

THE STORY OF BLONDINE, BONNE-BICHE,  
AND BEAU-MINON

OLD FRENCH FAIRY TALES  
by Comtesse De Segur

BLONDINE

THERE was once a king called Benin. He was good and all the world loved him; he was just and the wicked feared him. His wife, the Queen Doucette, was also good, and much beloved. This happy pair had a daughter called the Princess Blondine, because of her superb fair hair, and she was as amiable and charming as her father the king and her mother the queen.

Unfortunately, the poor queen died a short time after the birth of Blondine and for a long time the king wept bitterly at his great loss. Blondine was too young to understand her mother's death: she did not weep but continued to laugh, to play and to sleep peacefully. The king loved her tenderly and she loved him more than all the world. He gave his little daughter the most beautiful jewels, the finest bonbons, and the most rare and delicious fruits. Blondine was very happy.

One day it was announced to the king, that all his subjects demanded that he should marry again in order to have a son who should reign after him. He refused at first but finally yielded to the pressing desires of his people and said to his minister Leger : "My dear friend, my subjects wish me to marry again but my heart is so sad because of the death of my cherished queen Doucette that I cannot undertake the task of seeking another wife. Go, then, my good Leger and find me a princess who will make my sweet Blondine happy. Go; I ask for nothing more. When you have found a perfect woman, you will demand her hand in marriage and conduct her to my court."

Leger set off immediately, visited many courts and saw innumerable princesses ugly, humpbacked and wicked. At last he arrived at the kingdom of the monarch Turbulent, who had a lovely daughter, bright, winning and apparently good. Leger found her so charming, that he asked her hand in marriage for his king Benin, without sufficiently inquiring into her real character. Leger meets the wicked princess, Fourbette.

Turbulent was enchanted at the prospect of getting rid of his daughter who was jealous, proud and wicked. Also, her presence often interfered with his excursions for pleasure, with the chase and with his various entertainments at the palace. Without a moment's hesitation, he acceded to the Prime Minister's request, and he returned with the princess to the kingdom of the good king Benin. The princess Fourbette was accompanied by four thousand mules, loaded with the jewels and wardrobe of the charming bride.

King Benin had been apprised of their approach by a courier and went forward to receive the princess Fourbette. He found her beautiful but he noted the absence of the mild and attractive expression of the poor lost Doucette.

When Fourbette's eyes fell upon Blondine her glance was so cruel, so wicked, that the poor child, who was now three years old, was greatly terrified and began to weep bitterly.

"What is the matter?" said the king. "Why does my sweet and sensible Blondine weep like a bad little girl?"

"Papa! dear papa!" cried Blondine, throwing herself into the arms of the king, "do not give me into the hands of this princess. I am afraid of her — her eyes are cruel!"

The king was much surprised. He turned so suddenly towards the princess Fourbette that she had no time to control herself and he perceived the terrible glance with which she regarded the little Blondine.

Benin immediately resolved that Blondine should be wholly separated from the new queen and remain as before under the exclusive protection of the nurse who had taken care of her and who loved her tenderly.

The queen thus saw Blondine rarely, and when she met her by chance she could not wholly dissimulate the hatred she felt for her.

About a year from that time a daughter was born to the queen Fourbette. She was named Brunette, because of her dark hair which was black as the raven's wing.

Brunette was pretty but not so lovely as Blondine; more over she was as wicked as her mother. She detested Blondine and played all sorts of cruel tricks upon her, bit her, pinched her, pulled her hair, broke her toys and tore her beautiful dresses. The good little Blondine was never in a passion with her sister but always tried to make excuses for her conduct.

"Oh, papa!" she said to the king, "do not scold Brunette ; she is so little ! she does not know that she grieves me when she breaks my toys ! It is only in play that she bites me, pulls my hair and pinches me."

The good king embraced his little daughter, and was silent but he knew that Brunette was cruel and wicked; that Blondine was too gentle and good to accuse her. He loved Blondine, therefore, more and more from day to day and his heart grew cold to Brunette.

The ambitious queen Fourbette saw all this clearly and hated intensely the innocent and gentle Blondine. If she had not feared the rage of the king she would have made Blondine the most wretched child in the world.

Benin had commanded that Blondine should never be left alone with the queen. He was known to be just and good but he punished disobedience severely and the queen herself dared not defy his commands.

## BLONDINE LOST

BLONDINE grew to be seven years old and Brunette three. The king had given Blondine a charming little carriage drawn by ostriches, and a little coachman ten years of age, who was the nephew of her nurse.

The little page, who was called Gourmandinet, loved Blondine tenderly. He had been her playmate from her birth and she had shown him a thousand acts of kindness.

But Gourmandinet had one terrible fault; he was a gourmand was so fond of dainties and sweet things, that on a paper of bonbons he would commit almost any wicked action. Blondine often said to him : "I love you dearly, Gourmandinet, but I do not love to see you so greedy. I entreat you to correct this villainous fault which will make you despised by all the world."

Gourmandinet kissed her hand and promised to reform. But, alas! he continued to steal cakes from the kitchen and bonbons from the store-room. Often, indeed, he was whipped for his disobedience and gluttony.

The queen Fourbette heard on every hand the reproaches lavished upon the page and she was cunning enough to think that she might make use of this weakness of Gourmandinet and thus get rid of poor Blondine. The garden in which Blondine drove in her little carriage, drawn by ostriches and guided by her little coachman, Gourmandinet, was separated by a grating from an immense and magnificent forest, called the Forest of Lilacs because during the whole year these lilacs were always covered with superb flowers.

No one, however, entered these woods. It was well known that it was enchanted ground and that if you once entered there you could never hope to escape.

Gourmandinet knew the terrible secret of this forest. He had been severely forbidden ever to drive the carriage of Blondine in that direction lest by some chance Blondine might pass the grating and place her little feet on the enchanted ground. Many times the king Benin had sought to build a wall the entire length of the grating or to secure it in some way so as to make an entrance there impossible. But the work men had no sooner laid the foundation than some unknown and invisible power raised the stones and they disappeared from sight.

The queen Fourbette now sought diligently to gain the friendship of Gourmandinet by giving him every day some delicious dainties. In this way she made him so complete a slave to his appetite that he could not live without the jellies, bonbons and cakes which she gave him in such profusion. At last she sent for him to come to her, and said : "Gourmandinet, it depends entirely upon yourself whether you shall have a large trunk full of bonbons and delicious dainties or never again eat one during your life."

