



THE LAND OF STORIES



A TREASURY OF CLASSIC FAIRY TALES



CHRIS COLFER
ILLUSTRATED BY BRANDON DORMAN



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To my mom.

*Thank you for introducing me to fairy tales and humoring
my endless curiosity about the characters and their
motives.*

I love you and will miss you always.



INTRODUCTION



A NOTE TO ALL STORYTELLERS

Imagine a world with *magic*. Now imagine this place is home to everything and everyone you were told wasn't "real." Imagine it has fairies and witches, mermaids and unicorns, giants and dragons, and trolls and goblins. Imagine they live in places like enchanted forests, gingerbread houses, underwater kingdoms, or castles in the sky.

Personally, I know such a place exists because it's where I'm from. This magical world is not as distant as you think. In fact, you've been there many times before. You travel there whenever you hear the words "Once upon a time." It's another realm, where all your favorite fairy-tale and nursery-rhyme characters live. In your world, we call it *the Land of Stories*.

For those of you familiar with fairy tales, I'm known as the Fairy Godmother. I'm best remembered for transforming Cinderella's raggedy clothes into a beautiful gown for the prince's ball—but I won't give anything else away in case you haven't read it. You'll be delighted to see it's the first story in this treasury.

I understand this all may come as a bit of a surprise. It's not every day you learn that a place like the Land of Stories exists outside one's imagination. Although it shouldn't be *that* shocking if you think about it: After all, if fiction is inspired by mythology, and myths are just embellished legends, and legends are exaggerated history, then *all* stories must have an element of truth to them. And I can assure you that the fairy-tale world is as real as the book you're holding in your hands.

You're probably wondering *how* the stories of the fairy-tale world became so prevalent in your world. Allow me to explain, for I am entirely to blame.

Many centuries ago, I discovered your world by accident. After a long and wonderful career of helping people (like Cinderella) achieve their dreams, I was only eager to do more. So one day I closed my eyes, waved

my magic wand, and said, “I wish to go someplace where people need me the most.” When I opened my eyes, I was no longer in the Land of Stories.

When I first arrived, your world was enduring a time known as *the Dark Ages*, and there couldn’t be a better description. It was a period consumed with poverty, plague, and war. People were suffering and starving, and they were very doubtful that conditions would get any better.

I did what I could to help the people I met: I treated the sick, I fed the hungry, and I even tried to stop the violence throughout the land. Unfortunately, nothing I did prevented the disease and destitution from spreading.

However, it wasn’t *interaction* your world needed; it was *inspiration*. In a world dominated by ruthless kings and warlords, the ideas of *self-worth* and *self-empowerment* were unheard of. So I started telling stories about my world to entertain and raise spirits, especially the poor children’s. Little did I know it would become the greatest contribution of my lifetime.

I told stories about cowards who became heroes, peasants who became powerful, and the lonely who became beloved. The stories taught many lessons, but most important, they taught the world how to dream. The ability to dream was a much-needed introduction to *hope*, and it spread like a powerful epidemic. Families passed the stories from generation to generation, and over the years I watched their compassion and courage change the world.

I recruited other fairies to help me spread the tales from the Land of Stories around the world, and the stories became known as *fairy tales*. Over time, we asked writers like the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Charles Perrault to publish the stories so they would live on forever.

During that time, I realized how important *storytelling* is. While philosophy and science help enhance our mind and body, storytelling stimulates our spirit. It broadens our imagination, teaches us valuable lessons, shows us that things are not always as they seem, and encourages us to reach our greatest potential.

With that said, I have a favor to ask of anyone reading this: *Become a storyteller!* Read to others the fairy tales in this book. Read them stories from another book. If you can, create your own stories to share. When you pass along the art of storytelling to your family and friends, you make the world a better place.

By inspiring someone, you stimulate that person's creativity; and when someone is gifted with creativity, he or she inherently holds the source of *progress* and *prosperity*. Creativity is the simple but powerful ability to make something from nothing, and it just so happens that *making something from nothing* is also the definition of *magic*.

Become a storyteller and help us keep fairy tales alive. Even if people don't believe in magic, never let the world forget what it represents. Wherever there is a storyteller, there will always be hope.

Thank you, and may you all have a *happily-ever-after*!

With love,
The Fairy
Godmother

CLASSIC FAIRY TALES



CINDERELLA



ADAPTED FROM CHARLES PERRAULT

Once upon a time, there was a lovely little girl named Cinderella. She was as beautiful as she was kind and treated everyone with compassion and respect, from the lords and ladies that lived in her village to the small mice that lived in her garden. Cinderella had a heart of gold and was beloved and befriended by all she met.

She lived in a charming home with her mother and father, and they were as happy as a family could be, until the unfortunate day her mother passed away.

Fearing Cinderella would grow up unhappy without a mother, her father soon remarried a widow from the village who had two daughters of her own. Her stepmother wasn't as warm or gentle as Cinderella's mother had been, and her stepsisters weren't very kind, but Cinderella loved them like the family she hoped they'd become.

Sadly, shortly after the marriage began, Cinderella's father also died, leaving her alone with her stepmother and stepsisters. It was then that her new family's true nature revealed itself. They removed everything from the home that had belonged to Cinderella's mother and father and filled the house with their own belongings. The stepsisters took Cinderella's bedroom for themselves and made her sleep on a stack of hay in the cellar. The stepmother took Cinderella's dresses away and gave her raggedy clothes to wear.

"If you want to continue living here, you'll have to work for it," the stepmother said.



From then on, Cinderella wasn't treated like a sister or daughter, but like a maid. Her stepmother and stepsisters gave her grueling chores and frivolous tasks and made her wait on them hand and foot as they enjoyed their new home.

As time went on, Cinderella grew to be a beautiful young woman, igniting the jealousy of her two stepsisters. As punishment for her beauty, they added to her chores until she was constantly covered in dirt, and Cinderella forgot she was pretty at all.

Despite her misfortune, Cinderella remained a kind and compassionate person. She knew her heart of gold was something her stepmother and stepsisters could never take away, and that alone gave her joy on the gloomiest days. She may have spent her time working for her stepfamily, but the nights were hers to dream of a better life, and those dreams gave her hope that good things would come.

One day, royal invitations were sent throughout the kingdom inviting all the young women in the land to a special ball the king and queen were

hosting at the palace. At the ball, the very handsome Prince Charming would dance with all the young women in attendance and choose his future bride.

It was the most exciting news the kingdom had heard in years, and Cinderella's house was buzzing with anticipation. For weeks leading up to the ball, Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters spoke of nothing else. The stepsisters took turns fantasizing about what it would be like to dance with the prince and accept his marriage proposal. They purchased elegant fabrics and ordered Cinderella to make them dresses for the occasion.

While she listened to her stepsisters' daydreams and sewed their dresses, Cinderella also dreamed of what it would be like to attend the ball. She had never been to the palace before and wanted nothing more than to attend the ball with the other young women of the kingdom. When she was little she'd loved listening to her father's stories about visiting the palace on special occasions. He had promised to take her there one day when she was older, but now that he was gone, the ball seemed like Cinderella's only chance.

Cinderella worked on her stepsisters' dresses around the clock, hoping she would finish with enough time to make something for herself to wear. Soon the night of the ball came, and Cinderella only had time to sew patches over the holes and tears of her raggedy clothes.

A carriage arrived to take the stepmother and stepsisters to the palace, and Cinderella followed them outside.

"Where do you think you're going?" the stepmother asked.

"To the ball, of course," Cinderella said.

"You can't go to the palace dressed in those hideous rags," the stepmother said.

"Oh, please let me go, Stepmother," Cinderella pleaded. "I don't wish to dance with the prince, I only wish to see the palace. I'll stand in the very back where no one can see me."

"Absolutely not," the stepmother said. "The people at the palace will laugh at you. We'd be so embarrassed, we'd never show our faces in society again. Trust me, Cinderella; I'm doing you a favor."

And with that said, the stepmother and stepsisters climbed into the carriage and left for the ball. Cinderella fell to her knees and cried harder than she had ever cried before.

"Oh, Mother and Father," Cinderella prayed, "please forgive me for

being so upset. I try so hard to have a happy heart, but it's difficult when your heart is broken."

Suddenly, a gust of wind circled Cinderella, and an old woman appeared out of thin air. She wore sparkling robes and had a kind smile. She dried Cinderella's tears and stroked her hair.

"There, there, my child," the old woman said. "A person as lovely as you shouldn't be so sad."

"Who are you?" Cinderella asked with a fright, for she had never seen the woman before in her life.

"I'm your Fairy Godmother," the woman said. "I'm here to help you."

"Out of all the people in the world, why would you help *me*?" Cinderella asked.

"I've been watching you, my child," the Fairy Godmother said. "You are kind to all, even when kindness isn't shown to you. You are compassionate, despite the little compassion you receive from others. You celebrate the good in life, even when life isn't good to you. You have a rare and special soul, so it would be my honor to help you attend the ball tonight."

"How can you help me?" Cinderella asked. "I'm filthy and have nothing to wear, and without a carriage, the ball will be over by the time I reach the palace on foot."

"Your circumstances seem bleak, I'm sure," the Fairy Godmother said. "But it's nothing a little touch of magic can't cure!"

The Fairy Godmother retrieved a long crystal wand from inside her robes. She waved it at a pumpkin growing in the garden, and it magically transformed into a large golden carriage. The transformation frightened six tiny mice, and they scurried away.

"Oh, splendid," the Fairy Godmother said when she saw the mice. "You'll need horses and someone to steer!"

She pointed her wand at the mice, and they magically turned into four horses, a coachman, and a footman.

"And now, for something to wear," the Fairy Godmother said and waved her wand over Cinderella. Her raggedy clothes were transformed into the most gorgeous and elegant ball gown she had ever seen, and glass slippers appeared on her tiny feet. Even in her wildest dreams, Cinderella had never thought she could look so beautiful.





“Now you must hurry to the ball before it’s too late,” the Fairy Godmother said. “You must be home before the clock strikes twelve, for the spell will be broken at midnight.”

Cinderella thanked the Fairy Godmother, and the footman helped her into the golden carriage. The coachman took the horses’ reins and they traveled down the road, headed for the palace.

By the time Cinderella reached the magnificent palace, the ball was well under way. She quickly climbed up the front steps to the entrance, desperate to be closer to the music and laughter coming from inside.

Once she entered the ballroom, Cinderella felt as though she had stepped into a dream. There were men and women dancing all around her, wearing the finest suits and gowns in the kingdom. There were mirrors and artwork on the walls, golden pillars, and a remarkable chandelier illuminating it all.

When the other people attending the ball saw Cinderella, the festivities came to a temporary halt. She was the most spectacular sight anyone had ever seen.

Cinderella saw her stepmother and stepsisters across the ballroom, but she was so beautiful they didn’t recognize her. They stared at her in awe like everyone else. Cinderella even mesmerized the king and queen, who stood from their thrones to get a better look at her.

At first, their gazes worried Cinderella. Did they know she didn’t belong there? Would she be asked to leave the ball? Her fears were silenced when a remarkably handsome man approached her and offered his hand.

“May I have this dance?” he asked her.

Cinderella didn’t want to be rude, so she took his hand and they waltzed around the ballroom. Although she was certain they had never met, there was something so familiar about the man she danced with, as if they had met in a dream. As she looked around at all the awestruck faces in the ballroom, she quickly realized whom she was dancing with.

“You’re the prince, aren’t you?” Cinderella asked.

“I am,” he said with a smile. “And who are you?”

“I’m... I’m...” Cinderella said and glanced up at the clock. “*I’m so sorry, but I have to go!*”

It was almost midnight! Cinderella had completely lost track of time while she was dancing with the prince. She only had a few moments before the spell was broken. Cinderella ran out of the ballroom as fast as she could

in her glass slippers.

“No, wait!” the prince called after her. “Please come back!”

Cinderella didn’t want to leave the prince, but she couldn’t let him see her transform back into a servant. She ran down the front steps of the palace, and the prince chased after her. A glass slipper slid off her foot as she went, but she didn’t have time to retrieve it.

The footman helped Cinderella into the golden carriage, and they raced home. They arrived on the front lawn of the house right at midnight’s final toll. Cinderella’s gown turned back into her raggedy clothes, the carriage turned back into a pumpkin, and the footman, the coachman, and the horses transformed back into the garden mice.

“I can’t thank you enough for helping me tonight,” Cinderella said as she gratefully petted the mice. “I’ll remember it forever!”

When her stepmother and stepsisters returned a few hours later, all they talked about was the mysterious woman the prince danced with at the ball. As Cinderella helped them get ready for bed, they tried to guess who the mysterious woman was and where she came from, never realizing she was right in front of them.

The next morning, the kingdom awoke to wonderful news. After dancing with all the young women in the land, the prince had chosen his bride. There was only one problem: *No one knew who she was or where she came from.* The only clue the prince had was the small glass slipper she had left behind.

So the prince set off on a quest around the kingdom searching for the woman he had met at the ball. He searched for weeks, trying the slipper on the feet of princesses, duchesses, and all the daughters of the aristocratic families, but there still was no match in sight. He then had all the young women in the land without a title or royal lineage try on the glass slipper. Because it was meant for such a small and delicate foot, none of the women’s feet fit.

The prince’s final stop was at Cinderella’s home. The stepsisters fought over who would try on the glass slipper first, certain they could trick the prince into thinking it belonged to them.

The first sister pushed her foot into the slipper so frantically it almost broke. The second sister crammed her foot inside the slipper so tightly it started to bleed.

“I’m afraid the woman you’re looking for isn’t here,” the stepmother said. “But either of my daughters would make you a wonderful wife, Your Highness.”

“Wait,” the prince said. “What about *her*?”

Cinderella had just come up from the cellar with an armload of firewood when she caught the prince’s eye.

“You mean Cinderella?” the stepmother said with a laugh. “She’s just a servant girl, Your Highness. She couldn’t possibly be the woman you’re looking for.”

However, unlike the stepmother and stepsisters, the prince was able to look past Cinderella’s raggedy clothes and the dirt on her skin. He knew there was something special about the servant girl, and he needed to try the slipper on her to be sure.

“Please, I insist,” the prince said.

Cinderella had a seat, and the prince placed the glass slipper on her foot. To everyone’s amazement (except Cinderella’s, of course), it was a perfect fit! The prince kissed her cheek and proposed on the spot.



At first, Cinderella didn't know how to answer. She had met the prince only once before, but he had been in her thoughts every day since the ball. Waltzing around the ballroom had been the happiest experience of her life, and after years of unpleasant memories, Cinderella was ready to make new ones.

“Yes, Your Highness,” Cinderella said. “I will marry you.”

Despite the years of cruel treatment, Cinderella forgave her stepmother and stepsisters and invited them to her wedding. Sadly, they didn't come. Just as the stepmother predicted, Cinderella had caused them so much embarrassment that they never showed their faces in society again.

Cinderella and the prince were married the following week in an enormous celebration at the palace. Church bells rang joyfully around the

kingdom, and Cinderella was welcomed into the royal family with open arms. She and the prince had a wonderful marriage, and they lived happily ever after.

The End

HANSEL AND GRETEL



ADAPTED FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Once upon a time, there were a brother and sister named Hansel and Gretel. They lived with their father and stepmother in a small cottage at the edge of the woods. Their father was a good man who loved his children more than anything else in the world. His wife, however, was a mean and selfish woman who became jealous of the affection her husband showed his children.

Their father was a woodcutter and did all he could to provide for his family, but due to a recent famine spreading across the land, times were hard for peasant families in the kingdom. Food was scarce, and many worried about surviving the approaching winter.

“If we don’t do something, we’ll starve!” the wife told the woodcutter one night before bed. “We barely have enough food for the two of us. We must get rid of Hansel and Gretel if we want to survive.”

“I could never get rid of my children,” the woodcutter said. “They mean everything to me!”

“It’ll be easy,” said the wife, who had already devised a plan. “Tomorrow, we’ll take Hansel and Gretel deep into the forest and leave them there. They’re so young, they won’t be able to find their way home. They’ll get lost and a hungry pack of wolves will find them. We’ll never have to worry about feeding them again.”

“I would rather starve than abandon my children,” the woodcutter said. “I won’t hear another word of this. We will find another way to get through the winter.”

Despite her husband’s wishes, the wife was convinced her plan was the only solution. Luckily, Hansel and Gretel were still awake and heard their father and stepmother’s conversation through the thin walls of their cottage.

“What will we do, Hansel?” Gretel asked her brother. “Our stepmother will surely try to abandon us in the woods while Father is away chopping

wood tomorrow.”

“Don’t fret, Gretel,” Hansel said. “I’ll gather white pebbles tonight while they sleep and create a trail to follow back home.”

So Hansel snuck outside while his father and stepmother slept and gathered as many white pebbles as he could find. The next morning, once the woodcutter left to chop down trees, his wife led the children into the woods.

“Where are we going?” Gretel asked.

“To collect firewood,” their stepmother said. “Now be quiet and follow me.”

She led them deep into the heart of the forest, farther than Hansel and Gretel had ever gone before. Hansel dropped a white pebble every few steps, leaving a trail behind them. They traveled the whole day and came to a stop just as the sun began to set.



“Now look around and help me gather wood,” their stepmother said. But before she finished her sentence, she dashed back in the direction from which they had come, leaving her stepchildren all alone in the woods.

Hansel and Gretel followed the trail of white pebbles to their cottage.

The forest became so dark after nightfall, the small white stones were the only thing they could see. By the time they returned, their father was worried sick about them.

“Thank the Lord you’re all right,” the woodcutter said and embraced his children tightly. “Where is your stepmother?”

To Hansel and Gretel’s surprise, they had arrived home before their stepmother. Without a trail of pebbles, the woodcutter’s wife had a hard time navigating through the woods and returned several hours after her stepchildren. She was furious to see that Hansel and Gretel had found their way back to the cottage.

“What happened?” the woodcutter asked his wife.

“We went to retrieve firewood,” the wife said. “I turned my back for one minute and they were gone.”

“I pray it doesn’t happen again,” the woodcutter said.

“Don’t worry, *it won’t*,” the wife said and glared at her stepchildren when her husband wasn’t looking.

That night, the wife locked Hansel and Gretel in their room so they couldn’t sneak out to collect any more white pebbles.

“Oh, Hansel, what are we to do now?” Gretel asked her brother. “Our stepmother will surely try to abandon us again tomorrow.”

“Don’t fret, Gretel,” Hansel said. “Tomorrow morning at breakfast, we’ll save our crusts of bread and use bread crumbs to make a trail.”

Just as predicted, as soon as their father left the next morning, their stepmother led Hansel and Gretel back into the woods. They walked even longer this time, traveling farther into the trees than ever before. Hansel left crumbs behind them as they went and nearly ran out by the time they stopped.

“Now gather up some wood,” their stepmother said.

Once again, she dashed back toward the cottage and left Hansel and Gretel all alone in the woods. It was so late that Hansel and Gretel decided to sleep in the woods and wait for morning to follow the bread crumbs home. Unfortunately, by the time they awoke, the morning birds had eaten all the bread crumbs they’d left behind!

Hansel and Gretel walked through the woods in what they hoped was the right direction, but there were so many trees, it was impossible to tell. They walked for hours and hours, never finding a familiar part of the forest.

They finally found a friendly white bird and followed it through the woods, hoping it might lead them home. The longer they followed the bird, the more a wonderful aroma filled the air. It was a sweet smell, as if something delicious was baking in an oven nearby.

Hansel and Gretel came upon a clearing in the middle of the woods. They were delighted to see, in the center of the clearing, a house made entirely of food. It had gingerbread walls, a fence made of candy canes, and a garden of gumdrop shrubs. The roof was covered in frosting, and the windows were made of clear sugar panes.

“I’ve never seen something so delicious!” Gretel exclaimed.





She and her brother dashed toward the house and began eating it. They were so hungry and tired from their journey, they didn't even think to ask the resident for permission. Suddenly, the door of the home opened and a kind-looking old woman stepped outside.

"Who's there?" the old woman said. "What are you doing to my house?"

"Please forgive us," Hansel said. "We were hungry and lost in the woods when we found your home."

The old woman smiled at them, showing rotting teeth behind her wrinkled lips.

"I didn't realize you were *children*," she said happily. "No need to apologize, my dear. I built a home out of food for children just like you. Please eat as much as you'd like!"

Hansel and Gretel were certain the old woman must be an angel in disguise. They ate the candy-cane fence and the gumdrop shrubs. They ate the sugar-pane windows and licked all the frosting off the roof. By the time Hansel and Gretel were full, they'd eaten everything but the gingerbread walls.

"Now come inside and rest, my dears," the old woman said. "There are more goodies and soft beds waiting for you."

Hansel and Gretel eagerly did as the old woman requested, knowing they could use a rest after their journey through the woods. However, when they went inside, there were no goodies or beds to be found, only a large cage and an enormous oven.

The old woman threw Hansel and Gretel in the cage and locked the door. She took off the mask of an old woman, and the children saw that the rest of her was as rotten as her teeth. She wasn't a sweet old woman at all, but *an ugly old witch!*

"One of you shall be my dinner, and the other shall be my slave!" the witch cackled. "That'll teach you not to wander the woods alone!"

The witch pulled Gretel out of the cage and handed her a broom.

"Sweep the house, girl," the witch ordered. "I want a clean home before my meal."

Not having much choice, Gretel swept the house until it was spotless. The witch lit a fire in the oven and then pulled Hansel out of the cage.

"You shouldn't eat me yet!" Hansel pleaded. "I'm too thin and frail to make a meal, but if you keep feeding me, soon I'll make a feast!"

The witch scratched the hairs on her chin and thought it over.

“That’s an excellent idea,” the witch said. “I shall keep feeding you until you outgrow the cage; then you shall be my first meal of winter!”

For weeks and weeks, the witch forced Hansel to eat delicious sweets, while Gretel was forced to clean inside and outside the house. At the end of every day, the witch would peer into the cage and squint at Hansel.

“Are you pleasantly plump yet?” the witch asked.

Hansel assumed the witch must have bad vision. Otherwise, surely she could see that his clothes were much tighter than before and he grew rounder every day. He quickly thought of a way to use the witch’s failing eyes to save his life.

“I’d make a decent bite, but not enough to serve your appetite,” Hansel lied.

The witch huffed and puffed, then ordered Gretel to cook her a rat stew for dinner.

The next day, as Gretel was cleaning up leaves outside the house, she put a couple of sticks in her pocket. Later that night, she slid them into Hansel’s cage just before the witch peered inside.

“Are you reasonably round yet?” the witch asked.

“He’s as thin as he’s ever been,” Gretel said. “Hansel, hold out your hand so the witch can feel your bony finger.”

Gretel nodded to the sticks she had given him, and Hansel knew what to do. He held out one stick like it was a part of his hand, and the witch felt it. She moaned and groaned, then ordered Gretel to prepare spider soup for her supper.

Hansel and Gretel didn’t know how much longer they could continue tricking the witch. They knew she was growing impatient, because the next day she peered into the cage even before the sun had set.

“Are you finally fat?” she asked.

“I’m ample for snacking, but a full meal you’d be lacking,” Hansel lied again.

He held out a stick as he had done the night before. The witch felt the stick, and her face went bright red.

“I’ve waited long enough!” the witch shouted. “Fat or not, I will eat you tonight! Prepare the oven, girl!”

Gretel opened the wide door to the oven and filled it with firewood. She

lit a match, and a healthy fire grew inside. The witch stood behind her, and a sinister smile grew across her ugly face.

“Now I want you to test the fire to see if it’s hot,” the witch said.

Gretel knew the witch was trying to trick her—she was going to eat both of them for dinner!

“But I don’t know how,” Gretel said, thinking fast. “Will you show me what to do?”

“Stupid girl,” the witch said. “Move aside and I will show you. It’s very simple; you just lean into the oven like this and touch the flames with your — AAAAHHH!”

Gretel pushed the witch into the oven with all her might and locked the door behind her. The witch screamed as she was cooked to a crisp. When her screams finally came to a stop, Gretel freed Hansel from the cage. Just before they escaped the house, Hansel found a vase full of rubies and diamonds the witch had kept on a shelf. He and Gretel filled their pockets with the jewels and ran into the woods.



They ran far away from the witch’s gingerbread house and never looked

back. Eventually, they came to the edge of the woods and saw a very familiar cottage.

“Gretel, look! We’re home!” Hansel exclaimed.

The woodcutter heard his children and rushed out to greet them. He was so overjoyed to see them that tears filled his eyes and rolled down his face. Hansel and Gretel looked around the cottage, but the woodcutter’s wife was nowhere to be found.

“Father, what happened to our stepmother?” Gretel asked.

“The same day you went missing, she got lost in the woods and a pack of wolves found her,” he said. “I was so worried the same had happened to you, but you’re both alive and well, so all is right in the world!”

The woodcutter embraced his children and never let them out of his sight again. They used the jewels to buy a new home much closer to the nearby village, and Hansel and Gretel ate all the sweets they wanted without the fear of witches. The family survived the winter and lived happily ever after.

The End

GOLDBLOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS



ADAPTED FROM THE TRADITIONAL STORY

Once upon a time, there was a Papa Bear, a Mama Bear, and a Baby Bear. Although most bears prefer to live in caves by themselves, this family lived together in a quaint tree house in the middle of the woods. The house was rather small for bears of their size, but they found it perfectly accommodating.

Like most families, each bear was different and had his or her own unique set of comforts.

In the sitting room, each bear had a special chair. Papa Bear sat in a wooden rocking chair by the fireplace. Mama Bear enjoyed a cushiony armchair by the window. Baby Bear had a small chair just his size near his big toy chest.

