

STELLA

HAL AMES



Stella tried and tried to please her step-mother, but it was impossible. She wondered why her father ever married this woman.

Her mother died three years before. She and her mother had been best friends. Everything Stella did her mother would praise her and tell her what a wonderful daughter she was.

Her step-mother was just the opposite. She told her over and over again that no one would ever love her, she would never be pretty, she would never be smart, and she would never be successful at doing anything.

Unfortunately, Stella believed her.

Stella loved to be with her friends. She liked to go to the park and sit for hours talking about fun things. They would laugh and giggle when talking about boys. It was fun to talk about what boy liked which girl. Whenever the girls teased Stella she would blush and get red in the face. She liked it. She wanted a boyfriend.

Her step-mother told her that she was silly to think like that. She told Stella that sitting and talking to her friends about boys was childish. She needed to grow up and be responsible.

Stella did not want to go to the university. She wanted to be a hairdresser. She liked to have her friends over and they would brush each other's hair and put pretty bows and ribbons in it. Then they would dance around the room having fun.

Her step-mother told her she was never going to be good at anything, especially a

hairdresser. She told Stella she had to study hard in order to go to the best university. Then with a good education she could get a good job. Then when her parents were older she would be able to take good care of them.

Stella loved to dress up. Sometimes she would put makeup on her face and put her hair up in different ways. She liked to stand in front of the mirror, dream about going to a beautiful party, and meeting many different people. She even dreamed of being a princess.

Her step-mother would yell at her when she did this. She told her she should not dream about things like that. She was not pretty and a prince would never want to marry someone like her.

She would say, "That's only a dream! It'll never come true."

Stella liked to buy magazines and look at the pretty models. She would imagine herself walking on a red carpet and there would be many people taking her picture. She dreamed of being a famous movie star.

Her step-mother told her she should stop being so foolish. She would never be a famous movie star. She was too ordinary. She would only fail if she tried.

Stella loved to go to the theater to watch movies. Her favorite movies were about romance. She loved to sit and dream about a handsome man who would come and carry her away to his home along the ocean. She would have many kids and they would be happy together.

Her step-mother told her she would never find a handsome man and that she should not dream about such things. She would just be disappointed in her life if she dreamed about that all the time.

Stella liked to listen to pop music. She had dreams of being a famous singer and many people would come to see her perform. They would all sing her songs and have her picture on the walls in their rooms.

Her step-mother told her to stop singing. She said her voice was terrible and that she would never be good enough to be a famous singer.

Stella liked to play sports, especially soccer. She played on a team and she scored many goals. She enjoyed playing soccer and the other players liked her a lot. She had

daydreams of playing for the national team. She would be a national hero!

Her step-mother told her that the chances of her being on the national team were impossible.

She would say, “There are so many other girls better than you. Don’t waste your time thinking about that. It will never happen.”

Stella liked to draw in her drawing book. She had pencils, paints, and colored chalk. When she was bored, she would sit on the floor in her room and draw pictures of dresses and fashions. She loved to make the clothes long and elegant. She saw herself having her designs in a fashion show. Many models were wearing her clothes walking back and forth showing the most important fashion buyers her clothes and after the show they would stand up and cheer.

Her step-mother told her to throw her drawings away. They were terrible and no one would buy such ugly clothes. She told her that being a famous fashion designer was never going to happen. She would never be good enough.

Stella played the violin in school. She was first chair in the orchestra. She practiced her violin every day. She loved the sound of the violin and she fantasied about being in the city orchestra and playing a solo in front of all the people in the audience. They would clap and ask for more.

Her step-mother told her to close the door to her room. She said the noise of the violin made her upset. She told Stella that she played so badly, that no one would want to listen to her play. She said the strings squeaked and that the music did not sound like music at all. She told her it would be better if she stopped playing the violin.

Stella did as her step-mother told her, put her violin into the case, and then put it under her bed.

Stella signed up to be a model in a fashion show at school. She picked out the clothes she was going to wear very carefully. The kids at school liked the styles she chose. She showed the outfits to her step-mother.

Her step-mother said Stella looked funny. She said Stella didn’t look like a model. She was too short, too fat, and too ugly to be a fashion model. She said she shouldn’t make

herself look foolish by walking in front of everyone looking like that.

Stella liked to write. She liked to write stories about her friends, and of how they would go on great adventures. She had a big book of stories. Sometimes she would share her stories with her friends and they would always ask her for more.

Her step-mother found her book and read the stories. She told Stella the stories were boring and they did not have any imagination. She told her she was wasting her time writing. She should work harder to get better grades in school, not spending her time writing silly stories.

Stella studied hard for her tests. She did all her homework. She did very well in school and her teachers liked her. She was asked to be on the math team by her math teacher.

Her step-mother told her she needed to study harder. She told her that being on the math team was a waste of time. There were so many other children better in math than her. She would make the team fail if she was on it. It was better for Stella to stay home and study for school rather than to be on the math team.

Stella liked to go shopping for clothes. She knew how to find good clothes for low prices. She watched for sales and when stores were giving out coupons. She liked to wear the latest fashions. She always wanted to look her best in school.

Her step-mother told her she looked silly in the clothes she wore. She told Stella that she was wasting her money. She told Stella she should wear the clothes that her step-mother bought for her. They were more practical. Stella hated the clothes she got from her step-mother, but she wore them anyway to make her step-mother happy.

Stella began to believe all that her step-mother was saying to her. She got discouraged and began to quit all the things she used to do. From then on, she would come home and sit in her room and lock the door.

She did not go to the park, she did not have her friends over, she stopped dressing up, she quit going to the movies, she stopped listening to music, she dropped off of the soccer team, she did not draw, she put her violin in its case and put it in under her bed, she didn't go to the fashion show, she put her writing book in her desk, she told the teacher she

could not be on the math team, and she began to wear the clothes her step-mother bought for her.

Day after day, she just sat in her bedroom reading her textbooks preparing for college. She believed that would please her step-mother.

Her step-mother left her alone. She never came into her room. She no longer had to tell Stella what to do.

One day, her father went to her room after he arrived home from work.

He asked Stella why she had changed so much. He asked her why she wasn't with her friends, why she was always alone in her room, why she stopped going to the movies, why she wasn't listening to music, why she quit playing soccer, why she wasn't drawing anymore, why she stopped practicing the violin, why she wasn't on the math team and why she was wearing such different clothes.

Stella told him everything her step-mother had said. She said that her step-mother was right. She was never going to succeed in anything unless she concentrated on her studies. Stella said she agreed with her step-mother and that she would do what she said.

Her father took her into his arms. He held her close, and then he apologized.

"I'm so sorry Stella. I had no idea she was saying those things to you. Your mother was so proud of you, and so am I. We are going to make some big changes around here. First of all, I want you to have your life back. You are an amazing person. You are so beautiful and smart. I could not be prouder of you. Everything you do, you do the very best you can. I cannot expect any more of you. I love you and I want the best for you," her father said as tears ran down his face.

"Thank you daddy. I needed to hear that. I love you too," Stella said with a big smile and tears running down her cheeks.