

CHAPTER 9 - THE TRIBULATION OF TROT

The apartments occupied by the Six Snubnosed Princesses were so magnificent that when Trot first entered them, led by her haughty captors, she thought they must be the most beautiful rooms in the world. There was a long and broad reception room, with forty-seven windows in it, and opening out of it were six lovely bedchambers, each furnished in the greatest luxury. Adjoining each sleeping room was a marble bath, and each Princess had a separate boudoir and a dressing room. The furnishings were of the utmost splendor, blue-gold and blue gems being profusely used in the decorations, while the divans and chairs were of richly carved bluewood upholstered in blue satins and silks. The draperies were superbly embroidered, and the rugs upon the marble floors were woven with beautiful scenes in every conceivable shade of blue.

When they first reached the reception room, Princess Azure cast herself upon a divan while her five sisters sat or reclined in easy chairs with their heads thrown back and their blue chins scornfully elevated. Trot, who was much annoyed at the treatment she had received, did not hesitate to seat herself also in a big easy chair.

"Slave!" cried Princess Cerulia, "Fetch me a mirror."

"Slave!" cried Princess Turquoise, "A lock of my hair is loosened; bind it up."

"Slave!" cried Princess Cobalt, "Unfasten my shoes; they're too tight."

"Slave!" cried Princess Sapphire, "Bring hither my box of blue chocolates."

"Slave!" cried Princess Azure, "Stand by my side and fan me."

"Slave!" cried Princess Indigo, "Get out of that chair. How dare you sit in our presence?"

"If you're saying all those things to me," replied Trot, "you may as well save your breath. I'm no slave." And she cuddled down closer in the chair.

"You ARE a slave!" shouted the six all together.

"I'm not!"

"Our father, the Revered and Resplendent Royal Ruler of the Blues, has made you our slave," asserted Indigo with a yawn.

"But he can't," objected the little girl. "I'm some Royal an' Rapturous an' Ridic'lous myself, an' I won't allow any cheap Boolooroo to order me 'round."

"Are you of royal birth?" asked Azure, seeming surprised.

"Royal! Why, I'm an American, Snubnoses, and if there's anything royaler than an American, I'd like to know what it is."

The Princesses seemed uncertain what reply to make to this speech and began whispering together. Finally, Indigo said to Trot, "We do not think it matters what you were in your own country, for having left there you have forfeited your rank. By recklessly intruding into our domain, you have become a slave, and being a slave you must obey us or suffer the consequences."

"What cons'quences?" asked the girl.

"Dare to disobey us and you will quickly find out," snapped Indigo, swaying her head from side to side on its long, swan-like neck like the pendulum of a clock.

"I don't want any trouble," said Trot gravely. "We came to Sky Island by mistake and wanted to go right away again; but your father wouldn't let us. It isn't our fault we're still here, an' I'm free to say you're a very dis'gree'ble an' horrid lot of people with no manners to speak of, or you'd treat us nicely."

"No impertinence!" cried Indigo savagely.

"Why, it's the truth," replied Trot.

Indigo made a rush and caught Trot by both shoulders. The Princess was twice the little girl's size, and she shook her victim so violently that Trot's teeth rattled together. Then Princess Cobalt came up and slapped one side of the slave's face, and Princess Turquoise ran forward and slapped the other side. Cerulia gave Trot a push one way, and Sapphire pushed her the other way, so the little girl was quite out of breath and very angry when finally her punishment ceased. She had not been much hurt, though, and she was wise enough to understand that these Princesses were all cruel and vindictive, so that her safest plan was to pretend to obey them.

"Now then," commanded Princess Indigo, "go and feed my little blue dog that crows like a rooster."

"And feed my pretty blue cat that sings like a bird," said Princess Azure.

"And feed my soft, blue lamb that chatters like a monkey," said Princess Cobalt.

"And feed my poetic blue parrot that barks like a dog," said Princess Sapphire.

"And feed my fuzzy blue rabbit that roars like a lion," said Princess Turquoise.

"And feed my lovely blue peacock that mews like a cat," said Princess Cerulia.

"Anything else?" asked Trot, drawing a long breath.

"Not until you have properly fed our pets," replied Azure with a scowl.

"What do they eat, then?"

"Meat!"

"Milk!"

"Clover!"

"Seeds!"

"Bread!"

"Carrots!"

"All right," said Trot, "where do you keep the menagerie?"

"Our pets are in our boudoirs," said Indigo harshly. "What a little fool you are!"

"Perhaps," said Trot, pausing as she was about to leave the room, "when I grow up I'll be as big a fool as any of you."

Then she ran away to escape another shaking, and in the first boudoir she found the little blue dog curled up on a blue cushion in a corner. Trot patted his head gently, and this surprised the dog, who was accustomed to cuffs and kicks. So he licked Trot's hand and wagged his funny little tail and then straightened up and crowed like a rooster. The girl was delighted with the queer doggie, and she found some meat in a cupboard and fed him out of her hand, patting the tiny creature and stroking his soft blue hair. The doggie had never in his life known anyone so kind and gentle, so when Trot went into the next boudoir, the animal followed close at her heels, wagging his tail every minute.

