

*Every day charming portraits were brought him, but none gave promise of the beauty of his late Queen; instead of coming to a decision he brooded over his sorrow until in the end his reason left him. In his delusions he imagined himself once more a young man; he thought the Princess his daughter, in her youth and beauty, was his Queen as he had known her in the days of their courtship, and living thus in the past he urged the unhappy girl to speedily become his bride.*

—from Charles Perrault’s “Donkeyskin”, or “Peau d’Ane,” in *Cinderella: Tales From Around the World* (SurLaLune Fairy Tale Series).

### **To My Late Queen**

I have kept my promise to you, my love;  
no maid has entered my court with beauty  
worthy of you. You have remained my dove,  
my one truth—please forgive my flawed duty;  
something has shifted my soul, so sad.  
Our daughter, our Princess, she is marching  
on womanhood’s path, the same way you had,  
and with each year she grows more fetching.  
My child, our child—I am left in awe, but  
The churchman says I should not feel so. Yet I  
feel this blaze whenever I see her strut  
down my halls, longing to hear her soft trill.  
    Sinful, it is; I care not, in my pride.  
    By this year’s end, she will become my bride.

*“This is the most happy moment of your life. Wrap yourself in this skin, leave the palace, and walk so long as you can find ground to carry you: when one sacrifices everything to virtue the gods know how to mete out reward...”*

—from Charles Perrault’s “Donkeyskin”, or “Peau d’Ane,” in *Cinderella: Tales From Around the World* (*SurLaLune Fairy Tale Series*).

## **Skin**

I can no longer stay here,  
my godmother knows this too.  
This kingdom that I was born for  
has fallen into a deep ruin  
led by my mad King Father,  
who looks at me and longs for her.

Queen Mother mine, with lush dark hair and gleaming blue eyes—I barely knew her,  
but many have come to me to find her here.  
So does he, with his hungered touches and gaze—Father,  
and now future husband, too.  
My mind, a palace once safe and strong, has become a ruin  
for me to wander through when I cannot sleep. What for?

No, no! I need to be clear, I need to be ready for  
the deed that must be done, just as her  
instructions had detailed; must not bring ruin  
to Godmother’s plans to get me away from here.  
Thinking of makes my hands tremble, for it is too  
horrible, sickening—but so am I now. Right, Father?

In the back of the castle, there are stables often visited by Father,  
housing a donkey that has shat much gold for  
our beloved kingdom, building and sustaining her  
wealth and prosperity. To destroy this creature would bring too  
much chaos and possibly destruction here,  
but this is where I go, holding this sharp knife, to bring everything to ruin.

This donkey’s skin is rough on mine and starting to ruin  
my dress of gold, an old birthday gift from Father  
before his sickness for me—or perhaps it was already here,  
and I was too blind to know what his sudden tenderness was for?

Away with this dress; I shall wear my plain one of silver, a gift from her,  
dear Godmother, whom I will miss dearly, and my home too.

And my cat, and my friends, and the painting of Mother too.  
I want to say goodbye to them all, but I cannot bring ruin  
to this plan to leave and never return, even to her,  
dear Godmother, who must continue living under my Father.  
No one must know that she helped me, for  
with how mad he's gone, he might end her life now and here.

Away I will run from here, my mad King Father,  
my dead mother and her memory, and even "Princess" too.  
For now, I will just be me. I will find strength in my ruin.