

Fee Fi Fo Fum!

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*A Waldorf Reader
for Late Second Grade*

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*A Waldorf Reader for
Late Second Grade*



*Text by Arthur M. Pittis
Illustrations by AUSA M. Peacock*



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This Waldorf Reader Series is dedicated to Rosemary Gebert who was my teacher at the Waldorf Institute in 1980–81 and whose work as a teacher of teachers inspired me to undertake this project for the benefit of all class teachers and their students.

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The golden sun is shining
Up in the sky so blue:
Good morning, happy morning,
Good morning, sun, to you.

– *Traditional*

The Gingerbread Boy

Once upon a time, there was a little old woman and a little old man. They lived in a little old house by a big old hill.

One day the little old woman said to the little old man, "I wish we had a little boy. Let me make a boy out of gingerbread. If he is a good little boy, then I will make a little girl."

So she made some gingerbread and made a cute little boy.

"What a good little boy!" said the little old woman. "But he needs some clothes, or he will get cold."

So the little old woman made him a coat out of frosting. Then she made two eyes, a mouth and a nose, all out of raisins.

"My!" she said. "Now that's a good boy!" And she put him in the oven to bake.

After a while she heard a little voice say, "Let me out! Let me out! It's hot in here!"

So she opened the oven, and the little brown gingerbread boy hopped out and ran out the door. He ran past the little old man, and he ran down the lane.

"Stop him! Stop him!" the little old woman cried to the little old man.

But the little gingerbread boy just laughed at them and ran away.

*Run, run,
As fast as you can!
You can't catch me.
I'm the gingerbread man!*



And they could not catch him. He was very fast!

The little brown gingerbread boy ran on and on. Soon he came to a cow.

“Stop! Stop!” cried the cow. “You look good to eat.”

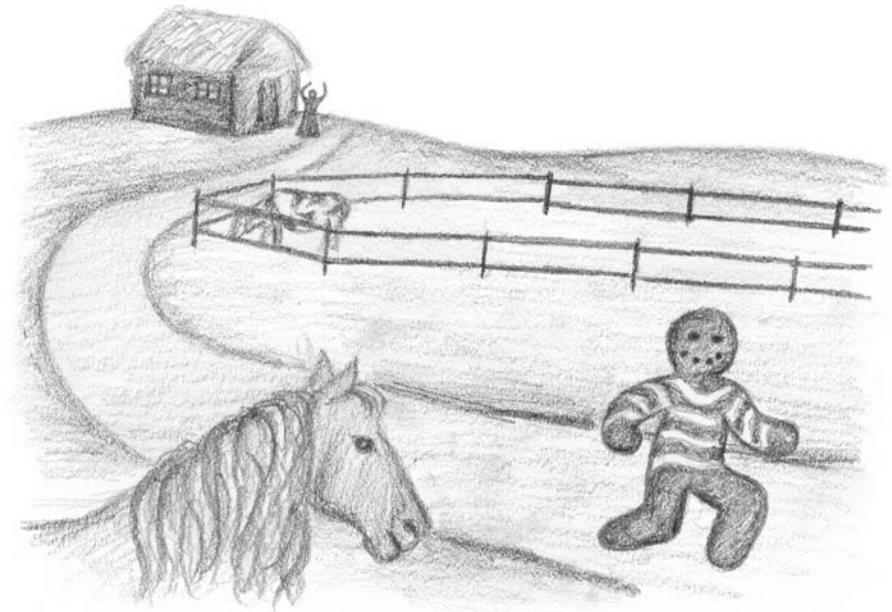
But the gingerbread boy only laughed. “If I can run away from the little old woman and the little old man, I can run away from you!”

*Run, run,
As fast as you can!
You can't catch me.
I'm the gingerbread man!*

And the cow ran after him, but the gingerbread boy was too fast.

The little brown gingerbread boy just ran on and on. Soon he came to a horse.

“Stop! Stop!” cried the horse. “You look good to eat.”



But the gingerbread boy only laughed. “If I can run away from the little old woman, the little old man, and the cow, I can run away from you!”

*Run, run,
As fast as you can!
You can't catch me.
I'm the gingerbread man!*

And the horse ran after him, but the gingerbread boy was too fast.

The gingerbread boy was very happy with himself.

Soon he came to a red fox.

“Stop! Stop!” cried the fox. “I want to talk to you.”

But the gingerbread boy only laughed at the red fox. “If I can run away from the little old woman and the little old man, and the cow and horse, I can run away from you!”

“But I don’t want to catch you,” said the red fox. “I can help you run faster.”

But the little brown gingerbread boy just laughed at the fox and ran away.

Run, run,

As fast as you can!

You can’t catch me.

I’m the gingerbread man!

Soon the gingerbread boy came to a river. He stopped, and the fox ran up to him.

“Oh! What shall I do?” cried the gingerbread boy. “I can not run on the river.”

“Jump on my tail,” said the red fox, “and I will take you across.”

So the little brown boy jumped on the fox’s tail. The fox began to swim across the river.

Soon the fox said, “Jump on my back, or you will fall into the river and get wet.”

So the little brown boy jumped on the fox’s back.

Soon the fox said, “My back is getting wet. Jump on my nose.”

So the little brown boy jumped on the fox’s nose.

Then the fox flipped the little brown

gingerbread boy up into the air, opened his mouth and **SNAP!** went his teeth.

“Oh!” cried the gingerbread boy. “My legs are gone!”

SNAP! went the fox’s teeth again.

“Oh, no!” cried the gingerbread boy. “My tummy is gone!”

SNAP! went the fox’s teeth again.

“Help!” cried the gingerbread boy. “My arms are gone!”

SNAP! went the fox’s teeth; and after that snap, the little brown gingerbread boy was all gone and had nothing more to say.

– *from England*

The Three Billy Goats Gruff

There were once three billy goats. They lived in a green meadow by a river. Over the river was a bridge, and over the bridge lay green grass.

The first billy goat was called Little Billy Goat Gruff. He was just a little bit gruff.

The second billy goats was called Middle Billy Goat Gruff. He was a little bit gruffer than the first billy goat.

And the third billy goat was called Great Big Billy Goat Gruff. He was the gruffest of them all.

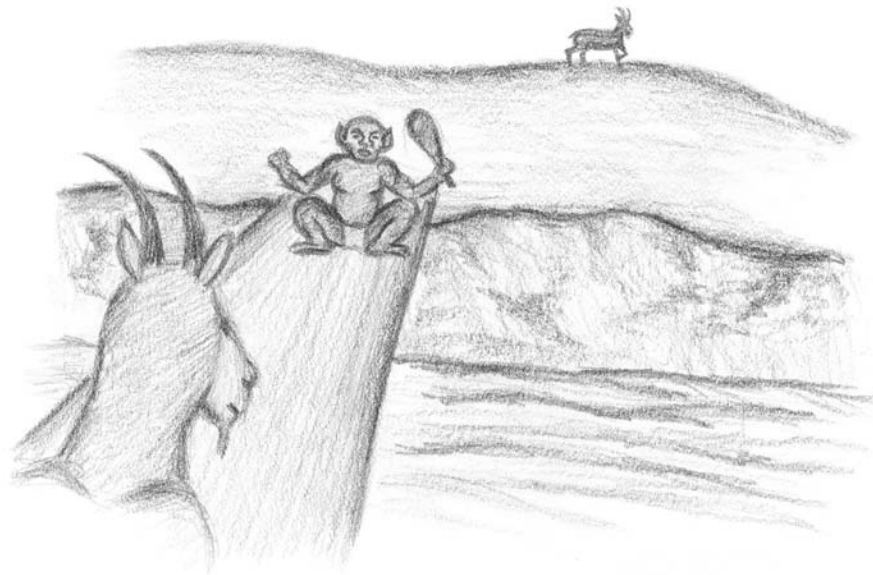
One day the three billy goats looked over the river and saw the green grass on the other side.

“That grass looks greener than this grass,” Middle Billy Goat said.

“It must be better,” said Great Big Billy Goat.

“And there is more grass over there than there is over here,” said Little Billy Goat. “Let us go across the river and eat it.”

So the three billy goats trotted over to the bridge, but they did not dare to cross. A nasty little troll lived under the bridge. He was very nasty and very ugly, and he had always wanted to eat a billy goat.



Then Little Billy Goat Gruff said, “I want that green grass. I am going to cross the river and eat the green grass over there.”

“If you go,” said Great Big Billy Goat Gruff, “the nasty troll will get you.”

“I am not afraid of that nasty troll,” said Little Billy Goat. “He will not eat me. I am too little.”

So off he trotted – trip-trap, trip-trap, trip-trap, trip – over the bridge.

The nasty troll poked his nose up onto the bridge. He had a big club in his hand.

“Who goes trip-trap, trip-trap, trip-trap, trip over my bridge?” he said.

“Little Billy Goat Gruff.”

“Then I will eat you up.”

“No, do not eat me. I am too little to eat. Eat Middle Billy Goat instead of me. He is much fatter.”

“Good,” said the nasty troll. “I will eat him instead of you.”

So the little billy goat trotted – *trip-trap, trip-trap, trip-trap, trip* – over the bridge.



When Middle Billy Goat saw Little Billy Goat eating the good green grass on the other side, he said, “I will cross the bridge too. If the troll did not eat Little Billy Goat, he will not eat me.”

So that billy goat *trip-trap* trotted over the bridge.

