near here, though so surrounded by mists and clouds as to be invisible to mortal eyes, unless you will be conducted there by a poor cray-fish.”

Though very much surprised, the queen answered courteously that she had no objection, except that the animal’s method of walking would not well suit her own.

The shell-fish smiled—if a shell-fish can smile—and immediately took the shape of a pretty little old woman. “Madam,” said she, “we now need not walk crab-fashion. Consider me as your friend, for, indeed, I am desirous of being so.”

So saying, she jumped out of the fountain, her clothes not being the least wet, though they were made of white and crimson velvet, nor her grey hair damp: it was tied with green ribbons, and appeared all in order and smooth as silk. She saluted the queen, and then conducted her by a road which, strange to say, well as she knew every portion of the wood, her majesty had never before seen, to a palace of which the walls, roofs, and balconies were built entirely of diamonds.

“Is all this a dream?” cried the delighted queen.

But no, it was a reality, for the gates straightway opened, and six beautiful fairies appeared, who, making her a profound reverence, presented her with six flowers composed of jewels: a rose, a tulip, an anemone, a jasmine, a carnation, and a heartsease.

“Madam,” said they, “we could not give you a greater mark of our favour than in permitting you to come here. We are delighted to tell you that by and by you will have a little daughter, whom you must name Désirée—the Desired. As soon as she is born, call us, and we will endow her with all sorts of good qualities. You have only to take this bouquet, and name each separate flower, thinking of us, when immediately we shall be present in your chamber.”

The queen, transported with joy, embraced all the fairies, spent the day with them, and returned, laden with presents, to the fountain side; where the little old woman jumped into the water, became a cray-fish again, and disappeared.

In due time the Princess Désirée was born, and the queen did as she was told in naming the flowers. Soon, all the six fairies appeared, in different chariots; of ebony, drawn by white pigeons—of ivory, drawn by black crows, and so on, in great variety. They entered the royal chamber with an air at once cheerful and majestic, embraced the queen and the little princess, and spread out all their presents. These were, linen, so fine that none but fairy hands could have spun it; lace and embroidery without end; and a cradle, the wonder of the world. It was made of wood more precious than gold, and at each corner stood four animated images, little cupids, who, as soon as the baby cried, began to rock it of their own accord. Then the six fairies kissed and dandled the princess, bestowing on her for her portion beauty, good temper, good health, talents, long life, and the faculty of doing thoroughly well everything she tried to do. The queen, overcome with gratitude, was thanking them with all her heart for their kindness to her little daughter, when she saw enter her chamber a cray-fish, so large that it could hardly pass through the door.

“Ungrateful queen,” said the crab, “have you forgotten the fairy of the fountain? You sent for these my sisters, and not for me, who am the one to whom you owed most of all.”

The queen made a hundred apologies, and the six fairies tried vainly to pacify the other one; but she was determined, as she said, to punish ingratitude. “However,” added she, “I will give no worse gift to the princess than to warn you, that if you let her see daylight before she is fifteen years old, you will repent it.” So saying, she retired backwards, crab-fashion, resisting all entreaties to resume her proper form and join in the festivities.

The afflicted mother took council with the six fairies how she was to save her baby from this impending evil, and after many conflicting opinions they advised her to build a tower without doors or windows, and with a subterranean entrance, which the princess might inhabit till she had passed the fatal age. Everything is easy to fairies; so three strokes of their wands, making eighteen strokes in all, began and finished the edifice. It was built of green and white marble, ornamented inside with diamonds and emeralds, and hung with tapestry—all fairy work—on which was pictured the lives of heroes. Though there was only lamp-light allowed, yet the lamps were so numerous, that they made the tower seem as bright as day. Whether the princess was ever permitted any fresh air, or taken out for a walk by starlight or moonlight, the history does not say; but it does say one thing, that she grew up very happy, very lovely, and very well educated.

