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# How Chocolate Became, a Tale of Modern Magic



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Once upon a long, long time ago the world went through a dark age filled with want and wretchedness. Yet it was neither wars nor plagues nor hurricanes nor hunger that were to blame for this, and neither was it floods or earthquakes. It was simply that the world lacked something!

Something that for certain pampered people, those who adore their snacks and sweets, is more important still than peace on earth, good health and the quiet joys of nature. Have you guessed what it was?

Yes, in that long-ago, unhappy age the people had no chocolate...

But for all that, there was still a sunny country filled with happy, dark-skinned people. And why were they happy? Because they did not even know that such a thing as chocolate existed. This country had a palace, and in that palace lived a king who was all-powerful, a queen who was always happy to agree with him, and a princess who was greedy. They lived surrounded by a host of courtiers and butlers, hangmen, judges, bards and minstrels, chefs, pastry-cooks ...and an apprentice.



Day in, day out the apprentice would be up by dawn and busy in the kitchens, washing the dishes, scouring the saucepans and making sure the plates were polished and the glasses gleaming. Once all this was done he would help the master pastry-cook as he conjured up blancmanges, biscuits and ice cream. And in return he learned a thousand and one tricks of the pastry-maker's trade.

Then each night, when the sun had gone down and the pale moon was rising, he would light a lamp that cast its warm glow on the great love of his life, a demanding love that few had mastered in those distant days: the written word. He would spend endless hours hunched over the palace's few manuscripts, written by wise men and sorcerers who had once lived there. Now these stores of knowledge lay neglected in silent, dusty piles down in the palace cellars, a stone's throw from the noisy, bustling kitchens and the wine vaults.

And when at last he took himself to bed... ah, then his second love, a love much harder to achieve, would come to meet him -but only in his dreams. And the figure that had haunted them these many months was none other than the greedy young princess.





Until one night, when he was ready to put out his lamp, there came the sound of furtive footsteps descending from the royal chambers and making for the corner of the kitchens where his straw mattress lay. At first he was alarmed -but then his eyes beheld the miracle he longed for: the lovely plump princess in person, come in the middle of the night, the greedy darling, to see what tasty titbit she could find to tide her over till the dawn. At first she did not notice him...

What her eyes fell on was the pastries the apprentice had prepared that very evening, in the hope that something made by his hands would reach hers: little balls of almond paste, oozing with juices of exotic fruits, and dusted with the the iridescent scales a brilliant blue butterfly had shaken from its wings in flight. He had wrapped them lovingly in soft rose petals, sweetened with thyme honey from the islands and a syrup of wild strawberries. As they lay there on the bench, spread out on a cloth of fine white linen, they looked for all the world like a bed sheet scattered with warm kisses that called to her invitingly -and she could not resist. Stretching out her hand, she picked one up and popped it in her mouth... Mmm!

Then, unexpectedly, the lamp's flame flared and flickered and in its dancing shadows their eyes met. There stood the princess with the pastry in her mouth, looking as sweet as sweet could ever be, and facing her was the apprentice, his dark, dark, pitch-black eyes burning like lighted coals from the words of wisdom that he had been reading. And -what else could have happened? -they fell in love, of course!

