(2) Coal Blake

In the distant kingdom of Mirror Lake, there lived a princess named Coal Blake. She was born with dark skin and a flat nose, features that didn't align with the royal standards of beauty. Her greasy hair clung to her scalp, and her face was covered in deep acne scars. Even her heavy makeup couldn't mask the deep lines etched into her skin or the uneven texture of her cheeks. Though Blake didn't fit the standards, she was still cherished by the people for her compassion and grace. Unfortunately, Blake's stepmother, a witch obsessed with being the most beautiful woman in the world. She owned a magical mirror that answered anything she asked.

The Queen with a wild look in her eyes asked, "Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest one of all?"

"You, my Queen, were the fairest one of all. But now, Princess Blake has become more beautiful than you," the mirror replied.

"No! That's impossible. I am the most beautiful woman alive. She cannot surpass me."

"I'm sorry, my Queen. I'm not wrong. As time goes by, the princess will be seen as the most beautiful woman in the world."

Listening to the response, the Queen grew jealous of her. Fearing Blake might become the most beautiful woman, she commanded a hunter to lead Blake deep into the forest and abandon her there.

"You must go into the forest and never return. Do you understand?" the hunter growled. Blake looked at him with sorrow. "What did I do wrong? Why can't I go home?" "It's not your fault," he sighed. "The Queen fears your future."

Alone and uncertain, Blake wandered into the forest, where she met seven small birds. They had ragged feathers, off-key voices, and clumsy wings, misfits of the woods. Yet, each of them held stories of hardship and resilience.

“I was mocked for having short wings. They said that I would never fly.” said the eldest. “But I found my own way to soar.”

“I used to hate my voice because I was tone deaf,” another bird chirped, “but my songs make babies giggle.”

Each night, Blake listened to their heart-broken stories. As they revealed their scars and strengths, her shattered heart slowly mended.

“You know,” a bluebird said one evening, “your heart is like the lake, imperfect, but capable of reflecting the truest beauty."

Blake smiled. “To me, you all seem like gorgeous swans now. If you can change how you see yourselves... maybe I can too.”

Blake helped rebuild nests, taught the birds to fly higher, and began to walk with the quiet confidence of a leader. One day, the Queen discovered Blake was still alive and arrived in disguise, offering her a gleaming red apple.

“One bite of this apple,” she cooed, “and you’ll become truly beautiful.”

Blake gazed at the apple, then took a deep breath. “If I’ve already learned to love who I am, why would I need to change?”

She turned away. Her heart began to glow, not transforming her outward appearance, but radiating a beauty that could not be denied.

The people of Mirror Lake finally found her. Seeing the strength and warmth in her, they cried out, “Our true princess has returned!”