

The servant girl and the elves

There was once a poor servant-girl, who worked very hard. She cleaned and swept the house every day, and emptied her sweepings on the great heap in front of the door. She washed the dishes and tended to the garden. She kept the house beautiful for the family who lived there.

One morning when she had taken a break and was just going back to her work, she found a letter on this heap, and as she could not read, she put her broom in the corner, and took the letter to the family to read for her. They were all surprised to find that, it was an invitation from the elves, who asked the girl to hold a child for them at its christening.

The girl did not know what to do, but at length, after much persuasion, and as they told her that it was not right to refuse an invitation of this kind, she consented.

The next day three elves came and guided her through the forest to a hollow mountain, where the little folks lived. Everything there was very small, but more elegant and beautiful than can be described.

The baby's mother lay in a bed of black ebony ornamented with pearls, the bed covers were embroidered with gold, the cradle was made of ivory, the bath was made of gold.

The girl stood as godmother during the ceremony, and then wanted to go home again, but the little elves urgently entreated her to stay three days with them. So she stayed, and ate and danced with the elves. The party lasted for 3 days, and the little folks did all they could to make her happy.

At last she set out on her way home, however, first they filled her pockets full of money, coins of silver and gold. After that, they led her out of the mountain again, through the forest and back to where she could see the house where she worked.

When she got home, she wanted to begin her work immediately, and took the broom, which was still standing in the corner, in her hand and began to sweep. Then some strangers came out of the house, who asked her who she was, and what business she had there?

And she had not, as she thought, been three days with the little elves in the mountains, but seven years, and in the meantime the family she worked for had died.