

## **Princess in Rags**

Princess Shanay was born to be a beauty. Her face was pretty like a flower and her hair was lustrous like a waterfall. Her eyes were extremely beautiful, like stars shining in the sky. When she smiled, it made you feel the whole world was smiling in her sweetness.

The king and the queen loved Shanay and gave her everything she wanted. They dressed her in pretty clothes to make her look beautiful all the time. Shanay always had a wonderful smile on her face when she looked at herself in the mirror. Since she was ten years old, Shanay never missed a single day gazing into the mirror for hours.

Shanay was not only beautiful but also extremely smart. However, all of her gifts made her lose humility. She disdained people who were not pretty and people who were poor. She became an arrogant person. But we can't classify a person as either good or bad, since human beings are such complex and multi-faceted creatures. People still loved and adored her. She was the symbol of beauty and vitality.

When Shanay was seventeen years old, she started her active social life. She was a nice dancer and went to balls all day and all night. Her beautiful eyes became diamonds for every man she met. One after another admirer fell in love with her. Who could resist the mystical beauty in her eyes? Who could resist her intoxicating smile? Who could resist her supreme wit?

“I am beautiful. I am wise. Everyone likes me,” Shanay said to herself. “Nobody is good enough for me.”

One day, the king and the queen took Shanay to visit another king in another country. At the palace, Princess Shanay met Prince Cecil. Cecil was the most handsome man Shanay had ever met. Something in Cecil captivated Shanay’s heart. For his part, Cecil never saw such beautiful eyes as Shanay’s in his whole life. Before long, they fell in love with each other.

However, romance did not change Shanay’s egotistic nature. She discovered Cecil’s flaws and thought that like anyone else, Cecil was not good enough for her. Gradually, Cecil discovered Shanay’s inability to care about people, and her arrogance became unbearable. Resentment grew quickly between the young lovers.

One year later, Cecil decided to end the romance. Shanay could not believe it. They had intense fights. Eventually, they split. Afterward, Shanay became deeply depressed. No matter how much she looked down upon Cecil, her heart was still with him. Shanay cried helplessly. She wanted him back and waited for Cecil to change his mind. Another year passed by. Cecil married a plain woman with an ordinary look.

Having heard the news, Shanay lost her mind. Pain devoured her heart. She hid herself in her room and cried for two weeks without eating anything. When she looked in the mirror she saw an old and pale face. In the last two weeks sadness had quickly taken away her

youth. “No! I can’t grow old like this.” Shanay panicked. The more she worried, the faster she became older. For the first time, Shanay hated mirrors.

Her spirit faded away every day. Tears overwhelmed and blurred her beautiful eyes. Then tragedy arrived. Shanay became blind. Overnight, her life fell to the abyss from heaven. The king and queen searched the country for doctors, but Shanay’s blindness was incurable.

“God, how could you do this to me? You gave me everything, and you took everything away from me.” Shanay suffered in the darkness. Bitterness tortured her soul. She shut herself from the rest of the world. Her beauty withered.

Seeing her beloved daughter live in hell, the queen was tortured too. One day she came to Shanay and said, “My dear daughter, I brought you a new dress. Touch it! It is made from silk. How beautiful it is.”

“No! Go away! No more clothes! What is the use of wearing pretty things? I am blind.”

Shanay’s rage burst out.

“Darling, I do not mean to hurt you. I just want you to feel we still love you.” The queen was frightened.

“No! No!” Shanay cried. She took out a pair of scissors and cut the new dress into pieces. “I will wear rags for the rest of my life.”

Since then, Shanay was in rags wherever she went. Five years passed by. Without eyesight, Shanay could not judge pretty and ugly. Her life was dependent on others. She became nice to her maids and people around her.

Inheriting the king’s strong character, Shanay had a tough soul. One night, she thought, “I will not let blindness destroy my life. I deserve happiness. There must be a way to live happily even when I can’t see things.” Through her intense soul searching, Shanay’s third eye opened.

The third eye was the eye of spirit. With the third eye, people were able to see the invisible. Shanay found another world, a spiritual world. In this world, there was only a higher good. Duality was dissolved. Her perspectives of reality changed. Her heart opened and her soul soared.

With the third eye, Shanay saw a higher truth of life and the secret of happiness. She learned forgiveness and compassion. She understood the purpose that suffering served. Her ego was diminished little by little. Catastrophe wound up with bliss. Shanay was able to live a life with joy.

Shanay told her parents what she saw with her third eyes. They shared a deeper love since then.

Ten years passed by. Shanay turned her life upside down. She was the happiest person in the country. She became a truly humble person. One sunny day, when she was giving charity to the poor people, her eyes were cured. She was able to see again.

“I earned it!” Shanay was thrilled. The king and the queen were so happy to see the miracle.

Having lived in the darkness for fifteen years, Shanay at last saw the physical world again. She walked around the palace, and everything was indescribably beautiful. Shanay also looked into the mirror to see how much she had changed over the years. To her surprise, her face was as young as it was fifteen years ago. Her eyes were even more beautiful. She could hardly believe it.

One day, in the gallery room, Shanay found a painting she had never seen before. In the picture, there was an old lady dressed in rags. Her face with wrinkles was in torment, and her eyes were full of sorrow. But Shanay saw a spiritual beauty in the woman.

“Mother, who was the old lady in rags in the gallery?” Shanay asked the queen.

“Sorry, I did not tell you.” The queen hesitated and said, “Darling, the woman was you. After you became blind, in five years you aged quickly and looked as if you were fifty years old. Your father and I realized the tragedy was a lesson. We asked an artist to paint you so everyone could learn the lesson. We did not know your eyes would be cured. But after you opened your third eye, you went through an amazing physical transformation.”

Shanay smiled and said, “In the spiritual world, there is no difference between ugliness and beauty. There is no difference between old and young. I only see pure, perfect, and ageless souls.”

Shanay was in rags in the rest of her life. In her eyes, rags had another beauty to which nothing could compare.