The six fairies came frequently to see her, and were most kind and affectionate to her; but the one she loved best among them all was Tulip. By this fairy’s advice, the nearer she approached the age of fifteen, the more carefully was Désirée shut up from daylight. But her mother, who was very proud of her beauty, caused her portrait to be painted, and sent among all the neighbouring courts, in order that some prince might seek her in marriage. There was one prince who was so captivated by this likeness, that he shut himself up with it, and talked to it, as if it had been alive, making love to it in the most passionate manner, and then falling into a hopeless melancholy.

When his father tried to discover the cause of this—“Sir,” said Prince Warrior (he went by that name, because, young as he was, he had already gained three battles), “my grief is that you wish me to marry the Black Princess, while I will only marry the Princess Désirée. I have seen her portrait, and without her I shall surely die. Behold her!”

The king looked at the portrait. "Well, my son, I cannot wish for a more charming daughter-in-law, we will retract our offers for the Black Princess, and send an ambassador to propose for the Princess Désirée."

The prince, kissing his father's hand, overwhelmed him with his gratitude and joy. A courtier, Becafico by name, young and gallant, was despatched with eighty equipages, a hundred mounted squires, and the portrait of the Prince Warrior, to ask the Princess Désirée in marriage. The report of his splendours travelled before him, till it reached the ears of the king and queen, and of the six fairies, who were all equally delighted.

"But," said the Fairy Tulip, who was the sagest of them, "beware, queen, of allowing Becafico to see our child," as they tenderly called Désirée, "and do not upon any account suffer her to leave her tower for the kingdom of Prince Warrior until her fifteenth birthday is past."

The ambassador arrived; his magnificent train took twenty-three days in going through the gates of the city. He made his harangue to the king and queen, and much state ceremonial passed between them; then he begged for the honour of an audience with the princess, and was very much astonished to find it denied him—still more so, when the king candidly told him the whole story.

The queen had strictly enjoined the ladies of honour not to tell her daughter one word of the ambassador's visit, or her intended marriage; yet somehow the princess already knew it quite well. But she was wise enough to say nothing about it; and when her mother showed her the prince's portrait, and asked her if she should like such a gallant young man for her husband, she replied humbly that she should be quite satisfied with any choice her parents made for her. So her hand was promised, but as she still wanted three months of fifteen, the prince was requested to wait thus long.

He took this delay so much to heart, that he could neither eat nor sleep; meantime Désirée was little better—she did nothing but look at the prince's portrait, and was exceedingly irritable with Longthorn and Gilliflower, her two maids of honour. The other lady—the Black Princess—was in equally sore plight, for she, too, had fallen in love with the prince's portrait, and his rejection of her hand offended her much.

"What," said she to the ambassador, "your master does not find me handsome enough, or rich enough?"

"Madam," said the ambassador, "as much as a subject dare blame a sovereign, I blame my prince; had I the first throne in the world, I should know to whom to offer it."

He said this, because he feared the bastinado, for Ethiopians are warm haters as well as warm lovers. The Black Princess was softened, and dismissed him, on which he gladly took himself out of the country.

But the Ethiopian lady was too deeply offended with Prince Warrior to pardon him so readily. She mounted her ivory car, drawn by six ostriches which ran at the rate of six leagues an hour, and went to the palace of her godmother, the Fairy of the Fountain, who had been so offended by being forgotten at the birth of Désirée. Arrived there, she unfolded all her annoyances. The fairy consoled her, and promised to aid her in her revenge.

Meantime Becafico had travelled with all diligence to the capital of Désirée's father, where with earnest entreaties he begged that the princess might be sent back with him to her betrothed spouse, who otherwise would certainly die; at which tidings the princess herself was so much moved that she fainted away. Thus her parents discovered how deeply in love she was with Prince Warrior.

"Do not disquiet yourself, my dear child," said the queen; "if the prince suffers, it is you who can console him. My only fear is on account of the menaces of the Fairy of the Fountain."