The nasty troll jumped up onto the bridge.

“Who goes *trip-trap, trip-trap, trip-trap, trip* over my bridge?”

“Middle Billy Goat Gruff.”

“Then I will eat you up.”

“No, do not eat me. Eat Great Big Billy Goat instead of me. He is the fattest billy

goat of all. Soon he will cross over the bridge. Then you can eat him.”

“Good,” said the nasty troll. “I will eat him instead of you.”

So the billy goat trotted – *trip-trap, trip-trap, trip-trap, trip* – over the bridge.

When Great Big Billy Goat saw the other two billy goats eating the good green grass on the other side, he wanted to eat the green grass too.

“I will cross over the bridge and eat the grass. That nasty troll will not eat me if he did not eat the other two.”

So Great Big Billy Goat *trip-trap* trotted onto the bridge.

The nasty troll licked his lips. He was very happy. Soon he would get to eat a big fat billy goat.

He poked his nose up onto the bridge.

“Who goes *trip-trap, trip-trap, trip-trap, trip* over my bridge?”

“Great Big Billy Goat Gruff.”

“Then I will eat you up,” said the nasty troll as he jumped onto the bridge.

“Oh no, you won’t,” said Great Big Billy Goat.

“Oh yes, I will!”

“We’ll see about that.”

And Great Big Billy Goat lowered his horns and stomped his hoofs. He ran at the troll as fast as he could. His strong horns hit the troll and sent him flying off the bridge.

The troll flew high, high, high into the air and then down, down, down into the water. He landed head-first in the mud.

“So you wanted to eat a billy goat?” said the biggest billy goat of all. “Well, now you can eat mud instead.”

So the three Billy Goats Gruff ate all the green grass on the other side of the river. And they became very, very, very fat.

– *from Norway*



There Lies a Lonely Field

There lies a lonely field,
The soil is brown and bare.
And so the farmer comes along
And fences it with care.

And then he brings his plough,
And ploughs from morn till late.
Across the field and back again
He ploughs the furrows straight.

Now pull the harrow well
To make the soil more loose.
The harrow combs the soil so soft
And makes it fit to use.

Then Jenny brings the seed
To sow the field just so
And in and out she swings her arm
As up and down she goes.

– *Traditional*

The Five Brothers



Once there was an old woman who lived in China. She had five sons, and they all looked alike. No one could tell one son from the other.

The old woman called them First Son, Second Son, Third Son, Fourth Son and Fifth Son, but everyone else just called them the Old Woman's Son.

Each of the sons had an amazing power. First Son could drink up the ocean in one gulp. Second Son's skin could snap iron. Third Son could make his legs as long as he wanted. Fourth Son could not be burned by fire. And Fifth Son could hold his breath forever.

One day First Son went down to the sea to fish. First, he drank up all the water. Then he went out onto the dry sea bottom to pick up fish.

When some village boys saw the dry sea bottom, they ran out to play. They had always wanted to play on the bottom of the sea.

When First Son's basket was full, he went back to the dry land. Then he saw the boys. He wanted to call to them to come back, but his mouth was full of the sea water.

He waved and he waved to them, but the boys only waved back. They thought it was a game.

By now, First Son could not hold the sea water any longer. He had to let it out. And when he did, the boys were drowned.

The people in the village saw him let the water out of his mouth and drown the boys.

"Look what the Old Woman's Son did!" they cried. "He drowned those poor

boys. Let us take him before the judge."

And so they took Old Woman's Son before the judge.

When First Son was before the judge, the judge asked, "Did you drink up all the water in the sea?"



"Yes, I drank up all the water in the sea."

"Did you see those boys on the dry sea bottom?" asked the judge.

"Yes, I saw the boys on the dry sea bottom."

"Did you let the sea water out of your mouth?" asked the judge.

"Yes, I let the sea water out of my mouth."

"And did the boys drown?"

"Yes, the boys drowned."

"Then you killed them and must die. We will chop off your head with an axe."

“Oh, I am very sorry,” cried First Son. “But before you chop off my head, may I go home and tell my old mother that I must die?”

“Yes, you may,” said the judge.

So First Son went home and told his mother that they were going to chop off his head with an axe.



“Oh, no they won’t,” she said. “Second Son, go take your brother’s place. No axe can chop off your head.”



So Second Son did as his mother said and went back in First Son’s place.

The axe man swung his axe, but it broke into many pieces. The axe man tried another axe, but it broke into many

more pieces. The axe man tried a third axe, but it broke into a so many pieces that he gave up.

“This is no good,” said the judge. “Let us throw the Old Woman’s Son into the sea and drown him.”



“Before you throw me into the sea and drown me,” cried the Second Son, “may I go home and tell my old mother how I must now die?”

“Yes,” said the judge.

So Second Son went home and told his mother that they were going to drown him in the sea.

“Oh, no they won’t,” she said. “Third Son, take your brother’s place. Let them throw you into the sea. No water can drown you.”

So Third Son did as his mother said and went back in Second Son’s place.

The people threw Third Son into the sea, but he made his legs so long that he stood on the sea bottom.

“This is no good,” said the judge.
“Take him far out to sea and throw him in again.”

So the people took him far out to sea and threw him in again, but he made his legs so long that again he stood on the sea bottom.



“This is no good,” said the judge. “We must burn him in a fire.”

“Before you burn me in the fire,” cried Third Son, “may I go home and tell my old mother how I must now die?”

“Yes,” said the judge.

So Third Son went home and told his mother that they were going to burn him in a fire.

“Oh, no they won’t,” she said. “Fourth Son, go back and take your brother’s place. No fire can burn you.”

So Fourth Son did as his mother said and went back in Third Son’s place.

They threw him into the fire, but the fire could not burn him.



“This is no good,” said the judge. “We must bake him into a big cream cake.

That will smother him.”

“Before you bake me in a big cream cake and smother me,” cried the Fourth Son, “may I go home and tell my old mother how I must now die?”

“Yes,” said the judge.

So Fourth Son went home and told his mother that they were going to bake him into a big cream cake and smother him.

“Oh, no they won’t,” said the mother. “Fifth Son, go back and take your brother’s place. They can bake you into a cream cake, but no cream cake can ever smother you.”

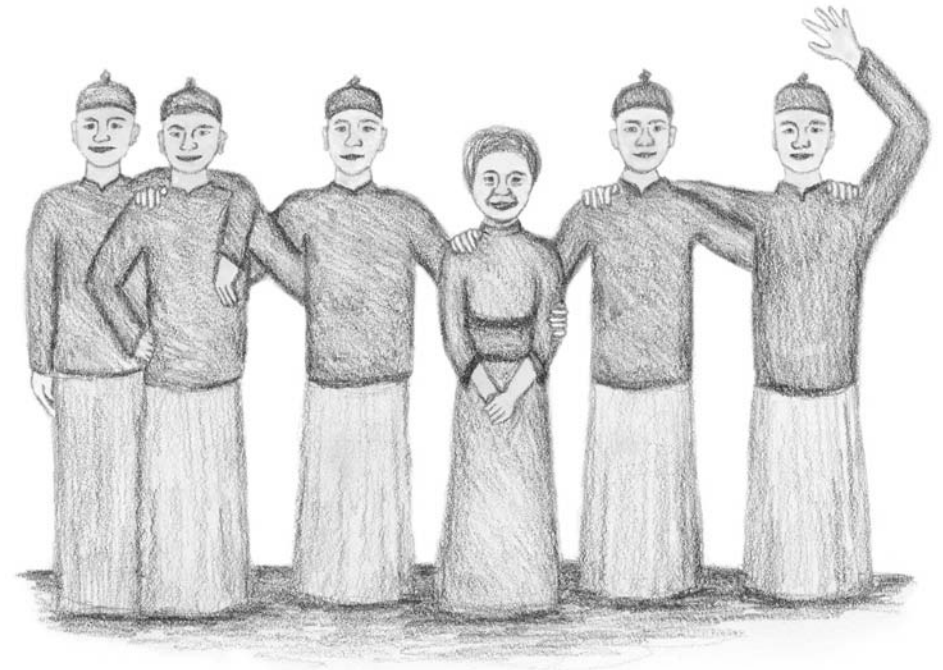
So Fifth Son did as his mother said and went back in Fourth Son’s place.

They baked Fifth Son into the big cream cake, but he just held his breath forever.

After many days had passed, Fifth Son ate his way out of the cream cake and went home to his mother.

The people were very upset and went to the judge to ask what he would do now. But the judge just shook his head and cried, “Go home and shut your doors. Don’t ever bother me with that Old Woman’s Son again.”

— *from China*



The Spirit of the Corn

Long ago when the world was new, the corn grew by itself. It did not need to be planted or tended.

Ona-tah, Spirit of the Corn, walked among the plants and watched over them. But she did not walk and watch alone.

Her two sisters, Spirit of the Squash and Spirit of the Bean, walked with her. And as they walked, squash and beans sprang from their steps.

One cool autumn morning, Ona-tah walked out alone. She walked far from her meadows of ripe corn, gathering the morning dew.

But the Dark Master of Under the Ground was watching her. He pulled her into his dark cave. He did not want her to walk the Earth anymore.

Then he sent fire monsters to destroy her ripe corn. When Ona-tah's sisters saw the fire monsters, they ran away, and the fire monsters were able to burn all Ona-tah's corn.

"O warm, bright Sun!" Ona-tah called from her dark prison under the ground, "if you help me to walk the bright Earth once more, I will never again leave my corn alone."

