

The Popcorn Princess



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In a castle with a tall golden roof lived Princess Poppy. She had curly copper-orange hair tied in a bouncy ponytail, and freckles across her nose. Poppy loved two things more than anything: popcorn and the royal theater. Every afternoon, she popped corn in a little black pot and munched it while watching rehearsals. 'One day,' she said, 'I'll make the best popcorn in the whole kingdom.' Her pet mouse, Mimsy, squeaked in agreement.



The royal theater was old and dusty. Its red velvet seats had lost their bounce, and the curtains were faded. Sir Popper, the theater manager, shook his head. 'We need something special to bring people back,' he said. His thick moustache drooped. 'I have an idea!' cried Poppy. 'A machine that pops popcorn in every color of the rainbow!' She pulled out her tiny silver wrench and a notepad. 'Let's build it together.'



Poppy worked day and night in the castle workshop. Her red tool belt clinked as she hammered and screwed. Mimsy, in her tiny purple vest and red cap, handed Poppy little springs. Sir Popper carried big boxes and sometimes tripped over his shiny black boots. 'Careful, Sir Popper!' giggled Poppy. They built a shiny brass machine with a big glass dome and a crank shaped like a star. Poppy painted it with swirls of gold and teal.



Finally, the popcorn machine was ready. Poppy turned the star crank. Pop! Pop! Pop! Out came fluffy popcorn—red, blue, green, yellow, and pink! It tasted like strawberries, blueberries, and lemon. 'It works!' Poppy cheered. Sir Popper clapped his white-gloved hands. 'Opening night will be magnificent!' They planned a grand show for the whole kingdom. Poppy's crown tilted as she danced around the workshop. Mimsy did a happy little jig.



Word spread fast. 'Colorful popcorn at the royal theater!' people whispered. On opening night, a long line curled around the castle. Everyone wore their best clothes. Children pointed at the posters of Poppy's machine. Inside, the theater glowed with candlelight. Sir Popper welcomed guests in his blue uniform coat with brass buttons. Poppy stood by her machine, ready to pop. Her teal work dress and white apron were spotless. 'Let the show begin!' she announced.



Poppy turned the crank. Pop! Pop! Pop! Popcorn flew into the glass dome. The audience gasped at the rainbow colors. 'More! More!' they shouted. Poppy turned faster. The machine hummed and rattled. Pop! Pop! Pop! The popcorn came faster and faster. It filled the dome, then spilled out. 'Oh no!' Poppy cried. 'It's popping too fast!' Sir Popper ran to help, but popcorn bounced off his nose and stuck in his moustache.



Popcorn overflowed like a colorful waterfall. It covered the stage, the seats, and the aisles. People laughed and ducked. Children caught popcorn in their hats. But the machine kept popping. Pop! Pop! POP! The star crank spun wildly. Poppy tugged at it, but it wouldn't stop. 'I have to fix it!' she shouted over the noise. Sir Popper waded through the popcorn, his shiny boots slipping. 'Tell me what to do!' he called.



Poppy grabbed her tiny silver wrench. She opened a small panel on the machine. Inside, gears were spinning too fast. 'The big gear is stuck!' she said. But she couldn't see which one. Just then, Mimsy scampered up Poppy's arm. She peeked into the machine with her tiny black bead eyes. Squeak! Squeak! Mimsy pointed her pink nose at a little gear jammed with a popcorn kernel. 'Good girl, Mimsy!' cried Poppy.



Poppy tried to reach the jammed gear, but her hand was too big. 'Sir Popper, I need a skinny tool!' she said. Sir Popper searched his pockets. He pulled out a long, thin spoon. 'Will this do?' he asked. 'Perfect!' said Poppy. She poked the spoon inside and wiggled it. The kernel popped out! But the machine still rattled. 'The crank is stuck!' said Poppy. 'I need to turn it backward, but it won't budge.'



Sir Popper grabbed the star crank with his white-gloved hands. 'On three!' he said. 'One, two, three!' They pulled together. The crank moved an inch. Popcorn sprayed everywhere. Poppy's ponytail bounced as she tugged. Mimsy squeaked encouragement from her shoulder. Finally, with a loud CLUNK, the crank turned backward. The popping slowed. Pop... pop... pop. The machine hummed softly. Poppy sighed with relief.



But the stage was a mess. Popcorn was piled high like colorful snow. 'The show can't go on like this,' said Sir Popper. Poppy looked at the audience. They were still smiling, holding handfuls of popcorn. 'Wait!' she said. 'We can share it!' She grabbed a big basket and filled it with rainbow popcorn. 'Everyone, take some!' she called. People passed baskets along the rows. Laughter filled the theater.



Poppy made a new plan. 'Let's have a popcorn party instead of a show!' she announced. Sir Popper nodded. 'What a splendid idea!' He invited everyone to sit on the stage. Children and grown-ups sat together, munching colorful popcorn. Poppy turned the crank slowly, and the machine popped just right. Mimsy sat on Poppy's shoulder, nibbling a pink kernel. The theater glowed with happy faces.



Sir Popper stood up. 'Three cheers for Princess Poppy!' he shouted. 'Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!' The audience cheered. Poppy blushed. 'I couldn't have done it without Sir Popper and Mimsy,' she said. 'And all of you!' She handed out more popcorn. The machine hummed softly, popping perfect batches. People shared their popcorn, swapping colors and stories. The royal theater had never felt so warm and full.



From that day on, the royal theater was always busy. Poppy's popcorn machine became famous. She added a special button that made the popcorn pop slowly and safely. People came from far away to taste rainbow popcorn and share it with friends. Poppy learned that good inventions are best when they bring everyone together. And she always kept her tiny silver wrench close, just in case.



Poppy and Sir Popper worked together every day. He carried the big bags of corn, and she fixed any little problems. Mimsy kept watch inside the machine, ready to squeak a warning. The three friends made a great team. 'What should we invent next?' Poppy asked. Sir Popper laughed. 'Something that brings people together again!' Poppy smiled. 'I have an idea!'



That night, the theater was full again. Poppy turned the crank, and popcorn popped in bright colors. Children and grown-ups shared baskets and laughed. Mimsy wore her purple vest and red cap, proud as could be. Sir Popper raised a glass of lemonade. 'To Princess Poppy,' he said, 'and to popcorn that brings us all together!' Everyone cheered. And they lived happily, sharing popcorn forever after.