But Désirée was so eager to start, that she suggested being sent away in a closed carriage, where the light of day should never penetrate, and which should only be opened at night-time to give her food. She was willing to suffer any inconvenience for the sake of saving the life of Prince Warrior.

The parents assented. So there was built a magnificent equipage of green velvet outside, and lined with rose-colour and silver brocade. It was very large, but it shut up as tight as a box, and it had a huge lock, the key of which was entrusted to one of the highest noblemen of the court. In this carriage Désirée was placed, after most affecting adieus, by her father and mother; and with her were sent her maids of honour Longthorn and Gilliflower, and a lady-in-waiting, who was the mother of both. Now, Longthorn cared little for the princess, but she cared very much for Prince Warrior, whose portrait she had seen; and when the bridal train departed, she said to her mother that she should certainly die if this marriage were accomplished; so the mother, notwithstanding the confidence placed in her by queen, that she should watch over the princess, and carefully seclude her from daylight until she had reached the age of fifteen, yielded to her own child's persuasions, and determined to betray her trust.

Longthorn, who learned each evening from the officers of the household, when they came to bring the princess her supper, how far they were on their journey, at last persuaded her mother, who put off the cruel act as long as she could, that it would never do to wait any longer. They were nearly at the capital, and the young prince might, in his impatience, come to meet them, and the opportunity be lost. So next day, at noon, when the sun was at the hottest, the lady-in-waiting took out a knife, which she had brought with her for the purpose, cut a large hole in the side of the carriage where they were all shut up together, and the princess, for the first time in her life, beheld daylight. She uttered a deep sigh, and immediately leaped out of the carriage in the form of a white hind, which fled away like lightning, and hid itself in the thickest recesses of a neighbouring wood.

None of the train perceived her, or if they had, they would not have known it was she; besides, the Fairy of the Fountain immediately sent such a storm of thunder and lightning that the whole cavalcade took shelter in the nearest place they could find. The only persons who knew what had happened were Longthorn, her mother, and Gilliflower; but Gilliflower, overwhelmed with grief, had sprung out of the carriage after her beloved mistress; so the two others were left alone. Longthorn immediately put on the garments of Désirée, and adorned herself with her royal mantle, her crown of diamonds, her sceptre of a single ruby, and the globe which she carried in her left hand, composed of one enormous pearl. Thus attired, with her mother bearing her train, the false Désirée marched into the city—they two alone; for, by the fairy's contrivance, the rest of the attendants had been scattered in all directions. Longthorn doubted not the prince would be already advancing to meet his bride,

which was indeed the case; though he was so weak that he had to be conveyed in a litter, surrounded by courtiers and knights, who all wore splendid armour and green plumes, green being the favourite colour of the princess. Seeing the two ladies so richly dressed, coming forward on foot and unattended, they dismounted, and respectfully greeted them.

“May I inquire,” said Longthorn, “who is in that litter?”

“Madam,” replied a knight, “it is the Prince Warrior, who comes to meet his betrothed, the Princess Désirée.”

“Tell him,” said Longthorn, “that I am she. A fairy, jealous of my happiness, has driven away all my attendants, but that I am Désirée is proved by these my royal ornaments, and the letters of my father, borne by my lady-of-honour here.”

Immediately the courtiers kissed the hem of her robe, and made all diligence to announce to the prince, and the king his father, who accompanied him, that the Princess Désirée had arrived.

“What!” cried the king; “arrived here in full daylight?” But the prince, burning with impatience, asked no questions, except about the lady herself—“Is she not a miracle of beauty—according to her portrait?” There was no reply. “You are afraid to speak, gentlemen, lest you should praise her too much.”

But the courtiers were still silent. “Sir,” at last said one of the boldest of them, “you had better go and see the princess yourself.”

The prince, much surprised, would have thrown himself out of his litter; but he was too feeble, and his father went instead. When the king beheld the false princess, he involuntarily drew back; but the lady-of-honour advancing boldly, said:

“Sire, this is the Princess Désirée;—I bear letters from the king and queen her parents, and also a casket of priceless jewels, which they charged me to place in your hands.”