The bright sun was too far away to hear her call. But the little birds that flutter and sing in the bright sky heard her cry. They lifted her words to the Sun as he walked across the bright blue sky.

Now, the Sun loved Ona-tah very much, and he sent bright beams of light into the darkness under the ground. The beams of light saved Ona-tah and led her back to the Earth.

When her sisters, Spirit of the Squash and Spirit of the Beans, saw her, they were ashamed and fled from her sight. From then on, Ona-tah walked alone.

In the spring, she planted the golden corn seeds in little hills and watched over them as they grew tall and strong. And if the strong wind blew her plants down, she lifted them up.

In the summer, she tended the hills and pulled the weeds. And when the fire monsters came, she threw dirt on them and buried them under the ground.

In the autumn, little insects came. Thousands upon thousands of the



insects came and ate the ripe kernels. Ona-tah tried to pick them off, but there were too many, and her plants began to wilt.

“O warm, bright Sun!” Ona-tah called, “help me save my corn.”

But her voice was now too weak, and the Sun was too far away. Yet once again, the little birds that flutter and sing in the bright sky came to her aid. They ate the little insects, one and all.

Ona-tah did not forget the little birds’ kindness. When the harvest time came, she gave them the first ripe kernels of her golden corn. And the little birds, fluttering and singing in the bright sky, thanked her for her gift.

— *from the Iroquois*

The Three Tasks

A chief once had a beautiful daughter. When the time came for her to marry, men came from all over the land to ask for her hand.

The sons of rich men came. The sons of chiefs came. Even the sons of kings came to ask to marry her.

But the chief did not want his beautiful daughter to marry. He wanted to keep her at home.

Whenever a man came to ask for her hand, the chief gave the man a hard look and said, "You must do three tasks. First, you must sit in a room full of mosquitoes without getting up or swatting them away."

Then the chief laughed.

"Second, you must eat a red hot pepper without showing any pain."

And the chief laughed again.



"And third, you must tell one story all day long, without stopping."

And when he was done speaking, the chief laughed and laughed and laughed, again and again and again.

Many men tried the first task, but not one of them could do it.

"These are good tasks," said the chief

to himself. “Now no man will ever be able to marry my daughter.”

But one day a poor farmer came to the chief.

“I hear you want a husband for your daughter,” the poor farmer said. “Well, I’m your man.”

The chief gave the man a hard look, then laughed and laughed and laughed.

“Well, what do I have to do?” asked the poor farmer.

The chief told him about the three tasks, and then he laughed and laughed until tears filled his eyes.

“So,” asked the farmer, “when do I begin?”

“In the morning,” said the chief, and he and all his men laughed and laughed and laughed, again and again and again.



In the morning, the chief’s men put the poor farmer in a room full of mosquitoes. Then they closed the door and looked in through a crack in the wall.

The farmer sat down and began to talk.

“Today I saw some hens. One was black and she had a white spot on her leg. Right here.”

And the farmer slapped his leg.

“Then I saw a white hen. She had a black spot on her wing. Right here.”

And the farmer slapped his arm.

“Then I saw a black and white hen. She had a black and white spot on her behind. Right here.”

And the farmer slapped his behind.

As he told more and more about the hens, he slapped himself here, and he slapped himself there. He told about

hens and slapped himself all day long. Finally, the chief's men gave up and took him back to the chief.

"So, are you going home like all the rest?" laughed the chief.

"No? Why should I go home?" asked the farmer. "I did the first task."

Now the chief did not laugh. He gave the man a long, hard look instead.

"Tomorrow, give him the red hot pepper!" said the chief.

So the men did as the chief said.

As the men went to get the pepper, the farmer spilled some corn at his feet. When the chief's hens saw the corn, they all ran over to him.

"Here," said the chief's men. "Eat this red hot pepper. We will watch your lips to see if you show any pain."

And the chief's men sat down before him and looked hard at his lips.

The poor farmer took a big bite of the red hot pepper. Then he waved his arms at the hens and began to jump up and down.

"You, *you* and **YOU!**" he cried. "Zoo, zoo, and **ZOO!**"

Then he took a second big bite of the red hot pepper. And again he waved his arms and jumped up and down, crying, "You, *you* and **YOU!** Zoo, zoo, and **ZOO!**"

And with the second bite, the pepper was all gone.

"That was good," said the farmer. "Is that all I have to do?"

The chief's men grabbed hold of the poor farmer and took him to their chief.

"You must tell us a story without stopping until it is dark," said the chief.

So the farmer began to talk.

"Today, I saw a hen. She picked up a kernel of corn. Then she took the corn

to her chick. And then the chick ate the corn. And then the hen picked up another corn and she took the corn to her chick, and then”

The chief and his men began to snore.

So by the time the sun set, the farmer was still talking.

“And then the hen”

“Stop!” the chief cried when his daughter woke him up. “Stop! Stop that story right now! You win. Take my daughter! But not another word!”

So the chief let the poor farmer marry his daughter, and she was happy to go.

– *from Africa*

The Bremen Town-Musicians

One day a donkey heard his master say, “This donkey is good for nothing. I will get rid of him.”

“What will I do now?” the donkey said. “My master is going to get rid of me, and who knows what will become of me then? I had better flee to Bremen. I hear they need town musicians, and can I not sing better than most beasts?”

So the donkey set out for Bremen.

As the donkey was walking down the road towards town, he saw a dog in the dust by the side of road.

“Why so sad, Mr. Waggy Tail?” asked the donkey.

“I just heard my master say that I am good for nothing, and he is going to get rid of me. Now what will I do?”

“Go to Bremen with me,” said the donkey. “I am going to be a musician.”

“But all I can do is bark and howl,” said the dog.

“That’s good,” said the donkey. “I heard that in Bremen anyone who can bark and howl can be a musician.”

“Good,” said the dog, and he went with the donkey.

After a while, they saw a cat sitting in the dust by the side of road.

“Why so sad, Miss Long Whiskers?” asked the donkey.

“My mistress said that I am good for nothing, and she is going to get rid of me. Now what will I do?”

“Come with us,” said the donkey. “We are going to Bremen to be musicians.”

“But all I can do is purr and yowl,” said the cat.

“That’s good,” said the donkey. “In Bremen, the best musicians purr and yowl.”

So the cat went with the donkey and the dog.

After a while, they saw a rooster crowing by the side of the road.

“Why so much crowing, Mr. Cock-a-Doodle-Do?” asked the donkey.

“The cook just said I am good for nothing but dinner. She is going to chop off my head and cook me for dinner!”

“Come with us,” said the donkey. “We are going to Bremen to be musicians.”

“But all I can do is crow,” said the rooster.

“That’s good,” said the donkey. “In Bremen, only the very best musicians can crow like you.”

So all four of them set off for Bremen.



After a while, the sun set, and it became dark.

“We must find a place to sleep,” said the donkey. “We will never find Bremen in the dark.”

So they left the road and went into the woods. After a while, they came to a tall tree.

“This is a good place to sleep,” said the donkey. So the four friends made ready to sleep.

The dog and the donkey lay down by the trunk of the tall tree. The cat jumped onto a branch and curled herself up. And the rooster flew up to the tippy top branch and made ready to roost.

“Look, my friends!” crowed the rooster. “I see a light.”

“It may be a house,” said the cat.

“Houses are good places to sleep,” said the dog.

“Let us go and see,” said the donkey.

After a while, they came to a house. There was a light in the window, so the donkey looked in.

“What do you see?” asked the rooster.

“I see a table full of good things to eat, and at the table are four men.”

“A table full of good things to eat is a good thing,” said the dog. “Maybe they will give us something to eat.”

“Let us sing them a song,” said the donkey. “They will like our singing so much that they will surely let us in.”

“That’s a good idea,” said the cat.

“Jump on my back, Mr. Waggy Tail,” the donkey said to the dog. “Then you, Miss Long Whiskers, jump up on his back; and last of all, Mr. Cock-a-Doodle-Do, you jump on top.”

When they were ready, the donkey brayed their first notes.

“Heeeeeeeee Haaaaww!”

And the others sang along.

The dog barked, “Wuff! Wuff!”

The cat yowled, “Meeoow! Meeoow!”

And the rooster crowed, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!”

They all liked their singing so much that they began to dance. The donkey kicked up his heels and jumped through the window and into the room.

The four men, who were very bad robbers, jumped up and knocked over the candle.

“A four-headed monster!” they cried.

“Run for your lives!”

And they fled out the door.

“Look,” said the dog, licking a plate.

“This is good to eat!”

So the four musicians ate their fill and found places to sleep.

The donkey lay on some straw in the



yard. The dog lay across the back door. The cat curled up in front of the warm fire. And the rooster flew up to a beam, high in the roof.



Around midnight, the robbers, who had been hiding in the woods, slipped back to the house.

“Go in,” the robber captain said to one of his men, “and find out who is in there.”

The man slipped up to the house and went in the door.

All was still.

Then he saw the cat’s glowing eyes and went to light a match from them.

The cat jumped up, hissed and tore at his face. The robber was so afraid that he ran for the back door.

But at the back door, he stepped on the dog. The dog yelped, jumped up and bit

the man’s leg. The man cried out and ran into the yard.

As he hopped across the yard, he fell over the donkey. The donkey jumped up and kicked him so hard that he flew head over heels.

Then the rooster woke up and crowed so loudly that the robber ran for his life.

