

Chapter V Twinkle Promises to Be Brave

IN the center of the valley was a great cluster of palaces that appeared to be built of crystal and silver and mother-of-pearl, and golden filigree-work. So dainty and beautiful were these fairy dwellings that Twinkle had no doubt for an instant but that she gazed upon fairyland. She could almost see, from the far mountain upon which she stood, the airy, gauze-winged forms of the fairies themselves, floating gently amidst their pretty palaces and moving gracefully along the jeweled streets.

But another sight now attracted her attention--a big, gray, ugly looking castle standing frowning on the mountain side at her left. It overlooked the lovely city of palaces like a dark cloud on the edge of a blue sky, and the girl could not help giving a shudder as she saw it. All around the castle was a high fence of iron spikes.

"That fence is enchanted," said the turtle, as if he knew she was looking at it; "and no fairy can pass it, because the power to prevent it has been given to the giant. But a mortal has never been forbidden to pass the fence, for no one ever supposed that a mortal would come here or be able to see it. That is the reason I have brought you to this place, and the reason why you alone are able to help me."

"Gracious!" cried Twinkle; "must I meet the Carbonated Giant?"

"He's corrugated," said the turtle.

"I know he's something dreadful," she wailed, "because he's so hard to pronounce."

"You will surely have to meet him," declared the turtle; "but do not fear, I will protect you from all harm."

"Well, a Corralated Giant's a mighty big person," said the girl, doubtfully, "and a mud-turtle isn't much of a fighter. I guess I'll go home."

"That is impossible," declared the turtle. "You are too far from home ever to get back without my help, so you may as well be good and obedient."

"What must I do?" she asked.

"We will wait until it is nearly noon, when the giant will put his pot on the fire to boil his dinner. We can tell the right time by watching the smoke come out

of his chimney. Then you must march straight up to the castle and into the kitchen where the giant is at work, and throw me quickly into the boiling kettle. That is all that you will be required to do."

"I never could do it!" declared Twinkle.

"Why not?"

"You'd be scalded to death, and then I'd be a murderer!"

"Nonsense!" said the turtle, peevishly. "I know what I'm doing, and if you obey me I'll not be scalded but an instant; for then I'll resume my own form. Remember that I'm a fairy, and fairies can't be killed so easily as you seem to think."

"Won't it hurt you?" she inquired.

"Only for a moment; but the reward will be so great that I won't mind an instant's pain. Will you do this favor for me?"

"I'll try," replied Twinkle, gravely.

"Then I will be very grateful," said Prince Turtle, "and agree to afterward send you home safe and sound, and as quickly as you came."