

Riquet with the Tuft

A Fairy Tale by Charles Perrault Retold



Once upon a time in a land far away lived a king and queen. The queen gave birth to a baby who was so ugly and misshapen that he barely looked human. The queen fretted about her poor son's future, but a fairy who was at the prince's birth told the queen not to worry because the boy would be as smart as he was ugly. The fairy blessed the boy with a special gift: she gave him the power to grant the gift of wisdom to the woman he loves.

The boy grew to be one of the smartest, most charming, and kindest people in the land. People lovingly nicknamed him Riquet with the Tuft—Tufty for short—because his family's last name was Riquet and he was born with a little tuft of hair on the top of his head.

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Several years later, a queen in a neighboring kingdom gave birth to twin girls. The same fairy attended this birth, too. The first baby to come out was so beautiful that the queen worried that she was too beautiful. The fairy told her not to fear for the princess would be as dumb as she was beautiful. This, obviously, did not make the queen feel any better (in fact, it made her feel worse). Then, when the second baby came out, the queen felt even worse, for this baby was as ugly as her twin sister was beautiful.

“Don’t worry,” said the fairy, “this princess will be so smart that no one will notice that she is ugly.”

“I hope you are right,” said the queen, “but is there any way to make the oldest twin any smarter?”

“I can’t help her with that,” said the fairy, “but I shall give her this gift: she will have the power to transform the man she loves into the most handsome person she has ever seen.”

As the twin princesses grew, so did their gifts; the older twin became more beautiful and the younger twin became smarter. Unfortunately, as the older twin grew, she became dumber, and by the time she was 20, she was so dumb that people found it nearly impossible to have a conversation with her. Everyone preferred to hang out with the ugly princess because she was funny and clever. Meanwhile, the pretty princess had no friends and felt quite lonely.

Sadly, the pretty princess was smart enough to know that no one wanted to be friends with her because she was dumb. Often depressed, she sometimes snuck off to the woods to cry. One day, a very odd-looking young man rode by and stopped to talk to her.

“How can someone so beautiful be so sad? Isn’t it much easier to be beautiful than ugly,” asked Tufty.

“No,” said the princess. “I would rather be ugly and smart than beautiful and dumb.”

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"Is that all that bothers you" asked Tufty "because I can help. If you marry me, I can make you as smart as I am."

The princess agreed to marry him in one year's time and she instantly became as smart as he was. She returned to the palace and became very popular. Now everyone wanted to be friends with her. The princess soon forgot what she'd said and done when she was dumb.



One day, the princess took a walk in the woods along the same path she took when she first met Tufty. In fact, she had met him exactly one year before, although she'd completely forgotten about it. She was surprised to see a lot of people in the woods setting up for a great celebration.

Along came Tufty. "You came! Let us now get married," he cried happily.

The princess was shocked and embarrassed because she'd completely forgotten about his proposal. She admitted to him that she forgot and that did not know what to do—should she keep her promise to him?

"If you put aside my looks, how do you feel about me?" asked Tufty.

"I love and respect you," replied the princess.

"And I love and respect you," said Tufty. "Let's get married like we planned and I will spend the rest of my life making you happy."

As soon as the princess agreed, Tufty suddenly transformed into the most handsome person she had ever seen. The couple married and lived happily ever after.