

## The Children who Lived in the Mansion and a Cottage

Once upon a time there lived a brother and sister, Melvin and Marinda, in a mansion, which is a huge house with many, many rooms and everything in it that one's heart could desire. Inside the mansion there were fancy rooms with fancy beds, fancy sofas to sit on, and delicious food of all manner to eat that the cooks prepared. Next to the mansion was a huge garden in which beautiful roses and peonies grew. Down the lane, close to the forest, was a little yellow cottage, in which another brother and sister, Andrey and Anya lived. The rooms in the yellow cottage were small but very cozy. Their garden was filled with carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, potatoes, celery and all sorts of berries. In the evening, after tending their garden and playing outdoors, Andrey and Anya would sit on a soft fuzzy rug in front of the fireplace and tell each other stories.

One day a messenger on a magnificent brown horse came riding through town. He reigned in his horse and read an announcement. "His royal highness, the prince, is traveling far and near and will be passing by this evening. He will need a place to rest, eat supper and sleep. Please ready your homes. When the prince arrives he will pick the house he will stay in."

Melvin and Marinda were overjoyed. "Of course the prince will want to stay with us. We have the finest mansion in town." In the meantime, Andrey and Anya said to each other, "The prince will pass our yellow cottage by because it is so small but let us decorate it anyways and pick some vegetables and berries and prepare a fine dinner. Brother and sister took a basket and went into their garden and picked vegetables and berries. They brought all they picked inside. Andrey and Anya washed and chopped the vegetables, put them in a pot of water and cooked a delicious warm soup. Then they washed the berries, put them in bowls and drizzled a little bit of honey on top. Brother and sister went outside to pick wild flowers. They put them in vases all around their cozy home. "Let's hang some over our front door!" said Anya. Not only did they hang them over the front door but also all around their windows.

Meanwhile, in the mansion, Melvin and Marinda were deciding what they should order the cooks to prepare for the prince. Melvin wanted a huge big pancake filled with cream and mushrooms. Marinda wanted potatoes sprinkled with dill. Melvin wanted to decorate the house with roses. Marinda wanted to decorate the house with peonies. They began to argue. The more they argued, the louder they got. "Roses" yelled Melvin. "Peonies" yelled Marinda. "Pancakes" yelled Melvin, "Potatoes" yelled Marinda. Nothing got done as they yelled at each other.

Just then the prince came riding by on his horse. He stopped in front of the mansion. "This might be a good place to rest" he said. But to his dismay, he heard all the yelling and arguing. "Oh My, how sad!" said the prince. "This is not a happy home. I cannot stay here. I will travel on to see if I can find a happy home to stay in."

The prince traveled on and came upon the little yellow cottage decorated with wild flowers. Inside he heard singing from the open window. The prince stopped and

listened. "Ah, this is a happy home. I will stay here." You can imagine the surprise which turned to joy when Andrey and Anya opened the door and saw the prince standing there. "May I please stay here for the night", he asked.

"Oh, do come in. Yes, please" and the children welcomed the prince in. They sat him down by the warm fireplace to rest while they set the table: bowl, cup, spoon, napkin. They made some chamomile tea with a drop of honey. "Please come eat". The children served the soup they had made and for dessert they each had a bowl of berries. "Thank you dear Andrey and Anya. This was the most delicious soup I have ever had." Brother and sister invited the prince to sit on the soft fuzzy rug by the fireplace and told him their favorite story about a bluebird who came to live in their garden and how it sings to them every evening just before bedtime. They listened quietly to the silence and sure enough the bluebird began to sing the sweetest song the prince had ever heard..

It was time for bed. "Thank you Andrey and Anya for such a wonderful dinner and story. Your home is the perfect place for me to rest in. It is a happy home with kind children." Andrey and Anya led the prince to the softest bed they had and they all wished each other a very good night. Andrey and Anya were very tired and they fell asleep on the soft fuzzy rug by the fireplace.

"Tweet, tweet, Tweet, tweet," wake up Anya and Andrey, it is morning sang the bluebird.. Anya rubbed her eyes and looked around. The children ran to the bed but the prince was not there. They ran outside but the prince's horse was gone. "The prince has left", they said sadly. But lo and behold, right by their door was a beautiful tall tree with delicious pears hanging on it. The pears were as yellow as their little cottage. "This must be a present from the prince," laughed the children. The best present ever.

This is a story that can be incorporated into your day. After hearing the story for several days, it can be set up that the children wash and chop vegetables to make the soup. Berries washed and placed in bowls, tea prepared. Children can set the table...they are very good at it.... as well as folding napkins. The story can be acted out or set up as a puppet play. Stuffed animals are very useful in becoming characters.