

The Egyptian Cinderella

Many moons ago in the land of Egypt, there lived a young maiden named Rhodopis. She was born in Greece but was kidnapped by pirates and sold as a slave in Egypt. Her owner was a kind old man called Charaxos, who spent most of his time under a tree sleeping. Due to this, he never saw how the servants in the house taunted and teased Rhodopis. She longed to be happy.

Cruelly, they teased her because she looked different. They had straight black hair while hers was golden and curly. They had brown eyes and she had green. Their skin had the glow of copper, but Rhodopis had pale skin that burned easily in the sun. They made her work hard and shouted at her all day. "Go to the river and wash the clothes," they demanded. They cried at her, "Mend my robe!" Poor Rhodopis was miserable and all alone.

However, Rhodopis had one joy in life; she loved to dance. One evening as she was dancing, the old man woke from his sleep and watched her. He admired her dancing and thought she deserved a pair of shoes to dance in. With a smile on his face, he ordered her a beautiful pair of poppy red shoes with glinting gold stitching.

Although Rhodopis was delighted with her shoes, the jealousy of the servant girls spoilt the shoes for her. Word arrived that the Pharaoh was having a ball in Cairo and all the kingdom was invited. Rhodopis longed to attend and dance, sing and eat scrumptious food. However, the girls left in their finest clothes without her.

Rhodopis, who had tears in her eyes, began to wash the dirty clothes in the river. Suddenly, a hippopotamus appeared and splashed her! Her beautiful shoes were wet so she took them off and left them in the sun to dry. Without warning, a falcon swooped down, snatched one of her slippers, screeched and flew away. It was the god Horus.

Far away in Cairo, the Pharaoh (Amasis) sat on his throne at the ball feeling bored. As Amasis sighed loudly, Horus swooped down and dropped the poppy-red slipper in his lap. Surprised and excited, thankful and grateful, he knew it was a sign the god had sent. He must find and marry the owner of the shoe!

Amasis searched high and low for his future queen. Early one morning, he sailed down the Nile and arrived at Rhodopis' home. The servants - who couldn't contain their glee - rushed to try on the shoe. No matter how hard they tried, they could not force their foot in. The Pharaoh spied Rhodopis hiding in the bushes watching and asked her to try on the shoe. Slowly, she slid her dainty foot into the shoe. It was a perfect fit! Amasis had found his queen.