At night when the bears went to bed, they slept in three very different beds. Papa Bear had a big bed with a stiff mattress. Mama Bear liked to sleep in a medium-size bed with lots of feather pillows. Baby Bear slept in a smaller bed that matched his height and width perfectly.

One morning, Papa Bear made his family porridge for breakfast. He poured the porridge into three separate bowls, and the bears sat around the kitchen table to enjoy it. It was rare that the family agreed upon something, but as they each took their first bite of breakfast, they all agreed it was too hot.

“Why don’t we go for a walk outside while we wait for our porridge to cool off?” Papa Bear suggested. “It’s been a while since we had a proper family outing.”

Mama Bear and Baby Bear thought this was an excellent idea, so the family went for a short stroll through the woods while their food cooled off. Also taking a walk in the woods that day was a little girl from the nearby village. Her name was Goldilocks because of her beautiful golden curls.

It’s a wonder Goldilocks didn’t cross paths with the bears, because she

came upon the tree house shortly after the bears left it. She had never seen a house like it before. Goldilocks was a very curious little girl and had never encountered a strange place she didn't want to explore, so she knocked on the door to ask if she could come inside.

She gave the door a sturdy knock, and to her surprise, it swung right open. The bears had forgotten to lock the door on their way out.

"Hello? Is anyone home?" Goldilocks called into the empty tree house, but all she heard was her own voice echoing back at her.

When no one answered, Goldilocks decided to give herself a tour. The aroma of fresh porridge led her to the kitchen, and she saw the three bowls laid out on the table.

"Porridge! My favorite!" Goldilocks exclaimed.

The little girl had worked up such an appetite while walking through the woods that she forgot all her manners. She picked up a spoon and tasted Papa Bear's porridge without asking. It was so warm, it burned her tongue.

"This porridge is much too hot," Goldilocks said.

She scooted over and took a bite of Mama Bear's porridge. It was much closer to the window and had cooled off so much, it hardly tasted like porridge at all.

"This porridge is much too cold," Goldilocks said.

Then she slid down to the next spot and tried Baby Bear's porridge. The little girl smiled, because in her opinion, it was exactly how porridge should taste.

"This porridge is *just right!*" Goldilocks said.



She ate Baby Bear's porridge until the bowl was empty. When she finished, she looked for a place to sit down while her stomach settled. She went into the sitting room and took a seat in Papa Bear's rocking chair. It was so solid, it hurt her bottom to sit on it.

"This rocking chair is much too hard," Goldilocks said.

She hopped down from the rocking chair and sat in Mama Bear's armchair. It was so soft, she sank into the middle of it.

"This armchair is much too soft," Goldilocks said.

It took a moment for the little girl to climb off the seat. Once she recovered, she sat down in Baby Bear's chair. The young bear's chair was just what Goldilocks was looking for.

"This chair is *just right!*" she said happily.

Goldilocks leaned back in the chair, and it suddenly crumbled underneath her. Before she knew it, the little girl found herself on the floor. Goldilocks had never broken a chair before, so it was quite a shock.

"I must have eaten more porridge than I thought," she said.

Since the chairs weren't up to her standards, Goldilocks decided to take a rest on a bed. Besides, after a long day of walking through the woods and exploring strange houses, she was ready for a nap. She went to the bears' bedroom and lay down in Papa Bear's bed.

“This bed is much too firm,” Goldilocks said.

She hopped off and tried Mama Bear’s bed next. Just like the armchair, the bed was so soft that Goldilocks sank down and had trouble getting out of it.

“This bed is much too lumpy,” Goldilocks said.

All that was left in the bedroom was Baby Bear’s bed. She sat on it first to make sure it could hold her weight. When it seemed sturdy enough to lie on, Goldilocks crawled under the covers and got comfortable.

“This bed is *just right*...” the little girl said, yawning. The very moment she closed her eyes, Goldilocks fell into a deep sleep.

The family of bears soon returned home from their walk in the woods. The bears were cheerful until they saw that their door was wide open.

“That’s funny. I don’t remember leaving the door open,” Mama Bear said.

“We must have an *intruder*!” Papa Bear growled.

The bears charged into the house to find the trespasser. They searched the kitchen first, but found nothing unusual beyond an empty bowl of porridge.

“Someone ate my breakfast!” Baby Bear said.

The three bears looked in the sitting room next, but all they found was the broken chair.

“Someone broke my chair!” Baby Bear said with a snuffle.

There was only one place left to look. Papa Bear led the way into the bedroom with his claws raised, not knowing who or what they’d find.

“Someone’s sleeping in my bed!” Baby Bear cried. “And it’s a girl!”

The bears were surprised that a little girl had caused such a mess. They gathered around the bed and stared down at the sleeping child. Feeling as if she were being watched, Goldilocks awoke to see the bears surrounding her. She let out a scream that was so high-pitched, the three bears covered their ears.

Goldilocks ran from the bedroom, through the sitting room, past the kitchen, and out the door as fast as she could. The three bears chased the little girl into the woods until they were certain she would never come back to their tree house.





The little girl had learned some valuable lessons the hard way. She never ate someone's porridge, sat in someone's chair, slept in someone's bed, or entered someone's house without permission ever again.

The End

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK



ADAPTED FROM THE TRADITIONAL STORY

Once upon a time, there was a poor widow who had a son named Jack. The widow was a good woman but had grown sad and gruff after a life of difficult times. Jack was a curious and daring boy. He always had his head in the clouds, daydreaming about a life full of excitement and adventure.

They lived in a tiny cottage on a small farm that never grew any crops. The only thing they had to eat was milk from a cow they called Milky-white. One day the cow's milk dried up, so Jack's mother ordered him to take the cow into town and sell it.

"Mother, we can't sell Milky-white!" Jack said. "She's like family to us!"

"We won't be a family if we starve to death," his mother said. "Life is filled with hard choices, Jack. Sometimes we have to do things we don't like to survive, but in the end they only help us grow. Now take the cow into the village, sell her for a good price, and pick up a loaf of bread on your way home."

Jack did as he was told but with a heavy heart. He walked Milky-white through the woods toward the nearest town but stopped when they encountered an old man on the path.

"Good afternoon, lad," the man said. He was a wacky old geezer with a long beard and tattered clothes.

"Good afternoon, sir," Jack replied.

"May I ask where you're taking this fine specimen?" the old man asked.

"I'm taking her into town to sell her," Jack said.

"My boy, it's your lucky day!" the old man said. "I just happen to be in the market for a cow."

"You want to buy Milky-white?" Jack asked.

"I'm afraid I don't have a shilling to my name, but I'd be more than happy to make a trade for the beast," the old man said.

“I’m not sure my mother would approve of a trade,” Jack said. “She told me to sell the cow and then bring back a loaf of bread for supper.”

“My boy, what I’m willing to trade you is worth more than all the bread in the kingdom!” the old man said.

The tradesman had gotten Jack’s attention, but he still wasn’t sure his mother would approve.

“What do you wish to trade?” Jack asked.

The old man reached into his raggedy coat and pulled out a handful of beans.

“Beans?” Jack asked. “But surely my cow is worth more than beans.”

“These aren’t just any beans,” the old man said with a twinkle in his eye. “These are *magic beans*! Guaranteed to grant your heart’s greatest desire.”

Jack’s eyes grew twice in size as he imagined the possibilities the beans might bring him.



“Are you sure they’re magical?” Jack asked.

“Cross my heart and hope to die!” the old man said. He held up his palm and then crossed his stomach.

Jack swiped the beans out of the old man’s hands and handed over Milky-white’s reins. He was so excited, he ran straight home without saying good-bye to the tradesman.

“Mother! Mother!” Jack cried when he arrived home. “I’ve traded Milky-white for *magic beans*! The man in the woods says they’ll grant my heart’s greatest desire!”

He happily poured the beans into his mother’s open palm. She took one look at them and her face turned bright red.

“Stupid boy!” his mother said. “You’ve been tricked! There’s nothing magic about these beans! We’re most certainly going to starve now!”

The widow angrily tossed the beans out the window and burst into tears. She locked herself in her room and cried all night at her son’s foolishness. Jack went to bed mad with himself too. He couldn’t believe how easily he had been deceived. He was so hopeful for a better life, he had let his hope cloud his judgment.

The following morning Jack awoke to a terrible screech. He hopped out of bed and found his mother in a panic outside.

“*Look, Jack!*” she cried and pointed to the sky. “*A beanstalk grew last night while we were sleeping!*”

Growing straight out of the ground was a massive beanstalk. It was so tall, it stretched into the sky and disappeared above the clouds.

“The beans! They must have grown when you tossed them out the window,” Jack shouted triumphantly. “They were magic after all!”

“Now help me gather some leaves, and I’ll cook us a nice beanstalk stew,” the widow said.

Jack ignored his mother’s wishes and immediately started climbing the beanstalk.

“Jack, get down!” the widow ordered. “You’re going to get hurt!”

Still, Jack ignored her. He couldn’t help himself; this was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to him. He had spent years hoping to find a little adventure, and an adventure had found him.

The higher he climbed, the better the view became of the land around him. He climbed so far up the beanstalk that he could see the entire kingdom—and even the kingdoms beyond it. When he reached the clouds,

he was so high up that his house was just a tiny spot below and he couldn't hear his mother's shouts imploring him to climb down. He stroked the clouds with his hand and was delighted to learn they were as soft and fluffy as he had always imagined.

The beanstalk grew through the clouds, so Jack continued climbing. He wanted to know how high the beanstalk went. He surfaced above the clouds into what looked like another world entirely. A sea of fluffy white hills stretched into the horizon all around him.





To Jack's amazement, there was a paved road floating above the clouds. He hopped off the beanstalk and followed the road as it curved and wound across the cloudy abyss. As Jack traveled down the road, he heard a beautiful singing voice grow louder and louder. He had never encountered such a lovely sound and wanted to find its source.

At the very end of the road, Jack found a massive castle. It was so big that Jack was the size of a mouse in comparison. He figured it must be the home of a humongous creature, and since Jack had always been more curious than fearful, he snuck under the enormous wooden door to have a look inside.

The castle was filled with the biggest objects Jack had ever seen. The furniture was so large, he could walk under the table and chairs without hitting his head. The fireplace was so big, his entire house could fit inside it.

Everywhere he looked he saw piles of gold coins the size of dinner plates. Jack wasn't a thief by any means, but since there was so much gold and he and his mother had so little, he figured it wouldn't hurt to take some home. So he filled a large bag with as much gold as it could hold and threw it over his shoulder.

Just as Jack was about to leave the castle, he heard the beautiful singing voice again. And Jack could have sworn he saw a golden woman standing on top of the enormous table. Once again, his curiosity got the best of him, and Jack went to take a closer look.

He climbed up a chair leg, stood on the seat, and then pulled himself up onto the top of the table. It wasn't a golden woman he saw, but a magic golden harp with arms and a face. She sang a song while the strings attached to her back magically played along.

*“Many years I’ve had to wait; my hero is rather late.
I sing songs of affection, but receive no protection.
Have my rescuers all died? Has anyone even tried?
Rescue is such a burden, only one thing is certain:
Princesses don’t benefit when their princes can’t commit.
Some damsels stay in distress, due to lack of interest.”*

The harp gasped when she saw Jack walking toward her.

“A *person!*” she said. “Oh, thank the heavens! At last, someone has come to rescue me from the giant!”

“What giant?” Jack asked.

“The giant that lives in this castle, of course,” the harp said. “He’s a horrible and cruel creature! He forces me to sing terrible songs for him every day! *Please, you must take me with you!*”

Suddenly, thunderous footsteps came from above them that caused the whole castle to shake.

“Oh no,” the harp said. “He’s awake! You must hide or he’ll eat you alive!”

Jack scrambled down from the table and hid in the giant’s oven. A few moments later, a terrifying giant stomped down the gigantic staircase. He was so large, the enormous castle seemed too small for him.

“*Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of a poor young man,*” the giant growled. “*Be he alive or be he dead, I’ll grind his bones to make my bread!*”

The giant looked all over the castle for Jack. He searched every cupboard and every drawer, but it never crossed his mind to check the oven. After a while, the giant grew tired of searching, so he sat down at the table.

“*Sing me a song!*” the giant demanded.

The harp began a song Jack could tell she didn’t want to perform.

*“Pillage! Pillage! Pillage the village!
Crush all the houses with your feet!
Pillage! Pillage! Pillage the village!
Terrorize the people and steal their meat!”*

As the harp sang, the giant’s eyelids fluttered shut. He rested his head on the table and fell asleep. His snores were like the sound of a hundred growling bears. Jack climbed out of the oven and headed for the door with his bag of gold coins.

“*Please don’t leave me!*” the harp said desperately. “*I couldn’t bear living in this castle for one more day!*”

Jack was hesitant to rescue the harp, but he knew it wouldn’t be very gentlemanlike to leave her there. He quietly climbed back up the leg of the

chair and made his way onto the table.

The air coming from the giant's nostrils was so powerful that it almost knocked Jack off his feet. The giant's eyes started to flutter open, so the harp continued singing to soothe him back to sleep.

*“Pillage! Pillage! Pillage the village!
Stomp on the farms with your boots!
Pillage! Pillage! Pillage the village!
Eat all the horses and steal all the loot!”*

Jack scooped up the harp and carried her toward the edge of the table. They were right under the giant's nose when he took a deep breath in his sleep. He caught a whiff of Jack, and his nose twitched until he awoke.

“Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of a POOR YOUNG MAN!” the giant roared.

He roared again when he saw Jack attempting to rescue his harp. Jack leaped off the table with the harp in his arms, and they landed directly on the giant's foot.

“AAAAHHHH!” the giant yelled. He held his aching toes and hopped around the castle on one foot.

Jack held the harp in one arm and grabbed the bag of coins with the other. He ran to the door as fast as his legs would carry him. He crawled under the door and dashed down the paved road to the beanstalk.



Right when Jack made it back to the beanstalk, the giant emerged from the castle and ran down the path after him. Jack hurried down the beanstalk, but the giant followed, causing the beanstalk to sway among the clouds.

On the ground below, Jack's mother heard the commotion and ran out of the cottage to see what was happening. She was so frightened to see the giant chasing her son that it took her a couple of moments to find her voice.

"Jack! What have you gotten yourself into?" she yelled up at her son.

"Mother, get me the axe! I need to chop the beanstalk down before the giant reaches the ground!" Jack said.

The widow ran inside the house and returned with the axe. Jack reached the ground and took the axe from his mother. In one enormous swing, Jack chopped the beanstalk in two. It teetered over and the giant went with it, falling to his death.

“Jack, do you have any idea how worried I was about you?” the widow yelled.

“I’m sorry I made you worry, Mother,” Jack said. “But I promise you’ll never have to worry about anything ever again. Look what I’ve brought home!”

Jack emptied the bag of gold coins he’d collected at the giant’s castle and showed them to his mother. The widow was so overjoyed, tears came to her eyes. She hugged her son tightly and kissed his cheek.

“My brave boy!” she said. “You’ve saved us! We’ll never go hungry again!”

Jack and the widow used the coins to build a new home and started a proper farm that grew more crops than they knew what to do with. They ate three meals a day, and the harp sang them beautiful songs every night before bed.

The old man’s promise turned out to be true: The magic beans gave Jack all of his heart’s greatest desires. But the true magic was inside Jack. Had he not been so certain about what he wanted out of life, the beans would have never known what to do.

Jack’s story taught a great lesson to everyone who heard it: When life hands you beans, *grow a beanstalk!*

The End

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD



ADAPTED FROM CHARLES PERRAULT

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who lived with her parents in a small village on the edge of the woods. She was known throughout her village as Little Red Riding Hood because of the scarlet cloak she wore around her shoulders. The cloak had been a gift from Little Red's granny, whom she loved very much.

One day, Little Red's mother received a letter from her granny. The sweet old woman was suffering from a terrible cold and couldn't leave her house, which sat a little ways into the woods. Little Red's mother packed a basket of goodies and instructed the girl to take it down the path to her grandmother's house.

"Be careful while you're in the woods, Little Red," her mother said. "Stick to the path, don't dillydally, and never talk to strangers."

Little Red took the basket and skipped down the path to her granny's house, intending to follow her mother's instructions. However, the girl had only been in the woods for a matter of moments when a field of wildflowers distracted her.

"Oh my, what beautiful flowers," Little Red said. "Surely Mother wouldn't mind if I made Granny a bouquet. Flowers help people feel better when they're ill."

She convinced herself a quick stop wouldn't hurt and had a seat in the field. Little Red picked the prettiest flowers and made herself a flower crown, a flower necklace, and two flower bracelets. By the time she finished, there were no flowers left to make a bouquet for her granny.

"Oh well," Little Red said. "I'm sure seeing me will make Granny feel just as good as a bouquet of flowers would."

Little Red returned to the path, but it wasn't long before she was distracted again. This time, a bush with vibrant blueberries caught her eye.

"Oh my, what delicious-looking berries," Little Red said. "Surely

Mother wouldn't mind if I picked some for Granny. Sweets always lift someone's spirits when they're feeling under the weather."

So Little Red stopped to pick her granny some blueberries. She tested one to make sure they were sweet. She tested a second berry to make sure the first berry hadn't been a fluke. The third and fourth berries were just a little reward she gave herself for being so thoughtful.

The berries were so delicious, Little Red couldn't stop eating them. By the time she remembered to pick some for Granny, she had eaten them all.

"Oh well," Little Red said. "I'm sure I'll be as sweet a treat as anything for Granny."

Little Red didn't want to waste any more time, so she decided to stick to the path the rest of the way to her granny's house. When she was about halfway through the woods, Little Red had an awful fright. Standing on the path in front of her was a ferocious black wolf with big ears and sharp teeth.

"Hello, little girl," the wolf growled.

"Hello," Little Red said, not wanting to be rude, but then she quickly covered her mouth. "Oops—I promised my mother I wouldn't talk to strangers."

"Oh, but I'm not a stranger," the wolf said with a grin. "I've been watching you from the minute you stepped into the woods. I watched you pick flowers in the field, and I watched you eat all the blueberries off the bush. So you see, we're very well acquainted."

Little Red smiled. "Oh, that's a relief," she said. "I was afraid I had broken my word."

"What brings you into the woods, little girl?" the wolf asked.

"I'm on my way to my granny's house," Little Red said. "She's come down with a terrible cold, so I'm bringing her a basket of goodies to cheer her up."

"What a wonderful granddaughter you are," the wolf said. "Whereabouts does your granny live?"

"Just down this path a little farther into the woods," Little Red said. "In fact, I better get going if I want to get back home in time for supper."



Little Red said good-bye to the wolf and continued her journey down the path. Unbeknownst to her, the wolf had darted through the trees beside the path and arrived at her granny's house before her. Thanks to Little Red's directions, the wolf was going to enjoy *two meals* today!

He found the old woman asleep in bed and gobbled her up in one bite. By the time Little Red arrived, the wolf was dressed in Granny's clothes and lying in her bed.

"Granny, it's Little Red," she said and knocked on the door. "I've brought you a basket of goodies!"

"Come in, my child," the wolf said, pretending to be Little Red's granny. Little Red figured her granny must be sicker than she thought, because

her voice was almost unrecognizable. She went to the side of Granny's bed and had a good look at her. The old woman didn't look like herself either.

"Oh my, what big *ears* you have," Little Red said.

"The better to *hear* you with, my dear," the wolf said.

"Oh my, what a big *nose* you have," Little Red said.

"The better to *smell* you with, my dear."

"Oh my, what sharp *teeth* you have."

"THE BETTER TO EAT YOU WITH, MY DEAR!"





The wolf leaped out from under the covers and Little Red screamed. He gobbled the little girl up in one bite, and she joined her granny in the creature's stomach. After having two meals back-to-back, the wolf was so full that he could barely move. He lay back in bed and waited for the little girl and old woman to digest.

Luckily for Little Red and her granny, a local axe man had been working in the woods nearby and heard Little Red's scream. He found Granny's house and saw that the front door was still open, so he let himself inside.

The axe man saw the wolf lying in bed with the fullest belly he had ever seen on a beast. It didn't take him long to realize what had happened. With one slice of his axe, he slew the wolf and saved Little Red and her granny from the wolf's stomach.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Axe Man," Granny said. "Little Red, what do you say to the nice man?"

Little Red didn't say a word; she had learned her lesson about talking to strangers. She ran out the door and down the path until she was safe and sound at home. Little Red never disobeyed her mother again, and because of this, she lived happily ever after.

The End

SNOW WHITE



ADAPTED FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Once upon a time, in a cold, wintry kingdom, there lived a beautiful young queen who was pregnant with her first child. She was filled with the excitement, anguish, and fear every mother-to-be faces just before her child arrives. So, every night before bed, the queen knitted by her window to calm her nerves.

One night as she looked out to admire the snowy land around the castle, the queen accidentally pricked her finger with her knitting needle. Three drops of blood fell on the snow beneath her window. While looking down at the blood, the queen was overwhelmed by a grim premonition. She knew her child would be born in three days' time but that she would die giving birth.

Sure enough, three days later the young queen went into labor and gave birth to a daughter. With her little remaining strength, the queen named the infant princess *Snow White* and then died, just as she had predicted.

Rather than dealing with his grief, the king quickly remarried to distract himself. His new wife was a vain and guarded woman. Her most prized possession was a mysterious Magic Mirror. Every day, the new queen would stand before it and say:

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?”



The silhouette of a man would appear in the mirror and reply:

*“My lady’s beauty is fair and true,
No one in the land is fairer than you.”*

This exchange gave the new queen her greatest pleasure, for she knew the Magic Mirror only spoke the truth.

The king’s previous wife had been so beloved that the new queen didn’t receive a warm welcome to the kingdom. Word of her vanity quickly spread through the castle and eventually reached the people of the kingdom. As time went on, the new queen’s dissatisfaction with everything unrelated to her appearance became more and more evident, and the people began referring to her as *the Evil Queen*.

To the kingdom’s dismay, the king’s health began to decline rapidly. After years of suppressing his sadness for his late wife, the king’s heart was poisoned with grief, and he died.

Snow White grew up an orphan princess. She became a beautiful young woman with skin pale as snow, lips red as blood, and hair black as ebony. The young princess resembled her late mother, and she was beloved by all

in the kingdom. They looked forward to the day when she would take the throne from her stepmother.

Her stepdaughter's growing beauty started to worry the Evil Queen. Her resentment reached new heights when she stood before her Magic Mirror one day and asked it:

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?”

The man inside the mirror appeared and said:

*“My lady’s beauty is fair and true,
But Snow White is far fairer than you.”*

The Evil Queen never thought it was possible for her beauty to be surpassed. Enraged with jealousy, she summoned her most faithful Huntsman to the castle at once.

“I want you to take the princess into the woods and kill her,” the Evil Queen ordered.

“But, Your Majesty, I cannot do such a thing,” the Huntsman said. Even he had been taken by Snow White's charm.

“You shall do what I say or *you* shall be killed too,” the Evil Queen said. “And when you're finished, I want you to bring me her heart on a plate so I know it's done.”

Fearing his execution, the Huntsman was forced to oblige. The following morning, he took the young princess deep into the forest to kill her as the Queen had commanded. When he raised his knife, the young princess fell to her knees.

“Please, Huntsman, don't kill me,” she begged.

“'Tis not *I* that wish you harm, Princess, but the queen,” the Huntsman said. “She's horribly jealous of you. She won't stop until she has your heart on a plate!”

“If you let me live, I'll run into the woods and never come back!” Snow White said.

The Huntsman figured Snow White was as good as dead if she entered the woods alone, so he let her go. The princess ran into the trees and never looked back.

The Huntsman slaughtered a hog and delivered its heart to the Evil Queen on a plate. Fooled by the false heart, the Evil Queen was overjoyed, thinking her stepdaughter was dead. She had her servants cook the heart, and she ate it for dinner. Afterward, she stood before her Magic Mirror and asked it:

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?”

By then, Snow White had traveled well beyond the Magic Mirror’s dominion, so it did not see her running through the woods. For the first time in a long while, the mirror replied:

*“My lady’s beauty is fair and true,
No one in the land is fairer than you.”*

The Evil Queen cackled with satisfaction.

Snow White ran and ran through the woods until her feet bled and blistered and couldn’t carry her anymore. She collapsed on the ground and sobbed, fearing a wild creature would attack her.

“Oh, Father, wherever you are, please guide me to safety,” Snow White prayed.

When the princess looked up, she spotted a quaint cottage in the middle of the woods. It was small with short doors and windows, as if it were meant for children. Snow White went inside and discovered that all the furniture was miniature as well.

“How peculiar,” she said.

Snow White explored the tiny home and found a bedroom with seven small beds. The princess was so exhausted, she lay across them without hesitation and instantly fell asleep.

Unbeknownst to the princess, the cottage was not home to seven children but to seven dwarfs who worked in the local mines. They returned home that night to find the princess snuggled up in their beds. But the princess was so beautiful as she slept that none of the dwarfs was alarmed by her presence.

“What a lovely young maiden,” the oldest dwarf said.

Snow White suddenly woke up and jumped out of bed in fright when

she saw the seven dwarfs surrounding her.

“Please forgive me for intruding,” Snow White apologized. “I didn’t have anywhere else to go and I was afraid to be alone in the forest.”



“It’s all right, child,” the youngest dwarf said. “What are you doing so far in the woods by yourself?”

Snow White told the dwarfs that she was a princess and lived in her father’s castle on the other side of the forest. She told them how her stepmother was jealous of her and had ordered the Huntsman to kill her. After hearing her tale, the dwarfs grew very protective of the young princess.

“You must live with us, where it’s safe,” the oldest said, and all six of his brothers agreed. “You’re in dwarf territory, and we rarely get visits from royalty like yourself.”

