

The maiden of the forest

Long ago, in an enchanted forest called Nemkova, lived a mysterious and gentle maiden. This was a woodland full of secrets and magic. Its trees seemed to touch the sky, and their leaves shone in every colour of the rainbow when sunlight fell on them. Some flowers grew nowhere else: golden petals closed when it rained, while other blossoms sang softly in the wind.

The maiden had long hair as golden as sunlight. Her dress, made of leaves and flowers, changed colour with the seasons. Every creature, from squirrels to deer, loved her because she cared for them tenderly. Each morning she walked through the forest, gently touching the plants and trees. Everything seemed brighter and more alive wherever she passed. Birds sang cheerful songs, and flowers opened to greet her.

She had another special gift: she could talk to animals. She often met rabbits, owls and squirrels to hear their stories and problems. She always helped, whether by finding a nesting place or tending an injured creature. To thank her, the animals brought little presents, such as wildflowers and sweet berries.

One summer evening, as the sky turned orange and pink, a brave and curious knight entered Nemkova. He had heard of the magical maiden and wanted to meet her. He walked until he saw a beam of light between the trees. Drawing closer, he found her beside a stream, combing her hair with a comb made of leaves. He was amazed: he had never seen anyone so beautiful or a place so peaceful.

“Maiden of the forest,” he said gently, “you are a beautiful and kind creature. I would like you to come to my castle. You would have delicious food, silk clothes and a great room filled with golden light.”

She smiled tenderly.

“Thank you for your offer, knight, but this forest is my home. Here I have everything I need. The trees are my friends, the animals my family and the flowers my happiness. The forest needs me as much as I need it.”

The knight was surprised, but understood that he must respect her decision. He watched her stand and walk among the trees. Little flowers grew beneath her feet at every step. He followed for a while in wonder, seeing her talk to animals, play with squirrels and dance to the sound of wind in the leaves. He saw that her happiness lay in nature and in caring for the creatures around her.

At last, he said a respectful goodbye and returned to his castle, carrying the memory of that magical evening. He told everyone about Nemkova’s beauty and the maiden’s kindness. From then on, the people of the nearby village knew that, even when they could not see her, she was there protecting nature.

The maiden continued living among the trees and flowers, caring for them and keeping the magic alive. At night, if you listen closely, you

may hear her song, gentle as a breeze through leaves. And if you ever lose your way in that storybook forest, follow the glow of the little flowers growing in her footsteps: her kindness will guide you home.