The king kept a mournful silence, and regarded his son, who now approached, leaning on one of the courtiers. When he looked at the girl, he recoiled with disgust; for she was so gaunt and tall that the clothes of Désirée scarcely covered her knees, and her extreme thinness, her red, hooked nose, her black and ill-shaped teeth, made her as ugly as Désirée was beautiful. Prince Warrior, who for months had thought of nothing but his lovely bride, stood petrified. “King,” said he to his father, “I am betrayed! this is not the lady whose portrait was sent me, and to whom I have plighted my faith; I have been deceived, and the deception will cost me my life.”

“What do I hear?” replied Longthorn, haughtily. “Prince, who has deceived you? you will be no victim in marrying me.”

“Ah! my beautiful princess,” exclaimed the lady-of-honour, “it is we who are victims. What a reception for one of your rank! what inconstancy—what falsehood! But the king your father shall make them hear reason.”

“We will make him hear reason!” cried the other king, indignantly. “He promised us a beautiful princess, and he has sent us a skeleton, a fright. I do not wonder he has kept it shut up for fifteen years, and now he wishes to foist it upon us.”

And without taking any more notice of Longthorn, he and his son remounted each into his litter, and departed.

Prince Warrior was so overcome by this unexpected affliction, that for a long time he did not speak a word. Then he resolved, as soon as his health allowed, to depart secretly from the capital, and seek some solitary place where he might pass the remainder of his sad life. He communicated this design to no one but the faithful Becafico, who insisted upon following his fortunes wherever he went. So, one day, the prince left a letter for his father, assuring him, that as soon as his mind was tranquillized he would return to the court, but imploring that in the meantime no search might be made after him; then he and Becafico departed together.

Meanwhile, the poor white hind fled into the wood. She wandered about till she came to a fountain, where, as in a mirror, she saw her own changed shape, and wept, convulsed with grief. Then hunger began to attack her—she bent her head, and browsed upon the green grass, which she was surprised to find tasted very good. She laid herself down on a bank of moss, but passed the night in extreme terror, hearing the wild beasts roaring around her, and often forgetting that she was a hind, trying to save herself by climbing a tree like a human being. Daybreak reassured her a little; she admired for the first time the wonderful beauty of dawn; and when the sun rose, it appeared to her such a marvellous sight that she could not take her eyes from it. She was strangely comforted, spite of all her misfortune, by the charm that she found out, every minute more and more, in the new world which now for the first time she beheld in daylight.

The Fairy Tulip, who loved Désirée, was very sorry for her, although somewhat offended that the queen had not taken her advice, and detained the princess safe in her tower till she was fifteen; however, she would not leave her a prey to the malice of the Fairy of the Fountain, so contrived invisibly to conduct the faithful Gilliflower to the place where the poor forlorn hind reposed. As soon as Désirée saw her, she leaped the stream, and came towards her former companion, lavishing on her a thousand caresses.

At first Gilliflower was very much astonished to be so taken notice of by a deer of the forest; but looking at it attentively, she saw two great tears rolling down from the soft human-like eyes, and some instinct told her that it was her dear princess. She took the forefeet of the hind, and kissed them as respectfully as if they had been her mistress’s hands. She spoke to her, and though the hind could not reply, yet it was clear she understood, for the tears flowed faster than ever, and she showed, by as much intelligence as a dumb beast could possibly evince, that she responded to the love of the faithful girl. When Gilliflower promised that she would never quit her, by a hundred little signs the poor hind tried to express how happy she was.

They passed the day together, Désirée leading her companion to a place where she had seen plenty of wild fruits; so that Gilliflower, who was dying of hunger, became strengthened and refreshed. But when night came, the girl’s terrors returned.

