|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Rhodopis - Egyptian Cinderella** by Sherry Climo |  | |  | | | | | |
|  | The Egyptian version of Cinderella. In this version her name is Rhodopis (ra-doh-pes). Considered one of the oldest versions of the Cinderella story. It was first recorded by the Roman historian Strabo in the first century BC. This version is based on fact and fiction. Fact: there was a Greek slave girl named Rhodopis who married a Pharaoh Amasis (Dynasty XXVI, 570-536 BC) and became his queen. A fellow slave, Aesop, told her many stories. In this version the slipper is not golden but rose-colored.  "Long ago in the land of Egypt were the green water of the Nile River flows into the blue water of the Mediterranean Sea lived a young maiden named Rhodopis." Rhodopis was born in Greece but was kidnapped by pirates and carried down into Egypt where she was sold into slavery.  Her owner turned out to be a kind old man who spent most of his time under a tree sleeping. Because of this he never saw how the other girls in the house, all servant girls, taunted and teased Rhodopis. They teased her because she looked differently from them. Their hair was straight and black 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 causing them to call her Rosy Rhodopis. They also made her work hard shouting at her all day, "Go to the river and wash the clothes," "Mend my robe," "Chase the geese from the garden,: "Bake the bread."  Now Rhodopis had no friends, only the animals. She had trained the birds to eat from her hand, a monkey to sit on her shoulder, and the old hippopotamus would slide up on the bank out of the mud to be closer to her. At the end of the day if she wasn't too tired she would go down to the river to be with her animal friends and if she had any energy left from the hard day's work she would dance and sing for them. One evening as she was dancing, twirling around lighter than air with her feet barely touching the ground, the old man woke from his sleep and watched as she danced. He admired her dancing and felt that one so talented should not be without shoes.  He ordered her a special pair of slippers. The shoes were gilded with rose-red gold and the soles were leather. Now the servant girls really disliked her for they were jealous of her beautiful slippers.  Word arrived that the Pharaoh was holding court in Memphis and all in the kingdom were invited. Oh how Rhodopis wanted to go with the servant girls. For she knew there would be dancing, singing, and lots of wonderful food. As the servant girls prepared to leave in their finest clothes they turned to Rhodopis and gave her more chores to do before they returned. They poled their raft away leaving a sad Rhodopis on the bank. As she began to wash the clothes in the river she sang a sad little song--"wash the linen, weed the garden, grind the grain." The hippopotamus grew tired of this little song and splashed back into the river. The splashing of the water wet Rhodopis's slippers. She quickly grabbed them up, wiped it off and placed them in the sun to dry. As she was continuing with her chores the sky darkened and as she looked up she saw a falcon sweep down, snatch one of her slippers, and fly away. Rhodopis was in awe for she knew it was the god Horus who had taken her shoe. Rhodopis now with only one slipper put it away in her tunic.  Now the Pharaoh, Amasis, Pharaoh of upper and lower Egypt was sitting on his throne looking out over the people and feeling very bored. He much preferred to be riding across the desert in his chariot. Suddenly the falcon swooped down and dropped the rose-red golden slipper in his lap. Surprised but knowing this was a sign from the god Horus he sent out a decree that all maidens in Egypt must try on the slipper, and the owner of the slipper would be his queen.  By the time the servant girls arrived the celebrations had ended and the Pharaoh had left by chariot in search of the owner of the golden slipper. After searching on land and not finding the owner he called for his barge and began to travel the Nile pulling into every landing so maidens could try on the slipper. As the barge rounded the bend in front of the home of Rhodopis all heard the sounds of the gong, the trumpets blaring, and saw the purple silk sails. The servant girls ran to the landing to try on the shoe while Rhodopis hid in the rushes. When the servant girls saw the shoe they recognized it as Rhodopis's slipper but they said nothing and still tried to force their feet into the slipper.   