"Never again eat one! Oh! madam, I should die of such punishment. Speak, madam, what must I do to escape this terrible fate?"

"It is necessary," said the queen, looking at him fixedly, "that you should drive the princess Blondine near to the Forest of Lilacs."

"I cannot do it, madam; the king has forbidden it."

"Ah! you cannot do it; well, then, adieu. No more dainties for you. I shall command every one in the house to give you nothing."

"Oh! madam," said Gourmandinet, weeping bitterly, "do not be so cruel. Give me some order which it is in my power to execute."

"I can only repeat that I command you to lead the princess Blondine near to the Forest of Lilacs; that you encourage her to descend from the carriage, to cross the grating and enter the enchanted ground."

"But, madam," replied Gourmandinet, turning very pale, "if the princess enters this forest she can never escape from it. You know the penalty of entering upon enchanted ground. To send away the dear princess there is to give her up to certain death."

"For the third and last time," said the queen, frowning fearfully, "I ask if you will take the princess to the forest? Choose either an immense box of bonbons which I will renew every month or never again to taste the delicacies which you love."

"But how shall I escape from the dreadful punishment which his majesty will inflict upon me?"

"Do not be disquieted on that account. As soon as you have induced Blondine to enter the Forest of Lilacs, return to me. I will send you off out of danger with your bonbons, and I charge myself with your future fortune."

"Oh! madam, have pity upon me. Do not compel me to lead my dear princess to destruction. She who has always been so good to me!"

"You still hesitate, miserable coward! Of what importance is the fate of Blondine to you? When you have obeyed my commands I will see that you enter the service of Brunette and I declare to you solemnly that the bonbons shall never fail."

Gourmandinet hesitated and reflected a few moments longer and, alas! at last resolved to sacrifice his good little mistress to his gluttony. The remainder of that day he still hesitated and he lay awake all night weeping bitter tears as he endeavored to discover some way to escape from the power of the wicked queen; but the certainty of the queen's bitter revenge if he refused to execute her cruel orders, and the hope of rescuing Blondine at some future day by seeking the aid of some powerful fairy, conquered his irresolution and decided him to obey the queen.

In the morning at ten o'clock Blondine ordered her little carriage and entered it for a drive, after having embraced the king her father and promised him to return in two hours.

The garden was immense. Gourmandinet, on starting, turned the ostriches away from the Forest of Lilacs. When, however, they were entirely out of sight of the palace, he changed his course and turned towards the grating which separated them from the enchanted ground. He was sad and silent. His crime weighed upon his heart and conscience.

"What is the matter?" said Blondine, kindly. "You say nothing. Are you ill, Gourmandinet?"

"No, my princess, I am well."

"But how pale you are! Tell me what distresses you, poor boy, and I promise to do all in my power to make you happy."

Blondine's kind inquiries and attentions almost softened the hard heart of Gourmandinet, but the remembrance of the bonbons promised by the wicked queen, Fourbette, soon chased away his good resolutions. Before he had time to reply, the ostriches reached the grating of the Forest of Lilacs.

"Oh! the beautiful lilacs!" exclaimed Blondine; "how fragrant how delicious! I must have a bouquet of those beautiful flowers for my good papa. Get down, Gourmandinet and bring me some of those superb branches."

"I cannot leave my seat, princess, the ostriches might run away with you during my absence."

"Do not fear," replied Blondine; "I could guide them myself to the palace."

"But the king would give me a terrible scolding for having abandoned you, princess. It is best that you go yourself and gather your flowers."

"That is true. I should be very sorry to get you a scolding, my poor Gourmandinet."

While saying these words she sprang lightly from the carriage, crossed the bars of the grating and commenced to gather the flowers.

At this moment Gourmandinet shuddered and was overwhelmed with remorse. He wished to repair his fault by calling Blondine but although she was only ten steps from him, although he saw her perfectly she could not hear his voice, and in a short time she was lost to view in the enchanted forest.

For a long time Gourmandinet wept over his crime, cursed his gluttony and despised the wicked queen Fourbette. At last he recalled to himself that the hour approached at which Blondine would be expected at the palace. He returned to the stables through the back entrance and ran at once to the queen, who was anxiously expecting him. On seeing him so deadly pale and his eyes inflamed from the tears of awful remorse, she knew that Blondine had perished.

"Is it done?" said she.

Gourmandinet bowed his head. He had not the strength to speak.

"Come," said she, "behold your reward!" She pointed to a large box full of delicious bonbons of every variety. She commanded a valet to raise the box and place it upon one of the mules which had brought her jewelry.

"I confide this box to Gourmandinet, in order that he may take it to my father," she said. "Go, boy, and return in a month for another." She placed in his hand at the same time a purse full of gold.

Gourmandinet mounted the mule in perfect silence and set off in full gallop. The mule was obstinate and willful and soon grew restive under the weight of the box and began to prance and kick. He did this so effectually that he threw Gourmandinet and his precious box of bonbons upon the ground. Gourmandinet, who had never ridden upon a horse or

mule, fell heavily with his head upon the stones and died instantly. Thus he did not receive from his crime the profit which he had hoped, for he had not even tasted of the bonbons which the queen had given him. No one regretted him. No one but the poor Blondine had ever loved him.

## THE FOREST OF LILACS

WHEN Blondine entered the forest she commenced gathering the beautiful branches of lilacs. She rejoiced in their profusion and delighted in their fragrance. As she made her selection, it seemed to her that those which were more distant were still more beautiful so she emptied her apron and her hat, which were both full and filled them again and again. Blondine had been thus busily occupied for about an hour. She began to suffer from the heat and to feel great fatigue. She found the branches of lilacs heavy to carry and thought it was time to return to the palace. She looked around and saw herself surrounded with lilacs. She called Gourmandinet but no one replied.

"I have wandered further than I intended," said Blondine. "I will return at once, though I am very weary. Gourmandinet will hear me and will surely come to meet me."

Blondine walked on rapidly for some time but she could not find the boundaries of the forest.

Many times she called anxiously upon Gourmandinet but he did not respond and at last she became terribly frightened.

