**“Glass Heart” / 978**

 Cinderella was the finest maiden in all the land. Unfortunately, her father had died when she was younger leaving her with her evil stepmother and stepsisters who made her dress like a maid and work day and night. One day they banned her from going to the prince’s ball. She was devastated, and while she was crying, suddenly a witch arrived. The witch told her she could go to the ball but she had to trade her heart for a glass heart. Cinderella was too upset to think straight and accepted the offer.

She went to the ball and immediately was swept into a dance with the prince. They danced into the night and Cinderella’s mood began to lift, she was dancing with the boy she had dreamed about marrying all her life. Yet she had an odd feeling in her chest. It was like she knew she wanted him but her heart was telling her that she had no interest in him. The ball ended and the prince offered her to stay the night. Cinderella accepted not wanting to go home.

As morning neared, Cinderella lying on the bed, held her hands crossed against her chest. She suddenly jumped up terrified. The steady beat that had always comforted her was gone. She now remembered everything. She had been banned from the ball, and had traded her heart to be able to attend. She now realized she couldn’t love the prince even when he had whispered in her ear that he loved her as he left her in the room.

She began to cry. She did not know what would happen to her or if the glass heart would even keep her alive. As she wept her tears began to make a puddle. When she looked down it was not her reflection that she saw but the witch’s. The witch’s reflection began to speak. “Don’t cry for it will only waste your time. You can still live until however old you were meant to live, the only thing that has changed is that your love is gone.”

 The reflection disappeared and Cinderella sat stunned at what she had just witnessed. Cinderella crawled up onto the bed but couldn’t fall asleep. The next few days were spent beside the prince laughing and talking. Cinderella tried to forget what the witch had said and love the prince but try as she might she couldn’t. Weeks turned into months and before Cinderella knew it two years had gone by.

One day Cinderella was having a picnic with the prince down by the stream when he asked her to marry him. She had said yes but still she did not love him. The wedding was set for a month away. They would have it June 16th, the day Cinderella was born. That night Cinderella did not feel happy even though she was engaged. She just felt ashamed that someone that cared for her so much would not be able to get any love back. Even so she had vowed to never tell anyone what had happened the night of the ball.

Her wedding day came and Cinderella was dressed in a dress more expensive than anything she had ever owned. Cinderella knew that any other girl in the kingdom would pay to marry the prince but still she did not love him. In an hour she would be married to the man of her dreams and riding away in a carriage, yet she was not excited. She was just lonely and sad.

The hour passed in a daze and she found herself sitting at a table with the prince’s family, staring at her new ring. Cinderella excused herself from the table saying she had to go to the bathroom. Once she got in the bathroom she went to the mirror and started to cry. Suddenly the witch appeared in the mirror and gave her an offer. In return for Cinderella’s heart back the witch wanted her first child. Cinderella agreed on one condition, she wanted her heart now and promised that she would have a child in three years. The witch agreed and said she would meet Cinderella in the middle of the orchard at midnight tonight.

Cinderella went back to the party and tried to enjoy herself. At the end of the day she rushed back to her room. It was 11:05, Cinderella changed into warmer clothes and tried her best to hide her face. She knew if anybody saw her they wouldn’t let her outside alone and then Cinderella wouldn’t get her heart back. Cinderella left her room and made it to the orchard. She waited there for five minutes before she saw the witch appear. The witch transformed her glass heart into her real heart and said remember your first child is mine. Then the witch disappeared just as quickly as she had reappeared.

Cinderella ran back to the castle and as she ran the love she felt for the prince rushed back into her body tingling the ends of her fingers. She ran to the prince’s room and launched into his arms. Cinderella told the prince everything and afterwards he hugged her tight. It was not the response Cinderella was expecting but she had known that he’d deserved the truth no matter what. Cinderella and the prince’s first child came three years later. The moment Cinderella saw the baby girl she knew what she had to do. She told the prince that she could not bear to give the baby to the witch and he agreed. Together they took some money and the few belongings they needed and fled the kingdom. Cinderella knew the witch would be furious but she had made sure the witch would never find her or her family. The new family lived happily ever after and Cinderella’s love had never been so powerful.