The Pharaoh spied Rhodopis hiding in the rushes and asked her to try on the slipper. She slid her tiny foot into the slipper and then pulled the other from her tunic. The Pharaoh pronounced that she would be his queen. The servant girls cried out that she was a slave and not even Egyptian. The Pharaoh responded with "She is the most Egyptian of all...for her eyes are as green as the Nile, her hair as feathery as papyrus, and her skin the pink of a lotus flower."   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Yeh-Shen, A Cinderella Story** by Aai-Ling Louie |  | |  | | | | | | |  | During the time of the Ch'in and Han dynasties, a cave chief named Wu married two wives and each gave birth to baby girls. Before long Chief Wu and one wife died leaving one baby, Yeh-Shen, to be reared by her stepmother. The stepmother didn't like Yeh-Shen for she was more beautiful and kinder than her own daughter so she treated her poorly. Yeh-Shen was given the worse jobs and the only friend she had was a beautiful fish with big golden eyes . Each day the fish came out of the water onto the bank to be fed by Yeh-Shen. Now Yen-Shen had little food for herself but she was willing to share with the fish. Her stepmother hearing about the fish disguised herself as Yen-Shen and enticed the fish from the water. She cooked the fish for dinner.  Yeh-Shen was distraught when she learned of the fish's death. As she sat crying she heard a voice and looked up to see a wise old man wearing the coarsest of clothes and with hair hanging down over his shoulders. He told her that the bones of the fish were filled with a powerful spirit, and that when she was in serious need she was to kneel before the bones and tell them of her heart's desires. She was warned not to waste their gifts. Yeh-Shen retrieved the bones from the trash heap and hid them in a safe place. Time passed and the spring festival was nearing.  This was a time when the young people gathered in the village to meet one another and to find husbands and wives. Yen-Shen longed to go to the festival but her stepmother wouldn't allow it because she feared that someone would pick Yeh-Shen rather than her own daughter. The stepmother and the daughter left for the festival leaving Yeh-Shen behind. Yeh-Shen wanting desperately to go asked the bones for clothes to wear to the festival. Suddenly she was wearing a beautiful gown of azure blue with a cloak of kingfisher feathers draped around her shoulders. On her feet were beautiful slippers. They were woven of golden threads in a pattern of a scaled fish and the soles were made of solid gold. When she walked she felt lighter than air. She was warned not to lose the slippers.  Yeh-Shen arrived at the festival and soon all were looking her way. The daughter and step-mother moved closer to her for they seemed to recognize this beautiful person. Seeing that she would be found out, Yeh-Shen dashed out of the village leaving behind one of the golden slippers. When she arrived home she was dressed again in her rags. She spoke again to the bones, but they were now silent. Saddened she put the one golden slipper in her bedstraw. After a time a merchant found the lost slipper, and seeing the value in the golden slipper sold it to a merchant who gave it to the king of the island kingdom of T'o Han.  Now the king wanted to find the owner of this tiny beautiful slipper. He sent his people to search the kingdom but no ones foot would fit in the tiny golden slipper. He had the slipper placed on display in a pavilion on the side of the road where the slipper had been found with an announcement that the shoe was to be returned to the owner. The king's men waited out of site. All the women came to try on the shoe.  One dark night Yeh-Shen slipped quietly across the pavilion, took the tiny golden slipper and turned to leave, but the king's men rushed out and arrested her. She was taken to the king who was furious for he couldn't believe that any one in rags could possibly own a golden slipper. As he looked closer at her face he was struck by her beauty and he noticed she had the tiniest feet. The king and his men returned home with her where she produced the other slipper. As she slipped on the two slippers her rags turned into the beautiful gown and cloak she had worn to the festival. The king realized that she was the one for him. They married and lived happily ever after. However, the stepmother and daughter were never allowed to visit Yeh-Shen and were forced to continue to live in their cave until the day they were crushed to death in a shower of flying stones. |  | |  |