"What will become of me, all alone in this vast forest? What will my poor papa think when I do not return? And Gourmandinet, how will he dare go back to the palace with out me? He will be scolded, perhaps beaten and all this is my fault because I would leave my carriage to gather lilacs, Unfortunate girl that I am! I shall die of hunger and thirst in this forest if the wolves do not eat me up this night."

Weeping bitterly, Blondine fell on the ground at the foot of a large tree. She wept a long time. At last her great fatigue mastered her grief. She placed her little head upon her bundle of lilacs, and slept peacefully.

## BLONDINE'S AWAKENING BEAU-MINON

BLONDINE slept calmly all night; no ferocious beast came to trouble her slumbers. She did not suffer from the cold and awakened at a late hour in the morning. She rubbed her eyes, much surprised to see her self surrounded by trees, in place of being in her own room in the palace, and upon her own bed. She called her nurse and a soft mewing was the only response. Astonished and almost frightened, she looked around and saw at her feet a superb white cat, looking gently upon her and continuing to mew plaintively.

"Ah! pretty puss! how beautiful you are!" cried Blondine, placing her little hand caressingly upon the soft fur, white as snow. "I am so happy to see you, pretty puss, for you will conduct me to your home. I am indeed very hungry and I have not the strength to walk much further without food."

Blondine had scarcely uttered these words, when the white pussy mewed again and pointed with her little paw to a small package lying near her, wrapped neatly in fine white linen. She opened the parcel and found it contained bread and butter which she found delicious. She gave the crumbs to pussy, who munched them with seeming delight. When they had finished their simple meal, Blondine leaned over towards her little companion, and said, caressingly:

"Thanks, pretty puss, for the breakfast you have given me. Now, can you conduct me to my papa, who is certainly in despair because of my absence?" Pussy, whom Blondine named Beau-Minon, shook her head and mewed plaintively.

"Ah! you understand me, Beau-Minon/" said Blondine. "I entreat you to have pity upon me and lead me to some house before I perish with hunger, cold and terror in his vast forest!"

Beau-Minon looked at the princess fixedly and made a sign with her little graceful white head which seemed to say, "I understand you." She rose, advanced a few steps and paused to see if Blondine followed her. In about an hour Blondine perceived an elegant castle. Beau-Minon led her to the gilded grating. However, Blondine did not know how to enter. There was no bell and the gate was closed. Beau-Minon had disappeared and Blondine was once more alone.

## BONNE-BICHE

BEAU-MINON had entered by a little passage, which seemed made expressly for him and had probably given notice to some one at the castle, as the gate opened without Blondine having called. She entered the courtyard but saw no one. The door of the castle opened of itself. Blondine entered the vestibule which was of rare white marble. All the doors of the castle now opened like the first and the princess passed through a suite of beautiful rooms.

At last, in the back part of a charming salon, furnished with blue and gold, she perceived white hind, lying upon a bed of fine and fragrant grasses. Beau-Minon stood near her. The pretty hind saw Blondine, arose, and approached her.

"You are most welcome, Blondine," said she. "My son Beau-Minon and I have expected you for a long time."

At these words, Blondine was much frightened.

"Take courage, princess; you are with friends. I know the king your father and I love him and I love you also."

"Oh, madam," said Blondine, "if you know the king my father, I pray you to take me to him. My absence must make him very wretched."

"My dear Blondine," said the hind, whose name was Bonne-Biche, sighing, "it is not in my power to conduct you to your father. You are in the hands of the magician of the Forest of Lilacs. I myself am subject to his power which is superior to mine but I can send soft dreams to your father, which will reassure him as to your fate and let him know that you are safe with me."

"Oh, madam!" said Blondine, in an agony of grief, "shall I never again see my father whom I love so tenderly? My poor father!"

"Dear Blondine, do not distress yourself as to the future. Wisdom and prudence are always recompensed. You will see your father again but not now. In the meantime be good and docile. Beau-Minon and I will do all in our power to make you happy."

Blondine sighed heavily and shed a few tears. She then reflected that to manifest such grief was a poor recompense for all the goodness of Bonne-Biche. She resolved, therefore, to control herself and to be cheerful. Bonne-Biche took her to see the apartment they had prepared for her. The bedroom was hung with rose-colored silk embroidered with gold. The furniture was covered with white velvet worked with silks of the most brilliant hues. Every species of animal, bird and butterfly were represented in rare embroidery. Adjoining Blondine's chamber was a small study. It was hung with sky-blue damask, embroidered with fine pearls. The furniture was covered with silver moire, adorned with nails of

turquoise. Two magnificent portraits, representing a young and superbly handsome woman and a strikingly attractive young man, hung on the walls. Their costumes indicated that they were of royal race.

"Whose portraits are these, madam?" said Blondine to Bonne-Biche.

"I am forbidden to answer that question, dear Blondine. You will know later ; but this is the hour for dinner. Come, Blondine, I am sure you are hungry."

Blondine was in fact almost dying of hunger. She followed Bonne-Biche and they entered the dining-room where she saw a table strangely served. An enormous cushion of black satin was placed on the floor for Bonne-Biche. On the table before her was a vase filled with the choicest herbs, fresh and nutritious and near this vase was a golden bucket, filled with fresh and limpid water. Opposite Bonne-Biche was a little stool for Beau-Minon while before him was a little porringer in gold, filled with little fried fish and the thighs of snipes. At one side was a bowl of rich crystal full of fresh milk. Between Beau-Minon and Bonne-Biche a plate was placed for Blondine. Her chair was of carved ivory covered with crimson velvet attached with nails of diamonds.

Before her was a gold plate richly chased, filled with delicious soup made of a young pullet and fig-birds, her glass and water-bottle were of carved rock-crystal, a muffin was placed by her side, her fork and spoon were of gold and her napkin was of linen, finer than anything she had ever seen.

The table was served by gazelles who were marvellously adroit. They waited, carved and even divined the wishes of Blondine, Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon. The dinner was exquisite the chicken was splendid, the game and fish most delicate, the pastry and bonbons superlative. Blondine was hungry so she ate of all and found all excellent.

After dinner, Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon conducted the princess into the garden. She found there the most delicious fruits and lovely walks. After a charming walk, Blondine entered the castle with her new friends, much fatigued. Bonne-Biche proposed that she retire, to which she agreed joyfully.