Snow White was overwhelmed by the dwarfs’ kindness. She stayed with the dwarfs for several months and they became a family. They forgot all about the Evil Queen, but unfortunately for Snow White, her stepmother had not forgotten about her.

By now, the Magic Mirror’s knowledge of the world it reflected had grown, and it found Snow White’s whereabouts. One night, the Evil Queen

stood before it and asked:

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?”

The mirror replied:

*“My lady’s beauty is fair and true,
But Snow White is far fairer than you.”*

The Evil Queen couldn’t believe her ears. “How can that be?” she asked. “I had her heart on a plate!”

*“’Twas not the princess’s heart you consumed,
But that of a swine.
She lives in a cottage deep in the woods,
With dwarfs from the mines.”*

The Evil Queen was beside herself with anger. She quickly devised a new plan to get rid of her stepdaughter forever. This time, rather than putting the task in someone else’s hands, the Evil Queen would do the deed herself.

The next morning, the jealous queen disguised herself as an old peddler woman and filled a basket full of the finest accessories from her own wardrobe. She traveled into the forest and found the dwarfs’ cottage. The Evil Queen waited for the seven dwarfs to leave for the mines and then knocked on the door.

“Hello, may I help you?” Snow White said as she answered the door. She was surprised to see another person so far in the woods.

“Good afternoon, my dear,” the Evil Queen said, using a different voice from her own. “I am an old merchant and have many beautiful things to sell, if you’re interested.”

“What kinds of things?” Snow White asked.

“Silks and scarves, laces and corsets, and much more,” she said. “Everything fancied by a young girl like you.”

“I wish I could purchase some of your lovely items, but I’m afraid I don’t have any coins to spare,” Snow White said.

The princess went to shut the door, but the Evil Queen blocked it with her foot.

“It doesn’t cost anything to try something on,” she said. “Please, I insist.”

She opened the basket and showed Snow White all the colorful accessories inside. Snow White was entranced by the colors and fabrics and couldn’t resist letting the old woman inside.

The Evil Queen helped Snow White try on a corset and laced it up behind her. She pulled it tighter and tighter. When Snow White expressed that it was hard to breathe, the Evil Queen pulled it even tighter. Snow White turned blue and fell on the floor as if she were dead.

The Evil Queen laughed. “Now I shall be fairest once again!” She left the cottage and hurried back to the castle, anxious for her Magic Mirror to confirm it.

Soon after, the seven dwarfs returned from the mines and found Snow White on the floor. They noticed the tight corset right away, and the oldest split it open with his knife. Snow White gasped and regained consciousness.

“Who did this to you?” the oldest dwarf asked.

Snow White told the dwarfs about the old merchant woman selling accessories. Fearing it may have been the Evil Queen in disguise, the dwarfs told Snow White to never open the door for that woman again.

Meanwhile, the Evil Queen returned to the castle and stood before her Magic Mirror.

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?”

To her dismay, the mirror replied:

*“My lady’s beauty is fair and true,
But Snow White is far fairer than you.”*

“No!” the Evil Queen shouted. “I crushed her ribs with a corset and yet she still lives!”

The angry queen knew she would have to try harder if she wanted Snow White to remain dead. She went into a secret chamber in the castle that no one else knew about and devised her next plan. The chamber was filled

with cauldrons and potions and many other items used for witchery. There, the Evil Queen took a comb and laced it with poison.

The next day, the Evil Queen disguised herself as a different old woman and traveled to the dwarfs' cottage again. She waited for the dwarfs to leave for the mines and then knocked on the door.

Thinking that it was another woman entirely, Snow White answered the door.

"Hello, may I help you?" she asked.

"Hello, my dear. I'm a traveling beautician," the Evil Queen said in a different voice from what she had used before. "I'm selling many beauty secrets and tricks, guaranteed to attract the man of your dreams."

"I would love to learn what you can teach me," Snow White said. "But I'm afraid I don't have a coin to my name."

The Evil Queen ran her fingers through Snow White's dark hair.

"Hair as lovely as that should never go untended," she said. "Allow me to comb it for you, free of charge!"

Snow White thought that this was too generous an offer to refuse, so she let the old beautician into the cottage. The Evil Queen combed Snow White's hair with the poisoned comb and pressed it into her scalp. Within moments the poison did the trick, and Snow White fell to the floor as if she were dead.

"Now I shall be fairest once more!" The Evil Queen cackled and fled back to the castle before the dwarfs returned.

When the dwarfs arrived, they found Snow White on the floor, just as they had the day before. The youngest dwarf pulled the comb out of Snow White's hair. Once the poison had worn off, the princess awoke and sat up.

"Who did this to you?" the youngest dwarf said.

Snow White told the dwarfs about the old beautician but assured them she wasn't the same lady as the one the day before. Growing even more paranoid, the dwarfs made her promise to never open the door for a stranger again.

Once she was back at the castle, the Evil Queen triumphantly threw off her disguise and stood before her Magic Mirror.

"Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?"

The mirror replied:

*“My lady’s beauty is fair and true,
But Snow White is still fairer than you.”*

“*But how?*” the Evil Queen yelled. “I poisoned her with a comb and yet she still lives!”

The furious queen stomped back into her chamber of witchery and devised another plan to kill the princess. She concocted a poison twice as strong as before and laced a bright red apple with it.

The following day, the Evil Queen disguised herself as yet another old woman, this time selling apples, and returned to the dwarfs’ cottage. Just as before, she waited until they left before knocking on the door. However, there was no answer.

“Apples for sale!” the Evil Queen called into the house. “Fresh, juicy apples—the perfect snack for a young maiden!”

Snow White peered through the window at her.

“No, thank you,” she said. “I’m not supposed to open the door for strangers.”

“Oh, of course, child,” the Evil Queen said. “I would never wish a beautiful girl like you any harm. Please take this apple as a token of apology for disturbing you.”

Snow White was charmed by the old woman’s kindness, and the Evil Queen handed her the poisoned apple through the window. Snow White took a bite and began to choke on it. The princess fell to the floor, most certainly dead.

The Evil Queen waited to make sure Snow White didn’t wake up this time. After hours of watching her closely, she never saw the princess move. She was certain her stepdaughter was dead.

“Now I shall be the fairest forever!” the Evil Queen said, laughing.

She rushed back to her castle just before the dwarfs arrived home from the mines. The Evil Queen stood before her Magic Mirror and asked it:

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?”

To her excitement, the mirror replied:

“My lady’s beauty is fair and true,

There's no one in the land fairer than you."

At last her stepdaughter was dead. The Evil Queen threw herself a celebration that lasted until the wee hours of the morning.

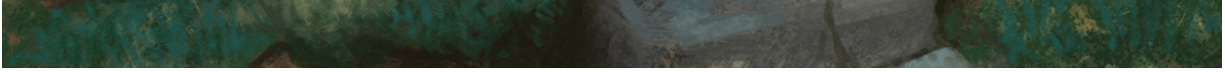
The dwarfs found Snow White on the floor with the poisoned apple still in her hand. They tried to revive her using every remedy they knew, but the princess never woke up. As far as anyone could tell, Snow White was truly dead.

The following weeks were the saddest of the seven dwarfs' lives. They couldn't bring themselves to bury the beautiful princess, so the dwarfs made a coffin of jewels and glass from their mines and placed it on a hill beside their cottage. They took turns guarding the coffin day and night.

Snow White was in the coffin for a long time, but her beauty never faded. Her skin stayed pale as snow, her lips red as blood, and her hair black as ebony. She appeared to just be sleeping by all who saw her.

One day, a handsome young prince from a neighboring kingdom was passing through the forest. His traveling party decided to stop for a rest when he came upon the coffin on the hill. The prince fell in love with the princess at first sight, for he had never seen someone so beautiful in his whole life.





“Who is this maiden?” the prince asked the dwarfs.

The dwarfs told the prince all about Snow White—that she was the daughter of a king, and how she had been poisoned by her jealous stepmother.

“Please may I have this coffin?” the prince said. “We’ll take very good care of her at my palace. Now that I’ve seen her beauty, I never want to be without it.”

The dwarfs took pity on the young prince and let him take the coffin back to his kingdom. As his traveling party continued back home, however, the wagon carrying Snow White’s coffin hit a large tree root growing in the path. The motion caused a small piece of poisoned apple to come out of Snow White’s mouth, and the princess awoke. The apple had not killed the princess after all, but had been lodged in her throat, causing her to fall into a deep sleep.

“Where am I?” Snow White asked.

The prince was amazed to see she was alive. He told her how he had found her in the woods and the dwarfs had let him take her so that he never had to live without her again. It was love at first sight for Snow White too, and she agreed to marry the prince.

With the help of the prince’s army, Snow White returned to her castle and reclaimed her father’s throne from her cruel stepmother. The Evil Queen was locked away in the dungeon without a mirror of any kind, forced to grow old without the comfort of a reflection.

The dwarfs were knighted and invited to live in the castle. Snow White became the queen of her family’s kingdom, she and the prince were married, and they lived happily ever after.

The End

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS



ADAPTED FROM THE TRADITIONAL STORY

Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. Since they were no longer piglets, their mother decided it was time for them to leave the pigpen and make homes of their own. So she packed her three sons a sack of food and sent them on their way.

It may have seemed like a cruel thing for a mother to do, but the pigpen was so crowded, the three brothers were happy to leave.

The first Little Pig built his home out of straw. He thought it was a wise decision since straw was so easy to carry and assemble. It took the first Little Pig only a day to finish the straw home. It was a very flimsy house, but the Little Pig was proud of himself for completing his home so quickly.

The second Little Pig built his home out of sticks. The sticks weren't as easy to carry and assemble as straw, but they were a lot stronger. The stick house was much sturdier than his brother's straw house and it took him only a week to build it, so the second Little Pig thought he had made a smart choice.

The third Little Pig built his home out of bricks. They were so heavy that he could only carry two at a time in his hooves, but the third Little Pig knew that bricks would make a much sturdier home than sticks and straw.

Every day on his way to the brick maker, the third Little Pig walked past his brothers' houses. They teased him mercilessly for taking on such a chore.

"You'll never finish your home!" the second Little Pig said.

"Your arms are going to fall off from carrying those bricks back and forth!" the first Little Pig said.

Despite his brothers' mean remarks, the third Little Pig knew he was doing the right thing.

"You may be laughing now, but this land is full of dangerous creatures your houses won't protect you from," the third Little Pig said.

After a tiring month, the house of bricks was finally finished.



Just as the third Little Pig had predicted, a Big Bad Wolf soon entered the land searching for his next meal. He came upon the three Little Pigs' houses and thought they would be easy catches. So he went to the house of straw first and knocked on the door.

"Little Pig, Little Pig, let me come in," the wolf called to the pig inside.

"Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin," the first Little Pig replied.

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll *blow your house down!*" the wolf growled.

He took a deep breath and blew the straw house away. The wolf barged inside and gobbled up the first Little Pig.

When the wolf was hungry again, he went next door to the house made of sticks and knocked on the door.

"Little Pig, Little Pig, let me come in," the wolf said.

"Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin," the second Little Pig replied.

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll *blow your house down!*" the wolf growled.

Just like before, the wolf took a deep breath and blew the stick house to the ground. He pounced on the second Little Pig and gobbled him up.





The wolf regained his appetite soon after and went to the house made of bricks.

“Little Pig, Little Pig, let me come in,” the wolf said.

“Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin,” the third Little Pig replied.

“Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll *blow your house down!*” the wolf said.

“I’d like to see you try,” the third Little Pig said with a laugh.

The wolf didn’t like to be mocked by his food, so this angered him very much. He took a deep breath and blew at the house. However, unlike the houses of straw and stick, the brick house stayed in one piece.

The wolf took an even deeper breath and blew at the house more strongly than before. Still, the brick house remained intact. The wolf tried again, taking the deepest breath he could and blowing it out with all his might.

Sadly for the wolf, the brick house stayed standing. He was so out of breath, the wolf fell to his knees and coughed and wheezed.

“I’ll get inside your house and eat you, Little Pig, even if it’s the last thing I do!” the wolf growled.

“Oh no!” the third Little Pig said. “Whatever you do, don’t come through the back door!”

The wolf thought the pig was foolish for giving him such a good idea. He marched to the back of the brick house and pulled the door open. However, it wasn’t an entrance to the house, but a room where the third Little Pig kept his firewood. The logs came tumbling out and piled on top of the wolf.

The third Little Pig laughed hysterically as he watched the wolf from inside. The wolf climbed out from under the pile of firewood and angrily got to his feet.

“Laugh all you want, little pig,” he said. “I’ll find a way inside that house and eat you just like I ate your brothers!”

“Oh no!” the third Little Pig said. “Whatever you do, don’t dig a hole under the house!”

The wolf knew what the pig was doing, and he wasn’t going to be fooled by it this time. He wouldn’t go under the house as the pig had suggested—he was going to go *over* the house and crawl down the chimney!

The wolf fetched a ladder and climbed up to the roof of the brick house

and then quickly slid down the chimney before the pig could hear him coming.

“Ready or not, here I come!” the wolf growled.

However, the third Little Pig had outsmarted the wolf again. Waiting for him at the bottom of the chimney was a large pot of boiling water. The wolf fell straight into the pot and died.

The third Little Pig added carrots and celery to the pot and cooked himself a nice wolf stew. Thanks to his wise decisions, the third Little Pig lived a long and happy life in the brick house, and remained safe from all the other wolves that came his way.

The End

RUMPELSTILTSKIN



ADAPTED FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Once upon a time, there was a young maiden who was the most talented spinner in her village. She lived at home with her father, who worked as a miller. The miller was so proud of his daughter, she was all he ever talked about. In fact, some of the villagers grew tired of him bragging about her.

One night, while he was getting drinks with friends at a tavern, he went on and on about how gifted his daughter was. He had been served too much and was making outlandish claims that he wouldn't have made if sober.

"My daughter is such a brilliant spinner, she could spin hay into gold!" he said.

The other men in the tavern laughed and raised their drinks to the miller and his daughter. Despite his constant boasting, it was charming to see such a supportive father.

He never expected that singing his daughter's praises would put her in harm's way. Unfortunately, one of the king's soldiers happened to also be drinking in the tavern that night. Neither the king nor the soldier had any sense of humor whatsoever. When he heard about the maiden who could spin hay into gold, the soldier took it quite seriously. And since the kingdom was experiencing its worst financial troubles since the Dark Ages, he thought the maiden was the answer they had been looking for.

The soldier raced back to the castle and awoke the king to tell him the fortunate news.

"Your Majesty, something wonderful has happened," the soldier said. "There is a young maiden in the village who has been blessed with the power to spin hay into gold!"

"She must be a witch!" the king exclaimed. "We must arrest this woman at once and burn her at the stake!"

"Actually, Your Highness," the soldier said, "I thought a young woman like her would be most useful to the kingdom in a time like this. If she spun

enough hay into gold, we would become the wealthiest nation in the world!”

“You’re absolutely right,” the king said. “I order you to find this maiden and bring her to the castle at once! We will put her to work straightaway!”

The soldier organized a squad and charged into the village. They knocked down the miller’s door and seized the maiden. The soldiers carried her off to the castle. She was locked in a tower with nothing inside it but a spinning wheel and a stack of hay.

The maiden couldn’t have been more frightened and confused. The king entered the tower, and she bowed to him.

“I beg your pardon, Your Majesty,” the maiden said. “But what is the meaning of this?”

“Word of your abilities has reached the castle,” the king told her. “While we should punish you for keeping such a gift from our attention, we have brought you here to redeem yourself.”

“Excuse me, sir,” she said. “What abilities are you referring to?”

“You have been blessed with the power of spinning hay into gold,” the king said. “And now you shall do it for me.”

“Your Majesty, I believe there’s been some kind of mistake,” the maiden said. “I am a very gifted spinner, but I most certainly cannot spin hay into —”

“Do not lie to me! We heard it from your father’s lips,” the king said. “You will spin the hay in this tower into gold by sunrise tomorrow morning, or your head shall be chopped off.”

The king promptly turned on his heel and left. The maiden was locked in the tower alone. She fell on the floor and sobbed hysterically. It was as if she were living a nightmare. There was no way she could accomplish what the king had ordered. For all she knew, such a thing was impossible.

Just when she thought she’d most certainly lose her head, a small whirlwind spun around the tower, and a dwarf magically appeared.

“Hello, fair maiden,” the dwarf said. “It seems you’ve found yourself in quite a predicament.”

“Who are you?” she asked.

“The question isn’t *who* but *what*,” the dwarf said.

“Then *what* are you?”

“I may be your salvation,” he said. “The king expects you to spin all the

hay in this tower into gold by morning, is that correct?”

“Yes, but he is mistaken,” the maiden said. “I’ve never been capable of such a thing. He must have misunderstood what my father said. Tomorrow morning when the king finds this tower still full of hay, I will lose my head for it.”

The dwarf excitedly rubbed his hands together.

“Luckily for you, spinning hay into gold is one of my specialties. I’d be willing to help you if you’d like.”

“Yes, of course!” the maiden said. “I would be so grateful!”

“I don’t do anything for free,” the dwarf said. “I will only spin the hay into gold if we can make a trade.”

The maiden didn’t have much to offer, but she was willing to trade anything if it would save her life. The dwarf looked her up and down and then side to side.

“I’ll do it in exchange for your ring,” he said.

“But the ring was my mother’s,” the maiden said. “I could never part with it.”

“It’s the ring or your head,” he said. “What do you choose?”

It was an easy choice. The maiden quickly took the ring off her finger and handed it over to the dwarf. The dwarf kicked his feet up and down in a happy little jig. Nothing made him happier than a trade. He sat at the spinning wheel and went to work.

The maiden watched in amazement as the dwarf did the impossible. In just a few hours, the entire haystack had been transformed into a glimmering pile of gold.





“Thank you so much!” the maiden said. “I didn’t get your name.”

Instead of answering, the dwarf snapped his fingers and disappeared from the tower. Shortly after sunrise, the king stormed in to check on the maiden’s progress. He looked around the tower in awe. Although he had given the order, even he was impressed to see it happen.

“I spun the hay into gold, just as you wished,” the maiden said. “May I please go home?”

The king didn’t answer. His soldiers took hold of the maiden and escorted her to a large chamber in the castle. It was four times the size of the tower and contained nothing but a spinning wheel and numerous stacks of hay.

“Now you will spin *this* hay into gold by sunrise tomorrow, or your head will be cut off,” the king said.

With his new orders given, he and his soldiers left the chamber and locked the poor maiden inside. The maiden was beside herself with sorrow. How was she going to spin all the hay into gold? It would be a challenge even if she were capable of such an act.

Luckily, another whirlwind spun around the chamber and the magic dwarf appeared once more.

“At it again, I see,” he said with a wink.

“Will you help me spin this hay into gold again?” the maiden begged. “If not, I will surely lose my head tomorrow at sunrise.”

“But I never do anything for free, especially if I’ve done it before,” the dwarf said. “I’d be happy to help if we could come to an arrangement.”

Once again, the dwarf looked the maiden up and down and then side to side.

“I’ll do it for your necklace,” he said.

“But this necklace belonged to my grandmother,” she said. “I could never give it up.”

“It’ll be hard wearing a necklace without a head,” the dwarf pointed out.

“Fair enough,” the maiden said.

She handed over her grandmother’s necklace, and the dwarf went to work spinning the hay into gold. By the time the sun rose the following day, the chamber was filled with glittering stacks of gold.

“Thank you!” the maiden said. “But wait—I still didn’t get your name.”

Instead of answering, the dwarf wiggled his ears and disappeared. Just

after sunrise, the king and his soldiers barged into the chamber and were very pleased with what they saw.

“I’ve spun the hay into gold, just as you asked,” the maiden said. “Now will you please let me go home?”

The king did not answer. The soldiers took the maiden by the arms and led her down a dark staircase into the castle dungeon. The dungeon was filled from floor to ceiling with mounds of hay.

“If you spin this hay into gold by sunrise tomorrow, the kingdom shall be the richest country in the world, and I shall make you my queen,” the king said. “If not, you shall lose your head.”

The king and his soldiers left the dungeon and locked the maiden inside. She was overwhelmed with fear. The task seemed impossible. Even if the dwarf appeared again, he most certainly wouldn’t be able to spin all the hay in the dungeon into gold by sunrise.

Another whirlwind spun around her, and the dwarf appeared in the dungeon.

“We have to stop meeting like this,” he said.

“I’m starting to think the king just wants me dead,” the maiden said. “There isn’t enough time to spin all the hay into gold, even for you!”

“Ah, but the greater the trade, the faster I work,” he said.

“But I have nothing left to give you,” the maiden said.

“For now,” the dwarf said with a twinkle in his eye. “But if you give me your firstborn child, I will spin all this hay into gold by sunrise.”

It was the most obscene idea the maiden had ever heard. If she had a child one day, she could never give it to the dwarf.

“What a cruel thing to suggest!” she said.

“It’s a child or the executioner’s axe,” the dwarf said. “Take it or leave it.”

The maiden was so exhausted she wasn’t thinking straight. More than anything, she just wanted the nightmare to be over.

“Fine—if you spin all the hay in this dungeon into gold, I will give you my firstborn child,” she said.

The dwarf laughed wildly and did cartwheels around the dungeon. To date, it was the greatest trade he had ever made. He sat behind the spinning wheel and went to work. The longer he spun the hay into gold, the faster he went. Soon the entire dungeon was filled with gleaming stacks of gold.

“You’ve saved my life again,” the maiden said. “But I didn’t get your name.”

Instead of answering, he scrunched his nose and disappeared from the dungeon. The king and his soldiers returned at sunrise and were shocked to see all the gold in the dungeon. Even the king had thought the task would be impossible.

“I apologize for threatening your life, but we were most desperately in debt,” the king exclaimed. “But now, thanks to you, we will have the richest kingdom in the world! Please rule it alongside me as my queen.”

The circumstances were very bizarre, so the maiden had to think his proposal over. She either returned to a father who had almost gotten her killed, or married a man who had almost had her killed. Either way, it was a complicated future. But when she compared the life of a queen to the life of a miller’s daughter, the maiden found it was an easy choice.

Thanks to the kingdom’s newfound wealth, the king and the maiden had an extravagant royal wedding. The maiden became queen and was never forced to spin anything again. She enjoyed her new life as queen so much, she forgot all about the magical dwarf and the debt she owed him.

Within a year, the queen was pregnant with the heir to her husband’s throne. She gave birth to a beautiful baby princess, and the kingdom rejoiced. Unfortunately for the queen, the dwarf had not forgotten about their agreement. He returned to the castle ready to collect on his end of the bargain.

“The princess is mine!” he said.

“No! You can’t take her!” the queen said.

“A deal is a deal,” the dwarf said. “You wouldn’t be queen if it weren’t for me! Now hand over the child or I’ll tell the king who really spun all that hay into gold.”

“Please, there must be something else I can give you,” the queen said. “I can give you riches and jewels beyond your wildest dreams! I could give you land and a title! I could make you a knight, a lord, or a duke!”

“The child is all I’m interested in,” the stubborn dwarf said. “However, if you can guess my *name*, I will let you keep the child.”

The queen guessed all the names she knew.

“Is it John, Michael, or William?” she asked.

“Nope,” the dwarf said.

“What about Harold, Robert, or David?”

“Not even close!”

The queen guessed every name from Adam to Zachariah, but not one was correct. The dwarf squealed in delight watching her agonize over it.

“You’ll never guess!” he said. “Give me the child!”

“Wait! At least let me have until the end of the week,” she pleaded. “Just one more week and I will give you my daughter.”

The dwarf was certain she would never guess his name, and since he enjoyed watching her struggle so much, he agreed to give her one more week. As soon as he left, the queen sent for her royal guard.

“Yes, Your Majesty?” the guard asked.

“I have a very important task for you, one that the king must never know about,” she instructed. “There is a dangerous dwarf living in the kingdom who is trying to take the princess. I want you to find him and learn his name. If we know what he is called, the princess will be saved.”

In all his years of service at the castle, this was by far the strangest task the guard had ever been assigned. He spent the whole week searching the kingdom for the dwarf, asking everyone from the young to the elderly if they had seen such a person. Finally, he was pointed in the direction of a strange woods where the dwarf lived. He found the odd little man singing and dancing around a large fire.

“The queen is sure to lose this game, for Rumpelstiltskin is my name!” the dwarf sang joyfully.

“Rumpelstiltskin!” the guard said. “That’s it—that’s his name!”

The guard raced back to the castle and told the queen what he had seen and heard in the woods. At the end of the week, the dwarf returned to the castle grinning from ear to ear, certain he would be leaving with the young princess.

“Today is your last chance, Your Highness,” he said.

The queen knew better than to come right out and say his real name, so she guessed the most ridiculous names she could think of to appear as genuine as possible.

“Is it Pickledphil, Slimbutter, or Jackytabby?”

“No, no, no!” the dwarf sang.

“Is it Fuzzlebee, Wunkadunka, or Hurshquilt?”

“Wrong, wrong, wrong!” the dwarf replied, laughing.

“What about Crustylumpkins, Lullytufkins, or Quackysimons?”

The dwarf roared with victorious laughter. As far as he was concerned, he had already won.

“You’ll never get it right,” he said. “Now give it up and hand over the princess!”

“Wait, allow me one final guess,” the queen said. “Just one more guess and the princess will be yours.”

“Fine, fine, fine,” the dwarf said. “One more guess and then hand her over.”

“Is it *Rumpelstiltskin*?” the queen asked.

The dwarf’s mouth dropped open. He couldn’t believe the queen had guessed his name correctly—no one had *ever* guessed his name correctly. He hopped around the castle in a furious rage and then disappeared.

The queen raised her daughter at the castle in peace and they never saw Rumpelstiltskin again.

