

## **The Magic Sash**

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Once upon a time there was a man whose wife died leaving him and his daughter alone. He remarried so that she would have a mother who could take care of her while he was away. The new stepmother had two daughters of her own, who were jealous of their stepsister because she was pretty with golden hair and blue eyes and they were plain looking. Not too long after his marriage, the man got very ill and died. His daughter was left without any parents of her own.

After his death, things did not go well for the girl. Her stepmother immediately moved the girl out of her own room into the cellar to sleep. She gave her one old dress to wear, and made her do all the work while her own daughters sat and did nothing, except if it was for their own pleasure. So day after day the girl swept, and dusted, and mopped, and did the dishes, and every other little chore that could be thought of. She got up before the sun, and went to bed long after everyone else was asleep. She was given only bread and water to eat. She was treated like dirt by her stepmother and treated with contempt by her stepsisters.

One day, after about a year, the girl went outside to work in the garden. There she saw three toads sitting in the garden bed. As she tried to shoo them away, one of them started to talk to her. "Do not try to make us go away. I am an enchanted princess and these are two of my maidens. A witch changed us into toads during the day because we would not help her in an evil plot. At night we turn back into women, but as soon as the sun comes up, we are toads. Tonight, when your stepmother and her daughters are asleep, come out to this spot and we will give you a gift that will help you in your hard position." The girl wondered, but did as she was told.

That night after her stepmother and stepsisters were all asleep, she slipped outside to the place in the garden where she had seen the toads earlier. There she found the princess and two girls, all dressed in white with golden hair. When they saw the girl they came to her. The princess handed her a sash, with pearls woven into it, and embroidered with gold and silver thread. "Wear this," she said, "when you are in most trouble. Just make sure of one thing: do not let your stepmother see this, for she is the enchantress who turned me into a toad. Use it while she and her daughters are at the ball, but make sure to take it off before they get home." The girl thanked her and went back in. The next day she had to work even more

because her stepmother and sisters were going to a ball. The girl wanted to go too, but her stepsisters laughed at her, “You want to go? Why, you are worth nothing! You, go to a ball?” So they teased and made fun of her, while she got them ready to go.

After they left the girl felt sad. Then she remembered the sash the princess had given her. She looked at it. It seemed ordinary except for its beauty. She slowly put it on, but nothing seemed to happen. When she looked up, however, she found herself in a green meadow covered in wildflowers. She saw that her dress was no longer dirty or torn. She walked down a road and came to a town. There she found a palace. She went up to the gate and immediately the guard stepped aside to let her pass. She walked inside and another servant took her to the dining room where the king, queen, and their son the prince were eating.

When they saw her, all was quiet for a moment. The queen, when she saw the sash, started to cry. “That is our daughter’s sash, who was turned into a toad by the wicked woman!” The girl realized that this was the princess’s family. She explained that the princess had given her the sash for when she was in most trouble, and that her stepmother was the witch. They told her to sit down and eat with them. They said that she was the one who could perhaps turn the princess back to her human form for always. The queen gave her a magic potion and told her to put it on her stepmother and sisters when they were asleep, then to put it on the princess when she was a toad, but before the stepmother was awake. The prince in the meantime had looked at the girl. He fell in love and decided when she saved his sister, he would marry her. The girl enjoyed herself, but then realized that she had to be back. She quickly said bye and took off her sash. Once more she was in her old dress and in the very spot where she had out on the sash earlier. She hid the sash just before her stepmother and stepsisters came in. She was scolded for not doing her work well, and given nothing to eat for dinner. The stepmother and sisters ate and then immediately went to bed as it was late.

After they were asleep, the girl slipped into her stepmother’s room and took out the bottle of the magic liquid. She put some on her stepmother’s dress, and hurried out of the room. She then did the same to her stepsisters. Now she had to wait until the sun was up and the princess would be a frog. As soon as the sun was up the girl went out to the garden and saw the three frogs. “I have this to put on you,” she said to the princess. “I saw your family, and the queen gave me

this.” She quickly put some on the princess and her helpers, and immediately they were women again. The princess thanked her and said that now her stepmother was a toad. The girl went inside to her stepmother’s room again. There she found three toads hopping about. They went up to the girl, but could not say anything, for these toads were not allowed to talk. The princess told the girl to put on the sash again. The girl did and found herself in the palace with the princess and two women. They all went to the king and queen who thanked the girl. Just then the prince walked in. He saw her with his sister, the princess, and knew what had happened. He asked the girl to marry him, and they lived happily ever after in the kingdom, ruling after the king and queen were dead. The girl had the princess as a friend. The girl never heard anything more of her stepmother or stepsisters again.