Blondine entered her chamber and found two gazelles waiting to attend her. They disrobed her with grace and adroitness, placed her in bed and seated themselves by her couch to watch over her. Blondine was soon peacefully asleep, not however, without having first thought of her father and wept bitterly over her cruel separation from him.

## BLONDINE'S SECOND AWAKENING

BLONDINE slept profoundly, and on awaking she found herself entirely changed. Indeed, it seemed to her she could not be the same person. She was much taller, her intellect was developed, her knowledge enlarged. She remembered a number of books she thought she had read during her sleep. She was sure she had been writing, drawing, singing and playing on the piano and harp. She looked around, however, and knew that the chamber was the same to which Bonne-Biche had conducted her and in which she had gone to sleep.

Agitated, disquieted, she rose and ran to the glass. She saw that she was much grown and she found herself charming, a hundred times more beautiful than when she retired the night before. Her fair ringlets fell to her feet, her complexion was like the lily and the rose, her eyes celestial blue, her nose beautifully formed, her cheeks rosy as the morn, and her form was erect and graceful. In short, Blondine thought herself the most beautiful person she had ever seen. Trembling, almost frightened, she dressed herself hastily and ran to seek Bonne-Biche whom she found in the apartment where she had first seen her.

"Bonne-Biche, Bonne-Biche!" she exclaimed, "I entreat you to explain to me the change which I see and feel in my self. Last night I went to sleep a child I awoke this morning, and found myself a young lady. Is this an illusion or have I indeed grown and developed thus during the night?"

"Yes, my dear Blondine, you are fourteen years old today. But you have slept peacefully seven years. My son Beau-Minon and I wished to spare you the weariness of all early studies. When you first entered the castle you knew nothing; not even how to read. I put you to sleep for seven years, and Beau-Minon and I have passed this time in instructing you during your sleep. I see by the wonder expressed in your eyes, sweet princess, that you doubt all this. Come into your study and reassure yourself on this point."

Blondine followed Bonne-Biche to the little room. She ran first to the piano, commenced playing and found that she played remarkably well. She then tried the harp and drew from it the most ravishing sounds, and she sang enchantingly. She took her pencil and brushes and drew and painted with a facility which denoted a true talent. She wrote and found her handwriting clear and elegant. She looked at the countless books which were ranged round the room and knew that she had read them all.

Surprised, delighted, she threw her arms around the neck of Bonne-Biche, embraced Beau-Minon tenderly and said to them : "Oh! my dear true good friends, what a debt of gratitude do I owe you for having thus watched over my childhood and developed my intellect and my heart. I feel how much I am improved in every respect and I owe it all to you."

Bonne-Biche returned her caresses and Beau-Minon patted her hand delicately. After the first few happy moments had passed, Blondine cast down her eyes and said timidly: "Do not think me ungrateful, my dear good friends, if I wish you to add one more to the benefits you have already conferred upon me. Tell me something of my father. Does he still weep my absence? Is he happy since he lost me?"

"Dear Blondine, your anxiety on this point is most natural and shall be relieved. Look in this mirror, Blondine, and you shall see the king your father and all that has passed since you left the palace."

Blondine raised her eyes to the mirror and looked into the apartment of her father. The king seemed much agitated and was walking backwards and forwards. He appeared to be expecting someone. The queen, Fourbette, entered and related to him that notwithstanding the remonstrances of Gourmandinet, Blondine had herself seized the reins and guided the ostriches who, becoming frightened, dashed off in the direction of the Forest of Lilacs and over turned the carriage. Blondine was thrown over the grating which bounded the forest. She stated that Gourmandinet had become insane from terror and grief and she had sent him home to his parents. The king was in wild despair at this news. He ran to the Forest of Lilacs and he had to be withheld by force from throwing himself across the boundary in order to search for his cherished Blondine. They carried him to the palace where he yielded to the most frightful sorrow and despair, calling unceasingly upon his dear Blondine, his beloved child. At last, overcome by grief, he slept and saw in a dream Blondine in the castle of Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon. Bonne-Biche gave him the sweet assurance that Blondine should one day be restored to him and that her childhood should be calm and happy.

The mirror now became misty and everything disappeared, then again clear as crystal and Blondine saw her father a second time. He had become old, his hair was white as snow and his countenance was sad. He held in his hand a little portrait of Blondine, his tears fell upon it and he pressed it often to his lips. The king was alone. Blondine saw neither the queen nor Brunette. Poor Blondine wept bitterly.

"Alas!" said she, "why is my dear father alone? Where is the queen? Where is Brunette?"

"The queen," said Bonne-Biche, "showed so little grief at your death, my princess, that your father's heart was filled with hatred and suspicion towards her and he sent her back to the king Turbulent, her father, who confined her in a tower, where she soon died of rage and anger. All the world supposed you to be dead. As to your sister Brunette, she became so wicked, so insupportable, that the king hastened to give her in marriage last year to the prince Violent, who charged himself with the duty of reforming the character of the cruel and envious princess Brunette. The prince was stern and harsh. Brunette saw that her wicked heart prevented her from being happy and she commenced trying to correct her faults. You will see her again some day, dear Blondine and your example may complete her reformation." Blondine thanked Bonne-Biche tenderly for all these details. Her heart prompted her to ask, "But when shall I see my father and sister?" But she feared to appear ungrateful and too anxious to leave the castle of her good friends. She resolved then to await another more suitable opportunity to ask this question.

The days passed away quietly and pleasantly. Blondine was much occupied, but was sometimes melancholy. She had no one to talk with but Bonne-Biche, and she was only with her during the hours of lessons and repasts. Beau-Minon could not converse and could only make himself understood by signs. The gazelles served Blondine with zeal and intelligence but they had not the gift of speech. Blondine walked every day, always accompanied by Beau-Minon, who pointed out to her the most lovely and sequestered paths and the rarest and richest flowers. Bonne-Biche had made Blondine promise solemnly never to leave the enclosure of the park and never to enter the forest. Many times Blondine had asked Bonne-Biche the reason of this prohibition. Sighing profoundly, she had replied :

"Ah, Blondine! do not seek to penetrate the forest. It is a fatal spot. May you never enter there."

Sometimes Blondine mounted a pavilion which was built on an eminence near the boundary of the forest. She looked admiringly and longingly at the magnificent trees, the lovely and fragrant flowers, the thousand graceful birds flying and singing and seeming to call her name.