The End

THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER



ADAPTED FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Once upon a time, there was an old shoemaker who worked and lived in a small shop in a tiny village. The shoemaker was known throughout the town as a kind and generous man. He made a point to help the hungry and needy as he came upon them, believing with his whole heart that they crossed his path for a reason.

After a series of unfortunate events, the shoemaker found himself in a time of need. He had become very poor and barely had enough money to feed himself or his wife. All he had left in his possession was enough leather to make one final pair of shoes.

If he couldn't sell the shoes, he and his wife would lose the shop and live on the streets. And with winter fast approaching, he worried how they would survive.

The shoemaker was so exhausted from worry, he decided to go to bed early. He cut the leather into pieces, laid the pieces out on his worktable, and planned to make the shoes first thing in the morning.



The following day, the shoemaker awoke early, eager to get started on the shoes. To his amazement, a pair of perfectly sewn leather shoes was waiting for him on his worktable. Someone else had made the shoes for him!

The shoemaker examined every inch of the shoes. Each piece of leather had been sewn together flawlessly. They were far better than the shoes he made—perhaps the nicest pair he had ever seen.

“Honey, come look at this!” he called to his wife.

“What a lovely pair of shoes you’ve made,” she said sweetly.

“But I didn’t make them,” the shoemaker said. “I left the pieces on the table last night and then woke this morning to find they had been made without me.”

“You silly old fool,” his wife said and pinched his cheek. “It’ll take more than that to trick me.”

The shoemaker didn’t press the matter any further. Had the positions been reversed, he probably wouldn’t have believed it either. The shoes were both a miracle and a mystery. He just wished he had someplace to direct his gratitude.

He placed the leather shoes in the window of his store, and they caught the attention of the first man who walked past. The man was so attracted to the shoes, he went inside to inquire about purchasing them.

“How on earth did you make such a beautiful pair of shoes?” the man asked. “I’ve never seen stitching that fine in my life!”

“I wish I knew,” the shoemaker said with a shrug.

“I appreciate a man who keeps his business secrets to himself,” the man said. “Name your price. I simply must have them.”

The man gave the shoemaker enough money to live off for another week and buy enough leather to make two new pairs of shoes.

Not expecting the miracle to happen twice, the shoemaker cut the leather into the pieces he needed and went to work on them. His old hands weren’t what they used to be and his joints ached with arthritis. So the shoemaker went to bed and planned on coming back to the project in the morning.

The next day, the shoemaker walked into his shop only to find that another mysterious miracle had occurred while he slept. Two pairs of impeccably sewn leather shoes had been put together without him.

“Honey, come look at this!” the shoemaker called to his wife.

“What lovely pairs of shoes,” she said. “They’re just as nice as the pair you made before.”

“That’s what I’m trying to tell you,” the shoemaker said. “I didn’t make these shoes, and I certainly didn’t make the pair from the night before!”

His wife knew exactly how long it took her husband to make a single pair of shoes. It was unlikely he could make one pair overnight, let alone two.

“Just because you’re an old dog doesn’t mean you can’t learn new tricks,” she convinced herself. “Now stop teasing me with this foolishness or I’ll take you to see a doctor.”

“Trust me, if we could afford a doctor, I would have taken myself already,” the shoemaker said.

He placed the new shoes in his store window, and both pairs sold for even better prices than the day before. The shoemaker had enough money to eat for another week and enough left over to buy leather for four pairs of shoes.

Things took such a turn for the better, the shoemaker was starting to feel guilty. He still had no clue who or what had been helping him.

That night he cut the leather into pieces to make four pairs of shoes. Business was so great that there was no rush to finish them, so the shoemaker went to bed as soon as he finished dinner.

You'd have thought the old man would be used to it by now, but the next morning he was just as amazed as ever to find four new pairs of shoes on his worktable.

"Honey, come see this!" the shoemaker said to his wife. "And this time you'll have to believe me!"

Now, the shoemaker's wife had gone to bed much later than her husband the previous night. She had seen the leather pieces on the table with her own eyes and knew the shoemaker couldn't have made the shoes himself.

"Well, bless my soul," his wife said. "Who could have done this?"

"I don't know, but we must find out so I can thank them," the shoemaker said.

Once the new shoes were sold, the shoemaker purchased enough leather to make eight pairs of shoes. That night, he cut the leather into pieces and laid them out on his worktable. He and his wife hid in the doorway and anxiously waited for the help to arrive.

They waited and waited, but nothing happened.

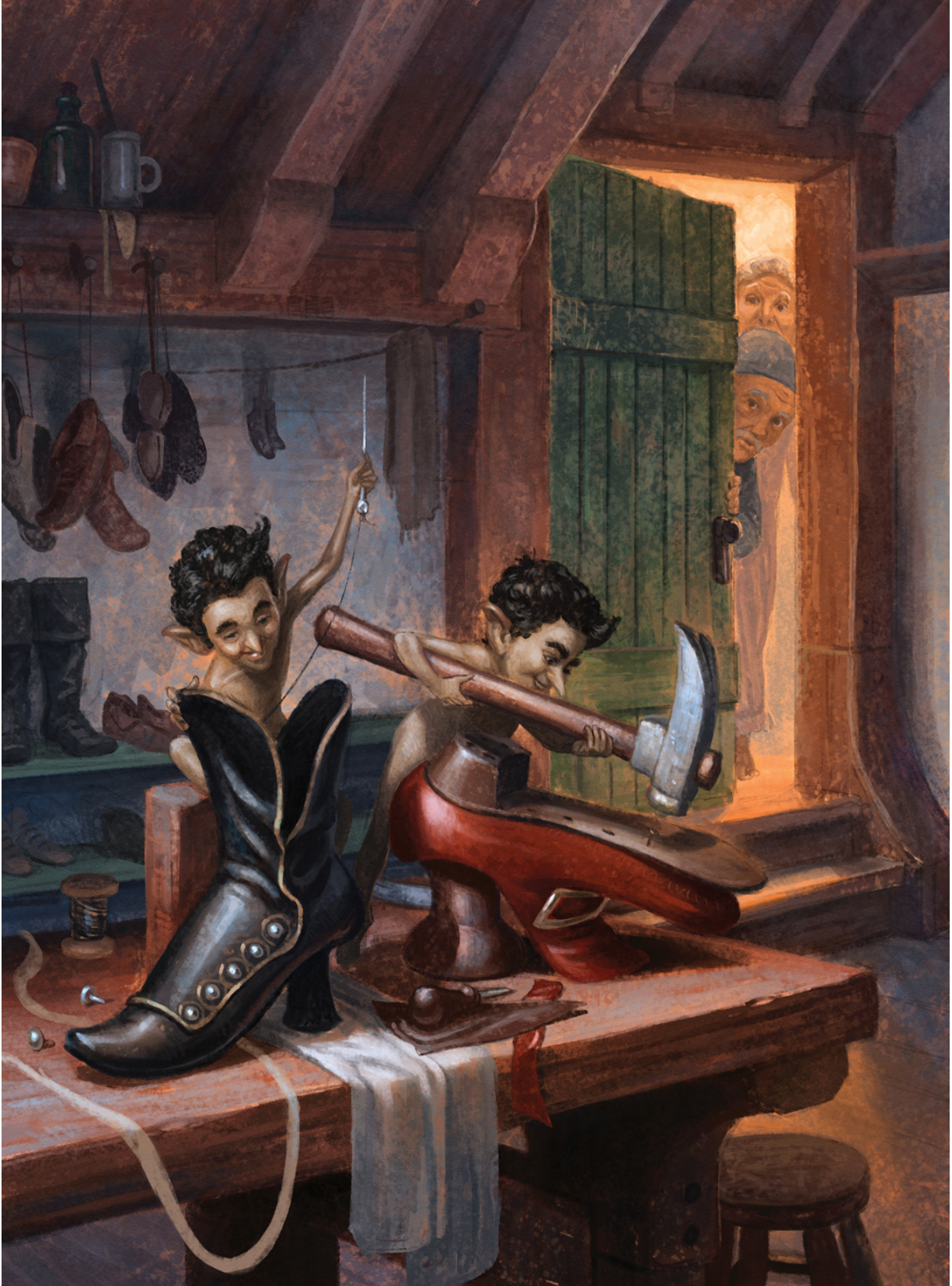
"Perhaps they've taken the night off," the shoemaker suggested.

Just then, the leather pieces began moving on their own at the worktable. It was as if two invisible hands were sewing the shoes together.

"*It's a spirit!*" the shoemaker whispered to his wife.

"The shoes aren't being constructed by a spirit; they're being made by *elves!*" his wife said. "Your eyes aren't what they used to be. Here, take my glasses and see for yourself."

The shoemaker's wife handed her husband her glasses. There were two elves making the shoes at his worktable, and they were so small, he couldn't see them from the doorway. Each elf did the work of one human hand using its entire body, all while completely naked.





“The poor dears,” the shoemaker’s wife said. “They must be freezing! Tomorrow, I’ll knit them both a wardrobe as a way of saying thank you.”

The next day, the eight new pairs of leather shoes sold even more quickly than the previous pairs. It would be a very long while before the shoemaker had to worry about poverty again.

That night, instead of laying out pieces of leather for the elves, the shoemaker’s wife laid out two tiny hats, two scarves, two pairs of pants, two pairs of socks, and two sweaters she had knitted during the day. The shoemaker even crafted two pairs of tiny boots for the elves to wear.

They hid in the doorway like before and waited for the elves to arrive. When the elves appeared on the worktable, the shoemaker and his wife couldn’t believe their eyes. However, the elves didn’t try on any of the clothes as expected. On the contrary, they tiptoed around the clothes as if they were afraid of them.

“Go on,” the shoemaker said. “We made them for you. We can’t thank you enough for helping us.”

The elves were startled to see that the shoemaker and his wife had been watching them.

“You mean it’s a gift?” the first elf asked.

“Of course it is,” the shoemaker’s wife said. “I don’t know anyone else they’d fit.”

“But to give an elf an article of clothing is to give him his freedom,” the second elf said. “We would never have to make another pair of shoes for you again.”

The shoemaker and his wife had no idea the gesture would imply so much, but since it was the right thing to do, they didn’t hesitate.

“You’ve done quite enough for us,” the old shoemaker said. “We’d be happy to give you freedom.”

The elves erupted into high-pitched cheers. They had been slaves to mankind all their lives and had never thought this day would come.

“Why did you start helping me in the first place?” the shoemaker asked the elves.

“We used to belong to another man in the village, one you had helped get back on his feet a long time ago,” the first elf said. “When he died, he told us to look after you.”

“My word,” the wife said. “Kindness certainly goes around, even if it

doesn't come back to you right away.”

The elves dressed in their new, warm clothes and left the shop. The shoemaker and his wife never saw them again.

Years later, the old shoemaker fell on hard times once more. He ran out of money and feared that he and his wife would be kicked out onto the street.

Even though his hands were crippled with arthritis, the old shoemaker cut leather pieces to make a pair of shoes with the last bit of material he had left. It was all his poor hands could handle for the night, so he retired early.

Miraculously, when the shoemaker awoke the next day, he found a pair of perfectly sewn shoes waiting for him. Even though they were freed, the elves were so thankful for the kindness of the shoemaker and his wife that they returned and offered him a helping hand whenever he needed one.



The elves enjoyed their freedom, and they made sure the shoemaker and his wife enjoyed a happily-ever-after.

The End

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST



ADAPTED FROM JEANNE-MARIE LEPRINCE DE
BEAUMONT

Once upon a time, there was a wealthy merchant who owned a trading company. While he had been blessed with success, the merchant had not been blessed with good business sense. He had made many terrible investments over the years and would soon come to regret it.

He lived in a gorgeous palace with three daughters. The older two had grown accustomed to their privileged lifestyle. They were spoiled, entitled, and unpleasant to be around. Even though they had everything they desired, the sisters complained whenever they could.

The youngest daughter, on the other hand, had enough compassion and elegance for all three of them. She was her father's favorite daughter and far prettier than her sisters, and both qualities made the sisters resent her. Everyone called the youngest sister Beauty, for she was beautiful inside and out.

On an unfortunate night, a brutal storm wrecked three of the merchant's ships as they sailed home from abroad. The damage was catastrophic and bankrupted the merchant. The family lost everything and was forced to sell their mansion and move to a small farmhouse in the countryside.

The older sisters were so distraught about losing their lavish home that they locked themselves inside their bedroom and never stopped crying. Beauty and her father did all the work around the farm so the family could survive.

Beauty didn't mind working on the farm, though. It kept her away from her terrible sisters and allowed her to spend time outdoors with the animals.

Fortunately, good news reached the farm. One of the merchant's ships had in fact survived the storm and docked safely at port. The merchant celebrated with his daughters, thinking their days of poverty were over.

Just before the merchant left to see to the ship, he asked each of his daughters what they'd like him to bring back as a gift to celebrate their

restored fortune.

“I’d like a diamond necklace!” the oldest sister said.

“I’d like pearl earrings!” the middle sister said.

Not wanting to be any trouble, Beauty said, “I’d like the prettiest rose you can find.”

Her sisters laughed at the simple request, but it warmed her father’s heart.

The merchant saddled up his horse and set off. It took him several days to travel to port, and when he arrived he discovered he had traveled there for nothing. The cargo aboard his ship had been seized to pay off debts he had neglected over the years. His family was still poor.



So the merchant traveled back home, devastated to tell his daughters the

news. In his despair, he wasn't paying attention to the roads and became lost in a giant forest and unknowingly crossed the border into a long-forgotten kingdom.

A heavy rainstorm descended on the woods, and the merchant looked for a place to spend the night. He searched for a village for miles, but there was none to be found.

Eventually, the merchant discovered an enormous castle hidden in the forest. He didn't know such a place existed, but he was happy it did, because the storm was steadily growing worse. At first, he was afraid the castle might be abandoned, but then he saw smoke coming out of a chimney.

The merchant put his horse away in the stables and knocked on the castle door. No one answered, so he knocked again.

"Would you be so kind to shelter an old man from this terrible storm for the night?" he yelled through the door.

Thankfully, the door opened and the merchant was granted entry. Curiously, there was no one awaiting him on the other side. The door promptly shut behind the merchant, as if it had been opened and closed by a ghost.

"Hello?" the merchant called. "Is anyone there?"

He searched the castle to find a resident, but it appeared empty. It was an enchanting home with many spacious rooms and countless pieces of art on display. The merchant found a fire burning in a drawing room, which made it even more peculiar that he couldn't locate a single soul.

In the dining room, the merchant saw that the table was set for one and there were trays of hot food.

"Perhaps everyone left in a hurry," the merchant said.

Since he was starving and didn't want the food to go to waste, the merchant sat at the table and ate dinner. Once he was full, the exhaustion from his trip caught up with him, and he looked for a place to sleep.

Upstairs, the merchant found a chamber that had been prepared for a guest, as if the castle had been expecting him. He climbed into the warm bed and had a good night's sleep.

The next morning, there still was no lord or lady of the castle to be found, so the merchant left a note expressing his gratitude. He retrieved his horse from the stables and guided it away from the castle. As he went, he

spotted a beautiful garden to the side of the castle containing the most gorgeous red roses he had ever seen.

“If I brought Beauty home a rose, perhaps my trip wouldn’t be such a waste,” he said. “At least I’ll make one of my daughters happy.”

The merchant went to the garden and pulled a single rose off the bush. Suddenly, a thunderous roar came from inside the castle. The doors burst open and a hideous creature charged outside.

The Beast had the mane of a lion, the face of a bear, the horns of a goat, and the paws of a wolf. He pulled the merchant off the horse and threw him to the ground.

“I was generous enough to feed you and give you shelter for the night, and you repay me by stealing my flowers!” the Beast roared. “You did not deserve my kindness and shall pay for this!”

“Forgive me!” the merchant said. “I am very grateful to you! I would have never taken one had I known the roses were so valuable!”

“Stealing will cost you your life!” the Beast roared. “You’ll never leave the castle again!”

The Beast grabbed the merchant by the collar and dragged him toward the castle.

“No, please have pity on me!” the merchant said. “I am the father of three daughters! They won’t survive without me! The rose was just a gift for the youngest, Beauty.”

The Beast dropped the merchant.

“Beauty, you say?” he said. “Why is she called Beauty?”

“She has the heart and face of an angel,” the merchant said.

The Beast thought for a moment about the merchant and his daughter.

“You may return to your daughters,” the Beast said. “But in your place, you must send Beauty to live at the castle!”

“No!” the merchant cried.

“Fail to do so, and I’ll come for you and *all* your daughters!” he roared. “Now leave!”

The Beast threw the merchant over his horse and sent him on his way. The merchant dreaded having to tell his daughters about meeting the Beast. He worried they would have to move far away, where the creature would never find them.

When he returned home, his older daughters were so upset he didn’t

have any gifts for them that they locked themselves in their room and didn't come out. Beauty could see the fear in his eyes.

"Father, what's troubling you?" Beauty asked.

The merchant told his daughter about how the goods on his surviving ship had been seized to pay off his debt. He explained how he was so disheartened he became lost in the woods and found the mysterious castle. Then he told his daughter what had happened when he picked her a rose from the Beast's garden.

"It was I who asked you for a rose, and I who should pay the price for it," Beauty said. "I'll go live with the Beast in the castle so he does not harm you or my sisters."

"Absolutely not," the merchant said. "I couldn't live with myself knowing you were living with that creature! Tomorrow we will pack our things and head far away from here."

Beauty was too clever to argue with her father. Instead of fighting with him, she asked where the Beast's castle was and how to get there. The following morning, the merchant awoke to discover that Beauty was gone. Against his wishes, she had gone to live at the Beast's castle.

Beauty journeyed through the forest and into the forgotten kingdom. The castle was so tucked away, she wasn't sure she'd ever find it. Finally, looming above the trees in the distance, she saw the castle's high towers.

It was a fearful sight. The castle was much larger than she'd anticipated. She didn't know what to expect of the horrible monster waiting for her inside.

The Beast was standing at the entrance when she arrived. He was glad to see her and didn't appear as frightening to her as he had to the merchant. In fact, Beauty thought he looked rather kind.

Her beauty was well beyond what the Beast was expecting, and she took his breath away. He kneeled down and kissed her hand.

"The castle is your home now," he said. "I hope you'll find happiness here."

He led her inside, and Beauty gasped. The castle was the most exquisite place she had ever seen. It reminded her of the home her family had lost, but it was even grander.



The Beast escorted Beauty into the dining room, where a delicious meal was waiting on the table. At the end of the meal, the plates and silverware were cleared away magically, as if taken by invisible servants.

“The castle is enchanted with the souls of those who once worked here,” the Beast said. “I apologize if it comes as a shock, but you’ll get used to it.”

“What’s keeping the souls here?” Beauty asked.

“A curse,” the Beast said, then he quickly changed the subject. “Now I’ll show you to your room.”

The Beast offered his arm to Beauty and walked her up a grand staircase

to the upper floor. A lovely chamber had been prepared for her. So far, the Beast was a wonderful host.

In time, Beauty learned that the Beast was nothing like the vicious monster she thought he'd be. On the contrary, the longer she stayed with him, the fonder she grew of him.

Every morning, they took long walks in the garden and talked. Every evening, they would sit in the drawing room and read to each other until it was time for bed. On special occasions, the invisible servants would play instruments in the hall and Beauty and the Beast would dance.

The more time she spent at the castle, the more curious Beauty became about the castle's history. There were portraits of a handsome man hung on many of the walls, and she wondered who he was.

"Who is the man in all the paintings?" Beauty asked one night at dinner. "Did he used to live in the castle?"

"Yes, that was the prince," the Beast replied. "He hasn't lived here in many years."

Beauty was afraid to learn what happened to him, so she didn't ask any further questions. She thought of the Beast as a friend and didn't want to think he had harmed the prince in any way.

As their friendship grew, Beauty knew the Beast's feelings for her were evolving into something much more. Her suspicion turned out to be true one night when he entered her chambers and sat at the foot of her bed.

"Beauty, will you marry me?" he asked.

Beauty didn't know how to respond. She knew her answer would only hurt his feelings.

"I'm very fond of you, but I cannot marry you," she said.

The Beast nodded and left the bedroom. They went about their daily routines, and he said nothing of it for many weeks. Then one night, just like before, the Beast entered Beauty's room and sat at the foot of her bed.

"Beauty, will you marry me?" the Beast asked.

"I care very much for you, but I cannot marry you," Beauty said.

"Do you think I will ever make you happy?" the Beast asked.

"I enjoy our time together, but it's very difficult being happy here," Beauty said. "I miss my family more and more each day. I would do anything just to see them again."

"What if there was a way to see them without them seeing you?" the

Beast asked. "Would that make you happy?"

"Oh, yes, very much!" Beauty said.

The Beast left her chambers and returned with a small hand mirror. It was a magic mirror, and all Beauty had to do was look into it and she could see her father and sisters back home at the farm. By now, both of her sisters were married, and her father was much grayer than he'd been before.

"Father is so much older now," Beauty said. "But it still brings me such joy to see they're all right!"

The Beast was pleased he could make Beauty happy. She looked into the mirror whenever she missed her family, but seeing them only made her miss them that much more. She longed to speak to them and embrace them.

One day, she saw that her father had become very ill. Her sisters and their husbands did little to care for him, and Beauty worried he would only get worse if she didn't help him.

"Beauty, why do you look so sad?" the Beast asked. "Is the mirror not working anymore?"

"My father is very sick," Beauty said. "I would do anything to go home and care for him."

The Beast knew he would regret what he was about to say, but he had fallen so in love with Beauty, he couldn't bear to see her unhappy.

"If I allow you to return home, will you promise to come back to me?" the Beast asked.

"Oh, yes!" Beauty said. "I promise to return once my father is well again!"

The Beast removed a ring from the knuckle of his paw and gave it to Beauty.

"This ring is magic," he said. "When you're ready to return, all you have to do is put it on your finger and turn the diamond three times, and you'll be back in the castle."

Beauty was so grateful, she kissed the Beast's cheek. She left the castle and hurried back to the farm. When she arrived, her father and sisters couldn't believe their eyes. They didn't think they'd ever see her again—in fact, the sisters had been hopeful they wouldn't.

"The Beast let me come home so I can take care of you, Father," Beauty said.

"He let you go?" her father asked.

“I promised him I would return once you were well,” Beauty said. “He’s not as bad as he seems. I’ve actually grown to like him very much.”

Beauty told her family about life with the Beast and all the fun things they did together. Knowing she wasn’t living a miserable life made the merchant’s heart warm with relief, and his health began improving immediately.

Her sisters, on the other hand, weren’t happy for her at all. Beauty seemed to have a better life with the Beast than they did with their own husbands, and they became very jealous. They plotted a way to anger the Beast and sabotage their sister’s happiness.

By the time her father was well, Beauty was looking forward to returning to the castle. She missed the Beast much more than she thought she would and was eager to return to their life of walks through the garden, reading in the drawing room, and dancing in the hall.

However, her sisters insisted she stay another week after their father was well. Beauty made it very clear that she had promised the Beast she would return as soon as their father was healthy again, but her sisters were so persistent, Beauty agreed to stay just a few days longer.

What Beauty didn’t know was that, at that exact moment, the Beast was watching her through the magic mirror. Watching her break her promise broke the Beast’s heart. He knew she would never love him as much as he loved her.

When it was finally time to leave the farm, Beauty placed the magic ring on her finger and turned the diamond three times. She was magically transported back to the castle and sighed with relief. The castle now felt more like home than the farmhouse did.

“I’m back,” Beauty called through the halls, but she couldn’t find the Beast anywhere. “Where are you?”

Beauty passed a window and screamed. In the garden she saw the Beast lying on the ground under the rosebush. He was as still as stone, and his paw was clutching his chest. It appeared the Beast had died of a broken heart waiting for Beauty to return.

She ran out into the garden and collapsed on top of him. Tears ran down her face, and she rested her head above his heart.

“Please don’t die,” she cried. “While I was away, I realized just how much I care for you. I love you with my whole heart. Nothing would make

me happier than to marry you.”





A sudden gust of wind surrounded them. Beauty looked up to see what was happening, and when she looked down, the Beast was gone. A handsome man had taken his place.

“Beauty, you’ve come back!” the man said.

She recognized the man—he was the prince from all the paintings throughout the castle.

“You’re the prince!” she said. “But where’s the Beast?”

“I am the Beast,” the prince said happily. “Many years ago, an evil Enchantress thought I was too vain and needed to be taught a lesson. She cursed me to look like a beast and cursed the souls of my servants to stay trapped in the castle. The only way to break the spell was to be loved by someone of true beauty!”

With the curse lifted, the souls of the servants trapped in the castle were freed. Beauty and the prince were married and became rulers of the forgotten kingdom. The merchant joined them at the castle, leaving his selfish daughters behind, and they all lived happily ever after.

The End

THE BOY WHO CRIED WOLF



ADAPTED FROM THE TRADITIONAL STORY

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who lived on a farm with his family. They were an organized bunch, and each family member had his or her own set of chores to keep the farm running.

His father farmed all the crops and sold them in the local village. His mother cooked and cleaned and made sure everyone else was pulling his or her own weight. His brothers fed the chickens and the pigs and kept the pigpens and henhouses clean. His sisters milked the cows and goats and carefully kept track of which milk was which.

Being the youngest in his family, the little boy was given the simplest task on the farm. Every day, he would take the farm's herd of sheep into a field nearby and look after them as they grazed on the grass. At night, when his mother rang the bell for supper, he'd escort the sheep back into their pen, and the whole thing would start over again the next day.

It was such an easy chore that the little boy spent most of the day being bored and restless. Even with a good imagination, it was difficult to keep himself entertained in the field.