When the man found the other robbers, they asked, “What did you see?”

“We must flee for our lives!” he cried.

“Why?” asked the robber captain.

“It was terrible,” gasped the man.

“First, there was a witch, and she tore at my face with her claws. Then a man stabbed me in the leg, so I ran into the yard. A giant was hiding there, and he beat me with a club. And worst of all, a judge was sitting on the roof, and he cried, “Get the others, too!”

The robbers were so afraid that they fled and never came back. But the four animals liked the house so much that they never left and forgot all about going to Bremen to become town-musicians.

And the mouth that last told this tale is still warm.

– *from the Brothers Grimm*

Five Little Goblins

Five little goblins on a Halloween night,
Made a very, very spooky sight.
First one danced on his tippy-tip-toes.
The next one tumbled and bumped his nose.
The next one jumped high up in the air.
The next one walked like a fuzzy bear.
The next one sang a Halloween song.
Five goblins played the whole night long.

– *Traditional*

A Little Witch

A little witch in a pointed cap,
On my door went rap, rap, rap.
When I went to open it,
She was not there;
She was riding on a broomstick
High up in the air.

– *Traditional*

The Fisherman's Wife

There once was a fisherman and his wife. They lived by the sea in a house that was no better than a pig-sty.

One day the fisherman went to the sea to fish. He cast his line, sat down and looked out over the clear, blue water. He sat, and he sat, and he sat.

Then his line went down, down, down. When he pulled it up, he had a big flounder.

"Fisherman," begged the flounder, "I am an enchanted fish. Let me go free."

The fisherman was very surprised and said, "A fish that can talk must be enchanted. I will let you go free."

So he put the flounder back in the clear, blue water, and it swam away, trailing a long stream of blood.

When the fisherman arrived home, he told his wife about the enchanted fish.

"An enchanted fish!" she cried, "I hope you got something for letting it go free!"

"No," said the husband. "What could a fish give me?"

"Agh!" cried the wife. "Look at how we live. This place stinks! You could have asked for a hut. Go back and tell the fish that you want a hut."

"Oh, wife," said the husband, "why should I go back?"

"Agh!" cried the wife. "Why do you fish? Just to let them go free? Go back, I say."

So the man did as his wife said.

When he arrived back at the sea, the



water was all green and yellow and no longer smooth. He called to the fish.

*Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come, I pray thee, come to me.
For my wife, good Ilsabil,
Wills not as I'd have her will.*

The flounder swam to him and said, "Well, what does she want?"

"She does not want to live in a pig-sty. She wants a hut."

"Go then," said the fish. "She has what she asked."

When the man arrived home, his wife was sitting in the door of a nice little hut.

"Look at the nice things we now have," she said. "Wasn't I right?"

"Yes," said the man, "now let us be contented."

"We will see about that."



One day the wife looked about her.

"Agh!" she cried. "This hut is too small. I want to live in a castle. Go back to the fish and tell him to give us a castle."

"Oh, wife," said the husband, "we should be contented."

"Go back, I say!"

When the man arrived at the sea, it was all purple, dark blue and grey. Big waves broke on the shore. He called to the fish.

*Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come, I pray thee, come to me.
For my wife, good Ilsabil,
Wills not as I'd have her will.*

The flounder swam to him and said, "Now what does she want?"

"She wants a castle."

"Go then," said the fish. "She is

standing in the door.”

When the man arrived home, he found his wife standing in the door of a castle.

“Look,” she said. “We now have a hundred rooms, and each room is full of fine things.”

“Now, wife,” said the man, “let us be contented.”

“We’ll see about that.”

Early the next morning the wife woke her husband. She had not slept all night.

“It would be better if you were the king. Tell the fish you want to be king.”

“Ah, wife, I do not want to be king. Let us be contented.”

“Well, if you do not want to be king, then I will be king. Go, do as I say!”

When the man arrived at the sea, the water had a bad smell. It was dark grey, and big waves beat the shore.

*Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come, I pray thee, come to me.
For my wife, good Ilsabil,
Wills not as I’d have her will.*

The flounder swam to him and said, “Now what does she want?”

“She wants to be king.”

“Go then,” said the fish. “She is king.”

When the man arrived home, he found his wife sitting on a throne. She had a gold crown on her head and a sword in her hand.

“Now that you are king, let us be contented.”

“No, husband,” she said. “I want to be emperor.”

“There is only one emperor in the land. The fish can not do it.”

“What!” cried the woman, “Am I not the king? Go, do as I say!”

The man did as his wife said, but he was afraid and said, “This will not end well.”

☞ ☞



When he arrived at the sea, the wind blew hard. The water was black and thick as mud. It had begun to boil. He called to the fish.

*Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come, I pray thee, come to me.
For my wife, good Ilsabil,
Wills not as I'd have her will.*

“Well, what does she want?”

“She wants to be emperor.”

“She is emperor.”

When the man arrived home, he found his wife sitting on a tall throne. Kings and queens bowed before her.

“Now wife, are you contented?”

“Husband,” she said, “why do you stand there? Can't you see that I want to be pope?”

“No, wife, there can only be one pope. The fish can not make you pope.”

“If he made me king and emperor, he can make me pope. Now do as I say!”

The man was afraid, but he did as his wife said.

When the man arrived at the sea, the water was boiling. Waves tore at the land, and the sky was as dark as blood. But far in the distance, there was still one little patch of blue.

He shouted over the wind to the fish.

*Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come, I pray thee, come to me.
For my wife, good Ilsabil,
Wills not as I'd have her will.*

“And what is it now?”

“She wants to be pope.”

“Go to her. She is pope.”

The man now found his wife in a great church. She sat on a high throne and

wore three gold crowns. Candles burned all around her, and kings and queens and emperors bowed at her feet.

She did not move or show any sign of life. Her face was as hard as stone.

“Ah, wife,” he said. “Now that you are pope, let us be contented. You can not be greater than pope.”

“I will think about that.”

That night, she tossed and turned and cried in her sleep. She wanted more, but she did not know what.

In the morning, she saw the sun rise and knew what she wanted.

“Husband,” she said, “I want to make the sun rise. I want to be like God.”

“No!” he cried. “You can not be like God.”

“Husband, if I can not be like God and make the sun rise, I will never be happy.”

Then she began to scream, and the man had to do as she said.

Now a great storm raged. It blew away houses and tore up trees. It pushed over mountains and turned the sky black. The sea was as black as the sky. Waves rose up to heaven and tore at the land.

He called to the fish.

*Flounder, flounder in the sea,
Come, I pray thee, come to me.
For my wife, good Ilsabil,
Wills not as I'd have her will.*

“What is it now?”

“She wants to be like God.”

“Go back to your wife. You will find her in her pig-sty.”

And to this day, that's where they live.

— *from the Brothers Grimm*

The Snow Maiden

Once upon a time there was an old woman and her husband. They had always wanted a child, but they had never had one.

One winter day, they saw snow falling on the meadow, and boys and girls were making it into a snow-man.

“How I wish we had a child,” said the old woman as she looked at the children. “Then even in winter, we would be warm in our hearts.”

“Do not be sad,” said her husband. “Let us make a snow girl. She will be our child.”

“Yes,” said the woman, “if just for one winter day.”

They put all their love into making the snow girl. She was beautiful to see. Her eyes were raisins, and her lips were dried cherries.



When they were done, the woman kissed the snow girl's icy lips, and the snow girl opened her eyes and smiled.

“Thank you, Mother,” she said, “for giving me life.”

The old woman and her husband were very happy, and they named her Snow Maiden and loved her with all their hearts.

Snow Maiden liked to play outside. She loved to walk in the icy meadows and feel the cold wind.

But when the days grew longer and warmer, she began to feel sad. She did not walk in the meadows but hid in the cool shadows.

One day her mother saw her hiding in the shadow of the barn. She was crying.

“Why are you crying, dear daughter?”

“The last snow is melted.”

“But the flowers will fill the meadows. The birds will sing from the green trees, and the earth will become warm.”

But Snow Maiden could only cry.

From then on, she hid in the cool cellar and would not come out.

Then one day, hail fell. Snow Maiden ran into the yard and lovingly held the icy hail to her heart. She hid the hail from the sun, but it still melted in her arms.



Now Summer came, and Snow Maiden never left the cellar.

One day some girls came to Snow Maiden's mother.

"Can Snow Maiden play with us? We are going to the forest to pick wild flowers."

"Go with them," said the old woman. "You will have fun."

So Snow Maiden obeyed her mother and went with the girls into the forest to pick the wild flowers.

All day the girls sang songs and danced in the sun-light. But Snow Maiden hid in the shadows until the sun had gone down.

When it was dark, the girls made a little fire, took hands and danced around it. Then they took turns jumping over the little flames.

"Come, Snow Maiden. Join our dance!"

Snow Maiden looked at the flames for a long time. Then she too began to dance. As she danced, she began to sing.

*Far to the North is the land of snow;
That's my true home, so home I must go.
I'll not come back 'till Winter comes
And drives away the Summer sun.*

She jumped over the little fire and melted away. A wisp of steam hung in the air. Then it fled north.

Summer ended, and the days became shorter. Fall began, and the meadows became brown.

The old woman and man were full of sadness. Each night they sat by their little fire, but no flame could warm their hearts.

One night a cold wind blew from the north, and the first snow fell on the meadow.

The old man and woman looked out at the falling snow and heard a girl's voice singing on the wind.