"Alas!" said she, "why will not Bonne-Biche allow me to walk in this beautiful forest? What possible danger can I encounter in that lovely place and under her protection?" Whenever she was lost in these reflections, Beau-Minon, who seemed to comprehend what was passing in her heart, mewed plaintively, pulled her robe and tried to draw her from the pavilion. Blondine smiled sweetly, followed her gentle companion and recommenced her walk in the solitary park.

## THE PARROT

SIX months had passed since Blondine awaked from her seven years' sleep. It seemed to the little princess a long time. The remembrance of her dear father often saddened her heart. Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon seemed to divine her thoughts. Beau-Minon mewed plaintively, and Bonne-Biche heaved the most profound sighs. Blondine spoke but rarely of that which occupied her thoughts continually. She feared to offend Bonne-Biche, who had said to her three or four times:

"Dear Blondine, be patient. You will see your father when you are fifteen, if you continue wise and good. Trust me, dear child; do not trouble yourself about the future and above all do not seek to leave us."

One morning Blondine was alone and very sad. She was musing upon her singular and monotonous existence. Suddenly she was disturbed in her reverie by three soft little strokes upon her window. Raising her head, she perceived a parrot with beautiful green plumage and throat and breast of bright orange. Surprised at the appearance of a bird entirely unknown to her, she opened the window and invited the parrot to enter. What was her amazement when the bird said to her, in a fine sharp voice : "Good day, Blondine! I know that you sometimes have a very tedious time of it, because you have no one to talk to. I have taken pity upon you and come to have a chat with you. But I pray you do not mention that you have seen me, for Bonne-Biche would cut my throat if she knew it."

"Why so, beautiful Parrot? Bonne-Biche is good; she injures no one and only hates the wicked."

"Blondine, listen! If you do not promise to conceal my visit from Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon, I will fly away at once and never return."

"Since you wish it so much, beautiful Parrot, I will promise silence. Let us chat a little. It is a long time since I have had an opportunity to converse. You seem to me gay and witty. I do not doubt that you will amuse me much."

Blondine listened with delight to the lively talk of the Parrot, who complimented extravagantly her beauty, her wit and her talents. Blondine was enchanted. In about an hour the Parrot flew away, promising to return the next day. In short, he returned every day and continued to compliment and amuse her. One morning he struck upon the window and said: "Blondine! Blondine! open the window, quickly! I bring you news of your father. But above all make no noise unless you want my throat cut."

Blondine was overwhelmed with joy. She opened the window with alacrity and said: "Is it true, my beautiful Parrot, that you bring me news of my dear father? Speak quickly! What is he doing and how is he?"

"Your father is well, Blondine, but he weeps your loss always. I have promised him to employ all my power to deliver you from your prison but I can do nothing without your assistance."

"My prison!" said Blondine. "But you are ignorant of all the goodness which Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon have shown me, of the pains they have lavished upon my education, of all their tenderness and forbearance. They will be enchanted to find a way of restoring me to my father. Come with me, beautiful Parrot and I will present you to Bonne-Biche. Come, I entreat you."

"Ah! Blondine," said the sharp voice of the Parrot, "it is you, Princess, who do not know Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon. They detest me because I have sometimes succeeded in rescuing their victims from them. You will never see your father again, Blondine, you will never leave this forest, unless you yourself shall break the charm which holds you here."

"What charm?" said Blondine. "I know of no charm and what interest have Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon in keeping me a prisoner?"

"Is it not to their interest to enliven their solitude, Blondine? There is a talisman which can procure your release. It is a simple Rose, which, gathered by yourself, will deliver you from your exile and restore you to the arms of your fond father."

"But there is not a single Rose in the garden. How then can I gather one?"

"I will explain this to you another day, Blondine. Now I can tell you no more, as I hear Bonne-Biche coming. But to convince you of the virtues of the Rose, entreat Bonne-Biche to give you one and see what she will say. Tomorrow tomorrow, Blondine!"

The Parrot flew away, well content to have scattered in Blondine's heart the first seeds of discontent and ingratitude.

The Parrot had scarcely disappeared when Bonne- Biche entered. She appeared greatly agitated.

"With whom have you been talking, Blondine?" looking suspiciously towards the open window.

"With no one, madam," said the princess.

"I am certain I heard voices in conversation."

"I must have been speaking to myself."

Bonne-Biche made no reply. She was very sad and tears fell from her eyes.

Blondine was also engaged in thought. The cunning words of the Parrot made her look upon the kindness of Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon in a totally different light. In place of saying to herself that a hind which had the power to speak, to make wild beasts intelligent, to put an infant to sleep for seven years, to dedicate seven years to a tiresome and ignorant little girl, in short, a hind lodged and served like a queen, could be no ordinary criminal; in place of cherishing a sentiment of gratitude for all that Bonne- Biche had done for her, Blondine, alas believed blindly in the Parrot, the unknown bird of whose character and veracity she had no proof. She did not remember that the Parrot could have no possible motive for risking its life to render her a service. Blondine believed it though, implicitly, because of the flattery which the Parrot had lavished upon her. She did not even recall with gratitude the sweet and happy existence which Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon had secured to her. She resolved to follow implicitly the counsels of the Parrot. During the course of the day she said to Bonne-Biche :

"Why, madam, do I not see among your flowers the most lovely and charming of all flowers the fragrant Rose?"

Bonne-Biche was greatly agitated and said in a trembling voice:

"Blondine! Blondine! do not ask for this most perfidious flower, which pierces all who touch it! Never speak to me of the Rose, Blondine. You cannot know what fatal danger this flower contains for you!"

The expression of Bonne-Biche was so stern and severe that Blondine dared not question her further.

The day passed away sadly enough. Bonne-Biche was unhappy and Beau-Minon very sad.

Early in the morning, Blondine ran to her window and the Parrot entered the moment she opened it.

"Well, my dear Blondine, did you notice the agitation of Bonne-Biche, when you mentioned the Rose? I promised you to point out the means by which you could obtain one of these charming flowers. Listen now to my counsel. You will leave this park and enter the forest. I will accompany you and I will conduct you to a garden where you will find the most beautiful Rose in the world!"

"But how is it possible for me to leave the park? Beau- Minon always accompanies me in my walks."

"Try to get rid of him," said the Parrot; "but if that is impossible, go in spite of him."

"If this Rose is at a distance, will not my absence be perceived?"

