

The Discovery of Princess Jane

by Khulya Jafarova

Once upon a time, a princess sat gazing out her bedroom window. It was autumn—orange, brown and yellow leaves were tumbling from the trees, dancing and swirling in the wind. It was the day of the great Autumn Festival, and many noble families, dignitaries, princes and princesses were travelling to the palace to celebrate with her family. Princess Jane’s body was swirling like the leaves with a mixture of excitement, fear and anticipation.

Jane’s stepmother called out to both her and her stepsister, Princess Ella.

“Our guests will be arriving soon. Come downstairs so I can talk to you both.”

The sisters ran down the halls of the castle to see their mother, their dresses rustling along the wooden floor. They entered the drawing room where the Queen and King’s advisor sat by the fire. The Queen smiled with joy and admiration.

Jane glanced enviously at her sister—her tall, slender figure, elegant face and long hair, flowing like a waterfall from her shoulders. Jane spent hours trying to look as good as Ella, but no matter how much she tried, she always felt so uncomfortable in her own body. Her corset squeezed and pinched her belly—she could hardly breathe, never mind talk to their guests. After running down the hallway, her wig had slipped and was precariously balancing on her head. Ella, even after running, looked perfect, not one single hair out of place on her head. As she watched her sister laugh and talk with the Queen, Jane knew that all her hours of preparation—the tweaking and plucking, the poking and squeezing—were a waste of time.

“All the eyes of our guests will be upon you at the Autumn Festival because you are the princesses of this kingdom. You may find yourselves feeling quite uncomfortable,” the Queen said.

“Yeah right, especially me,” Jane muttered, mocking herself as usual. “Uncomfortable is my middle name.”

“Yes dear, especially you. One day you will see how special you are,” the Queen repeated sincerely.

Clearing his throat, the King’s advisor joined the conversation. “Your Majesty, as you know, the King wants his daughters to get married soon. There will be many suitors coming today...”

The Queen scowled at the advisor, then turned to face the girls. “Have fun. Don’t get nervous and enjoy! Don’t worry about any suitors, just be yourselves.”

Within the hour, the hall of the palace was teeming with hundreds of guests. Many young princes from across the different lands had come to see the princesses. Ella descended the stairs first, accompanied by the ethereal tones of the harpist below. The chattering of the crowd subsided, and one thousand eyes stared up at Ella as she glided down the staircase.

Jane followed Ella, biting her nails anxiously. She didn't need to look up—she knew in her heart that nobody was watching her. Although the room was crowded, Jane felt so alone. She stayed by Ella's side, sipping her drink, straightening her wig and adjusting her very uncomfortable corset.

As they walked across the hall, Jane looked up, making eye contact with Prince Charming! Her heart beat faster. Her cheeks turned a deep red. Her knees trembled, and her wig tilted even further to the right. The Prince had a warmth and kindness about him—she could see it in his smile.

“Your Highness,” he bowed, “it's an honour to meet you.”

Jane froze. She couldn't blurt out a single word. Turning to her sister, she saw that Ella had gone to play the piano for their guests. The crowd and the Prince looked over in admiration, cheering and clapping.

“Can you play?” Prince Charming asked Jane.

“No, I can't,” she said, “Ella is good at this stuff, not me,” her face still red.

“What stuff?”

“Playing music, painting, singing, cooking...”

“And what do you like?” he asked curiously.

“Hmm...,” Jane spoke excitedly with a sparkle in her eye. “Travelling and horse riding. I love geography, and my father has taken me horse riding all over our kingdom—I want to travel and visit every single country in this world.”

“Oh, really? I can't imagine a princess travelling by herself across the kingdom, let alone the world!” he said.

“Oh, I can!” she replied as happiness spread across her face. “I want to discover the world for myself. Our kingdom is so diverse and beautiful—imagine what else is out there...”

A young woman fell over beside them. Her goblet, full to the brim with cranberry juice, tipped all over Jane. Her cream dress turned a deep shade of pink. Jane leapt back; her wig fell to the ground with a *gflump*. “Oh, your Highness! I am so sorry, I didn’t see you...”

Jane looked down at her splattered pink dress and her deflated wig and fled upstairs, crying. The Prince called out, “Please wait...,” but Jane kept running.

Upstairs, Jane tore off her ruined dress and the uncomfortable corset and kicked off her shoes. She put on her favourite dress and her riding boots and slumped onto her bed.

From behind the curtain a fairy appeared.

“What happened, Princess?”

“I hate myself! I am ugly! Everyone is laughing at me. I embarrassed myself in front of Prince Charming!”

“Oh Jane, I have a spell that may help with these thoughts. I can beautify you with my magical beautification spell,” the Fairy said.

“Yes! I want to be as beautiful as Ella!”

The Fairy shook her magic wand, uttering the words of the spell.

Jane turned to the mirror. She couldn’t believe her eyes when she saw her reflection. She didn’t need that wig after all—her hair seemed longer, framing her freckle-free cheeks. She seemed taller and thinner, her favourite dress fitted her like a glove, and those boots made her feel so comfortable and confident—she could do anything!

“Now I feel like a real princess!” Jane said.



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After a long winter, everyone was eagerly preparing for the Spring Festival. Since the Fairy had cast her spell, Jane noticed how others admired her beauty and her confidence. She felt excited to see Prince Charming again.

On the morning of the festival, Jane spent only half an hour getting ready—she curled her hair, wore another favourite dress and put on her riding boots (no one could see them under her dress). She ran down the stairs to the hall and stood with the Queen, the King and her sister, greeting the guests as they arrived.

Jane could see Prince Charming in the line of guests. He caught her eye and smiled.

“Your Highness,” he bowed, “there is something different about you. May I say how confident you look!”

Jane thanked him politely. Ella pinched Jane from behind and whispered in her ear, “Did you see the way he looked at you? I had heard he is going to ask for someone’s hand in marriage!”

Jane took a deep breath and walked out to the garden to gather her thoughts.

“What if he asks to marry me?” she thought. “What am I going to do?”

The Fairy appeared from behind the big oak tree.

“Are you okay, Princess?” the Fairy asked.

“Dear Fairy, Ella thinks that the Prince wants to marry me.”

“Don’t you want that?” the Fairy asked.

“What if it is not me but your magic spell that he loves?” Jane started crying. “Oh, Fairy, I want to go back to my old self. I want people to love me for the person I am!”

“I only pretended to put a magic spell on you. I just enchanted your thoughts, so when you were looking at the mirror, you were seeing yourself the way you thought you wanted to look. Everyone else was still seeing your old self.”

“So, Prince Charming really has fallen in love with me!” Thanking the Fairy, Jane walked back to the hall.

As Jane entered, Prince Charming cut his way through the crowd towards her. He knelt in front of her.

“Will you marry me? I haven’t stopped thinking about you since we met.”

A hush descended across the hall, and the thousand eyes and ears turned towards them.

“I don’t know!” Jane answered.

Leaving the Prince on one knee with a ring in his hand, Jane ran through the crowd towards the garden. The Prince followed her. One of her riding boots got stuck in the mud in the garden. The Prince picked up the boot and followed Jane.

“You left your boot,” he shouted.

Jane ran to the stables.

“If you are riding, you will need this boot! Where are you going?”

“I told you—I want to travel and discover the miracles of the world! I am not sure if I want to get married yet.”

“I want to come with you!” the Prince said. “I have never met a princess who wants to travel. If we got married, just think of the adventures we can have together!”

Jane turned to the Prince. “It sounds like we have a lot to talk about—and a lot to plan,” she said.

The next month, they rode off on their horses, happily ever after, to travel the world together.