Mother! Father! Open the door!

The snow brings me back to you once more!

The old man and woman ran out into the meadow and took Snow Maiden's hands. Across the snow-white meadow they danced until they were lost amidst the blowing flakes.

– from Russia

Jack Frost

Jack Frost is very small,
I'm sure he is out today.
He nipped my nose
And pinched my toes
When I went out to play.

– Traditional

Little Yeh Shen and the Golden Slipper

A long time ago, there was a chief called Wu. He was chief of the Land of Caves.

Chief Wu had two wives, and each gave birth to a girl. The daughter of First Wife was big and ugly, but the daughter of Second Wife was beautiful and small. The chief called her Little Yeh Shen.

When Chief Wu and Second Wife died, Little Yeh Shen was left in the care of First Wife. She hated Little Yeh Shen and gave her food that was only fit for a dog.

Little Yeh Shen had to get the wood and cook the meals. She had to wash the clothes and scrub the cave's floor. Then at night, she had to sleep on a pile of straw like a dog.

Little Yeh Shen had only one friend. It was a beautiful fish. The fish had eyes

as gold as the sun. Little Yeh Shen loved the fish and fed it her own food.

One day First Wife saw Little Yeh Shen feed the fish her food.

“You little brat, that’s my food,” First Wife said. “I’ll make you pay for giving my food to a fish.”

So First Wife made her own daughter, First Daughter, look like Little Yeh Shen.

When the fish came to eat, First Daughter caught it, and she and her mother ate it.

That night Little Yeh Shen wept for her



friend the fish. Then she heard a voice say, "Do not weep, little one."

She looked up and saw an old man with long white hair. He was dressed in rags.

"The bones of the fish hold a spirit. The spirit will grant you one wish if you ask. But do not fail the spirit. You must do as it says."

So Yeh Shen hid the bones of the fish in her pile of straw.



Little Yeh Shen grew into a beautiful maiden, but she never grew bigger than a little child.

One spring day as First Daughter was making ready for the Festival of the New Year, she yelled at Yeh Shen.

"Sweep the cave and make sure you sweep out all the bad luck. I want to find

a good husband at the Festival of the New Year. If any bad luck is left, I will beat you. Do you hear?"

"After I sweep the bad luck out of the cave," Yeh Shen asked, "may I go to the Festival with you?"

"You little dog," First Daughter laughed. "No one wants you there. You will only bring bad luck."

When First Wife and her daughter had gone, Yeh Shen took the bones of the fish out of the straw.

She knelt before them and said, "I want to go to the Festival, but I have no dress to wear."

At once, her rags became a beautiful dress and cape. The dress was as blue as the sky, and the cape was as red as the dawn. And on her little feet were golden slippers made of fish scales, as bright as the sun.

“Take care of my slippers,” said the bones of the fish.

“Yes, I will.”

When Yeh Shen arrived at the Festival, all the people ran to see her. She was the most beautiful girl they had ever seen.

But when First Wife came near her, Yeh Shen ran away. As she ran, one of the golden slippers fell from her feet.

When she arrived home, she hid the one golden slipper in the straw. Then she took out the bones to thank them, but they would not say a word.



That night a man found the golden slipper. He had never seen a slipper so beautiful or so small, and he sold it to a man who gave it to the King.

Now, the King wanted to find the maiden who could wear a slipper so small. She would be his queen.

He looked from the Land of Sunset to the Land of Dawn, but he found no one with a foot so small. At last, the King came to the Land of Caves.

“Put the slipper by the road,” the King said to his men. “Then hide. If anyone puts it on her foot, bring her to me.”

That night the women came down from the caves and tried to put the slipper on their feet, but it would not fit.

“Who wants that old slipper?” said First Daughter. “It hurts my foot.”

After everyone was asleep, Yeh Shen put the golden slipper on her foot, and the King’s men ran up to her.

“Stop! That slipper is fit only for a queen, not some beggar in rags.”

Yeh Shen tried to run, but they took her to the King.

“Why do you bring me a beggar in rags?” asked the King.

“She put the slipper on her foot.”

The King now looked at Yeh Shen’s face and saw that she was more beautiful than any woman he had seen.

“Why does that slipper fit only your foot?” he asked.

Yeh Shen knelt before him.

“Because it is mine.”

“Bring me its mate, and you will be my queen. If you have lied, then you must die.”

So Yeh Shen took the King to her cave where she took the other slipper from the straw.

“Here it is, just as you asked,” she said and gave the slipper to the King. He bent down and slipped it on her foot.

At once her rags became a beautiful dress and cape. The dress was as blue as the sky, and the cape was as red as the

dawn. And her face was as bright as the sun.

“Take us with you,” cried First Daughter, as the King took Yeh Shen to be his queen. “After all, my mother and I worked so hard to raise her.”

But the King left First Wife and First Daughter in their cave. There they lived until they were killed by falling stones.

— *from China*



The Noblest Deed

Once there was a poor man who lived in Guadalajara. When it was his time to die, he called his three sons to him.

“My sons,” he said, “this diamond is all I have in this world. My father gave it to me, and his father gave it to him. Now I must give it to one of you, but I cannot decide who should get it.”

“Why decide, *padre*?” said the oldest son. “Sell it and divide the money.”

“I swore to my father that the diamond would always stay in our family.”

“Then what are we to do?” asked the second son.

“I will give you a test,” said the old man. “The diamond will go to my son who does the noblest deed. Go now. In one week tell me what you have done.”

After one week had passed, the three sons stood before their father. He was

now much weaker than before and had only a little while to live.

“Tell me what you did,” he said. “For soon I must depart from this world.”

“*Mi padre*,” said the oldest son, “I have done a noble deed. I thought and thought what I could do. At last I knew what to do. I gave half the things I have in this world to the poor.”

The old man shook his head. “*Sí, mi hermoso*, that is a good deed but only a good deed, not noble. It is every man’s duty to give to the poor.”

The second son now stood before his father.

“*Padrecito*,” he said, taking his father’s hand, “I saw a little child fall into the river. Even though I cannot swim, I jumped in and pulled her out. I almost drowned.”

“That too is only a good deed, not a noble one. A man should always try to save a child.”

At last, the third son stood before his father.

“*Padre*, I too have failed. I did only a good thing.”

“Tell me about it, *mi hermoso*.”

“One morning I was walking in the mountains. It was dawn. I saw a man sleeping at the very edge of a cliff. I was afraid to call to him for fear he would move and fall off the cliff.”

“Tell me more.”

“*Padre*, guess who he was? He was Pancho, my worst enemy, the man who said he would kill me.”



“What did you do?”

“I gently put my arms around him. He awoke and looked at me in fear. ‘Do not fear’, I said softly, ‘I will not harm you.’

“When we were safe, he threw his arms around me and wept. ‘*Ay!*’ he cried. ‘You have saved my life. Last night, I became lost on the mountain, so I lay down and fell asleep. One step more, *amigo*, and I would have fallen to my death.’

“We then swore to be each other’s true friend forever. Is it not strange, *padre*, that we both found a friend in an enemy?”

“*Ay, mi hermoso*,” smiled the old man. “That is a beautiful story and truly a noble deed. Only a noble man would risk his life for his worst enemy. The diamond is yours.”

– *from Mexico*

Boom, Bam, Boom!

Boom, bam, boom, bang!
Rumpety, lumpety, bump!
Zoom, zam, zoom, zam!
Clippety, clappety, clump!
Rustles and bustles
And swishes and zings!
What wonderful noises
A thunderstorm brings!

– *Traditional*

The Fairy Snake

There once was a man who had three daughters. They were skilled with needle and thread and could embroider the most beautiful flowers on silk cloth.

Every day the man picked flowers for them, and every day the girls embroidered their beautiful flowers. In this way, the little family was able to live.

One day the father could find no flowers to pick. He looked and looked, but he could find no flowers by his home.

At last, he saw some flowers deep in the forest. But as soon as he picked one, a great snake took hold of him.

“How dare you pick my flowers?” the snake said. “This forest is mine. Now you will have to die.”

“Please do not kill me,” the man said. “I have three daughters. If you kill me, how will they live?”

“Three daughters?” said the snake.
“Are they good daughters?”

“Yes,” said the man.

“Then bring your First Daughter to me. I will let you live if she will be my bride.”

“Yes, let me live. My First Daughter will be your bride.”

So the snake let him go. As the man was running from the forest, the snake called after him.

“If you do not bring her to me,” the snake said, “I will come and get you.”

When the man arrived home, he did not tell his daughters about the snake. He was afraid of what they might say.

That night he was so troubled that he did not sleep. And the next day, he did not eat.

“What is the trouble, father?” asked First Daughter.

But he would not tell her.

And again that night he could not sleep for fear of the snake.



In the morning, his daughters looked at him and were afraid.

“Father,” they asked, “what is the trouble? Why do you not eat?”

But he would not tell them. He was that afraid.

On the third night, he cried out in his sleep. “Let me be! Let me be! I want to live!”

His cry woke his daughters, and they ran to his room.

“Father, why do you cry out? What is the trouble?”

“No, daughters, I will not say.”

The next night he also cried out. Again, his daughters ran to his room, but

First Daughter stopped them at the door. She would not let her sisters go in.

“I am First Daughter. Let me see if our father will tell me what troubles him.”

So First Daughter went into his room, and he told her his troubles.

“You see, First Daughter,” he said, “you must be the snake’s bride.”