“Dear hind,” said she, “where shall we sleep? If we stay here the wild beasts will devour us; is there no little hut where we can hide?”

The poor hind shook her pretty head, and the tears again began to flow, almost as if she were a human being. Her tears melted the heart of the Fairy Tulip, who had watched her invisibly all the time, and now made herself known—appearing suddenly in a shady alley of the wood. Gilliflower and the white hind threw themselves at her feet—the latter licking her hands, and caressing her as prettily as a deer could—the former imploring her to take pity on the princess, and restore her to her natural shape.

“I cannot do that,” said the fairy; “her enemy has too much power; but I can shorten her term of punishment, and soften it a little, by granting that during every night she becomes a woman, though as soon as day breaks she must again wander about as a hind of the forest.”

It was a great comfort to be a woman every night; and the hind showed her joy by innumerable leaps and bounds, which delighted the good Tulip.

“Follow this by-path,” said she, “and you will find a hut that will serve you as a quiet home. Farewell.”

She disappeared, and Gilliflower, with the hind trotting after her, went on and on, till she came to a little hut, before which sat an old woman, making a basket of osiers.

“My good woman,” said she, “have you a room to let, for me and my pet here?”

“Yes, truly,” replied the old woman; and took them into a room where were two little beds, hung with white dimity, with fine white sheets, and everything as neat and comfortable as possible. As soon as it grew dark, the princess recovered her own shape, and kissed and embraced a thousand times her dear Gilliflower, who, on her part, was full of delight and thankfulness. Then they had their supper, and went to sleep in their two little beds.

When morning broke, Gilliflower was awakened by a scratching, and there she saw the hind, just as much a hind as before, waiting to be let out. The faithful attendant opened the door, and the deer sprang out quickly, and disappeared in the forest.

Now, by an extraordinary chance, it happened that Prince Warrior, wandering about, indifferent to where he went, lost himself in this very forest, where he had come with his companion Becafico. The latter, seeking for fruits to satisfy their hunger, reached the same cottage-door where the old woman lived, and being received kindly, asked her for some food for his master. She put some bread into a basket, and was going to give it to him, when her charity made her offer the wanderers shelter for the night.

“It is a poor cottage,” said she; “but I have still one empty room, which will at least save you from being eaten up by wolves and lions.”

So the prince was persuaded; and the old woman, who appeared ignorant of his rank, admitted him and Becafico cautiously, so as not to disturb the lady and the hind, who occupied the next room. Thus the two lovers were so near, that they might almost have heard one another speak, yet did not know it.



The prince rarely slept much; his sorrow was still too great; and when the first rays of the sun shone through his window, he arose, and went out into the forest. There he wandered a long time without finding any sure track: at last he came upon a sort of bower, overhung with trees, and carpeted with moss, out of which started a beautiful white hind, who immediately fled away.

Now the prince had formerly been a great hunter, until his passion for the chase was swallowed up by his love for Désirée; but the old fancy returned when he saw the white hind. He could not help following her, and sending after her arrows, not a few, from the bow which he always carried, causing her almost to die of fear; although, by the care of the Fairy Tulip, she was not wounded. All through the day he pursued her; until, towards twilight, she escaped from him towards the cottage, where Gilliflower was watching in the utmost anxiety. The faithful girl received tenderly into her arms the poor hind, breathless, exhausted; and eagerly awaited the moment when her mistress should become a woman again, and tell her what had happened. When darkness came on, the deer vanished, and it was the Princess Désirée who lay on Gilliflower's bosom.

"Alas!" cried she, weeping, "I have more to fear than the Fairy of the Fountain, and the wild beasts of the forest. I have been pursued all day by a young hunter, whom I had scarcely seen, before he obliged me to fly; and sent so many arrows after me that I marvel I was not killed, or at least wounded."

"My princess, you must never quit this room again," said Gilliflower.

"I must; for the same enchantment which makes me a hind forces me to do as hinds do. I feel myself every morning irresistibly compelled to run into the wood, to leap and bound, and eat grass, and behave myself exactly like a wild creature of the forest. Oh, how weary I am!"

