# 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. To-morrow—to-morrow, 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.

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