“No,” she said. “I will not be a snake’s bride. This is your trouble, not mine.”

“But First Daughter, I do not want to die.”

But the girl would only say, “This is your trouble, not mine.”

“What troubles our father?” asked her sisters when they saw her. But she said not a word.

The next night the man cried out again. This time Second Daughter went into his room, and he told her his troubles.

“So, Second Daughter, you must be the snake’s bride.”

“No,” she said. “I will not be a snake’s bride.”

“But Second Daughter,” the man cried, “I am afraid. Please, do not let me die.”

But the girl would only say, “This is your trouble, not mine.”

“What troubles our father?” asked Third Daughter when she saw her sister. But Second Daughter just turned away and said not a word.

On the next night, the father cried out again, and this time Third Daughter went into his room.

After he had told her his troubles, she took his hand and said, “Father, I will be the snake’s bride. But first you must get well.”

And since the man was no longer afraid, he soon became well.

When the time came for Third Daughter to go to the snake, her sisters said, "Do not go yet. You have work to do here. Will you make us do everything?"

So Third Daughter did not go.

The next day, a wasp flew into the room where the sisters were working. It flew about the room and sang,

Buzz! Buzz! My buzz gets faster.

Who will wed the snake, my master?

The two older sisters tried to swat the wasp, but it was too fast.

When it landed on their work, First Daughter tried to stick it with her needle, so it stung her hand and flew away.

The next morning two wasps flew about the room and sang,

Buzz! Buzz! Our buzz gets faster.

Who will wed the snake, our master?



The girls tried to swat them. They tried to stick them with their needles, but the wasps stung their hands and flew away.

The next morning three wasps came. They flew about the room.

Buzz! Buzz! Our buzz gets faster.

Who will wed the snake, our master?

The girls tried to swat them. They tried to stick them with their needles, but the wasps stung their hands and flew away.

Day after day, more and more wasps flew about the room and sang their song.

Buzz! Buzz! Our buzz gets faster.

Who will wed the snake, our master?

The girls tried to swat them. They tried to stick them with their needles, but





the wasps stung their hands and flew away.



“Sisters,” said Third Daughter, “these wasps come from the snake. If I do not go to him, our father will die.”



So Third Daughter went to be the snake’s bride.



The snake lived in a Palace of Flowers. His skin was warty. At first, Third Daughter was afraid, but his eyes were soft, and his voice was like soft music.

“Do not be afraid,” said the snake. “I will not hurt you. All I ask is that you bring me fresh water every day. Without fresh water I will die.”

When Third Daughter saw that the snake would not hurt her, she stopped being afraid.



One day the well was dry, so she had to go deep into the forest to find fresh water. She looked all day, and at last, she came to a spring.

She filled her jug with the fresh water and turned back to the snake’s palace. But the way was very long, and it was after dark before she arrived.

The snake was dying.

“Why have you hurt me?” he asked.

“I only asked for fresh water.”

“Oh, do not die,” she cried.

And she picked the snake up and put him in the jug of fresh water. At once, he turned into a beautiful man.

“Thank you,” he said. “Your good deed has set me free.”

So they lived happily ever after in the Palace of Flowers. And they often went to visit her father and sisters. But

those three were never allowed to visit
the Palace of Flowers and were never as
happy as she.

— *from China*



The Owl and the Eel and the Warming-Pan

The owl and the eel and the warming-pan,
They went to call on the soap-fat man.
The soap-fat man he was not within:
He'd gone for a ride on his rolling-pin.
So they all came back by the way of the town,
And turned the meeting-house upside down.

— *Laura E. Richards*

Spring Defeats Winter

Long ago when the world was new, an old man walked the land. His hair was white and long, his skin was as white as snow, and his eyes were as cold as ice.

Wherever he stepped, the ground became cold. His breath made the rivers stop flowing and the ponds as hard as stone.

All living things ran from him. If he touched a plant, it died. And when he passed a tree, its leaves fell to the ground.

The old man made himself a lodge of ice and covered it with snow. Then he crawled inside. He made himself a fire of ice that burned coldly and gave off no heat.

His only friend was the bitter North Wind. They sat smoking their pipes and enjoying the cold. The old man said nothing, but the North Wind loved to howl.

One morning the North Wind rose and looked out of the lodge. The snowdrifts were smaller, and cracks could be seen on the pond.

“I cannot stay here any longer,” the North Wind grunted and flew off.

But the old man did not care. He would stay in his lodge as long as he liked. He had built it to last. He knew that his power was strong.

After a while, he heard his ice walls crack. Something was hitting his lodge.

“Go away!” the old man called. “No one may come into my lodge.”

But as he spoke, the lodge door broke open, and a strong young man stepped in. Without saying a word, the young man sat across from the old man. The young man crossed his legs and smiled.

The young man’s smiling face shone like the sun, and in his hand he held a

green stick. He stirred the fire with the stick, and the fire began to grow bright and warm.

Sweat began to flow down the old man's face.

"What do you want?" the old man grunted. "No one is welcome here. Go away, or I'll freeze you to death."

The old man then tried to blow his cold breath on the young man, but only a whisp of mist dribbled from his icy lips.

"Old man," the young man laughed, "soon you will warm yourself by my fire."

The old man was now very angry.

"Do you not fear who I am? I am the one who makes the animals and birds flee. I drive the leaves from the trees, and I make the plants die."

He shook his fist at the young man.

"Wherever I step, the ground becomes cold. I make the rivers and ponds as hard

as stone. I am master of the snow and ice, and I am mightier than you!"

"You talk big," said the young man.

"But I am mightier than you. Do you not know who I am? Do you not feel the warmth of my breath? I run with the sunshine, and I make your snow melt at my feet.

"Wherever I step, the grass grows and the flowers bloom. The animals welcome me, and the birds wing back and sing.

"See, old man, how long my hair grows while your hair falls out. I am growing in power while you are growing weak.

"Do you not hear my friend at your door? She is the South Wind. She will bring down your lodge.

"It is *you*, old man, who must leave."

The old man tried to speak, but his voice had no power. He was growing

weaker. Sweat poured from his face. He was growing smaller and melting away.

The ice walls of his lodge broke and fell down around him, and where his cold fire had once burned, a white flower now bloomed.

– *from the Seneca*

Snow Drops

Snowdrops, little drops of snow,
What do you do when the cold winds
blow?

“Hide our little heads and say,
‘Cold winds, cold winds go away.’ ”

Snowdrops, snowdrops, dressed in green
and white,

What do you do when the sun shines
bright?

“Shake our little bells and sing,
‘Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, here’s the
Spring.’ ”

– *Traditional*

Sore Skin and the Heavenly Maidens

There once was a young man called Sore Skin. He was ugly to look at and a simple fool to boot.

One day he stood in front of his hut and called out for all to hear, “I am setting out to find a wife. When I return, I will have the most beautiful girl in the world with me.”

“Sore Skin, how can you find a wife?” his brother asked. “All the girls laugh at you and run away. What girl wants a husband with sore skin?”

But Sore Skin set off anyway. He was sure he would find a wife.

He walked all day, looking for a wife behind every rock and bush. At sunset, he stopped by a lake to rest. As he rested, he heard wings over his head.

Looking up, he saw two Heavenly Maidens flying down to earth. Their skin

was golden brown, and their wings were bright gold.

They were very beautiful, but he was afraid they would laugh at him, so he hid behind a bush.

The Heavenly Maidens landed and took off their wings. Then they began to laugh and play in the water.



As they played, Sore Skin took their wings and hid them. When the maidens came out of the water, they looked around for their wings.

“Where are our wings?” they cried. “How will we get back to our parents in heaven without them?”

“Do not cry, beautiful maidens,” called Sore Skin from behind the bush. “I took your wings. What will you give me if I give them back? Will you marry me?”

“Give us our wings back, and then we will marry you,” said the older maiden.

“No,” Sore Skin laughed. “First, you must marry me. Then I will give your wings back.”

“How can we marry you without our wings?” cried the younger maiden. “Are you really such a fool?”

“*They are so beautiful,*” Sore Skin said to himself. “*They must be telling the truth.*”

Maybe they will love me if I give back their wings?”

So he stepped out from behind the bush and said, “Do I have your word?”

“Yes,” the maidens said.

So he gave them back their wings. He even helped them put on their wings.

But as soon as they had their wings back on, they laughed at him and flew back to heaven.



The next day, Sore Skin waited by the lake all day. As the sun was setting, he heard the wings again. The two Heavenly Maidens were flying back down to earth.

They landed and took off their wings. As they laughed and played in the water, Sore Skin slipped from behind the bush and took their wings. He ran back to his



village with the wings and hid them.

“You took our wings,” they cried when they saw him walking back to the lake.

“Yes,” he said. “You gave me your word, but you broke it. You did not marry me. Now I will keep them until you do as you promised.”

So the Heavenly Maidens had to go with him to his village.

When the villagers saw the Heavenly Maidens, they were amazed and ran out of their huts.

“Sore Skin, where did you get such beautiful wives?” they asked.

“I found them,” was all he would say.

Sore Skin made two huts for his wives, but they were not happy.

One day his wives came to him as he sat before their huts and said, “We



want to see our parents, but we need our wings to fly back to heaven. Why will you not give them back to us?”

“Because you broke your word, because you laughed at me, and because you flew away. Some day I will give them back, but not today.”