He'd practice balancing his straw hat on the end of his staff, but he grew tired of that. He'd look for anthills and stomp on them until all the ants came out, but that got old pretty quick. He'd build buildings out of rocks, but eventually he ran out of rocks.



One afternoon, after he had done everything he could think of to pass the time, he decided to play a joke on his family.

“Wolf!” he cried. *“There’s a wolf in the field!”*

His father and his brothers immediately came running from the farm with their pitchforks and axes raised high. His mother and sisters ran out too, swinging rolling pins and carving knives. However, when they arrived in the field, there wasn’t a wolf anywhere.

The little boy burst into a fit of giggles.

“I tricked you!” he laughed. “There’s no wolf out here! You should have seen the looks on your faces!”

His siblings rolled their eyes and went back to the farm. His parents shook their heads and scowled at him. The little boy figured he was the only one in his family who had a sense of humor.

The next day, the little boy was back in the field watching over the flock

of sheep as always. He was so bored, he didn't know what to do with himself.

He practiced twirling his staff, but it kept hitting him in the head. He laid on the grass and thought about what the clouds were shaped like, but there were only one or two in the sky that day. He tried teaching the sheep tricks, like how to fetch and roll over, but the sheep weren't interested in learning.

Finally, he was so desperate for excitement that he decided to play another joke on his family.

"Wolf!" he cried. *"There's a wolf in the field!"*

Just like the day before, his family ran toward the field with pitchforks, axes, rolling pins, and knives raised. But before they reached the field, the little boy fell and rolled on the ground with bellyache-inducing laughter.

"I tricked you again!" he said with a giggle.

His parents and siblings were at their wit's end with him. Even the sheep were annoyed, because the little boy frightened them each time he yelled.

"I'm glad you're pleased with yourself, because the rest of us sure aren't!" his father said. "Scare us like that again and you'll get a whipping."

The little boy was so tickled with himself, he laughed until it was time to head back for supper. Unfortunately, the next day the joke was on him.

Just like always, the little boy was back in the field watching the sheep. He was walking around looking for something to do, when out of the corner of his eye he saw a frightening sight. At the edge of the field was a pack of enormous wolves.





They had thick, matted fur, long claws, and razor-sharp teeth. Their mouths watered, and they licked their lips as they watched the little boy and his herd.

The sheep saw the wolves and quickly ran from the field, causing a small stampede. The little boy was left all alone, and the wolves began circling him. He was so scared, he froze where he stood and it took him a few moments before he was able to make a sound.

“Wolves!” he cried. *“There are wolves in the field!”*

However, his family didn’t come.

“Wolves!” he cried louder. *“There are wolves in the field! A whole pack of them!”*

Still, no one from the farm came to save him.

“WOLVES!” the boy cried as loud as he could. *“Come quick before they eat me!”*

His family heard him loud and well, but they thought he was only trying to trick them again. They shook their heads and continued their own chores.

The wolves pounced on the little boy and gobbled him up. The family didn’t realize what had happened until suppertime, when the boy didn’t return from watching the sheep. They went to the field to see what was keeping him, but all that was left was his staff and straw hat.

Naturally, it was devastating for the family and all the villagers who knew him. With the family’s permission, the village built a monument for the little boy in the center of town. It reminded the other children in the village the importance of honesty and having an honorable reputation. Even little white lies can cause big trouble.

The End

SLEEPING BEAUTY



ADAPTED FROM CHARLES PERRAULT

Once upon a time, in a far-off land, there lived a sad queen who could not have children. Although she had every luxury imaginable, the one thing she wanted more than anything was a child to hold in her arms. She cried herself to sleep every night knowing she would never be a mother. The king did everything he could to make his wife happy, but nothing eased the queen's heartbreak.

One afternoon, to take her mind off the unfortunate matter, the queen took a walk beside a river. She stopped for a moment when she noticed something strange; it was a large fish flopping on the riverbank. Although her heart was broken, it still was kind, so the queen helped the poor fish back into the water. To her surprise, the fish peeked its head out of the water and began talking.

"Thank you ever so much for helping me back into the river," the fish said. "I jumped out of the water to escape a predator, but I would have suffocated on the bank if it hadn't been for you."

"Oh my! You can speak?" the queen asked.

"I can, because I'm a magic fish," he said. "I am so grateful to you for saving my life. I would like to say thank you by granting you a wish, if you'll allow it. Although I'm sure a queen as fair as you does not want for much."

At first the queen thought she might be ill or dreaming. She had never heard of a talking fish before—let alone one that could grant her magic wishes. But just in case she was not ill and was not dreaming, the sad queen told the fish her heart's greatest desire.

"I wish to have a child," the queen said. "But if that's too big of a wish for a fish to grant, I understand."

The fish winked both eyes at her, and the wish was granted.

"Nine months from now, you will be blessed with a child," it said and

swam away.

True to his word, nine months later the queen gave birth to a baby girl. It was such a miracle, the king hosted a giant celebration for everyone in the kingdom to welcome his child into the world.

There were parades and fireworks, singing and dancing, and costumes and games. The rulers from neighboring and distant lands came to join the festivities. Fairies visited the castle to bestow gifts upon the infant princess.

One fairy blessed the princess with the gift of beauty. Another fairy blessed her with the gift of health. The princess was also blessed with the gifts of talent, intelligence, and grace. Finally, it was the smallest fairy's turn to bless her. She flew up to the cradle and withdrew her wand.

"Sweet baby princess, the gift I would like to leave you with is the gift of—"

Unfortunately, before the smallest fairy had her chance to bless the princess, she was interrupted. An evil Enchantress stormed the castle, and the celebration came to a halt.

The Enchantress was a terrible and cruel woman. She was the only person in all the kingdom not to have received an invitation, and when she'd learned this, it had angered her beyond reason.

"You have no business being here!" the king yelled. "Leave at once!"

"Leave?" the Enchantress said. "I didn't come all this way for nothing. I *too* have a gift for the child."

Everyone in attendance gasped, for they knew that the Enchantress's gift for the princess would be very unpleasant.

"Please don't, I beg of you!" the queen said. "She's our only child!"

But before she could be convinced otherwise, the evil Enchantress had already begun. She didn't bestow a gift on the baby princess, but a nasty curse.

"The child shall indeed grow to be beautiful, wise, and graceful," the Enchantress said. "However, in sixteen years' time she shall prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and *die!*"



The Enchantress laughed wildly and disappeared in a thick cloud of smoke. The king and queen were devastated. They held their newborn daughter in their arms and wept. All seemed lost, until a tiny hand tapped the king on his shoulder.

“Your Majesty, I still haven’t given my gift to the princess,” the smallest fairy said.

“Can you reverse the curse?” the king asked desperately.

The little fairy shook her head. “The Enchantress is far too powerful for me to reverse her spell, but perhaps I can shape it into something a little less grim.”

The fairy waved her wand over the baby and did what she could to amend the Enchantress’s curse.

“In sixteen years’ time, the child will not die after pricking her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel, but shall fall into a deep sleep,” she said. “A sleep that can be interrupted only by a kiss of true love.”

Knowing the curse wouldn’t kill their daughter but only put her to sleep let the king and queen rest easier that night, but they still did everything in their power to prevent the prophecy from ever happening. The king ordered all the spinning wheels in the kingdom to be destroyed at once. They were rounded up by his soldiers, brought to the courtyard of the castle, and burned.

As the princess grew, her parents kept a close eye on her. She was forbidden to leave the castle and wasn’t even allowed in certain parts of it. However, she was never warned about the curse placed upon her, so the princess started resenting her parents for being so strict.

Living such a sheltered life caused the princess to become a curious and mischievous child. Every night, once everyone in the castle was asleep, the princess made it a hobby to sneak out of bed and explore the parts of the castle she was not allowed in.

On the eve of her sixteenth birthday, while her parents and the castle servants slept peacefully in their beds, the princess snuck out of her room and came upon a spiral staircase she had never seen before. It led to the tallest tower in the castle and was so high, it took the princess until morning to reach the very top.

Unfortunately for the princess, no one had thought to check the tower for a spinning wheel all those years ago. One was waiting inside, just as the Enchantress’s curse foretold.

“Oh my goodness, whatever could that be?” the princess said.

Since she had never seen a spinning wheel before and had no knowledge of the dangers it presented her, the princess began to play with it. Eventually, she figured out how it worked and became rather good at using it. But just as she became comfortable with the contraption, her hand slipped on the spindle and her finger was pricked by the needle.

The princess instantly fell into the deepest sleep she had ever experienced. The fairy’s amendment to the curse had worked! However, the curse was much more powerful than the fairy had expected. Not only did the princess fall asleep, but the entire kingdom entered into a deep slumber as well.



Castle servants fell asleep standing up as they did their morning chores. Gardeners dozed off while tending to the plants in the gardens. The shopkeepers, butchers, bakers, and farmers throughout the kingdom's villages went to sleep too. The king and queen even fell asleep on their thrones.

The fairies returned and looked after the kingdom and made the people comfortable while they slept. They searched all over the world for someone to break the curse, but none of the suitors they brought to the castle awoke the princess with a kiss.

To make matters worse, the Enchantress cursed the kingdom a second time, this time with vines and thornbush. The plants grew over the land until it was virtually hidden and went unnoticed to any travelers nearby. As time went on, the fairies lost all hope of breaking the curse.

The kingdom slept for over a hundred years. Its existence faded from history and became a fable. As more time passed, the fable was reduced to just a myth, and the myth was soon forgotten entirely. Well, *almost* entirely.

During the curse's one hundred and first year, an adventurous young prince was traveling through the woods when he came upon the long-lost kingdom.

“What a strange place,” he said.

Using his sword, the prince cut through the plants covering the kingdom and found a road winding through the sleeping villages. The number of people he saw sleeping peacefully was astonishing. He tapped their shoulders, poked their arms, and waved his fingers in front of their faces, but nothing woke them up.

“This must be the Sleeping Kingdom!” the prince said excitedly. “My grandfather told me about a place like this when I was a child, but I thought it was just a story.”

The prince followed the road up to the castle and eagerly began to explore. All the servants and soldiers sleeping inside seemed to be frozen in time.

Eventually, he came upon the spiral staircase leading to the tallest tower of the castle. He climbed it, hoping to get a better view of the mysterious kingdom. When he finally reached the top, he discovered the sleeping princess resting on a giant bed inside.

“What a beautiful girl,” he said to himself.

The prince’s grandfather had told him about the princess of the Sleeping Kingdom, but he was so smitten with her beauty, the prince forgot all about the story. For all he knew, she was just a pretty girl cursed to sleep for all eternity.

As if he were being controlled by something much greater than himself, the prince stood beside her bed and leaned down to kiss her lips.





The princess suddenly sat up in a daze.

“Where am I?” she asked. “Who are you?”

The sound of people waking throughout the castle echoed up to the tower. It made the prince remember the story and realize he was standing next to the famous princess. It was *his kiss* that had broken the spell. He had been led there by destiny.

“If the story is real, then I may be your true love,” the prince said.

The princess blushed, for she had never seen a man as handsome as the prince.

News of the awoken kingdom spread around the world, and the fairies traveled there to see it with their own eyes. Slowly but surely, the entire kingdom woke up from the sleeping curse. They cleared out the overgrown plants, and eventually (when everyone stopped yawning) the kingdom was restored to its former state.

As for the prince and the princess, the kiss turned out to be true love indeed, because they were married and lived happily ever after.

The End

THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA



ADAPTED FROM HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Once upon a time, there was a handsome prince who was in desperate need to marry a princess. His father, the king, was getting older and wanted his son to have an heir before he died. So, the prince traveled all over the world looking for a suitable bride.

There was only one problem: All the princesses in the kingdoms nearby were already married.

“Dear son, if a princess can’t be found, why not settle for a nice duchess or a countess?” the queen asked the prince.

“No, she must be a princess—a *real* princess,” the prince insisted. “Father wants to leave a true royal bloodline behind when he dies. It’s the only way to make him happy.”

Eager to please his father, the prince continued his exhaustive search. He traveled to kingdoms farther away than any prince of his kingdom had traveled before. Unfortunately, he always returned to the castle empty-handed.

“I don’t think I’ll ever find a real princess to wed,” the prince said. “Father will die thinking I’m a failure.”

“Don’t worry, my son,” the queen said. “We will find you a princess, I promise. You must be patient.”

As luck would have it, rumors started circulating through the kingdom that a princess from a faraway land was missing. The queen kept the castle on high alert to look out for such a person, hoping the missing princess would be the key to her husband’s and son’s happiness.

As time went on, the old king became very ill. Fearing his father was in his final days, the prince lost all hope that he would find a princess to marry in time.

“I have no choice but to marry a duchess,” the prince told his mother. “I’ll meet with the ladies of court tomorrow and select a bride.”

Naturally, the prince was devastated, but the queen wasn't ready to give up.

That night, the kingdom experienced the strongest rainstorm it had endured in decades. There was a soft knock on the castle door, and a servant answered it. The caller was a beautiful young maiden who was soaked to the bone and shivering in the cold.

"Please, may I be given shelter for the night?" the maiden asked. "I've been walking for days and have nowhere to hide from this nasty storm."

The servant took pity on the young woman. "Of course, my dear," he said. "Please come inside where it's dry."



"Thank you! I shall never forget this generosity," the maiden said. The servant took the maiden into the kitchen and sat her by the fire to

keep warm.

“Where are you from, ma’am?” he asked.

“I wish I knew,” she said. “I’m afraid I’ve lost my memory. I’ve been traveling from kingdom to kingdom hoping to find something familiar, but so far I’ve found nothing.”

The servant’s heart began to flutter. Could this maiden be the missing princess? He informed the queen of the visitor at once.

“Interesting,” the queen said. “She *might* be the missing princess, but with no memory, there’s no way to be certain.”

The queen thought for a moment and came up with a plan.

“I know what to do,” she said. “We’ll offer her a bed for the night with twelve mattresses stacked on top of one another and place a pea under the bottom mattress. If the maiden has trouble sleeping, we’ll know she’s indeed the missing princess. Only a true princess could feel a small pea under a dozen mattresses!”

The servant did just as the queen said. He made a bed with twelve mattresses and offered it to the maiden.

“What a strange bed,” the maiden said. “But I am so tired, I’ll take anything I can get.”

The servant fetched the maiden a ladder so she could climb to the top of the highest mattress. He blew out the candles in her chambers and left her alone to sleep.





The following morning, word of the queen's plan had spread through the castle. All the servants, the queen, and the prince waited anxiously outside the maiden's door to see how she had slept.

When the maiden opened the door, she had bags under her eyes and couldn't stop yawning.

"How did you sleep, my dear?" the queen asked.

"Not well, I'm afraid," the maiden said. "Thank you so much for your kindness, but I tossed and turned all night long."

"It's a miracle!" the prince said. "We've found the missing princess!"

The crowd in the hallway burst into cheers and applause. The maiden was confused by the sudden celebration.

"Excuse me?" the maiden asked. "What did you say I am?"

"I'm sorry you didn't have a restful night, my dear," the queen said. "We hid a pea under your bed. Only a real princess would have been able to feel it!"

The maiden was delighted to learn she was a princess, and the discovery allowed her to reconnect with her family in a far-off kingdom.

The prince and princess were married and had many children before the king passed away. Both had gotten exactly what they were looking for: The prince had finally found a wife, the princess had finally found a life, and together they found a happily-ever-after.

The End

RAPUNZEL



ADAPTED FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Once upon a time, there lived a baker and his wife. They lived above their bakery in a small village, next door to a mysterious vegetable garden. The garden had thick brick walls built on all four sides to protect its vegetables from pests.

In all their time living above the bakery, the baker and his wife never met the owner of the garden, nor did they see anyone going in or out of it. However, from the window of their bedroom, they could peer down into it and gawk at all the delicious crops growing between the walls.

The tomatoes were bright red and ripe, the cabbage was healthy and full, and the mushrooms were plump and lush. Sadly, no one ever seemed to enjoy the vegetables growing there. The crops always rotted back into the earth before being eaten.

The baker and his wife had much more important things to worry about than the neglected garden; they were expecting their first child.

While carrying the baby, the wife was experiencing the strongest cravings she had ever felt. Being a good husband, the baker happily fetched his wife whatever it was she wanted to eat.

One day, the wife's hungry gaze fell upon the lettuce in their neighbor's garden. They were some of the juiciest greens she had ever seen. Day and night she dreamed about making a salad or stew out of the leaves. The wife's craving for the lettuce increased every day, until she almost died from desire.

"Oh, darling, I would love nothing more than to have a bite of the delicious lettuce in our neighbor's garden," she said. "Would you mind climbing the wall and bringing me back some?"

"You want me to steal from our neighbor, my dear?" the baker asked.

"It'll only go to waste if we don't eat it," the wife said. "Besides, we've never seen so much as a mouse next door! No one will ever know."

The baker was hesitant at first, but he was willing to do anything to be a good father and husband. He figured some mild thievery wouldn't harm anyone.

As soon as the sun set that night, the baker climbed the wall into his neighbor's garden and brought back some lettuce for his wife. She cooked it, and the happy couple enjoyed it for dinner without a care in the world. Little did they know that stealing the lettuce would be the biggest mistake of their lives.

Unbeknownst to the baker and his wife, the garden next door belonged to a terrible witch, who noticed that the head of lettuce was missing as soon as it was taken. She barged into the baker's home and caught him and his wife eating it.

"*Thieves!*" the witch yelled. "How dare you steal from me! I'll curse you for this!"

The baker and his wife fell to their knees and begged the witch for forgiveness.

"We're so sorry!" the baker said. "We've never seen the crops in your garden harvested before!"

"We didn't know the lettuce would be missed!" the wife said.

"*Fools!*" the witch roared. "The vegetables in my garden are not meant for eating—they're meant for making potions! The lettuce you stole from me is called *rapunzel*. When it's prepared correctly, it will bring hair back to the bald or sight back to the blind!"

"Please take something of ours in exchange," the baker said.

"Yes, anything you'd like!" the wife said. "But please don't curse us!"

The witch was looking forward to putting a curse on their house, but their offer was very intriguing.

"Anything I'd like, you say?" she asked.

"Yes, anything!" the baker and his wife said together.

The witch looked around their tiny home. She didn't find anything that interested her until her eyes fell upon the wife's pregnant belly. A child was something the witch had never owned before, so it was an easy decision.

"I shall return when you give birth, and your *child* shall be mine!" the witch declared.

"No!" the baker pleaded. "*Anything but our child!*"

"*Do not argue with me!*" the witch warned. "You will hand the child

over to me, or I will curse you into oblivion!”

Two months later, the wife gave birth to a beautiful and healthy baby girl. She had been in her mother’s arms for only a few short moments when the witch returned. Although every fiber of his being urged him not to, the baker handed his newborn daughter over to her.

“I shall name her *Rapunzel*, so what you *stole* and what was *stolen* from you shall always be one and the same,” the witch said.



She disappeared with the child, and the baker and his wife never saw her again.

The witch took the child into the middle of the woods and locked her away in the room of a very tall tower where no one could reach her. There were no doors or stairs in the tower, just a single small window, so the witch had to climb the tower brick by brick every day when she visited.

As the witch got older, this became a much harder and harder task, but an alternative method presented itself when Rapunzel grew into a young woman.

Thanks to the magic of the lettuce her mother had consumed, Rapunzel’s hair grew faster, longer, and stronger than that of all the other maidens in the land put together. When the witch came for a visit, she would call up to the tower:

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!”

Rapunzel would lower her hair, and the witch would climb it as if it were rope.

Every day during the witch’s visit, Rapunzel would ask her the same question.

“Mother,” Rapunzel called the witch, for she had never known any other. “One day, when I am older and wiser, will you let me down from this tower so I may explore the world?”

“Absolutely not,” the witch replied. “The world is a dark and cruel place, my dear. You’re much better off staying here where it’s safe.”

“But I get so lonely in this tower all by myself,” Rapunzel said.

“My dear, *greed* is your problem, not *loneliness*,” the witch said. “There are maidens in this world with far less than you. They would be happy to have the protection of this tower. I will not hear any more of this nonsense. You should be grateful for the life I’ve given you.”

Despite what the witch said, this daily exchange didn’t make Rapunzel more grateful, only more curious. She didn’t believe the world was as bad as the witch made it seem. She spent all day gazing at the woods around her, dreaming about what it was like outside her tower.

Rapunzel prayed every day that she would find a way to leave the tower and have someone to leave it with. Soon, an answer to her prayer arrived... but she didn’t find it—it found her.

A handsome young man was wandering through the forest when he discovered Rapunzel’s tower in the woods. He was a curious person himself and circled the base of the tower to find a way inside.

The witch arrived for her daily visit with Rapunzel, and the young man hid from her behind a thornbush. He watched as she called up to the tower:

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!”

Rapunzel appeared in the window and dropped her hair for the witch to climb. The young man’s heart raced upon seeing her. He had never seen a girl as beautiful as she, and he wanted nothing more than to climb up the tower and meet her.





He waited outside the tower and listened to Rapunzel and the witch's conversation. It was the same as it was every day: Rapunzel's requests to leave the tower were dismissed by the witch, who told her how ungrateful she was for asking.

The young man was compelled to save poor Rapunzel from the tower and the witch. The next day he returned to the tower with a plan to meet her. He waited for the witch to arrive and hid from view as she called up to the tower:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!"

The hair was lowered and the witch climbed it to the window. The witch and the young woman had the same conversation as always, and when they had finished, the witch climbed down Rapunzel's hair and left the tower for her home in the village.

The young man waited until he was certain the witch was gone and then called up to the tower himself:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!"

The witch had never visited Rapunzel twice in one day. Fearing something was wrong, Rapunzel quickly lowered her hair for the caller. She never had any other guests besides the witch, so it gave her quite a scare to see the young man climb through the window.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Don't worry, I will not harm you," he said. "Forgive me, but I saw you in this tower yesterday, and I had to meet you."

"Where are you from?" Rapunzel asked.

"The village at the edge of the woods," he said.

"There's a *village* at the edge of the woods?" Rapunzel said, and her eyes grew wide at the idea. "Please, you must tell me all about it!"

The young man told Rapunzel everything there was to know about his village. He told her about all the roads, shops, markets, houses, and schools. He told her about his family and his friends and how they treated one another so differently than the witch treated her.

"How wonderful," Rapunzel said with a dreamy sigh.

"There's a lot more I'd like to tell you," the young man said. "May I come back and visit you again?"

"I would love that," Rapunzel said.

Every day from then on, once the witch had come and gone, the young

man would climb up Rapunzel's hair and visit her in the tower. Each day he would bring new things to show her about the world outside.

He showed her maps of his village, maps of the forest, maps of the kingdom, and maps of the known world. He brought her books and scrolls so she could read about all the places and people she never knew existed.

"If only I could leave this tower and see the world with my own eyes," Rapunzel said desperately.

"I'll help you leave the tower so we can travel the world together," the young man said.

"But what about my mother?" Rapunzel asked. "She'd be heartbroken if I left."

"A real mother doesn't keep her child locked away in a tower," he said. "A real mother would want you to leave and have experiences. She'd want you to live, learn, and *love*."

And with that said, the young man kissed Rapunzel. For the first time in her life, Rapunzel felt like a person and not a prisoner. She decided to leave the tower, even if it was the last thing she did.

"How will I get down without Mother noticing?" she said.

"Leave it to me," the young man said. "I'll come up with something so the witch will never be the wiser."

From that day forward, when the young man visited the tower he brought Rapunzel handfuls of twine the same color as her hair. She would twist the twine into rope and then braid the rope into her hair, so the witch never found it. Once the rope was as long as her hair, Rapunzel planned to use it to climb down from the tower and be free.

At the time, it seemed like the perfect plan. The longer the rope became, the more Rapunzel's and the young man's excitement grew. However, their excitement made them careless, and one afternoon the young man foolishly left one of his maps behind.

The witch found the map and screamed at Rapunzel.

"Tell me who's been visiting you!" she demanded.

"No," Rapunzel said with a quivering jaw.

"Tell me now, or I will curse them when I find out who they are!" the witch warned.

"Just a young man from the village at the edge of the woods," Rapunzel said. "Is it so wrong to have a friend?"

Rapunzel burst into tears. The witch had never seen her so sad before. It was the first time the witch felt sorry for the girl, and she knelt down to comfort her. However, all the witch's guilt quickly diminished when she stroked Rapunzel's head and found the rope braided into her hair.

"You horrible, ungrateful girl!" the witch yelled. *"After everything I've done for you, you were going to leave the tower and run off with that scoundrel! I'll make sure you never see each other again!"*

The witch left the tower and returned with an axe and a rope ladder. She chopped off all of Rapunzel's hair with the axe and then forced her down the ladder. The witch dragged the poor girl into the forest and abandoned her at a spot so deep in the woods, she would never find her way back.

The witch returned to the tower, discarded the ladder and the axe in the shrubbery below, and waited for the young man to arrive the next day. For all he knew, Rapunzel would be freed soon, so there was an extra bounce in his step. He stood at the base of the tower and called up:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!"

The witch let down Rapunzel's hair for the young man to climb. When he reached the very top of the tower, she pulled it out of his hands and knocked him off the window ledge.

The thornbush below broke his fall, but the thorns pierced his eyes and blinded him. The young man wandered into the wilderness, not knowing in which direction he was headed.

For months and months, the young man wandered the forest blindly. Every day he called for help until his voice grew hoarse, but no one ever heard him.

Miraculously, the young man and Rapunzel found each other in the woods, but she wasn't alone. Since they had been separated, Rapunzel had given birth to twins.

"You're a father," she told him. *"We can be a family now."*

The young man cried tears of both joy and pain. He was happy to have a family, but he knew he would never lay eyes on them. Rapunzel rested his head in her lap and cried with him. Her tears rolled down her face and fell into his eyes.

