

## The Princess Mouse • By Aaron Shepard

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Mikko walked through the forest for hours without seeing a soul. But at last he came to a cottage deep in the woods.

“I knew I’d find a sweetheart!” said Mikko. But when he went inside, he saw no one.

“All this way for nothing,” he said sadly.

“Maybe not!” came a tiny voice.

Mikko looked around, but the only living thing in sight was a little mouse on a table. Standing on its hind legs, it gazed at him with large, bright eyes.

“Did you say something?” he asked it.

“Of course I did! Now, why don’t you tell me your name and what you came for?”

Mikko had never talked with a mouse, but he felt it only polite to reply. “My name is Mikko, and I’ve come looking for a sweetheart.”

The mouse squealed in delight. “Why, Mikko, I’ll gladly be your sweetheart!”

“But you’re only a mouse,” said Mikko.

“That may be true,” she said, “but I can still love you faithfully. Besides, even a mouse can be special! Come feel my fur.”

With one finger, Mikko stroked the mouse’s back. “Why, it feels like velvet! Just like the gown of a princess!”

“That’s right, Mikko.” And as he petted her, she sang to him prettily.

“Mikko’s sweetheart will I be.

What a fine young man is he!

Gown of velvet I do wear,

Like a princess fine and rare.”

Mikko looked into those large, bright eyes and thought she really was quite nice, for a mouse. And since he’d found no one else anyway, he said, “All right, little mouse, you can be my sweetheart.”

“Oh, Mikko!” she said happily. “I promise you won’t be sorry.”

Mikko wasn’t so sure, but he just stroked her fur and smiled.