Her soft eyes closed, and she fell asleep until the dawn of day, when again she was driven out in the shape of a poor four-footed creature, to fulfil her sad destiny.

The prince on his part came home also very much wearied and vexed. "Becafico," he said, "I have spent the day in chasing the most beautiful hind I ever saw. She has slipped from me time after time with the most wondrous adroitness; yet my arrows were so true that I marvel how she escaped. At dawn to-morrow I must be after her once more."

So he did not fail to go, at earliest dawn, to her hiding-place; but the hind took care not to re-visit her favourite haunt. He sought her everywhere, and could see nothing; then being very tired and hot, he gathered some luscious apples which he saw hanging upon a tree over his head. As soon as he ate them he fell fast asleep.

Meantime the hind, roaming stealthily about, came to the place where he lay—came quite suddenly, or else she would have taken to flight; but now seeing her enemy sound asleep, she paused a minute to look at him; and in his features, wasted with grief, but still so loveable and beautiful, she recognised the face which had long been engraven on her heart. The poor hind! she crouched down at a little distance, and watched him, her eyes beaming with joy. Then she sighed: at length, become bolder, she approached nearer, and softly touched him with her fore-foot.

Awaking, what was the prince's surprise to see beside him, tame and familiar, the pretty creature whom he had hunted all yesterday; but when he put out his hand to seize her, she fled away like lightning. He followed with all the speed he could, and thus, she flying and he pursuing, they passed the whole day. Towards evening her strength failed; and when the hunter came up to her it was a poor half-dying deer that he found lying on the grass. She thought her death was certain—still, from his hands, it did not seem so terrible as from any one else; but instead of killing her he caressed her.

"Beautiful hind," said he, "do not be afraid. I only wish to take you home with me, and have you with me always." He cut branches of trees, wove them ingeniously into a sort of couch, which he strewn with roses and moss; then took the creature in his arms, laid her gently down upon them, and sat beside her, feeding her from time to time with the softest grass he could find. She ate contentedly from his hand, and he almost fancied she understood all the sweet things he said to her, and so time passed till it grew dusk.

"My pretty hind," said he, "I will go in search of a stream where you can drink, and then we will take our way home together." But while he was absent she stole away, and had only time to reach the cottage when the transformation happened, and it was not a hind but a weeping princess who threw herself on the bed beside the faithful Gilliflower.

"I have seen him!" she cried. "My Prince Warrior is himself in this forest: he was the hunter who has pursued me these two days, and has taken me at last. But he did not slay me: he saved and caressed me. Ah, he is gentler and sweeter even than the image in my heart."

Here she began again to weep; but Gilliflower consoled her, and they went to sleep, wondering much how this adventure would end.

The prince, returning from the stream, missed his beautiful white hind, and came back to Becafico full of grief, mingled with a certain anger at the ingratitude of the creature to whom he had been so kind. But at break of day he rose, determined again to pursue her. She, however, in order to avoid him, took a quite different route. Still, the forest was not so large, but that at last he saw her, leaping and bounding among the bushes. Seized by an irresistible impulse, he shot an arrow after her; it struck her, she felt a violent pain dart through one of her slender limbs, and fell helpless on the grass. When the prince came up to her, he was overcome with remorse for his cruelty. He took a handful of herbs and bound up her wound, made her a bed of branches and moss, laid her head upon his knees, and wept over her.

"My lovely hind," said he, "why did I wound you so cruelly? You will hate me, when I wish you to love me." So he tended and cherished her all day, and, towards nightfall, he knotted a ribbon round her neck, with the intention of gently leading her home. But she struggled with him; and the struggle was so sore that Gilliflower, coming out in search of her dear mistress, heard the rustling, and saw her hind in the hunter's power. She rushed to rescue her, to the prince's great astonishment.

