Rhodopis: An Egyptian Cinderella Story

Rhodopis lived in Egypt, but she was born far away in Greece. Her hair was not smooth and black like most Egyptians; instead, it was curly and yellow. She lived as a servant, and she worked hard. The other servant girls did not like Rhodopis because she was different. They gave her more work to do.

Each day, when Rhodopis had finished pulling weeds from the garden or washing clothes in the river, she put on her special golden shoes and went to a quiet place to practice dancing.

One day, Rhodopis heard that the pharaoh of Egypt had invited everyone in the land to a celebration. She decided to wear her golden shoes, and she was very happy.

The other servants did not like to see her happy, so they gave her so much work that she could not go to the party. They told her to make the bread, wash the clothes, sweep the floor, cook the soup, sew the torn clothes, dust the rooms, go to the market, and feed the animals. Then they all left for the party. Rhodopis tried not to cry while she started on the long list of things to do.

Rhodopis went to the riverbank to wash clothes. She set her golden shoes on a rock and began to scrub. As she was working, a hawk swooped down and stole one shoe.

At the same time, the pharaoh was watching his party. He sighed. He wanted to find just the right girl for his wife, but so far no one had caught his attention. Many of the girls were pretty, but he wanted a sign to help him choose the right one.
Just then, a hawk dove from the sky, dropped a golden shoe in the pharaoh’s lap, and flew off.

The pharaoh picked up the shoe and said, “This was no accident.” Then he stood and called his helpers to him. “Somewhere in Egypt is a girl who fits this shoe,” he told them. “Whoever she is, I will bring her here and make her my wife.”

The pharaoh’s servants spent many days searching throughout the kingdom. While the pharaoh waited, he walked up and down his long hallway, wondering what kind of girl would come.

At last, a servant told him that they found the girl. When she came to see him, he held up the golden shoe and asked, “Is this yours?” Rhodopis was too shy to speak, but she nodded and showed him the other shoe.

The servants were surprised that the pharaoh chose to marry Rhodopis. She was not born in Egypt. The pharaoh said, “Her heart is Egyptian, and she belongs with us.” Everyone was happy, and Rhodopis loved both Egypt and the pharaoh all her life.