"It is about an hour's walk. Bonne-Biche has been careful to separate you as far as possible from the Rose in order that you might not find the means to escape from her power."

"But why does she wish to hold me captive? She is all-powerful and could surely find pleasures more acceptable than educating an ignorant child."

"All this will be explained to you in the future, Blondine, when you will be in the arms of your father. Be firm! After breakfast, in some way get away from Beau-Minon and enter the forest. I will expect you there."

Blondine promised, and closed the window, fearing that Bonne-Biche would surprise her.

After breakfast, according to her usual custom, she entered the garden. Beau-Minon followed her in spite of some rude rebuffs which he received with plaintive mews. Arrived at the alley which led out of the park, Blondine resolved to get rid of Beau-Minon.

"I wish to be alone," said she, sternly; "begone, Beau-Minon!"

Beau-Minon pretended not to understand. Blondine was impatient and enraged. She forgot herself so far as to strike Beau-Minon with her foot. When poor Beau-Minon received this humiliating blow, he uttered a cry of anguish and fled towards the palace. Blondine trembled and was on the point of recalling him, when a false shame arrested her. She walked on rapidly to the gate, opened it not without trembling and entered the forest. The Parrot joined her without delay.

"Courage, Blondine! in one hour you will have the Rose and will see your father, who weeps for you."

At these words, Blondine recovered her resolution which had begun to falter. She walked on in the path indicated by the Parrot, who flew before her from branch to branch. The forest, which had seemed so beautiful and attractive near the park of Bonne-Biche, became wilder and more entangled. Brambles and stones almost filled up the path, the sweet songs of the birds were no longer heard and the flowers had entirely disappeared. Blondine felt oppressed by an inexplicable restlessness. The Parrot pressed her eagerly to advance.

"Quick, quick, Blondine! time flies! If Bonne-Biche perceives your absence you will never again see your father."

Blondine, fatigued, almost breathless, with her arms torn by the briers and her shoes in shreds, now declared that she would go no further when the Parrot exclaimed:

"We have arrived, Blondine. Look! that is the enclosure which separates us from the Rose."

Blondine saw at a turn in the path a small enclosure, the gate of which was quickly opened by the Parrot. The soil was arid and stony but a magnificent, majestic rose-bush adorned with one Rose, which was more beautiful than all the roses of the world grew in the midst of this sterile spot.

"Take it, Blondine!" said the parrot; "you deserve it you have truly earned it!"

Blondine seized the branch eagerly and in spite of the thorns which pierced her fingers cruelly, she tore it from the bush.

The Rose was scarcely grasped firmly in her hand, when she heard a burst of mocking laughter. The Flower fell from her grasp, crying : "Thanks, Blondine, for having delivered me from the prison in which Bonne-Biche held me captive. I am your evil genius! Now you belong to me! Ha! ha!" now exclaimed the Parrot. "Thanks, Blondine! I can now resume my form of magician. You have destroyed your friends for I am their mortal enemy!" Saying these cruel words, the Parrot and the Rose disappeared, leaving Blondine alone in the forest.

## REPENTANCE

BLONDINE was stupefied! Her conduct now appeared to her in all its horror. She had shown a monstrous ingratitude towards the friends who had been so tenderly devoted to

her who had dedicated seven years to the care of her education. Would these kind friends ever receive her, ever pardon her? What would be her fate, if they should close their doors against her? And then, what did those awful words of the wicked Parrot signify: "You have caused the destruction of your friends"?

Blondine turned round and wished to retrace her steps to the castle of Bonne-Biche. The briars and thorns tore her arms and face terribly. She continued however to force her way bravely through the thickets and after three hours of most painful walking she came before the castle of Bonne- Biche and Beau-Minon.

Horror seized upon her, when in place of the superb building she saw only an appalling ruin in place of the magnificent trees and rare flowers which surrounded it, only briars and thorns, nettles and thistles, could be seen. Terrified and most desolate, she tried to force her way in the midst of the ruins, to seek some knowledge of her kind

Blondine sees the castle of Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon friends. A large Toad issued from a pile of stones, advanced before her, and said : "What are you seeking? Have you not occasioned the death of your friends by the basest ingratitude? Begone! do not insult their memory by your unwelcome presence!"

"Alas! alas!" cried Blondine, "my poor friends, Bonne- Biche and Beau-Minon, why can I not atone by my death for the sufferings I have caused them?" And she fell, sobbing piteously, upon the stones and nettles; her grief and her repentance were so excessive that she did not feel their sharp points in her tender flesh. She wept profusely a long time. At last she arose and looked about her, hoping to find some shelter where she might take refuge. Ruin only stared her in the face!

"Well," said she, "let the wild beasts tear me to pieces, let me die of hunger and thirst, if I can expiate my sins here upon the tomb of Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon!"

As she uttered these words, she heard a soft voice saying: "True repentance can atone for the worst of crimes."

She raised her head and saw only an immense black Crow flying above her.

"Alas! alas!" said Blondine, "my repentance however true, however bitter it may be, can never give me back the lives of my dear Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon!"

"Courage, courage, Blondine! redeem your fault by your repentance and do not allow yourself to be utterly cast down by grief."

The poor princess arose and left the scene of desolation. She followed a little path, where the large trees seemed to have rooted out the brambles and the earth was covered with moss. She was utterly exhausted with grief and fatigue and fell at the foot of a large tree, sobbing piteously.

"Courage, Blondine!" said another voice; "courage and hope!"

She saw near her only a Frog, which was looking at her compassionately.

"Oh, Frog!" said the princess, "you seem to pity my anguish! What will become of me now that I am alone and desolate in the world?"

"Courage and hope!" was the reply.

Blondine sighed deeply and looked around, hoping to discover some herb or fruit to appease her hunger and thirst. She saw nothing and her tears flowed freely. The sound of bells now somewhat dissipated her despairing thoughts. She saw a beautiful cow approaching her, gently and slowly. On arriving near her, the cow paused, bowed down, and showed her a silver porringer attached to her neck by a chain of beaten gold.

Blondine was very grateful for this unexpected succor. She detached the porringer, milked the cow and drank the sweet milk with delight. The pretty, gentle cow signed to her to replace the porringer. Blondine obeyed, kissed her on the neck and said, sadly:

"Thanks, Blanchette, it is without doubt to my poor friends that I owe this sweet charity. Perhaps in another and better world they can see the repentance of their poor Blondine and wish to assist her in her frightful position."