The blue cat was asleep on a window seat, but it woke up when Trot tenderly took it in her lap and fed it milk from a blue-gold dish. It was a pretty cat and instantly knew the little girl was a friend vastly different from its own bad-tempered mistress, so it sang beautifully as a bird sings, and both the cat and the dog followed Trot into the third boudoir.

Here was a tiny baby lamb with fleece as blue as a larkspur and as soft as milk.

"Oh, you darling!" cried Trot, hugging the little lamb tight in her arms. At once the lamb began chattering just as a monkey chatters, only in the most friendly and grateful way, and Trot fed it a handful of fresh blue clover and smoothed and petted it until the lamb was eager to follow her wherever she might go.

When she came to the fourth boudoir, a handsome blue parrot sat on a blue perch and began barking as if it were nearly starved. Then it cried out,

"Rub-a-dub, dub, Gimme some grub!"

Trot laughed and gave it some seeds, and while the parrot ate them she stroked gently his soft feathers. The bird seemed much astonished at the unusual caress and turned upon the girl first one little eye and then the other as if trying to discover why she was so kind. He had never experienced kind treatment in all his life. So it was no wonder that when the little girl entered the fifth boudoir she was followed by the parrot, the lamb, the cat and the dog, who all stood beside her and watched her feed the peacock, which she found strutting around and mewing like a cat for his dinner. Said the parrot,

"I spy a peacock's eye On every feather. I wonder why?"

The peacock soon came to love Trot as much as the other bird and all the beasts did, and it spread its tail and strutted after her into the next boudoir, the sixth one. As she entered this room, Trot gave a start of fear, for a terrible roar like the roar of a lion greeted her. But there was no lion there; a fuzzy, blue rabbit was making all the noise. "For goodness sake keep quiet," said Trot. "Here's a nice blue carrot for you. The color seems all wrong, but it may taste jus' as good as if it was red."

Evidently it did taste good, for the rabbit ate it greedily. When it was not roaring, the creature was so soft and fluffy that Trot played with it and fondled it a long time after it had finished eating, and the rabbit played with the cat and the dog and the lamb and did not seem a bit afraid of the parrot or the peacock. But all of a sudden in pounced Princess Indigo with a yell of anger.

"So this is how you waste your time, is it?" exclaimed the Princess, and grabbing Trot's arm, she jerked the girl to her feet and began pushing her from the room. All the pets began to follow her, and seeing this, Indigo yelled at them to keep back. As they paid no attention to this command, the princess seized a basin of water and dashed the fluid over the beasts and birds, after which she renewed her attempt to push Trot from the room. The pets rebelled at such treatment, and believing they ought to protect Trot, whom they knew to be their friend, they proceeded to defend her. The little blue dog dashed at Indigo and bit her right ankle, while the blue cat scratched her left leg with its claws and the parrot flew upon her shoulder and pecked her ear. The lamb ran up and butted Indigo so that she stumbled forward on her face, when the peacock proceeded to pound her head with his wings. Indigo, screaming with fright, sprang to her feet again, but the rabbit ran between her legs and tripped her up, all the time roaring loudly like a lion, and the dog crowed triumphantly, as a rooster crows, while the cat warbled noisily and the lamb chattered and the parrot barked and the peacock screeched "me-ow!"

Altogether, Indigo was, as Trot said, "scared stiff," and she howled for help until her sisters ran in and rescued her, pulling her through the bedchamber into the reception room. When she was alone, Trot sat down on the floor and laughed until the tears came to her eyes, and she hugged all the pets and kissed them every one and thanked them for protecting her.

"That's all right; We like a fight,"

declared the parrot in reply.

The Princesses were horrified to find Indigo so scratched and bitten, and they were likewise amazed at the rebellion of their six pets, which they had never petted, indeed, but kept in their boudoirs so they could abuse them whenever they felt especially wicked or ill-natured. None of the snubnosed ones dared enter the room where the girl was, but they called through a crack in the door for Trot to come out instantly. Trot, pretending not to hear, paid no attention to these demands.

Finding themselves helpless and balked of their revenge, the Six Snubnosed Princesses finally recovered from their excitement and settled down to a pleasant sisterly quarrel, as was their customary amusement. Indigo wanted to have Trot patched, and Cerulia wanted her beaten with knotted cords, and Cobalt wanted her locked up in a dark room, and Sapphire wanted her fed on sand, and Turquoise wanted her bound to a windmill, and so between these various desires, they quarreled and argued until dinner time arrived.

Trot was occupying Indigo's room, so that Princess was obliged to dress with Azure, not daring to enter her own chamber, and the two sisters quarreled so enthusiastically that they almost came to blows before they were ready for dinner.

Before the Six Snubnosed Princesses went to the Royal Banquet Hall, Cobalt stuck her head through a crack of the door and said to Trot, "If you want any dinner, you'll find it in the servants' hall. I advise you to eat, for after our dinner we will decide upon a fitting punishment for you, and then I'm sure you won't have much appetite."

"Thank you," replied the girl. "I'm right hungry, jus' now." She waited until the snubnosed sextette had pranced haughtily away, and then she came out, followed by all the pets, and found her way to the servants' quarters.