Two days passed, and his wives came to him again and asked, “We want to see our parents, but we need our wings to fly back to heaven. Why will you not give them back to us?”

But he only said, “Some day, but not today.”

Three days passed, and his wives came to him again and asked, “We want to see our parents. If you give us our wings, we will take you to heaven with us.”

Sore Skin rubbed his chin and asked, “You will not laugh or fly away without me?”

“No, we will take you.”

“Then you may have them.”



When they arrived in heaven, the Heavenly Maidens' father and mother were happy to see their daughters.

“But who is this ugly man?” their father asked. “Look at him! He has no wings, and his skin is ugly with sores. I will put him in the cooking pot and make him into medicine.”

“No!” said the maidens. “Do not put him in the cooking pot and make him into medicine. He is kind and loves us. If you do not like him, we will take him back to earth.”

That night a rat woke Sore Skin.

“The man plans to make you into medicine.”

“No,” said Sore Skin. “My wives will not let him.”

“Are you a fool?”

Being called a fool made Sore Skin mad. So he threw a rock at the rat, who ran away.

“Oh, yes, they will,” the rat laughed.

“I heard them say so just now.”

So Sore Skin ran after the rat. Soon he found the rat sitting by the road with an ant-eater and a spider.

“Why do you run?” the ant-eater asked.

“The man wants to make me into medicine. What will I do?”

“What will you give us if we help you?” asked the spider.

“I will give you anything you want. Just ask.”

“Well, I want some scraps from a cooking pot,” said the rat.

“I want some flies,” said the spider.

“And I want a mess of ants,” said the ant-eater.

“You have my word,” said Sore Skin.
“All these things are yours if you help me
get back to earth.”

So the ant-eater made a hole in the
sky with his snout. Then the spider spun
a silk cord. And all four went down to
earth.

When they arrived back on earth, Sore
Skin gave them what they wanted, and
they went away happy.



Every day Sore Skin went back to the
lake. He wanted to see the Heavenly
Maidens, but they did not come back.

Many moons passed, but the maidens
never came back again.

One day as the sun set, Sore Skin
heard wings over his head. It was the
Heavenly Maidens coming back to earth.

He hid behind a bush, and as they

played in the water, he took their wings.
This time he did not hide them. He
burned them instead.

“Now,” he called to the maidens, “you
cannot trick me and fly away.”

And he took them home to his village.



Many
more moons
passed, and
the Heavenly
Maidens began
to like living
on the earth.

They loved

the beautiful sunrises and the beautiful
sunsets. They loved the fresh smell of
the earth after the rain.

One day they found a mighty medicine
plant.

They took the mighty medicine plant
back to the village and filled a big

cooking pot with water. Then they cut up the medicine plant and boiled it. The water became yellow.

When Sore Skin came home, they said, "Husband get into the cooking pot."

"NO!" he cried. "You want to make me into medicine.

"No," they laughed. "You have our word. We do not want to hurt you. Get into the pot, and we will heal you."

So Sore Skin felt the water. It was not too hot, and he got in.

As soon as he was in the pot, he felt all the sores fall from his skin, and his skin was as beautiful and golden brown as the skin of his wives.

He was now so happy that he began to laugh. And from that day on, he was no longer called Sore Skin but always Laughing Man.

– from Africa

The Squirrel

Whisky, frisky, hoppity hop,
Up he goes to the tree tops!
Whirly, twirly, round and round,
Down he scampers to the ground.
Furly, curly, what a tail!
Tall as a feather, broad as a sail!
Where's his supper? In the shell.
Snappity, crackity, out it fell.

– Traditional

Brother and Sister

“Come, Sister, take my hand. Since our mother died, we have not been happy. Our Step-Mother beats us, and even the little dog lives better. Come, let us flee this place and go into the wide world.”

So the brother led his little sister from their unhappy home. As they walked, it rained, and Little Sister said, “Heaven and our hearts weep together.”

As the sun set, they came to a forest, and Little Sister said, “Let us sleep in this old tree,” and they lay down.

In the morning, the brother said, “Let us find a stream where we can drink.”

So they went to look for a stream where they could drink.

But the Step-Mother was a witch, and she had put a spell on all the streams in the forest.

As the brother bent to drink, the water said to his sister,

*Who drinks of me,
A tiger he will be.
A tiger he will be.*

“Brother, do not drink, or you will become a tiger and kill me.”

So the brother did as his sister asked and did not drink from that stream.

Soon they came to a second stream. And as the brother bent to drink, the water said to his sister,

*Who drinks of me,
A wolf he will be.
A wolf he will be.*

“Brother,” she said, “do not drink, or you will become a wolf and kill me.”

“Then we will look for another stream,” said her brother. “But at that stream, I must drink, or I will die of thirst.”

When they came to the third stream, the water said to the sister,

*Who drinks of me,
A roe-buck he will be.
A roe-buck he will be.*

“Oh, Brother, do not drink, or you will become a roe-buck and run away.”

But the brother bent down to drink. And as soon as drank, he became a roe-buck and lay down at his sister’s feet.

The little sister wept, and the little roe-buck wept with her.

“Little Roe-Buck,” she said as she patted his head, “I will never, never let you run away.”

She then took her golden garter and made him a collar. Then she wove grass into a cord, and she tied the cord to the golden collar.

They walked deep into the forest and came at last to a little house.

“We can live here, brother,” she said. She made the little roe-buck a soft bed.

And after she had said her prayers, she put her head on the little roe-buck’s back, for he was her only pillow.

So they lived, and they were happy.



One day the King of that land went into the forest to hunt.

When the little roe-buck heard the barking of the dogs and the blowing of the horns, he said, “Oh, Little Sister, let me run before the



hunters and the dogs.”

“No, they will kill you, and I will be alone.”

But the roe-buck begged her, and at last, she said, “You may go, but you must come back to me when it is dark. Tap at the door and say, ‘Little Sister, let

me in.’ If you do not say that, I will not open the door.”

So the little roe-buck ran before the hunters and the dogs, and he was happy.

The hunters chased him up hills and down hills. They chased him all day, and he gave them good sport.

But he was too fast for them, and when it was dark, he went back to the little house and tapped on the door.

“Little Sister, let me in.”

And she did.

The next morning the King of that land wanted to hunt the roe-buck with the golden collar again. So he went into the forest with his hunters and dogs.

When the little roe-buck heard the dogs and horns, he said, “Oh, Sister, let me run before the hunters and the dogs, or I will jump out of my skin.”

And at last, she let him go.

So once again the little roe-buck ran before the hunters and the dogs. They chased him up hills and down hills. They chased him all day, and he gave them good sport.

But they could never catch him because he was too fast.

Just as the sun was about to set, the King’s best hunter shot the roe-buck in the foot and tracked him to the little house.

The hunter saw him tap on the door and heard him say, “*Little Sister, let me in.*”

Then the hunter went back to the King and told him all that he had seen and heard.

The next day the King said to the hunter, “Chase the roe-buck, but do not harm him. Then when the sun sets, take me to the little house.”

And the hunter did as his King said.
As the sun set, the King went to the
little house and tapped on the door.

“Little Sister, let me in.”

She opened the door, saw the King
and was afraid.

“Do not be afraid,” the King said.
“Come and be my queen.”

“But my little roe-buck must come with
me, and he must never be harmed.”
And so the King did as she asked.



One day the Step-Mother heard that
the brother and sister had not been killed
by wild beasts. Her heart filled with envy,
and she wanted to hurt them once again.

Now her own daughter was as ugly
as night and had only one eye to boot.
When she heard that the little sister was
queen, she said, “I should be queen; why
should she be queen?”

“Be still,” her mother said, “and wait
for your time.”

One day as the King was hunting, the
Queen gave birth to a baby boy.

Then the Step-Mother said to her
daughter, “Come, now is your time.”

She dressed herself up as a maid and
slipped into the Queen’s room.

“Come, my dear,” the Step-Mother
said to the Queen. “Your bath is waiting.
It will make you well. Hurry, before it
gets cold.”

But the bath was so hot that the
Queen died.

Now the Step-Mother put her ugly
daughter in the bed and gave her the
Queen’s shape.

“Lie on your side,” she told the ugly girl,
“and the King will not see your bad eye.”

That night the King wanted to see his

wife, but the Step-Mother stopped him.

“The Queen must sleep.”

And the King did as she said and went away.



That night at midnight, the Nurse saw the true queen come into the nursery.

The true queen took the baby in her arms and nursed him. Then she patted the head of the roe-buck and went away.

Each night at midnight, the true queen came back and nursed the child. When she was done, she patted the roe-buck and went away.

Night after night, the true queen came back and nursed the child until one night she spoke to the Nurse,



How fares my child?

How fares my roe?

Twice will I come,

Then never more.

The Nurse was too afraid to speak. But in the morning, she went to the King.

“Ah, God,” the King said. “What is this?”

Tonight I will sit with you.”

At midnight, the Queen returned. She looked at the King and the Nurse and said,

How fares my child?

How fares my roe?

Once will I come,

Then never more.

But the King was too afraid to speak. When the true queen was done nursing the child, she patted the roe-buck and went away.

The next night the King sat with the Nurse again. At midnight the true queen returned. She looked at the king and the nurse and said,

How fares my child?

How fares my roe?

This time I come,

Then never more.

Now the King spoke.

“You must be my dear wife.”

“Yes, I am.”

And she became alive again.

She then told the King what the Step-Mother had done.