"A true repentance will obtain pardon for all faults," said a kind voice.

"Ah!" exclaimed Blondine, "years of sorrow and weeping for my crimes would not suffice! I can never pardon myself!"

In the meantime, night approached. Notwithstanding her anguish and repentance, Blondine began to reflect upon some means of securing herself from the ferocious wild beasts, whose terrible roars she already believed she heard in the distance. She saw some steps before her a kind of hut, formed by several trees growing near together and interlacing their branches. Bowing her head, she entered, and found that by carefully connecting some branches she could form a pretty and secure retreat. She employed the remainder of the day in arranging this little room and gathered a quantity of moss, with which she made herself a bed and pillow. She concealed the entrance to this little retreat by some broken branches and leaves and went to rest, utterly worn out with regret and fatigue.

When Blondine awoke it was broad daylight. At first she could scarcely collect her thoughts and understand her position but the sad realities of her lot were soon apparent to her and she commenced weeping as before.

Blondine was hungry, and she could not imagine how she was to secure food but soon she heard again the sound of the cow-bells. In a few moments, Blanchette stood near her. Blondine again loosened the porringer, drew the milk and drank till her hunger was appeased, then replaced the porringer and kissed Blanchette, hoping to see her again during the day. Every day in the morning, at midday and in the evening Blanchette came to offer Blondine her frugal repast. Blondine passed the time in tears for her poor friends, and bitter self-reproach for her crimes.

"By my unpardonable disobedience," she said to herself, "I have caused the most terrible misfortunes, which it is not in my power to repair. I have not only lost my good and true friends but I am deprived of the only means of finding my father, my poor father, who perhaps still expects his Blondine, his most unhappy Blondine, condemned to live and die alone in this frightful forest where her evil genius reigns supreme."

Blondine sought to amuse and employ herself in every possible way. Her little home was neatly arranged, and fresh moss and leaves composed her simple couch. She had tied some branches together and formed a seat and she made herself some needles and pins of the thorns and twisted some thread from the hemp which grew near her little hut, and with these implements she had mended the rents in her shoes.

In this simple way Blondine lived for six months; her grief was always the same and it is just to say that it was not her sad and solitary life which made her unhappy but sincere regret for her fault. She would willingly have consented to pass her life in the forest if she could thus have brought to life Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon.

## THE TORTOISE

ONE day Blondine was seated at the entrance of her hut, musing sadly as usual, thinking of her lost friends and of her father, when she saw before her an enormous Tortoise.

"Blondine," said the Tortoise, "if you will place yourself under my protection, I will conduct you out of this forest."

"And why, Madam Tortoise, should I seek to leave this forest? Here I caused the death of my friends and here I wish to die."

"Are you very certain of their death, Blondine?"

"What do you mean? Is it possible I may be deceived? But, no; I saw the ruins of their castle. The Parrot and the Toad assured me of their death. You are kind and good and wish to console me without doubt but, alas! I do not hope to see them again. If they still lived they would not have left me alone with the frightful despair of having caused their death."

"But how do you know, Blondine, that this seeming neglect is not forced upon them? They may now be subjected to a power greater than their own. You know, Blondine, that a true repentance will obtain pardon for many crimes."

"Ah! Madam Tortoise, if they still live, if you can give me news of them, if you can assure me that I need no longer reproach myself with their death, assure me that I shall one day see them again, there is no price which I will not gladly pay to merit this great happiness."

"Blondine, I am not permitted to disclose to you the fate of your friends but if you have the courage to mount on my back, remain there for six months and not address a single question to me during the journey, I will conduct you to a place where all will be revealed."

"I promise all that you ask, Madam Tortoise, provided I can only learn what has become of my friends."

"Take care, Blondine! reflect well. Six months without descending from my back and without asking me a single question! When once you have accepted the conditions, when we have commenced our journey, if you have not the courage to endure to the end, you will remain eternally in the power of the enchanter, Perroquet, and his sister Roseand. I cannot even continue to bestow upon you the little assistance to which you owe your life during the last six months."

"Let us go, Madam Tortoise let us be off, immediately. I prefer to die of hunger and fatigue rather than of grief and uncertainty. Your words have brought hope to my poor heart, and I have courage to undertake even a more difficult journey than that of which you speak."

"Let it be according to your wish, Blondine. Mount my back. Fear neither hunger nor thirst nor cold nor sunshine nor any accident during our long journey. As long as it lasts you shall not suffer from any inconvenience."

Blondine mounted on the back of the Tortoise. "Now, silence!" said she ; "and not one word till we have arrived and I speak to you first."

## THE JOURNEY AND ARRIVAL

THE journey of Blondine lasted, as the Tortoise had said, six months. They were three months passing through the forest. At the end of that time she found herself on an arid plain which it required six weeks to cross. Then Blondine perceived a castle which reminded her of that of Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon. They were a full month passing through the avenue to this castle.

Blondine burned with impatience. Would she indeed learn the fate of her dear friends at the palace? In spite of her extreme anxiety, she dared not ask a single question. If she could have descended from the back of the Tortoise, ten minutes would have sufficed for her to reach the castle. But, alas! the Tortoise crept on slowly and Blondine remembered that she had been forbidden to alight or to utter a word.

She resolved, therefore, to control her impatience. The Tortoise seemed rather to relax than to increase her speed. She consumed fourteen days still in passing through this avenue. They seemed fourteen centuries to Blondine. She never, however, lost sight of the castle or of the door. The place seemed deserted; she heard no noise, she saw no sign of life.

At last, after twenty-four days' journey, the Tortoise paused, and said to Blondine: "Now, princess, descend. By your courage and obedience you have earned the recompense I promised. Enter the little door which you see before you. The first person you will meet will be the fairy Bienveillante and she will make known to you the fate of your friends."

Blondine sprang lightly to the earth. She had been immovable so long she feared her limbs would be cramped but on the contrary she was as light and active as when she had lived so happily with her dear Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon and ran joyously and gracefully gathering flowers and chasing butterflies.

After having thanked the Tortoise most warmly she opened the door which had been pointed out to her and found herself before a young person clothed in white, who asked in a sweet voice, whom she desired to see?

