

The Fairy Tale
By Susan Martinez

"Tell me another bedtime story," Andrew said, as I tucked him in.

I smiled at him. He was such an adorable five-year-old, with his big blue eyes and his short blond hair. Almost as adorable as my own children. At the thought of them, I had his bedtime story.

"Well, once upon a time, there was this woman, and she had two children two children. They all loved each other very much. But they didn't see each other, because their mother was in a far away land, working for a cruel queen. The queen made the lady scrub her floors, and clean everything for only a small amount of money. But she worked every day and night for her children. She always sent them treats and gifts from this far away land she'd manage to get from the queen, and also the hope that they'd be reunited once again."

"Maria," Andrew's mother, Mrs. Peterson, came inside the room. "May I please see you outside?"

I got up and went into the hallway. In the light, Mrs. Peterson looked very stern.

"Yes, ma'am?" I asked her. I had a bad feeling about this.

She looked away from me, "I've been thinking, and I've come to a decision that we, as in to say myself and my husband, no longer require your services."

"Why?" I didn't mean it to come out so blunt, but... this was unexpected... I wasn't getting fired. No, I couldn't.

"Well," she still wasn't looking at me, "I want to try something new. I've heard about this very *wonderful* woman from Honduras does a better job at cleaning than you do, and for a lot less. Seriously, you've been slacking off. Maybe some other people will accept your lousy cleaning jobs and decide to hire you."

"You...you can't do this...*please*, ma'am, I need this job, I need it to send money to my children, and -" By the time I reached the end of my sentence, I already knew there was no convincing her.

"I'm sorry, Maria, but you're fired," there was no pity in her voice.

"Please ma'am, *please*, you can't do this!" I was practically pleading with her.

"Oh, I can't now?" her voice was icy cold now, "Fine. Call the cops. I don't know who'll be in more trouble, you, an illegal immigrant, or me, a law-abiding, U.S. citizen."

She held out her cellphone. It was time for me to admit defeat.

"I'll go say goodbye to Andrew," I said.

I walked back into the room, where Andrew sat up in his bed, his eyes wide and bright. I could clearly see my own children's big brown eyes, calling out for me. I repressed a sob.

"Maria! Maria! What happens next?" He was literally jumping up and down.

I gave him a watery smile, "I've got to go. Now be a good boy for your mommy. I won't be seeing you for a while, but I'll be back." I grabbed my purse, and headed for the door.

"But what happens next? Do the kids get to see their mom again? Does the queen finally leave the lady alone? Is there a happy ending?" he was sitting upright in his bed. I was already out the door.

I looked back at him, and tried to give him a smile, "I hope so. I really do."