And the King had the evil daughter pulled from the bed and taken into the forest. There she was torn apart by wild beasts.

Then he had the Step-Mother cast into a fire and burned to ash.

And as soon as the Step-Mother was dead, the roe-buck became his human shape. And so the brother and sister lived together happily for the rest of their lives.

— *from the Brothers Grimm*

A Little Garden Flower

A little garden flower
Is lying in its bed.
A warm Spring sun
Is shining overhead.
Down came the raindrops
Dancing to and fro –
The little flower wakens
And then begins to grow.

– *Traditional*

Jack and the Beanstalk

There was once a boy named Jack.
He lived with his old mother and a cow
called Milky White.

Jack was a good boy, but he liked to
wonder what was on top of the clouds.
Sometimes he wondered so much that he
did not get his work done.

One day Jack's mother said to him,
“Jack, take Milky White to market and
make sure you get a good price for her.
If you don't, I fear we will starve.”

“Do not fear, mother. You can count
on me,” said Jack. “I'll get a good price,
and I'll be home as fast as a wink.”

“Oh, Jack,” his mother said, “you are a
good boy.”

Jack had gone only a little way down
the road when he met a little green man.
This man had green hair and green eyes,
and he wore a green coat and green
boots.

“Hello, Jack,” the green man said.
“I see you are taking your cow, Milky White, to market. I bet you want to get a good price.”

“Oh yes, I do!” said Jack. “Or my mother will starve.”

The little green man held out his hand. In it was a little green bag.

“Do you know what this is?” the man asked.

“A bag of gold?” asked Jack.

“Better than gold,” said the man.

And he took four little green beans out of the bag and put them in Jack’s hand.

“Beans?” asked Jack.

“Magic beans!” said the little green man.

“Magic beans?” said Jack.

“Yes, magic beans,” said the little green man. “They will grow up through

the clouds to the top of the sky. Have you ever wondered what’s on top of the clouds, Jack?”

Well, the man did not need to say anything more. Fast as wink, Jack took the four little green beans, and fast as a blink, the man was gone.

When Jack arrived home, he called to his mother.

“Mother, Mother! Have you ever wondered what’s on top of the clouds?”

“Jack, Jack, slow down or you will burst. Now tell me, did you get a good price for Milky White?”

“Did I get a good price! I’ll say I did! Just look at what I got!”

And Jack held out his hand and showed her the four little green beans.

“Beans?” she cried.

“But they’re magic beans, Mother!”

“Oh, Jack, you never had any sense!” she cried and threw the beans away. “Now get to bed without any supper!” And that night it rained.



The next morning, green light filled Jack’s room. He looked about and saw a big bean stalk outside his window. It grew to the top of the sky.

Faster than a wink, Jack jumped out of bed and climbed up the bean stalk to the top of the sky. There he saw a big cloud castle. Now, Jack had always wondered about cloud castles, so he set off for it.

When he arrived at the cloud castle, an ogre’s wife was sitting on the steps. She had a fat nose and sharp teeth.

“Hello, mum,” Jack called. “My, you have nice teeth and a pretty nose. Can you give me some breakfast?”



“My, you’re a fresh boy, but I like fresh boys,” the ogre’s wife said. “I’ll give you some breakfast. But my man, the ogre, will be home soon. He likes nice, fresh boy . . . for his breakfast.”

“I’ll eat fast,” said Jack as he skipped into the ogress’ kitchen.

No sooner had he sat down than the cloud castle began to shake.

Thump! *Thump!!* **THUMP!!!**

“It’s my man, the ogre,” cried the ogress. “Hide, or he’ll eat you up.”

So fast as a wink, Jack jumped into the oven.

Thump! *Thump!!* **THUMP!!!**

A big, ugly ogre thumped into the room. Three big sheep hung from his belt.

“Here, wife,” he said. “Roast these sheep in the oven for my breakfast!”

“Oh, don’t be silly,” said the ogre’s

wife. “Those little sheep would burn to a crisp. Let me boil them for you.”

Then the ogre began to sniff about and sing the ogre song.

Fee, fi, fo, fum!

I smell the blood of an Englishman!

Be he alive or be he dead,

I’ll grind his bones to make my bread.

“Oh, don’t be silly,” said his wife.

“That’s only the boy we had last night for supper. I’m boiling his bones for soup.”

So the ogre grunted and sat down to eat. After his breakfast, he called for his bag of gold and began to count.

“One . . . three . . . two . . . uh?”

But it was very hard for the ogre to count so high, so he began again.

“One . . . uh . . . uh-uh?”

But it was so hard for ogres to count that he fell asleep and began to snore.

Fast as a blink, Jack jumped out of the oven, took the bag of gold and ran back to the bean stalk. He threw the gold down and climbed down after it.

When he arrived at the bottom, his mother was busy picking up the gold.

“Oh Jack!” she cried. “What a fine day. It’s raining gold.”

Jack wanted to show her the bean stalk, but as fast as a wink, it was gone.

Now he knew it was magic.



For a long time, Jack and his mother had all that they wanted. But one day, the last of the gold was gone.

“Oh Jack!” his mother cried. “What will we do? Now we will starve.”

“Don’t cry, Mother,” said Jack. “I’ll go to bed without supper!”

And that night it rained.

In the morning, a green light filled Jack’s room. Fast as a blink, he was up through the clouds and on the steps of the cloud castle.

“Hello, mum,” Jack said to the ogress. “Can you give a boy some breakfast?”

“Are you that fresh boy who took our gold?” the ogre’s wife asked.

“Maybe I am and maybe I’m not,” said Jack. “But if you give me some breakfast, you may find out.”

As soon as Jack sat down to eat, the cloud castle began to shake.

Thump! *Thump!!* **THUMP!!!**

“It’s my man, the ogre! Here, jump into the oven, or he’ll eat you up.”

Thump! *Thump!!* **THUMP!!!**

The ogre came into the room. Three cows hung from his belt.

“Here, woman,” he said. “Roast these in the oven for my breakfast!”

“Oh, don’t be silly,” said the ogress. “That would take all day. Let me boil them for you.”

Then the ogre began to sniff about and sing the ogre song.

Fee, fi, fo, fum!

I smell the blood of an Englishman!

Be he alive or be he dead,

I’ll grind his bones to make my bread.

“Oh, don’t be silly,” said his wife. “That’s only the boy we had for supper last night. I’m grinding his bones to make your bread.”

So the ogre sat down and ate his breakfast. After he was finished, he called for his golden hen.

*Hen, hen, do as I say,
Lay a golden egg today.*

The hen laid a golden egg, and the ogre began to snore.

Jack jumped out of the oven, took the hen and ran. But the hen began to squawk.

Jack ran as fast as he could. He jumped on the bean stalk and made it back home.

After that, all Jack had to do was say,

*Hen, hen, do as I say,
Lay a golden egg today.*

And he and his mother had all that they ever wanted.



One day, Jack began to wonder about the cloud castle at the top of the sky. *Was it still there?* So that night he went

to bed without supper. But he also made sure that he watered the ground outside his room before going to bed.

In the morning, a green light filled Jack's room, and Jack was up above the clouds so fast that he beat the sun into the sky.

This time he did not say hello to the ogress, nor did he hide in the oven. He hid in the boiling pot – and none too soon!

The cloud castle began to shake.

Thump! *Thump!! THUMP!!!*

In the ogre stomped. He had three whales hanging from his belt. The ogre sniffed about and began to sing the ogre song.

Fee, fi, fo, fum!

I smell the blood of an Englishman!

Be he alive or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

“I smell him too,” said the ogre's wife. “It's that fresh boy who stole our gold and stole our hen. I bet he's hiding in the oven!”

But when she opened the oven, there was only some roasting meat.

“Now, look at that?” she said. “It's the boy you got last night. I'm roasting him for breakfast.”

So the ogre called for his harp.

Harp, harp with the golden voice,

Sing the song of your master's choice.

The harp sang, and the ogre began to nod. But this time, he did NOT snore.

Fast as a blink, Jack jumped out of the boiling pot and took the harp. But it sang out,

Master, master, hear what I say:

That fresh boy Jack steals me away.

The ogre woke up and cried out,
“Stop, you nasty boy!”

But Jack was nimble, and Jack was quick. He jumped on the bean stalk as if it were a candle stick and slid down through the clouds.

As Jack was slipping down the bean stalk, the harp sang out even louder.

*Faster, master, chase after the boy.
If he gets away, you'll lose your joy.*

The ogre jumped onto the bean stalk, and it began to sway.

When Jack arrived at the bottom, he cried out, “Mother, get the axe!”

His mother ran and got the axe, and Jack began to chop.

Chop! *Chop!!* **CHOP!!!**

The bean stalk swayed even more.

“Have a care!” cried the ogre.

But Jack did have a care. He cared a lot. He cared so much that he swung that axe with all his might.

Chop! *Chop!!*

And with one last **CHOP**, the bean stalk snapped in two, and the ogre crashed to the ground – dead.

From then on if Jack and his mother wanted something, he only had to say,

*Hen, hen, do as I say,
Lay a golden egg today.*

Or if they were feeling low,

*Harp, harp with the golden voice,
Sing the song of your master's choice.*

And so they lived happily Oh! Wait! Have you forgotten?! That last bean. Doesn't it still need to be watered?

– from England

The silver moon is shining
Amidst the stars so bright.
It's such a lovely feeling
To see so grand a sight.

– *Traditional*

Author and Illustrator

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