Once again, the magic of the rapunzel lettuce proved itself useful, for Rapunzel's tears gave the young man back his sight. The first thing he saw after regaining his vision was his beautiful children.

Now able to recognize the forest around them, the young man guided Rapunzel and their children back to the village from which he had come. Once he was reunited with his old family, he and Rapunzel were married and continued a family of their own.

As for the witch, ironically she had also been blinded, but by anger. She was so set on punishing Rapunzel and the young man for betraying her that she had forgotten to supply herself with a way down from the tower. The witch was trapped inside it for years and years, until she died.

Living a life free of the witch, surrounded by friends and family in homes that had many doors and windows, made it easy for Rapunzel and the young man to have a happily-ever-after.

The End

HENNY PENNY



ADAPTED FROM THE TRADITIONAL STORY

Once upon a time, there lived an odd chicken named Henny Penny. Most people avoided Henny Penny when they saw her coming because she was such a wacky and nervous bird. She had a wild imagination and often made a very big deal out of very small matters.

One morning she stepped out of her henhouse and a small acorn fell off a tree and hit Henny Penny on the head. She looked up to see what it was, and when she saw nothing above her but a tree, the chicken came to an absurd conclusion.

“Good heavens!” she said. “The sky is falling! I must tell the king!”



So away she went, waddling through the countryside to speak with the king. Along the way, she passed her friend, a rooster named Cocky Locky.

“Good morning, Henny Penny,” said Cocky Locky. “Where are you headed?”

“I’m going to tell the king the sky is falling!” Henny Penny said.

Now Henny Penny and Cocky Locky were a peculiar pair, because Cocky Locky was madly in love with Henny Penny and believed everything she told him.

“Sounds romantic,” Cocky Locky crowed. “May I come along?”

“Certainly, Cocky Locky,” Henny Penny clucked. “Two birds are better than one!”

So off the two birds went, waddling through the countryside to speak with the king. Along the way, they passed their friend, a mallard named Ducky Lucky.

“Good morning, Henny Penny and Cocky Locky,” said Ducky Lucky. “Where are you two going?”

“We’re going to tell the king the sky is falling,” Henny Penny said.

Now Ducky Lucky made their group a troubling trio, because Ducky Lucky was so lonely, she would have done anything to be around other birds.

“Sounds very social,” Ducky Lucky quacked. “May I come along?”

“Certainly, Ducky Lucky,” Henny Penny clucked. “Three birds are better than one!”

So off the three birds went, waddling through the countryside to speak with the king. Along the way, they passed their friend, a goose named Goosey Loosey.

“Good morning, Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, and Ducky Lucky,” said Goosey Loosey. “What are you three up to?”

“We’re going to tell the king the sky is falling,” Henny Penny said.

Now Goosey Loosey made their group a concerning quartet, because Goosey Loosey was so smitten with royalty, she would have done anything to meet the king.

“How respectable,” Goosey Loosey squawked. “May I come along?”

“Certainly, Goosey Loosey,” Henny Penny clucked. “Four birds are better than one!”

So off the four birds went, waddling through the countryside to speak with the king. Along the way, they passed their friend, a turkey called Turkey Lurkey.

“Good morning, Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, and Goosey Loosey,” said Turkey Lurkey. “Where are the four of you going?”

“We’re going to tell the king the sky is falling,” Henny Penny said.

Now Turkey Lurkey made their group a questionable quintet, because Turkey Lurkey would have done anything just to get away from his wife, Mrs. Turkey Lurkey.

“Sounds time-consuming,” Turkey Lurkey gobbled. “May I come along?”

“Certainly, Turkey Lurkey,” Henny Penny clucked. “Five birds are better than one!”

So off the five birds went, waddling through the countryside to speak with the king. Suddenly, the five birds came to a halt on the path, because a

large fox, known as Foxy Loxy, had jumped out from the bushes and stood in their way.

“Good morning, Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, Goosey Loosey, and Turkey Lurkey,” said Foxy Loxy. “Where are you five fine fowl off to?”

“We’re going to tell the king the sky is falling,” Henny Penny said.

“Is it *actually* falling?” Foxy Loxy asked.

Turkey Lurkey looked to Goosey Loosey, Goosey Loosey looked to Ducky Lucky, Ducky Lucky looked to Cocky Locky, and Cocky Locky looked to Henny Penny, because no one but Henny Penny had seen the sky falling. Perhaps they should have asked before they left.

“Of course it is,” Henny Penny clucked. “A piece of it fell on my head this morning!”

Cocky Locky, Goosey Loosey, Ducky Lucky, and Turkey Lurkey all sighed with relief. They were glad their journey wasn’t a waste.

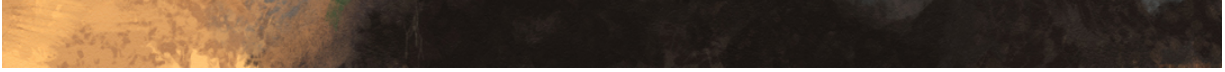
“Then allow me to escort you to the king,” Foxy Loxy said.

Now Foxy Loxy made their group a silly sextet, because a fox had never been seen traveling with five birds before.

“Certainly, Foxy Loxy,” Henny-Penny clucked. “A fox and five birds are better than one!”

And so Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Goosey Loosey, Ducky Lucky, and Turkey Lurkey followed Foxy Loxy through the countryside to speak to the king. However, Foxy Loxy led them off the path and toward a dark hole in the ground.





“This isn’t the way to the king,” Henny Penny clucked.

“It’s a shortcut,” Foxy Loxy growled.

All of sudden, Foxy Loxy grabbed Cocky Locky by the neck and Ducky Lucky by the bill and threw them into the hole. Then he grabbed Goosey Loosey by the wing and Turkey Lurkey by the wattle and threw them inside the hole too.

“Thanks for the snack, Henny Penny!” Foxy Loxy growled.

Henny Penny ran home and never saw Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, Goosey Loosey, or Turkey Lurkey again. The sky stayed perfectly intact and the chicken refused to involve her friends in her affairs from that day forward.

The End

THE LITTLE MERMAID



ADAPTED FROM HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Once upon a time, deep in the cold waters of the ocean, there lived a wonderful kingdom of merpeople. It was so far below the surface that it was completely untouched by mankind. The merpeople were a proud race and lived together in a large underwater palace that had coral walls and seaweed gardens.

The Mer kingdom was ruled by the powerful Mer king. He and his wife had six beautiful daughters, but the Mer queen tragically died giving birth to the youngest, so the Mer princesses were raised by their grandmother.

It should be no surprise that the mermaid princesses were just as fascinated with stories of our world as our children are of theirs. Their grandmother found their interest very amusing, but she raised them to believe they had everything they needed at home in the underwater palace.

“I know the *upper world* may seem appealing to you; it was to me too, when I was your age,” she said. “Trust me, little ones, it’s all just a bunch of dirt and air up there.”

The grandmother knew the princesses would never take her word for it, so on their fifteenth birthdays, she allowed them to swim to the surface for a glimpse of the upper world themselves.

The youngest princess, whom everyone called the Little Mermaid, for she was the smallest, was more curious about the upper world than any of her older sisters. It was agonizing having to wait for her fifteenth birthday, and torturous watching each of her sisters experience it before her.

“I saw a big bright light in the sky,” the oldest sister said when she returned from her visit to the surface. “It was brighter than anything I’ve ever seen!”

“That’s called *the sun*, my sweet,” the grandmother said. “It’s what provides light for the creatures living above and below water.”

“I felt a wave of air when I went to the surface!” the second-oldest Mer

princess said.

“That’s called *wind*, my dear,” the grandmother said. “You’ll find a lot of that up there.”

“I saw a strange fish that sang as it swam through the air! It had long scales and a pointed mouth like a squid,” the third-oldest princess said.

“That’s called *a bird*, my love,” her grandmother said. “And birds don’t *swim* through the air, they *fly*.”

“I saw a large sand dollar in the sky, and beyond it were thousands of twinkling lights,” the fourth-oldest princess said.

“What you saw is called *the moon* and *stars*,” the grandmother said.

“I saw a small whale made of wood floating along the surface!” the second-youngest mermaid said.

The grandmother’s amusement at her granddaughters’ adventures was suddenly replaced with fear and paranoia.

“You must listen to me very carefully,” she said sternly. “No one is allowed to go near the surface ever again! Is that understood? The wooden whale you spoke of is called a *ship*, and it transports *humans*. If they see you, you’ll be kidnapped and taken far away!”

The Little Mermaid was heartbroken. She had spent her whole life waiting for her turn to travel to the surface, and now it was forbidden. She didn’t care how dangerous her grandmother said it might be; she was certain she’d die of curiosity unless she saw it herself.

So, on her fifteenth birthday, the Little Mermaid traveled to the surface against her grandmother’s wishes.

The higher she swam, the brighter and warmer the water became. She was getting closer and closer to a rolling and rippling ceiling, which she assumed was the surface. Finally, the Little Mermaid poked her head out of the water and saw the upper world with her own eyes.

It was nothing like she expected. There was no sun, moon, stars, or birds in the sky, only thick clouds. Her grandmother was right about one thing: There was lots of wind, *powerful* wind! It blew the ocean water in many different directions.

In the distance, the Little Mermaid saw a large wooden structure with wide sails. It must have been a ship like her sister had seen. She swam closer to get a better look and saw dozens of humans running around the deck in a panic.

“The storm will sink us! Abandon ship!” one of the men yelled. *“Get the prince to safety!”*

A handsome young man was escorted to a boat on the side of the ship. The Little Mermaid had never seen someone so handsome in her whole life. He had tan skin, dark hair, and brown eyes—he looked nothing like the pale mermen she was used to.

Just as the prince stepped into the boat, a huge wave came from the north side of the ship and knocked him into the water. He tried to tread the water with all his might, but the waves kept knocking him back below the surface.

“Oh no!” the Little Mermaid said. “I must save him before he drowns!”

The Mer princess dived below the water and searched for the prince. By this point the ship was sinking, so it made it much harder to spot him through the debris. At last she found him. She wrapped her arms around his body and carried him to the surface.

By the time the Little Mermaid reached land with the prince, the storm was gone and the sun was out. Merpeople were forbidden to leave the water, so she rested his weak body on the sand and then fled before he awoke. She stayed just a little ways offshore to keep an eye on him as he recovered.



The prince was very tired and confused and had little memory of the storm. A fisherman and his wife came across him as they were taking a walk along the beach.

“Your Highness,” they said and bowed to him. “What has happened to you?”

“My ship was caught in a terrible storm,” the prince said. “The last thing I remember is being knocked overboard. I nearly drowned.”

“Who saved you?” the fisherman asked.

The prince stared out at the ocean in bewilderment. “I don’t know,” he said. “It must have been an angel.”

In that moment, the Little Mermaid fell in love with the prince. He was the only thing on her mind from that minute forward. It was as if her heart didn’t belong to her anymore but beat solely for him.

The thought of living without him was too devastating to bear. But as a mermaid, she knew she could never live with the prince on land, so she

would have to *become human*. And unfortunately for the Mer princess, there was only one creature she knew who could help her do that.

The Little Mermaid traveled to the deepest and darkest part of the ocean, to a cave where an infamous Sea Witch dwelled. She was feared throughout the ocean, but the Little Mermaid's love for the prince gave her the courage to face the witch.

The Sea Witch was a nasty creature—she was part merperson and part crustacean, and she had seaweed for hair.

“What have you come here for, child?” the Sea Witch snarled.

“I wish to become human so I may live on the land with the prince,” the Little Mermaid said.

“Changing your form forever is quite a commitment. Are you sure the prince is who you want to be with?”

“I've never been so certain of something in my life,” the Little Mermaid said.

A greedy smile appeared on the Sea Witch's face, exposing her rotting teeth. The Little Mermaid was her favorite kind of client.

“Such a strong spell will come at a high price,” she said.

“What will it cost me?” the Little Mermaid asked.

“A trade,” the Sea Witch said. “I'll give you legs in exchange for your tongue.”

“My tongue?” the Mer princess asked in shock. “But how will I speak to the prince and tell him I love him?”

“If it's true love, you won't need words,” the Sea Witch hissed. “But I must warn you that if the prince does not love you the same way you love him, you will turn into sea foam the second you return to the ocean... and cease to exist.”

The Little Mermaid never expected that her wish would come at such a price, but she couldn't imagine anything more painful than living without the prince. She agreed to the trade.



The Sea Witch cut the Little Mermaid's tongue out of her mouth with a sharp knife. She grabbed both ends of the mermaid's tail and ripped it into two pieces down the middle. Her fins magically turned to feet, her scales turned to skin, and two wonderful legs appeared on her body.

The Little Mermaid—no longer a mermaid—almost drowned in the Sea Witch's cave. She swam to the ocean surface just before it was too late and washed ashore on the beach in the exact spot she had left the prince.

Luckily, the prince himself returned to this beach every day hoping to find answers to the mystery of his rescue. He found the Little Mermaid and helped her to her feet. Since she had never walked before, she immediately fell back on the ground.

“What happened to you?” the prince asked.

The Little Mermaid tried to respond, but without a tongue, she could only mumble.

“What’s your name?” the prince asked.

Again, the Little Mermaid tried to tell him, but he didn’t understand.

“You don’t talk much, do you?” the prince said with a smile. “Why don’t I take you home to my castle and get you cleaned up?”

The Little Mermaid nodded her head, and tears came to her eyes. She couldn’t imagine anything more wonderful than that. She stayed with the prince for many months, and he took wonderful care of her.

The prince taught the Little Mermaid how to walk, how to run, and how to dance. They danced together every night before bed, each night dancing closer and closer, until they were so close she could rest her head on his chest and they swayed as one.

The Little Mermaid was convinced the prince loved her as much as she loved him. The transformation was worth every ounce of pain.

One day, a beautiful young woman arrived at the castle accompanied by the sound of trumpets and cheering crowds. From the look on the Little Mermaid’s face, the prince knew she didn’t recognize the young woman.

“She’s a princess from another kingdom and my *betrothed*,” he said. “We’re going to be married at the end of the week.”

The Little Mermaid collapsed on the ground when she heard this. She felt as if her heart had broken into a dozen pieces.

“I’m sorry, I thought you knew,” the prince said. “I thought everyone in the kingdom knew.”

The Little Mermaid ran from the castle in tears. Knowing the prince loved someone else gave her the strongest pain she had ever felt. She headed for the ocean and fell to her knees on the sand.

Just as she was about to touch the water with her toe and become sea foam, all five of her sisters surfaced in the water ahead.

“Dear sister, we’ve been looking everywhere for you!” the oldest said.

Something was different about the Mer princesses. When the Little Mermaid took a closer look, she saw that all of their beautiful hair had been chopped off.

“What happened to your hair?” she mumbled, and thankfully her sisters understood what she meant.

“We’ve traded it to the Sea Witch in hopes of turning you back into a mermaid,” the second oldest said. “She gave us this dagger and said if you want to return to the sea, you must stab the prince in the heart with it and let the blood fall on your feet.”

The second oldest placed a small dagger with a blade of sea glass and a handle of coral at the Little Mermaid’s feet.

The Little Mermaid returned to the castle on the night of the prince’s wedding. She snuck through the halls and entered the newlyweds’ chambers. She stood over the prince and raised the dagger above his heart.

Right as she was about to strike, the Little Mermaid froze. She looked down at the prince as he slept peacefully beside his new bride and realized she could never cause him harm. Although the prince did not love her, she still loved him very much.

The Little Mermaid returned to the beach and threw the dagger into the ocean. She stepped into the cold water and walked into the sea toward the full moon. As much as I’d like to say the Little Mermaid had a happily-ever-after, her body turned into sea foam just as the Sea Witch had warned her.





However, she did not cease to exist as she had been told. The Little Mermaid's spirit lived on, traveling across the ocean to help those in need and guiding young people away from making mistakes similar to her own.

The End

THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF



ADAPTED FROM ASBJØRNSEN & MOE

Once upon a time, there was a family of three billy goats who lived together in a field. The goats were brothers and were different in size and age. The youngest was the smallest and had only the slightest hint of horns growing on his head. The second-oldest goat was larger and had much bigger horns than his younger brother. The oldest brother was the largest goat in the family and had two strong horns growing on top of his head.

One day, the family of goats ran out of grass to eat in their field. It wasn't a problem, though, because there happened to be another grassy field just on the other side of the river. So the goats traveled down the river until they found a small stone bridge.

The youngest goat crossed the bridge first. Before he made it to the other side, a hideous troll jumped up from under the bridge and blocked his path.





“How dare you cross my bridge without paying the toll?” the troll roared.

The little goat trembled in the troll’s presence.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Troll,” he said. “But I’m only a goat and have no gold coins to spare.”

“Then you shall be my dinner!” the troll growled, and lunged toward the frightened goat.

“Wait!” the goat said. “I would make you nothing but a small snack. You should wait until my older brother crosses your bridge and eat him. He’ll make you a much more satisfying meal!”

The troll couldn’t believe the small goat would wish this upon his own brother, but he had a point. He let the little goat pass and waited for his brother to cross the bridge.

“How dare you cross my bridge without paying the toll?” the troll roared.

“I’m sorry, sir!” said the second-oldest goat. “But I am just a simple billy goat and have no money to give.”

“Then you shall be my dinner!” the troll growled.

“Wait!” the goat said. “I would only be a light meal for you, but if you wait for my older and larger brother to cross your bridge, you’ll have a wonderful feast!”

The goats were the most dysfunctional family the troll had ever encountered. But he was so hungry, he was glad they were turning on each other. He let the second-oldest goat pass and waited for the oldest goat to cross the bridge.

“How dare you cross my bridge without paying the toll?” the troll roared at the oldest goat.

The oldest goat laughed at him, for he was much larger than the troll. The troll tried to run, but the goat charged toward him horns-first and knocked the foolish troll off the bridge and into the river.



The three goats crossed safely into the next field, where there was plenty of grass for them to eat. The river sent the troll all the way to the other side of the kingdom, and he learned never to take on more than he could chew.

The End

THE SNOW QUEEN



ADAPTED FROM HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Once upon a time, there lived a little boy named Kay and a little girl named Gerda. The children were neighbors, and although they weren't related by blood, they loved each other as if they were brother and sister.

They lived in a great big city that was so crowded, there wasn't room for a garden or yard, so when the children wanted to play, they had to travel into the nearby forest. Kay's and Gerda's homes were especially close together. In fact, they were so close that they could reach through their windows and shake the other's hand.

They were only one short hop away from being rooftop to rooftop, so when the weather was warm, Kay and Gerda spent most of the day up there looking out across their busy city. They kept a little rooftop garden, where a small rose plant grew.

At night, Kay's grandmother would tell him stories while she tucked him into bed. Kay would leave his window open, and Gerda would do the same, so they could listen to the stories together.

"There once was a nasty little demon who enjoyed bringing misery into the world," Kay's grandmother said. "He created a magic mirror that gave everything a foul reflection. Beautiful women would look into the mirror and see ugly old hags. Handsome men would stare into the mirror and see disgusting old geezers. Even the most pleasant landscape you could think of would look like a filthy wasteland inside the mirror.

"The demon became very popular at his demon school for making such a repulsive creation. His demon peers helped him take the mirror all around the world in hopes of ruining the spirit of mankind.

"One day, the demons decided to take the mirror up to heaven to get a rise out of God and the angels. As the demons flew toward heaven with it, the evil living inside the mirror began laughing with excitement. It laughed so hard, it burst into thousands and thousands of pieces before they were

even close to heaven's gates.

“The shards of glass fell back toward the earth like rain. Most of them were smaller than a grain of sand, so the falling shards were hardly visible. The glass landed in people's eyes and hearts, cursing them to see and feel only the worst of the world.”



“Grandmother, why would you tell us a story like that?” Kay asked.

“So the next time you're feeling sad or can only focus on the bad in the world, you remember to check for a shard of the demon's magic mirror that may be lingering in your eyes or heart,” his grandmother said.

With the story complete, she kissed her grandson on the forehead and blew a kiss to Gerda. When she went to shut the window, she noticed that a layer of frost had appeared on the glass.

“Looks like winter is coming,” the grandmother said. “That, or the Snow

Queen has been visiting you.”

“Who’s the Snow Queen?” Gerda asked from her house.

“*Who’s the Snow Queen?*” the grandmother asked playfully. “You mean to tell me you don’t know who the Snow Queen is? What are they teaching you in those schools these days?”

Both the children shrugged, but the grandmother had caught their attention.

“Haven’t you ever wondered why they tell children to stay out of the cold or not to play in the snow for too long?” she asked.

“Why?” Kay and Gerda asked together.

“It’s because the Snow Queen will get you!” she said and made gestures like a terrifying monster. “She’s a weather witch and drives a massive sled through the clouds that’s pulled by polar bears! She sends blizzards of vicious snow bees to attack her victims! And when little children disobey their parents and stay out in the cold by themselves, she flies by and snatches them up!”

Hearing about the Snow Queen made Kay and Gerda hold their covers close to their eyes.

“That’s so scary!” Kay said.

“It’s supposed to be scary,” his grandmother said. “If it were a happy story, you wouldn’t learn anything. Now, that’s enough storytelling for one night. You both get some rest, and I’ll see you in the morning.”

The grandmother reached out to shut Gerda’s window and then shut Kay’s. The children went to sleep, but both had nightmares that the Snow Queen was watching them.

Since winter was on its way, Kay and Gerda spent less and less time on their rooftops. As soon as the first snow fell, the roof would become too slippery to stand on and their parents would make them stay inside or play in the woods. They always missed the view of the city during this time, but rather than pouting about it, the children spoke of all the winter activities they were looking forward to.





“I can’t wait to build a snowman in the street,” said Gerda.

“I can’t wait to go sledding in the woods,” Kay said.

They were excited by their winter plans. Kay looked up, hoping to see the first snowflake of the season fall from the sky. As fate would have it, just at that moment a small shard of glass from the demon’s magic mirror floated through the air and landed in the boy’s eye.

Although he didn’t understand why, Kay’s cheerful attitude suddenly went sour. He frowned, and there wasn’t a single thing in the entire world that made him happy.

“Kay, what’s the matter?” Gerda asked.

“Nothing,” Kay said. “I hate winter.”

“No you don’t, silly,” Gerda said. “You just said you couldn’t wait to go sledding.”

“I know what I said, but a person can change his mind!” he snapped. “You forget the winter also makes all the plants die and the wind freezing cold! Maybe it isn’t such a good thing after all!”

He swiftly left Gerda alone on the roof and went inside his house, slamming the door behind him. Gerda had never seen Kay so upset and didn’t know what to do. She never expected his bad mood to carry into the next day, but when she went next door to check on him, he stayed in his bedroom.

“Go away!” Kay yelled through the door. “I don’t want to see you!”

“Kay, please tell me what’s wrong,” Gerda said. “Did I say something to upset you?”

“You’re upsetting me right now by not leaving me alone!” Kay replied.

It was heartbreaking for the poor girl to be treated like this, and sadly, it only got worse. For weeks Kay stayed locked in his room and refused to come out and play with her. Eventually, his parents forced him to go outside and get some fresh air. So he grudgingly dragged his sleigh into the woods.

“Would you like a friend to come along?” Gerda asked. “I would love to go sledding with you.”

Kay ignored her and didn’t say a word. This sent the poor girl running back home in tears. She knew something was wrong with him but couldn’t figure out what it was.

The troubled boy went sledding by himself, but he didn’t enjoy a single second of it. He had become so miserable, he wondered if he would ever

enjoy anything again. There were other children playing nearby in the woods who laughed and cheered as they frolicked in the snow. Kay resented these children for being so joyful.

He walked farther into the woods to get away from them. Nightfall came much sooner than he expected, and Kay found himself lost in the cold. Exhausted, he sat on his sled by the side of the path, expecting someone to come along and help him home.

It was very late, and Kay dozed off while waiting to be found. When he opened his eyes, he was startled to see that he was moving. His sled was being pulled behind a massive white sleigh, and they were traveling over the snowy hills at lightning speed.

Amazingly, there was nothing holding the sleigh and the sled together. They simply traveled along as if connected by an invisible rope.

Kay looked down and saw that the sleigh was traveling not on a road but on top of a river, magically freezing the water below as it went. He screamed at the top of his lungs, and the sleigh came to a sudden stop. The driver stood and turned to face him.

She was the tallest woman he had ever seen. She had bright white skin and blue lips. She wore a snowflake crown and a large coat of white fur. He didn't need an introduction to know he was staring up at the Snow Queen.

"Poor dear, you must be freezing," she said. "Come sit with me and keep warm under my coat."

The Snow Queen lifted Kay out of the sled and set him down beside her.

Pulling the sleigh were two enormous polar bears, just as his grandmother's story had described. The Snow Queen whipped the polar bears, and the sleigh charged ahead. Kay's sled parted from the sleigh and sank into the river.

The Snow Queen wrapped her coat around his shoulders, but no warmth came from it. On the contrary, the coat made him feel even colder, and he shivered under it.

"Please let me go home," Kay said. "My family will be worried about me."

"But I *am* taking you home, child," she said. "To your *new* home with me."

The Snow Queen kissed Kay's cheek, and his heart was covered in ice. The spell made the cold much more bearable, and he sat perfectly content in

the freezing air.

“My family is going to miss me,” Kay said. “Especially Gerda.”

“Now, now, let’s not talk of the past,” the Snow Queen said. “You won’t need your memories where we’re going.”

The Snow Queen kissed his cheek again, and Kay lost all his memories. All thoughts about his parents, grandmother, and Gerda were erased from his mind.



The Snow Queen looked upward, and an ear-shattering whistle erupted from between her lips. Large snowy birds with feathers made from snowflakes descended from the sky and surrounded the sleigh. They lifted it high above the clouds, and the Snow Queen disappeared from the woods with Kay at her side.