"I wish to see the fairy Bienveillante. Tell her, I pray you, miss, that the princess Blondine begs earnestly to see her without delay."

"Follow me, princess," replied the young girl.

Blondine followed in great agitation. She passed through several beautiful rooms and met many young girls clothed in white, like her guide. They looked at her as if they recognized her and smiled graciously.

At last Blondine arrived in a room in every respect resembling that of Bonne-Biche in the Forest of Lilacs. The remembrances which this recalled were so painful that she did not perceive the disappearance of her fair young guide.

Blondine gazed sadly at the furniture of the room. She saw but one piece which had not adorned the apartment of Bonne-Biche in the Forest of Lilacs. This was a wardrobe in gold and ivory, exquisitely carved. It was closed. Blondine felt herself drawn towards it in an inexplicable manner. She was gazing at it intently, not having indeed the power to turn her eyes away, when a door opened and a young and beautiful woman, magnificently dressed, entered and drew near Blondine.

"What do you wish, my child?" said she, in a sweet, caressing voice.

"Oh, madam!" said Blondine, throwing herself at her feet, "I have been assured that you could give me news of my dear, kind friends, Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon. You know, madam, without doubt by what heedless disobedience I gave them up to destruction and that I wept for them a long time, believing them to be dead. But the Tortoise, who conducted me here, has given me reason to hope I may one day see them again. Tell me, madam, tell me if they yet live and if I may dare hope for the happiness of rejoining them?"

"Blondine," replied the fairy Bienveillante, sadly, "You are now about to know the fate of your friends, but no matter what you see or hear, do not lose courage or hope."

Saying these words, she seized the trembling Blondine and conducted her in front of the wardrobe which had already so forcibly attracted her attention.

"Blondine, here is the key to this wardrobe. Open it, and be brave!"

She handed Blondine a gold key. With a trembling hand the princess opened the wardrobe. What was her anguish when she saw the skins of Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon fastened to the wardrobe with diamond nails! At this terrible sight the unfortunate princess uttered a cry of horror and fell insensible at the feet of the fairy. At this moment the door opened and a prince, beautiful as the day, sprang towards Blondine, saying:

"Oh, my mother! this is too severe a trial for my sweet Blondine!"

"Alas! my son, my heart also bleeds for her. But you know that this last punishment was indispensable to deliver her forever from the yoke of the cruel genius of the Forest of Lilacs."

The fairy Bienveillante now with her wand touched Blondine, who was immediately restored to consciousness but despairing and sobbing convulsively, she exclaimed: "Let me die at once! My life is odious to me! No hope, no happiness, from this time forth forever for poor Blondine! My friends! my cherished friends! I will join you soon in the land of shadows!"

"Blondine! ever dear Blondine!" said the fairy, clasping her in her arms, "your friends live and love you tenderly. I am Bonne-Biche and this is my son, Beau-Minon. The wicked genius of the Forest of Lilacs, taking advantage of the negligence of my son, obtained dominion over us and forced us into the forms under which you have known us. We could not resume our natural appearance unless you should pluck the Rose, which I, knowing it to be your evil genius, retained captive. I placed it as far as possible from the castle in order to withdraw it from your view. I knew the misfortune to which you would be exposed on delivering your evil genius from his prison and, Heaven is my witness, that my son and I would willingly have remained a Hind and a Cat forever in your eyes in order to spare you the cruel tortures to which you have been subjected. The Parrot gained you over, in spite of all our precautions. You know the rest, my dear child. But you can never know all that we have suffered in witnessing your tears and your desolation."

Blondine embraced the Fairy ardently and addressed a thousand questions to her.

"What has become of the gazelles who waited upon us so gracefully?"

"You have already seen them, dear Blondine. They are the young girls who accompanied you. They also were changed when the evil genius gained his power over us."

"And the good white cow who brought me milk every day?"

"We obtained permission from the Queen of the Fairies to send you this light refreshment. The encouraging words of the Crow came also from us."

"You, then, madam, also sent me the Tortoise?"

"Yes, Blondine. The Queen of the Fairies, touched by your repentance and your grief, deprived the Evil Genius of the Forest of all power over us on condition of obtaining from you one last proof of submission, compelling you to take this long and fatiguing journey and inflicting the terrible punishment of making you believe that my son and I had died from your imprudence. I implored, entreated the Queen of the Fairies to spare you at least this last anguish but she was inflexible."

Blondine gazed at her lost friends, listened eagerly to every word and did not cease to embrace those she had feared were eternally separated from her by death. The remembrance of her dear father now presented itself. The prince Parfait understood her secret desire and made it known to his mother, the fairy Bienveillante.

"Prepare yourself, dear Blondine, to see your father. Informed by me, he now expects you."

At this moment, Blondine found herself in a chariot of gold and pearls, the fairy Bienveillante seated at her right hand, and the prince Parfait at her feet, regarding her kindly and tenderly. The chariot was drawn by four swans of dazzling whiteness. They flew with such rapidity, that five minutes brought them to the palace of King Benin. All the court was assembled about the king, all were expecting the princess Blondine.

When the chariot appeared, the cries of joy and welcome were so tumultuous that the swans were confused and almost lost their way. Prince Parfait, who guided them,

succeeded in arresting their attention and the chariot drew up at the foot of the grand stairway. King Benin sprang towards Blondine who, jumping lightly from the chariot, threw herself in her father's arms. They remained a long time in this position and everybody wept tears of joy.

When King Benin had somewhat recovered himself he kissed, respectfully and tenderly, the hand of the good fairy who, after having protected and educated the princess Blondine had now restored her to him. He embraced the prince Parfait whom he found most charming.

There were eight resplendent gala days in honor of the return of Blondine. At the close of this gay festival, the fairy Bienveillante announced her intention of returning home. But Prince Parfait and Blondine were so melancholy at the prospect of this separation that King Benin resolved they should never quit the place. He wedded the fairy and Blondine became the happy wife of Prince Parfait who was always for her the Beau-Minon of the Forest of Lilacs.

Brunette, whose character had entirely changed, came often to see Blondine. Prince Violent, her husband, became more amiable as Brunette became more gentle and they were very happy.

As to Blondine, she had no misfortunes, no griefs. She had lovely daughters, who resembled her, and good and handsome sons, the image of their manly father, Prince Parfait. Everybody loved them and every one connected with them was happy ever after.

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