"Whatever consideration I owe you, madam," said he, "you must know that you are committing a robbery; this hind is mine."

"No, sir, she is mine," returned Gilliflower, respectfully. "She knows she is, and will prove it if you will only give her a little liberty. My pretty pet, come and embrace me." The hind crept

into her arms. "Now kiss me on my right cheek." She obeyed. "Now touch my heart." She laid her foot against Gilliflower's bosom.

"I allow she is yours," said the prince, discontentedly. "Take her and go your ways."

But he followed them at a distance, and was very much surprised to see them enter the cottage. He asked the old woman who the damsel was, but she said she did not know, except that the lady and the hind lived there together in solitude, and paid her well. But when Becafico, who had eyes as sharp as needles, coming to meet his master, by chance caught sight of Gilliflower, he recognised her at once.

"Here is some great mystery," said he, "for that is the lady who was the favourite of the Princess Désirée."

"Do not utter that name, which only recalls my grief," said the prince, sadly; but Becafico, determined to gratify his curiosity, made all sorts of inquiries, and discovered that Gilliflower was lodged in the next room.

"I should like to see her again," thought he; "and since only a thin partition divides us, I will bore a hole through."

He did so, and beheld a wonderful sight. There sat the fairest princess in all the world, attired in a robe of silver brocade, her hair falling in long curls, and her eyes sparkling through tears. Gilliflower knelt before her, binding up her beautiful arm, from which the blood was flowing.

"Do not heed it," sighed the princess; "better let me die, for death itself would be sweeter than the life I lead. Alas! how hard it is to be a hind all day; to see my betrothed, to feel his tenderness and goodness, yet be unable to speak to him, or to tell him the fatal destiny which divides me from him."

When Becafico heard this, words cannot describe his astonishment and delight. He ran towards the prince, who sat moodily at the window. "Sir," cried he, "only look through this hole, and you will see the original of the portrait which so fascinated you."

The prince looked, and recognised at once his beloved princess. He would have died with joy, had he not believed himself deceived by some enchantment. He knocked at the door, Gilliflower opened it; he entered, and threw himself at the feet of Désirée. What followed—of explanations, vows, tears, and embraces—was never very clearly related, not even by Gilliflower and Becafico, who were present, but who considerably drew aside, and spent the time in conversing with one another. So passed the night; and anxiously they awaited for the dawn, to see whether the beautiful princess would again become a hind of the forest. But the day broke, grew clearer, brightened into sunrise, and the princess, with the prince sitting beside her, remained a beautiful maiden still. Then came a knock at the door, and there entered the little old woman, who had been such a kind hostess for all this while.

"The period of enchantment is ended, my children," said she. "Go home and be happy." And then they knew her as no longer the little old woman, but the Fairy Tulip, who had thus faithfully watched her charge.

So the bride and bridegroom returned to their capital, where the marriage was solemnized with all splendour, and, at Désirée's request, Longthorn and her mother, who had been imprisoned by the old king's order, were set free, with no further punishment than banishment to their own country, where they were to remain for life. As for the faithful Gilliflower, she stayed at court, with her beloved mistress, and became the wife of the equally faithful Becafico, who had served Prince Warrior as devotedly as she the Princess Désirée. The two were laden with wealth and honours, and shared the happiness of the other two lovers, which was as great as any mortal could desire. After their death the story of the White Hind of the Forest was commanded to be written down in the archives of the state, and thence it has been told in tradition, or sung in poetry, half over the world.

**To get more stories**

**Go to [www.tonightsbedtimestory.com](http://www.tonightsbedtimestory.com)**

## **License**

While the text and the illustrations used in this work are out of copyright, the unique presentation created for those elements is copyrighted. You may use, copy and distribute this work freely but you are not authorized to use this work for commercial purpose and you may not alter, transform, or build upon this work in any way.

© Copyright 2008 [www.tonightsbedtimestory.com](http://www.tonightsbedtimestory.com), all rights reserved.