When Kay didn’t return home that night, his family assumed the worst. They gathered a group and went into the woods looking for him. After searching all night, they found no trace of the young boy.

It was the coldest night of the winter so far, and many said it was unlikely he would have survived on his own. The following morning, after his sled was found in the river, the townspeople believed that the boy had died.

Despite what the adults in her city were saying, Gerda refused to believe Kay was dead. She still felt him in her heart; she knew he *must* be alive somewhere.

She decided to continue the search for her friend by herself and retrace what she thought would have been his steps through the woods. Her search soon led her to a freezing river.

“This must be the river where they found his sled,” Gerda said. “Perhaps he lost his sled while trying to cross. I’ll search the other bank.”

The little girl found a boat on the riverbank and tried to row it to the other side. Once she was in, she realized what a bad idea this was. The river’s current was much too strong for her tiny arms to row against, and it sent the boat down the stream at a frightful pace.

Gerda traveled farther and farther down the river, far beyond her city and the parts of the woods she knew. At the end of the river, the boat stopped at a truly bizarre place.

In the middle of the snowy forest, there was a sunny clearing filled with bright green grass and beautiful flowers. There were birds flying through the air, and all the trees still had their leaves. It was as if a patch of the woods had not surrendered to the winter and remained in a state of summer.

In the center of the clearing was a small cottage. Gerda carefully climbed out of the boat and knocked on the cottage door. The clearing was so pleasant, she was able to take off her coat and scarf. A little old lady wearing a colorful dress and a large hat answered the door.



“Hello, child,” the old lady said. “What can I help you with? Are you lost?”

“I was wondering if you’ve seen my friend,” Gerda said. “His name is Kay and he’s a little boy my age.”

“I haven’t seen a child in these parts for a very long time,” she said. “But why don’t you come inside and we’ll figure out where he may have run off to.”

Gerda happily accepted her invitation and went inside. She had a seat at a table, and the old lady made her a cup of tea. Gerda looked around the cottage and noticed that the windows were different from all the windows in the city. They were oddly shaped and made of colorful glass.

“Your home has strange windows,” Gerda said.

“You can never be too careful, with all that glass from the demon’s magic mirror floating around,” the old lady said. “Personally, I like looking at the world through my own point of view.”

“You mean like the story?” Gerda asked. “The magic mirror and the

demons existed?”

“Oh, my dear girl, it’s not a story,” she said. “They only say it’s a story so children like you aren’t frightened.”

Gerda thought back to the story and recalled the part about the shards raining down upon the earth.

“I wonder if that’s why Kay was so unhappy before he disappeared,” Gerda said. “A shard of glass must have fallen in his eye.”

“Then he’d better get it out as soon as possible,” the old lady said. “The winter feels twice as cold if there’s no happiness in your heart.”

“If only I knew what happened last night,” Gerda said. “He went into the woods to go sledding and never returned. He was so unhappy when he left—I’m worried sick about him!”

“It’s dangerous for a little boy to be wandering in the woods alone at night, especially in the winter,” the old lady said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if he was captured by the Snow Queen.”

“You know about the Snow Queen?” Gerda asked.

“Most certainly,” she said. “She’s my sister.”

Gerda couldn’t believe how foolish she had been. Obviously the sunny clearing in the woods had to have been created by magic. She had wandered right into the home of *another witch!*

“Are you a witch too?” Gerda asked fearfully.

“I am,” the old lady said. “But you have nothing to fear, darling girl. I am a witch of the summer and a sorceress of the sun. I will not harm you. However, just like every witch, I too get lonely from time to time, so I do hope you’ll stay with me a while longer.”

The summer witch kissed Gerda’s cheek, and the little girl lost her memory. She forgot all about her home in the city, her search for Kay, and how she had found the witch’s cottage. The witch kissed her again, and Gerda felt only warmth and happiness coming from her heart.

Gerda lived with the summer witch for quite some time. She helped the witch garden and look after all the forest animals who wandered into the clearing to escape the cold.

One day, as she was helping the witch water the flowers, Gerda uncovered a small rosebush. It was just like the rosebush in her and Kay’s rooftop garden. Suddenly, all of Gerda’s memories came rushing back as fast as the river that had brought her there. She remembered her family, how

Kay had gone missing, and how desperately she wanted to find him.

“Oh my goodness,” Gerda said. “Kay! I need to find him!”

The summer witch had underestimated how much the little girl loved the boy. Only true love could break a witch’s spell.

Gerda ran away from the clearing and back into the harsh winter. She continued her search for Kay all over the woods, but she never found a sign of him or his kidnapping by the Snow Queen.

The only thing the little girl found in the woods was a crow, because its black feathers stuck out against the snow. She knew it must have been injured because it flapped around the ground without gaining any height.

When she stepped closer to the bird, she saw a large thorn piercing its wing. She kneeled down and removed the thorn from the poor bird’s wing.

“Thank you, my lady,” the crow squawked.

Gerda was surprised that the crow could talk, but after everything she had seen in the forest, it wasn’t as much of a shock as it would have been before her journey.

“Please, Mr. Crow, I’m looking for my friend Kay,” Gerda said. “Have you seen a lost little boy in the woods?”

“Indeed,” the crow said. “I saw a lost little boy not too long ago dragging a sled through these parts.”

Gerda clapped her hands. “That must have been him,” she said. “Can you point me in the direction he went?”

“Afraid not,” the crow said. “I’m afraid your friend was taken by the Snow Queen.”

The little girl burst into tears. If the Snow Queen had taken Kay, she might never see him again.

“Don’t cry, little girl,” the crow said. “Not all is lost, for I know where the Snow Queen lives. I can take you there if you’re serious about finding your friend.”

Gerda nodded so fast, the tears flew off her face. She followed the crow for miles and miles through the woods, traveling far beyond any place she had heard of.

Finally, on top of a large frozen lake, Gerda discovered a tall palace made of ice. It looked like the coldest place on earth, and just the sight of it sent shivers down her spine. However, if Kay was inside, Gerda was determined to get him out.

“This is as far as I can take you,” the crow said. “Be careful, little one, and best of luck rescuing your friend.”

Gerda thanked the crow and then carefully crossed the frozen lake to the palace. The Snow Queen’s polar bears were sleeping by the entrance, and the little girl carefully tiptoed around them.

Once inside, Gerda checked all the rooms for Kay. Eventually, she found him in a large throne room with the Snow Queen herself. Kay was so cold, his lips were blue and his skin had turned white as snow. They were in the middle of a discussion, so Gerda quietly spied on them from the doorway.

“Please, Your Majesty, let me go home,” Kay said. “I don’t want to spend the rest of my life in this cold and dark place.”

“If you don’t wish to spend eternity with me, then you must spell *eternity* with these ice cubes,” the Snow Queen said.

She threw a handful of ice cubes on the floor and left the throne room. Kay quickly tried to arrange them into the word, but there were far too few to do so. It seemed he’d be with the Snow Queen forever, and even without a shard of glass in his eye, it would have been a miserable future.

While the Snow Queen was gone, Gerda ran to Kay and wrapped her arms around him. She was overjoyed to be reunited with her long-lost friend.

“Kay, I’ve missed you so much!” she said.

“Well, I haven’t missed you!” Kay snapped. “I don’t know why you won’t leave me alone!”

He struggled to free himself from her embrace, but she knew now that it was only the shard of glass making him act this way, so she held on to him even tighter. Tears of joy rolled down her face and over the boy’s chest, warming his heart and melting the ice the Snow Queen had placed around it.

Suddenly, color returned to Kay’s skin and memories resurfaced in his mind. He realized just how much he had missed Gerda, and tears of his own came to his eyes. They dribbled down his face, and the shard of glass went with them.

Kay had finally returned to his normal self. He took Gerda’s hands, and they danced for joy around the Snow Queen’s throne room. Their feet crushed the ice cubes on the floor into hundreds of pieces—enough to make several words now.



Much later, when the Snow Queen returned to check on the boy, she didn't find a single soul in the throne room. All she found was the word *eternity* spelled out on the floor.

Kay and Gerda traveled through the snowy woods back to the city. By the time they arrived home, winter had been replaced by spring. They stepped inside Kay's house and found his grandmother sitting in a chair by the fire.

She was thrilled to see they were alive and well. She leaped out of her seat and hugged the children so tightly, it knocked the air out of them.

"We've been worried sick!" Kay's grandmother said. "Where in heaven have you been?"

Gerda and Kay shared a smile.

"Grandmother, we have a story for you!"

The End

THE FROG PRINCE



ADAPTED FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Once upon a time, there lived two princesses in a stunning castle. Even though they shared the same parents, the same home, and led similar lives, the sisters couldn't have been more different.

The older sister was a mean and selfish girl. She called the castle servants horrible names and threw tantrums whenever she didn't get her way. The younger sister was sweet and kind. She had a big heart and was nice to everyone she met.

One day, the older sister took a stroll through the castle gardens by herself. She was playing with her favorite toy, a small sphere made of pure gold. The princess practiced tossing it into the air and catching it. She accidentally dropped it into a small pond, and it sank to the bottom.



“Oh no!” the older sister said. “I’ll never retrieve it!”

Right when she turned to head back to the castle, a frog leaped out of the pond clutching the golden ball in his mouth.

“Hello, princess,” he said. “I believe this belongs to you.”

“That was nice of you,” she said. “Is there anything I could give you in return? A soft lily pad to lie on or a nice jar of flies?”

“Actually, there is something you could give me, something I desire very much,” the frog said. “A *kiss* would be much appreciated.”

The older princess was disgusted that the frog would request something so disturbing. To teach him a lesson, she picked him up by the leg and threw him against a brick wall in the garden.

“How dare you ask such a thing from a princess,” she said and walked

away.

The younger princess had been watching the whole thing from a tower. She hurried outside to see if the frog was hurt.

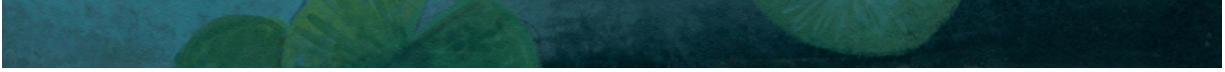
“You poor thing,” the younger princess said. “I’m terribly sorry she did that to you. Will you be all right?”

“Oh, yes, I’ll be perfectly fine,” the frog said.

“My sister can be cruel,” she said. “Perhaps I could make it up to you. I’d be delighted to give you a kiss.”

The younger princess placed the frog in the palm of her hand and raised him up to her face. She kissed the frog’s lips and set him back on the ground.





“There you are,” she said. “I hope you have a lovely—”

Suddenly, the frog began to twist and turn; he shimmied and he shook. His body stretched to ten times his size, and his green skin peeled away. The frog magically transformed into the handsomest young man the young princess had ever seen.

“*Good heavens!*” the young princess gasped. “*You’re a man?*”

“Indeed,” he said. “I was once the prince of a powerful kingdom, until an evil witch cursed me to live as a frog. She said the only way to break the spell was to receive a kiss from a princess.”

The young princess and the prince traveled across the land to his home, and the kingdom rejoiced at his return. The prince and the younger princess were married and eventually became the king and queen.

The older princess stayed at home and spent the rest of her life kissing every frog and toad she could find. However, none of them turned into a handsome prince. She never found a husband, but she did receive many warts.

The End

PUSS IN BOOTS



ADAPTED FROM CHARLES PERRAULT

Once upon a time, there was a miller who had three sons. Just before he died, the miller wrote a will so there would be no confusion over where he wished his possessions to go.

The oldest son received the mill, so he could continue his father's work. The middle son received all the horses and animals, so he could start a farm of his own. The youngest son, who was named John, inherited his father's cat.

At first, John felt snubbed by the inheritance. He loved his father very much and had always been good to him. John didn't understand why his father would leave his brothers so much and him so little.

What John didn't know yet was that the cat happened to be his father's most prized possession. He knew John and the cat would accomplish great things together.

The cat in question was named Puss. He was a brown tabby with green eyes and black stripes. He was a conniving little fellow and by far the smartest cat in the land.

"Looks like I'm stuck with you, kitty," John said with a sigh.

"I'm not thrilled about this either," Puss said. "After all the mice I caught and the snuggles I gave your father, I can't believe he left me with *you*."

"You can talk?" John said.

"I've always talked, you've just never listened," Puss said. "Now listen to this: Your father obviously put us together for a reason. We might as well make the most of it. I've put together a plan that will make us rich!"

The cat definitely had John's attention. "What's your plan?"

"Part of my plan is never speaking of my plan," the cat said. "But I will need your absolute trust and cooperation if it's going to work."

John didn't have anything better to do, and he figured any plan was

better than no plan at all.

“I’m here for whatever you need,” he said.

“Good,” Puss said. “First, I will need you to take me into town to purchase a new wardrobe. I must look my best for the first step of the plan.”

John and Puss went into town and shopped at the fanciest stores in the village. Puss purchased tall leather boots, a smart feathered hat, and a long silver sword. It cost John every penny he had.

“Are you positive you need such fancy things?” John said. “There are plenty of cheaper options.”

“Sometimes you’ve got to spend what you’re looking to earn,” Puss said. “Besides, I will need to look presentable for the king.”



“The *king*?” John said. “You didn’t tell me your plan involved the king!”

“That’s because you never asked,” the cat said. “Now we must gather some carrots and go into the woods.”

They stole carrots from a farmer’s garden and then traveled into the forest. They laid the carrots out on the ground and waited behind a tree.

“What are we doing?” John asked.

“Step two, *hunting*,” Puss replied.

Just then, a plump rabbit climbed out from its hole in the ground and began eating the carrots. Puss snuck up behind it and snapped its neck.

The following day, Puss traveled to the king's castle wearing his new clothes. A talking cat in high boots and a hat was such an odd sight, none of the king's men stopped him from going inside. Puss walked right into the throne room and laid the rabbit down at the king's feet.

"A gift for His Majesty, from my master," the cat said and bowed.

The king was just as surprised as anyone to see him.

"You can talk?" he said.

"Of course I can talk," Puss said. "I imagine His Majesty is so magnificent, most animals are speechless around him."

This answer pleased the king greatly, and he smiled down at the charming cat.

"Who did you say this was from?" the king asked.

"My master, the great Marquis of Carabas," Puss said. "Your Majesty is so well traveled, I'm positive you know him."

The king did not recall such a man, but he pretended to be familiar with him so he wasn't embarrassed in front of his court. Besides, he had met so many people throughout the kingdom, it was possible they were acquainted.

"Of course, the Marquis of Carabas," the king said. "Please thank your master kindly for me."

Puss bowed again and left the castle. With step three of his plan a success, he immediately went on to step four.

Every Sunday afternoon, the king enjoyed a carriage ride through the kingdom with his daughter, the princess. Puss was fully aware of this and planned to take advantage of the king's routine. He took John to a lake on the edge of the road he knew the king's carriage would travel down.

"Now take off all your clothes and get in the lake," Puss said.

"Do *what*?" John said. "How on earth is that going to help us get rich?"

"We don't have time to argue; the king is on his way!" Puss said. "Quickly, undress and get into the lake."

John was starting to think that following the cat's plan was a terrible idea. He stripped down until he was naked and then hopped into the freezing water of the lake. Puss stashed his clothes behind a large boulder so they were out of sight.

"Now throw yourself around in the water as if you're drowning," Puss said.

"But the water isn't even that deep—"

“Just do it!”

Against his better judgment, John threw himself about in the water as if he were in distress.





Soon, the king's carriage traveled down the road beside the lake. Puss ran out in front of it, waving his paws in the air, and got the driver to stop.

The king poked his head outside. "What's going on?" he asked.

"Thank heavens you're here, Your Majesty!" Puss said. "My master, the Marquis of Carabas, has been robbed! The assaulter stole his clothes, pushed him into the lake, and took off with his carriage! He'll drown if we don't rescue him."

The king was alarmed. "Guards, rescue the man in the lake immediately!" he ordered.

The king's guards threw John a rope and pulled him out of the water. By the time John was out of the lake, he was so cold that his body was blue and he was shivering madly. The guards wrapped him in their coats and let him sit in the carriage with the king and the princess where it was warm.

John couldn't believe he was in the presence of royalty. He was afraid Puss's plan would end horribly if he didn't know what he was doing.

"Are you all right, my boy?" the king said.

"Thanks to you, Your Majesty," John said. "I can't thank you enough for stopping to help me."

"What a horrible thing, to be robbed of one's clothes and pushed into a lake," the king said.

"Umm..." John said, because he was unaware that this was what the king had been told. "Yes, it's been a very rough day."

The princess was quite smitten with John. She blushed and giggled as she sat across from him.

"Father, may we give the Marquis of Carabas a ride back home?" she asked. "It would be tragic if he had to walk after what he's been through."

"Of course we may," the king said. "Where is your estate located?"

"My *what*?" John asked with large eyes.

"Poor Master, you have left your senses in the lake," Puss said quickly. "His estate is just down the road on the other side of the village. Allow me to run ahead and prepare it for the king's arrival."

Puss ran down the road as fast as he could. As he passed through the village, he warned all the villagers that the king's carriage would be passing through shortly.

"Good people, the king is approaching with the Marquis of Carabas," he warned. "They are very close friends! Make sure to give your respects to

the marquis, or the king will punish you!”

The people had never seen a puss in boots running through their town before, so they all came out to see him. Then, taking his warning very seriously, the villagers bowed and cheered as the king’s carriage passed them.

“God bless the Marquis of Carabas!” a lady cried.

“Long live the Marquis of Carabas!” a man shouted.

No one had ever cheered for John before in his life. He was starting to think he actually was the Marquis of Carabas.

“They sure like you around these parts,” the king said.

“Apparently so,” John said.

Meanwhile, Puss arrived at a large manor at the edge of the village, but it wasn’t the home of a marquis. The manor was the home of a horrible ogre that was feared throughout the kingdom.

Puss was intimidated by the ogre’s home. This was the final step in his plan. If it worked, he and John would be rich forever. If not, they might both be dead by nightfall.

The cat mustered all the bravery he could and burst through the front door of the manor.

“Prepare to die, hideous ogre!” Puss declared and withdrew his sword.

The ogre was sitting by a fire when Puss arrived. He stood up and towered over the cat, nearly twenty times his size. Even for an ogre, he was very large.

“How dare you disturb me!” the ogre shouted. “You will pay for this!”

Right in front of Puss’s eyes, the ogre magically transformed into a ferocious lion. He roared so loudly that Puss was almost knocked out of his boots.

“You are powerful enough to turn into a lion, but that does not impress me!” Puss laughed. “I bet you anything you are not powerful enough to condense your size.”

“I am powerful enough to be anything I wish,” the ogre said.

“Then prove it!” Puss said. “Turn into a mouse!”

The ogre never backed away from a challenge. Just to prove the cat wrong, the ogre transformed himself into a small field mouse.



“*Ha-ha!*” the ogre laughed. “As you see, I am much more powerful than you— *AHHH!*”

Puss pounced on the ogre and gobbled him up before he could transform into anything else. It was just in time too, because the king’s carriage arrived outside.

“Welcome home, Master,” Puss said. “I’ve just started a fire for you.”

The cat escorted John, the king, and the princess into the manor and served them tea.

“What a wonderful home!” the king said to John. “How long have you lived here?”

John gulped. “It was a recent transition,” he said.

“It used to belong to a terrible ogre, until my master slew him,” Puss said.

The king was so impressed with the Marquis of Carabas that he offered John his daughter’s hand in marriage. They were married and lived happily ever after in the manor. From then on, Puss also enjoyed a very privileged life with John and the princess, and the story of his wisdom and bravery lived on forever.

Much later, when John was an old man, his grandchildren asked him

about their family's history. A large smile came to John's wrinkled face and he said, "Well, it all started with a Puss in Boots."

The End

THUMBELINA



ADAPTED FROM HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Once upon a time, there was an old widow who lived all alone. Her husband had been dead for a long while, and her children were all grown with families of their own, so the widow had become very lonely in her golden years.

One night, during a terrible rainstorm, there was a knock at the widow's door. She answered it very hopeful it would be one of her children paying her a visit. Instead, she found an old hag shivering in the rain.

"Would you kindly provide an old woman with shelter from this storm?" the hag asked.

The widow had a big heart, so she didn't hesitate to let the old hag inside. She fixed her a meal and sat her by the fire to keep warm.

"Thank you so much," the hag said. "I've knocked on many doors tonight, and you're the only person to let me in."

"People aren't as kind as they used to be," the widow said. "We older women need to look out for each other."

The hag reached into her pocket and placed four seeds into the widow's hand.

"Please accept these barleycorn seeds as a token of my gratitude," she said.

Seeing that the old hag had so little, the widow tried giving them back.

"You don't need to repay me," she said. "I've enjoyed your company."

"No, I insist," the old hag said. "These aren't just any seeds—they're magic, and they bring good fortune. But if you want their magic to work, they must never be eaten or planted in a field, and instead must be placed in a flowerpot of their own."

The widow thought the hag was a foolish old woman, but to humor her guest, she planted the seeds in a small flowerpot and placed it by the window.

The old hag left the next morning, and the widow's loneliness began to creep up on her again. Only one of the four barleycorn seeds started to grow, and since it was the only other living thing in her home, the widow talked to it every day as if it were a person.

"Good morning, dear," the widow would say at the start of each day. "Oh my, look how much you've grown overnight! You must be thirsty. I'll get you some water."

The more frequently the widow spoke to the plant, the faster it grew, as if her voice was affecting it just as much as the sun. Soon a flower bud appeared at the top of the barleycorn stem.

"I've never seen a barleycorn flower before," the widow said. "I'm so looking forward to your very first bloom."

A week or so later, the flower bloomed. The widow was amazed, for not only had it bloomed into a beautiful flower, but inside the flower was a tiny young woman the size of a thumb.



"Hello," the young woman said.

"My word!" the widow gasped. "How did you get in there, child?"

"I grew with the flower, of course," she said.

"What's your name?" the widow asked.

"I don't have a name," the young woman said. "Would you give me one?"

The widow thought about it until the perfect name came to mind.

“How about *Thumbelina*?” she asked.

“I love it,” Thumbelina said.

“Are there other people like you?” the widow asked. “I’ve never seen someone your size before.”

“I don’t know,” Thumbelina said. “You might be the closest thing to a mother I have. May I call you Mother?”

“Oh, my dear, I would like that very much,” the widow said.

The widow was thrilled to have someone to look after, and she treated Thumbelina as if she were her own daughter. She made Thumbelina a bed out of a jewelry box and a dress from a handkerchief.

The small girl conveniently fit in the widow’s pocket, so she went along with the widow to all her daily errands. At night, they would sit together by the fireplace, and the widow would read her the stories she had read to her children when they were younger. Just as they had back then, the stories always put Thumbelina right to sleep.

Unfortunately, while the widow and Thumbelina were walking about through town, the small girl caught the attention of a large and ugly toad. The toad just so happened to be looking for someone like Thumbelina. One night, while the widow and Thumbelina were sleeping, the toad snuck into the house through a hole in the wall. She shut the jewelry box, trapping Thumbelina inside, and took off with it.

“*Help!*” Thumbelina cried. “Mother, help me!”

The girl’s pleas were muffled by the box. The toad dragged it outside and down the path to a muddy patch that sat beside a stream. The area was home to many toads, frogs, and other creatures. Each one was nastier than the one before.

“Son, oh, son!” the toad croaked. “Mother’s returned!”

Her son was just as large and ugly as his mother, and when they squatted side by side, it was hard to tell them apart.

“Mother, what are you carrying?” the toad asked.

“I’ve found you a *wife!*” his mother said. “I’ve been looking all over for a suitable match, and she’s the prettiest creature I’ve seen. You two will make beautiful children!”

The mother toad opened the jewelry box so her son could see Thumbelina for himself. His wide mouth became even wider at the sight of

her.

“Mama, she’s beautiful!” the toad said and went in for a kiss.

“Don’t touch me!” Thumbelina said and pushed his slimy face away from her. “Take me back to my mother at once!”

“Come now, little one,” the mother toad said. “You don’t belong with a human. You belong right here with creatures your own size!”

“I may be your size, but I don’t belong with you!” Thumbelina said. “I’m not an amphibian!”

“Then what are you?” the son asked.

Thumbelina didn’t answer, because she didn’t know. She climbed out of the jewelry box and tried running back home to her mother. Before she got far, the mother toad’s tongue wrapped around her waist and pulled her right back.

“No more talk of this nonsense,” the toad croaked. “It doesn’t matter what you are, because you will live in the mud with us and marry my son.”

The mother toad placed Thumbelina on top of a lily pad floating in the stream. The lily pad was too far away from the banks for Thumbelina to jump, and the stream moved too fast for her to swim, so she was stuck.





“Now I must prepare for the wedding!” the mother toad said. “What a wonderful celebration we will have!”

Thumbelina sat on the lily pad and cried. Spending the rest of her life as the wife of a slimy frog was the worst fate she could think of. Luckily for her, two fish in the stream had witnessed the entire thing and felt sorry for her.

“Don’t worry,” one of the fish whispered to her. “We’ll chew at the lily pad’s stem underwater, and you’ll be free!”

“Oh, please!” Thumbelina said.

The fish dived beneath the water and chewed on the lily pad’s stem until it detached. Thumbelina floated down the stream before the toads noticed she was gone.

She was happy to escape them, but she started to worry as the lily pad drifted faster and faster downstream. Up ahead, she saw that the stream flowed into a waterfall, and Thumbelina began to panic. It was only a small drop, but it was a terrifying distance for someone her size.

“Oh no!” she said. “Help me! Someone, please help me!”

