O<small>NCE UPON A TIME</small>, there was a young girl whose mother fell sick. Before the mother died, she told her sweet-natured daughter, "Be good and you will always be protected."

Now the girl's father was rich and he soon married again. His second wife was a haughty woman with two vile daughters who were hard of heart. No sooner was the wedding over than the new wife showed her true colours. She gave all the hard work about the house to her new stepdaughter. Every day, the girl washed the pots, swept the floors and cleaned the hearth.

The house was empty as Cinderella washed the pots, swept the floors and cleaned the hearth. She wept as she did so.

"What's the matter, child?" said a kindly voice. Cinderella's fairy godmother had appeared as if out of nowhere.

"I want…" Cinderella was crying too hard to speak.

"You want to go to the ball," said her godmother. "First, go to the garden and pick me a pumpkin."

Cinderella picked the plumpest pumpkin she could find. Her godmother struck the pumpkin with her wand and it changed into a golden coach.

"Fetch me mice from the mousetrap."

As the mice dashed out of the trap, the godmother tapped each one lightly with her wand and it turned into a white horse. Soon the golden coach had six fine white horses.

"Next, go and see if there are any rats in the rat-trap," said the godmother. "A rat would make a splendid coachman."

Cinderella found three fat rats in the rat-trap. One had particularly long whiskers. The godmother tapped this rat with her wand and it changed into a coachman with the most magnificent moustache you ever did see.

Finally, she tapped her wand to Cinderella's rags, which changed into a white dress that sparkled in the moonlight. Then she gave Cinderella the prettiest pair of glass slippers.

"Be home by midnight," warned her godmother. "If you stay one moment longer, your coach will turn into a pumpkin, your horses to mice, your coachman to a rat and your dress to rags."

"I promise," said Cinderella. And she left for the ball.