A large beetle happened to be flying over the stream at that very moment. When he looked down and saw the small girl, he figured she was a strange insect. He flew down and lifted Thumbelina off the lily pad just as it reached the edge of the waterfall.

“Thank you so much for rescuing me!” Thumbelina said to the beetle.

“You’re very welcome,” the beetle said. “The stream can be a dangerous place for bugs like us. Let me take you home, where you’ll be safe until morning.”

The beetle flew Thumbelina to the branches of a tree where he and many other insects and critters lived. There were butterflies and dragonflies, ladybugs and stinkbugs, mantises and spiders. They all came out to see the strange creature the beetle had brought.

“Hello,” Thumbelina said to the bugs. “My name is Thumbelina.”

“What kind of insect is she?” said a butterfly.

“She doesn’t have any wings or antennas!” said a mantis.

“And only two eyes and two legs!” said a spider.

“Oh, I’m not an insect,” Thumbelina said.

“If you’re not a bug, then what are you?” asked the stinkbug.

Thumbelina didn’t answer, for she still didn’t know.

“Whatever she is, she’s the *ugliest* thing I’ve ever seen!” said the ladybug.

The bugs all began insulting Thumbelina for being different from them. She was called so many horrible things, it brought tears to her eyes.

“I’m sorry to bring you all the way up here for nothing, but our tree is for insects only,” the beetle said. “I’m afraid I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

The beetle took Thumbelina to the ground, and she was banished from the tree. She looked at the landscape around her and tried to find her way back home to the widow, but she didn’t recognize anything.

Thumbelina wandered through the grass, the flowers, and the trees but couldn’t find her mother’s home. She was lost for so long, the seasons started changing. All the leaves in the trees fell off their branches, and snow began to fall.

Thumbelina had to keep an eye on the sky at all times to make sure nothing fell on her. She wrapped a shriveled leaf around herself to stay warm.

Along the way, she found a sparrow with beautiful blue feathers lying on the ground. He shivered in the cold and moaned in pain.

“Poor bird, what’s wrong?” Thumbelina asked.

“I broke my wing and couldn’t fly south for the winter with my family,” the bird said and raised his wing to show her that the tip was bent. “Now I will surely freeze to death.”

“I’m without a family too,” Thumbelina said. “Don’t worry; I’ll stay with you until you’re feeling better.”

Thumbelina splinted the bird’s broken wing with a twig and wrapped it in a blade of grass. She covered the bird with leaves to keep him warm and rested his head on a mushroom. She cared for him until his wing healed and he was ready to fly again.

“You’re the kindest creature I’ve ever known,” the sparrow said. “What are you, anyway?”

The small girl didn’t answer. Even after all her travels, she still didn’t know.

“You’d better leave; otherwise you’ll never catch up with your family,” Thumbelina said.

The sparrow thanked her again and flew south to find his family.

Unfortunately, the worst of winter was still to come. The snow fell more heavily and the air became even colder. Conditions became so bad that Thumbelina grew worried she wouldn't survive to see spring. She knocked on the door of the next home she found to ask for shelter. It was the underground home of a sweet little mouse.

"Can I help you?" the mouse asked.

"Please, I'm freezing and I have nowhere to go," Thumbelina said. "Might I come inside and get warm?"

"You poor dear," the mouse said. "Of course you can come inside."

The mouse had a kind soul and took Thumbelina in. She let her stay in her home through the harshest parts of the winter and the two became fast friends. Thumbelina earned her keep by helping the mouse keep her home clean. At night before bed, the mouse enjoyed listening to Thumbelina recite all the stories the widow had told her.

The mouse could tell that Thumbelina missed the widow greatly. But since it seemed unlikely she would ever find the widow, the mouse thought of another solution for her friend's loneliness.

The following night, the mouse invited the mole who lived next door to dinner. He was gruff and older and spoke of nothing but how much he hated sunlight. Even though Thumbelina disagreed entirely, she was very polite and listened to the mole.



The mole became quite taken with Thumbelina and she caught him whispering into the mouse's ear whenever she wasn't looking. Later that

evening, once Thumbelina and the mouse were alone, she found out what they were up to.

“The mole would like to marry you,” the mouse said and smiled at the idea.

“That’s very nice, but I can’t marry a mole,” Thumbelina said.

“Why not?” the mouse said. “He’s just as lonely as you and lives in a large hole with plenty of rooms.”

“But I’m not a mole,” Thumbelina said.

“Then what exactly *are* you?” the mouse asked.

“I don’t know what I am, but it’s definitely not a creature that enjoys living in the dark ground,” she said.

The mouse crossed her arms and glared at her. Although she didn’t mean to, Thumbelina knew she had hurt the mouse’s feelings. She had outworn her welcome, and it was time to leave.

By the time Thumbelina left the mouse’s underground home, winter had ended and the first days of spring had arrived. All the birds had flown back from the south, and Thumbelina saw a familiar face circling above her.

“Thumbelina!” said the sparrow. “I’ve found it—I’ve found your home! I flew past it on my way back from the south!”

Thumbelina’s heart began to race with happiness.

“I miss my mother so much,” Thumbelina said. “Will you please take me there?”

“I would be happy to!” the sparrow said.

The bird landed beside her, and Thumbelina climbed on his back. He flew south for miles and miles. Thumbelina didn’t realize she had traveled so far away from home.

“There it is!” the sparrow said. “Welcome home, Thumbelina.”

The bird did not land at the widow’s house as she had expected. Instead, he descended into an enchanted garden filled with thousands of beautiful flowers.

To Thumbelina’s amazement, in the center of the garden was a tiny kingdom made of homes and buildings the size of birdhouses. It was populated by men, women, and children her exact size. The only difference between them was that everyone in the kingdom had wings.

“What is this place?” Thumbelina asked.

“You mean you’ve never been here before?” the sparrow asked. “As

soon as I saw it, I was certain it was where you're from."

It was the first time she had ever seen people like her. Learning she was not alone was a dazzling discovery. Just then, a little man came to greet Thumbelina and the sparrow. He was very handsome and wore a crown made of daisy petals.

"Hello," he said. "May I help you?"

"Yes, can you tell me where we are?" Thumbelina asked.

"You're in the Fairy Kingdom," he said.

"So I must be a *fairy*," Thumbelina said.

"You mean you didn't know?" the man asked.

Thumbelina told him how she had been born in the widow's house and lived there until she was kidnapped. The man was fascinated by her adventures trying to return home. He turned out to be a fairy prince, and he gave her a tour of the kingdom.

"But if I'm a fairy, then where are my wings?" she asked.

"Wings aren't given; they're earned," the prince said. "But after the journey you've been through, I think you deserve a pair."

The prince gave Thumbelina her very own pair of wings. They magically attached to her back, and the prince taught her how to fly. Over time, the two fell in love and the prince asked Thumbelina to marry him.



The two were married in the garden, and Thumbelina was crowned a fairy princess. Even though she was among her own people, the fairy kingdom didn't feel like home without her mother. So Thumbelina and the prince found the widow and invited her to live with the fairies. The widow moved to the gardens to be closer to her daughter, and neither she nor Thumbelina was ever lonesome again.

The End

THE GINGERBREAD MAN



ADAPTED FROM THE TRADITIONAL STORY

Once upon a time, there was a talented baker who lived in a small village. He and his wife had their own bakery, which was famous for having the best baked goods in town. Every morning, the villagers would line up outside to purchase his bread, muffins, and sweet rolls when they were fresh from the oven.

Even though he never received a complaint about his selection, the baker thought it was time to give his customers a little variety. He found a recipe to make gingerbread cookies and purchased the needed ingredients. He brought them back to his bakery and mixed them into dough.

The baker cut the dough into the shapes of little men and spread them over a cooking tray. Using frosting, he painted eyes, mouths, vests, buttons, pants, and little shoes on the cookies and put the tray into the oven. Soon the entire town was filled with the sweet scent of freshly baked gingerbread. Before he knew it, there was a line of hungry villagers outside the bakery's door.

What the baker didn't know at the time was that he had accidentally purchased flour that had a pinch of magic in it. So when the cookies were finished baking, he opened the oven—and one Gingerbread Man leaped off the tray and ran around the bakery.

“Run, run as fast as you can! You can't catch me. I'm the Gingerbread Man!” the cookie sang.

The baker made a mess in his bakery trying to seize the enchanted cookie, but it was too fast to catch. The Gingerbread Man ran out the door and through the village, laughing hysterically as he went.

“Run, run as fast as you can! You can't catch me. I'm the Gingerbread Man!” he sang to taunt the villagers.

The cookie looked delicious, so all the villagers chased after the Gingerbread Man, with the baker leading the charge. The Gingerbread Man

was faster than all of them.





He ran through the countryside and passed by several mills and farms. The farm animals smelled him coming a mile away and stared at the cookie with hungry eyes.

“Run, run as fast as you can! You can’t catch me. I’m the Gingerbread Man!” he sang to tease the animals.

The farm animals jumped over their fences and climbed out of their pens and ran after the Gingerbread Man too. They joined the villagers and the baker and created a massive stampede. The cookie still ran much faster than them, and he giggled with joy.

The Gingerbread Man ran by a castle and caught the attention of the king and all the king’s men.

“Run, run as fast as you can! You can’t catch me. I’m the Gingerbread Man!” he sang to torment the king.

The king was insulted by the Gingerbread Man’s taunting song and ordered his soldiers to capture the defiant cookie. The soldiers climbed aboard their horses and joined the stampede of animals and villagers. But alas, the Gingerbread Man was still much faster, and it didn’t seem likely he would ever be caught.

Soon, the Gingerbread Man’s journey came to a pause at the edge of a river flowing through the kingdom. Being made of flour, he knew he would disintegrate if he swam across.

“Oh no! What shall I do now?” he said.

“Don’t worry, little cookie,” said a fox who appeared beside him. “I know what it’s like to be hunted and chased. I’ll swim across the river, and you can ride on my back!”

The Gingerbread Man was delighted by the assistance. He climbed on top of the fox’s back just as all the king’s soldiers, the farm animals, the villagers, and the baker reached the river. They knew they would never catch him now.



The Gingerbread Man sang and danced when he saw all their long faces.

“Run, run as fast as you can! You can’t catch me. I’m the—”

Before he could finish his song, the fox gobbled up the Gingerbread Man.

“My compliments to the baker!” the fox said and licked his lips.

The king’s soldiers returned to the castle, the farm animals returned to the farm, the villagers returned to the village, the baker returned to the bakery, and they all returned to their normal lives.

The baker learned a very valuable business lesson: Always double-check your ingredients when trying new endeavors. If you add legs to something, it might just get up and run away.

The End

THE UGLY DUCKLING



ADAPTED FROM HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Once upon a time, there was a duck that became a mother by laying six perfect eggs. She was very protective of her eggs and only left them alone once every morning to get breakfast. However, one day she returned to the coop and found not six, but *seven* eggs in her nest.

“Oh, I must have miscounted,” the mother duck said and never thought about it again.

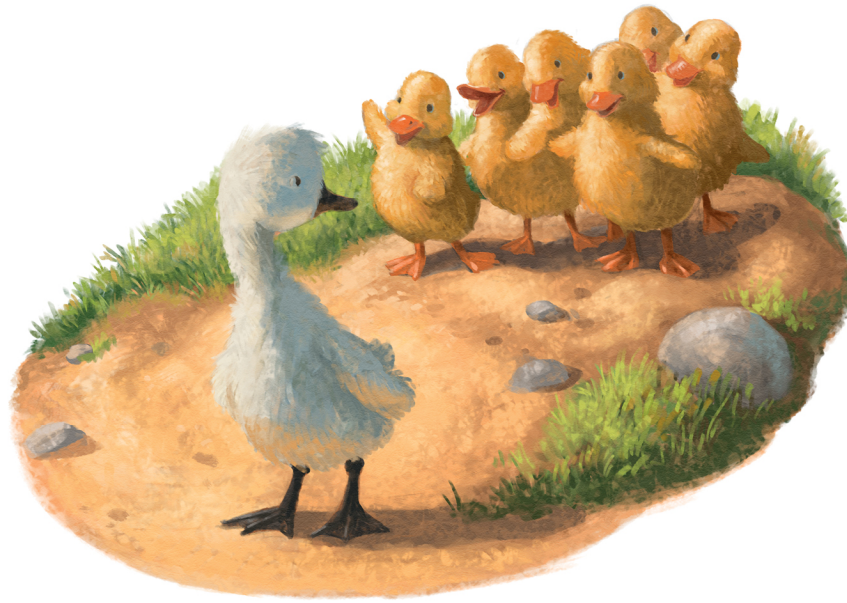
A month later, the eggs hatched, and six beautiful ducklings were born. However, the creature that hatched from the seventh egg could only be described as an *ugly duckling*, and that was putting it nicely.

While the six ducklings had bright yellow, fluffy feathers, the seventh’s feathers were gray and matted. The six ducklings had small orange beaks, but the seventh’s was large and black. At feeding time, the six ducklings quacked cutely up at their mother, but the seventh *squawked* and hurt his siblings’ ears.

From the minute they were born, the ducklings recognized that their brother was very different from them. And since *difference* has always frightened small-minded creatures, the Ugly Duckling was teased and tormented mercilessly by his brothers and sisters.

When they went for walks with their mother around the farm, they always made the Ugly Duckling walk a foot behind them. When they went for a swim, they’d trick him into a game of “who can hold their breath underwater the longest” and then abandon him when he dived under the surface. When they were caught in sudden storms, the ducklings would shut the door of their coop before the Ugly Duckling could get inside and make him stand in the rain.

The bullying didn’t just come from his siblings, though. None of the animals on the farm could resist taking a jab at the baby bird.



“Maybe his mother didn’t sit on his egg long enough,” said a cow.

“Or maybe she sat on it too long,” a pig said with laughter.

Finally, the Ugly Duckling couldn’t bear the mistreatment any longer, and he left the farm. He found a pond a little ways down the road and met a family of geese living there.

“Would you mind having another bird around?” the Ugly Duckling asked.

“As long as you can fend for yourself,” said the gander in charge. “No one is going to chew your food for you here.”

The Ugly Duckling had gotten enough practice fending for himself on the farm, so he didn’t think it would be a problem. The geese weren’t affectionate toward him, but they never harassed him either, so the Ugly Duckling was quite content living with them.

However, living outside the safety of the farm had dangers that the Ugly Duckling had never expected.

Hunters came to the lake and frightened the geese into the air. The geese tried to fly away, but they were shot down. Since his wings hadn’t grown in yet, the Ugly Duckling stayed on the ground and hid in the grass until the hunters left.

The Ugly Duckling was forced to venture out into the world and find a

new home. He passed a pleasant little cottage in the woods that belonged to an old woman. She was sitting in a rocking chair on her porch when he waddled by, and she invited him in.

“Poor little birdie, you must be lost,” she said. “Please come inside and let me take care of you.”

The old woman fed him lots of seeds and turned a wooden box into a nice bed for him. She was a kind person, but the Ugly Duckling wasn't her only pet. The old woman also had a fluffy house cat with a big appetite.

Every day, the cat would stare at the Ugly Duckling and lick the corners of its mouth. Its claws would go in and out as it watched him waddle around the house. It made the Ugly Duckling nervous, and he worried the cat would attack him if he stayed too long. Finally, he couldn't take the anxiety anymore and left the cottage to find a new place to live.

The Ugly Duckling came across a flock of swans resting in a stream. He thought they were the most majestic creatures he had ever seen and was envious of their white feathers and long, slender necks. He quickly waddled toward the swans to ask if he could live with them, but they stretched their long wings and flew away before he got a chance.

The swans flew south because, like all the birds except the Ugly Duckling, they knew winter was around the corner. Soon the land was covered in snow and blasted by freezing winds. All the ponds and the lakes froze over, and the Ugly Duckling had nowhere to go.

A farmer found him shivering in the cold and took pity on the poor bird. He wrapped him up in a cloth and took him home.

“Poor little fellow, let's take you someplace warm,” he said.

The farmer's house was lovely and a warm escape from the cold. He and his wife were kind to the Ugly Duckling, and they had no other pets he needed to worry about. However, they had two very rambunctious children, who became his biggest concern.

The children treated the Ugly Duckling like a toy. They threw him around, pulled his feathers, and dressed him up in clothes meant for a doll. The abuse became so bad that the Ugly Duckling thought he was better off living in the cold, so he left the farmer's house.

The Ugly Duckling traveled to a frozen lake and spent the rest of the winter alone in a small cave beside it. It was a disheartening time for him. After all his travels, he still didn't have a home or a family. He had turned

into “a lone duck,” and in the bird world, it didn’t get any worse.

Eventually, spring came and melted the ice covering the lake. The Ugly Duckling had grown so much inside the cave that he could barely crawl out of it. He floated around the lake and stretched his wings, when suddenly he heard a voice call to him.

“Oh, hello there!” it said. “You must be looking for us!”

The Ugly Duckling turned toward the voice and saw that the flock of swans had returned for spring.

“Come join us over here,” a swan said.

“You want *me* to join *you*?” the Ugly Duckling asked.

“Of course we do,” the swan said. “After all, you’re one of us.”

The Ugly Duckling looked into the water and was shocked to see the reflection staring back at him. He had feathers as white as snow and a long, curvy neck—*he had grown into a beautiful swan!*





“I’ve been so ugly my whole life,” he said. “How is this possible?”

“We all have an awkward phase when we’re young,” the swan said. “But without it, we’d never grow our wings.”

The swan formerly known as the Ugly Duckling lived with the other swans for the rest of his life. At the end of every year, when his family flew south for the winter, he made a point to fly over his old farm so all the animals could see him. The Ugly Duckling they had mistreated was soaring at heights they could never reach.

The End

PINOCCHIO



ADAPTED FROM CARLO COLLODI

Once upon a time, there lived a kind man named Geppetto. He was a very talented woodcarver and spent his whole life making wonderful wooden creations. Unfortunately, he never had time to start a family. With no wife or children to call his own, the poor man became very lonely and sad. To fill the emptiness in his heart, he built a marionette the size of a child and treated it like a son.

“I’ll call him *Pinocchio*,” Geppetto said.

The wooden boy gave Geppetto more joy than anything else in the world. In the morning he’d sit the marionette at the table and talk to him as he ate his breakfast. In the afternoon, he’d take Pinocchio on his errands throughout town. At night, Geppetto tucked him into a bed of his own and read him stories. He put so much love and care into the marionette that one day, *it magically came to life!*

Geppetto watched in amazement as the wooden boy stood up by himself and smiled at him. He thought he was imagining it until the marionette spoke.

“Hello,” Pinocchio said. “Who are you?”

“I’m your father,” Geppetto said.

“And who am I?” he asked.

“You’re my son, Pinocchio!” Geppetto said. “And a miracle you are!”

Like all parents, now that his child walked and talked, Geppetto found raising him much more difficult. One afternoon Pinocchio spent too long playing outside and came home covered in termites. Geppetto carefully removed the bugs from his son’s body one by one and sanded over the bite marks. On another day, Pinocchio took a nap on the stove and awoke to find that his feet had been burned off. Geppetto carved him a new pair of shoes and warned him about the dangers of fire.

Having a hollow head, Pinocchio had a lot to learn. He asked his father

hundreds of questions every day and loved learning about the world they lived in. There was only one question Geppetto didn't have an answer to.

"Papa, am I a real boy?" Pinocchio asked.

"Well, not exactly," Geppetto said.

"Will I ever be a real boy?" the marionette asked.

Geppetto was stumped because Pinocchio was the only living marionette. He had never heard of something nonhuman becoming human before; the chances looked slim. However, Geppetto didn't want to hurt his feelings.

"Maybe one day," he said. "Perhaps if you go to school and get a good education, you'll become a real boy. Here, take this money and buy schoolbooks. You can start school tomorrow."

Pinocchio happily collected five coins from his father and went into town to purchase his schoolbooks. However, along the way the money in his hands caught the attention of a wicked cat and fox. The animals were crooks and thought Pinocchio would be an easy target.

"Good afternoon, my boy," said the fox. "May I ask where you're going with those coins?"



"I'm off to the store to buy schoolbooks," Pinocchio said. "I'm going to

school to get an education so I can become a real boy!”

“Schoolbooks?” the cat hissed. “Any real boy knows school isn’t a good investment these days. If I were you, I’d take it to the field of Miracles! If you plant your coins in the ground, a money tree will grow with hundreds of coins.”

“Oh my,” Pinocchio said. “Geppetto would be so proud of me if I returned home with hundreds of coins! How do I get to the field of Miracles?”

“Just take this path into the woods and stop at the field,” the fox said. “You’ll recognize it from all the money trees growing there.”

The wooden boy giddily changed directions and headed to the field of Miracles the cat and fox spoke of. Little did he know, the animals were following in the trees beside the path. Pinocchio walked and walked but never found a field. Eventually, the sun set and the forest became so dark he could barely see the path in front of him.

“Surely I would have found the field of Miracles by now,” he said.

Suddenly, the cat and fox jumped out from the trees and stole the coins from Pinocchio. Pinocchio had walked right into a trap.

“Now let’s hang him from a tree,” the fox said. “By the time someone finds him, he’ll be dead and we’ll be far away.”

They tied a rope around Pinocchio’s waist and hoisted him high into the tree branches. The cat and fox counted the coins and howled with laughter at their successful scheme. They left the wooden boy all alone in the woods.

“Help!” Pinocchio shouted. “Someone please help me!”

Yelling for help seemed to be of no use. He was so far into the woods, he didn’t think anyone would hear him. Luckily for Pinocchio, a beautiful fairy living nearby in the woods heard his cries and came to his aid. A dozen bluebirds carried her above the trees and set her down gently at the base of the tree Pinocchio hung from.

“Poor little marionette,” the fairy said. “How did you get up there?”

Pinocchio was too embarrassed to tell the fairy what had happened, so he made up a story instead.

“I climbed the tree to save a baby bird from falling out of its nest,” he said. “But I slipped and got tangled up in this rope.”

To his surprise, Pinocchio’s nose grew twice in size. It was an odd thing to watch but an even odder thing to experience.

“Are you telling me a lie?” the fairy asked and put her hands on her hips.

“No, that’s the honest truth!” Pinocchio said.

Once again, his nose grew—this time a whole foot longer than it was before.

“What’s happening to me?” Pinocchio asked.

“You’ve been blessed with an honest heart, which means your nose grows every time you lie,” the fairy said. “I’ll give you one last chance to tell me the truth. Otherwise I’ll return home and leave you here.”

Pinocchio told the fairy how Geppetto had given him five gold coins to buy schoolbooks, but he had been tricked into the woods by a cat and fox who told him about a field of Miracles. Then he told her how the animals had hung him up in the tree and left him there.

“I’ll help you down, but only if you promise to tell your father the truth when you get home,” the fairy said. “And you must go to school tomorrow like he wished.”

“I promise!” Pinocchio said.

The fairy knew he was telling the truth because his nose stayed the same size. She waved her wand, and a flock of woodpeckers flew in from all corners of the forest. They chiseled Pinocchio’s nose back to normal and pecked at the rope until it broke and Pinocchio fell to the ground.

“Thank you so much,” Pinocchio said to the fairy.

The wooden boy ran down the path toward town and didn’t stop until he was home. Once he was back in Geppetto’s workshop, he burst into tears and told his father everything that had happened to him.

“There, there, Pinocchio,” Geppetto said. “Part of being a real boy is making mistakes. I’ll give you five more coins, and you can buy schoolbooks tomorrow.”

The next day the woodcarver placed five gold coins in the wooden boy’s hands and sent him on his way. Along the way, a large coach pulled up on the side of the road and blocked him from going any farther. The coach was filled with dozens of rowdy little boys Pinocchio’s size.

“Care to join?” the coachman asked.

“Where are you going?” Pinocchio asked.

“Catchfools Island,” the coachman replied. “Every little boy’s paradise! I’m only charging five coins a head for transportation.”

“I’m sorry, mister,” Pinocchio said. “But I’m on my way to the store to buy schoolbooks so I can become a real boy.”

“But you can’t become a real boy unless you know how to have fun like a real boy,” the coachman said.

Pinocchio didn’t need to hear any more. He handed the coachman his gold coins and joined the other boys in the back. They were a loud and rambunctious group. They wrestled, pushed each other around, and pulled one another’s hair as the coach traveled away from town.

It took all day for the coach to reach the shore, and then it boarded a large boat. The boat sailed across the ocean for two days and arrived at Catchfools Island. The island was nothing like Pinocchio had expected. Little boys ran amok everywhere he looked, smashing things with clubs and hammers. They kicked puppies, tied cats’ tails together, and caught butterflies only to rip their wings off.

“If this is *real fun*, I don’t want any part of it,” Pinocchio said.

“Hey, look at him!” said a boy who pointed at Pinocchio. “He’s made of wood! Let’s tear him apart and make a campfire out of him!”

The unruly boys chased Pinocchio all over the island. Thanks to his wooden legs, he was able to outrun them and hide from them on the beach.

“I should have obeyed my father and the fairy,” Pinocchio said to himself. “If I had just gone to the store instead of boarding the coach I wouldn’t be in this mess. Now I’ll never be a real boy!”

Thankfully, the fairy he had met in the woods had worried that the marionette would get into more trouble, so she had kept an eye on him. A dozen seagulls carried her across the ocean and set her down next to Pinocchio on the beach.

“In a jam again, I see,” she said.

“Oh, fairy, please help me off this island,” Pinocchio said.

“How did you end up in a place like this?” she asked.

Once again, Pinocchio was too ashamed to tell the fairy the truth, so he made up another story.

“I was kidnapped by thieves and brought here!” he said.

Just as before, Pinocchio’s nose grew twice in size.

“Now, now, lying doesn’t get you anywhere,” the fairy said and shook her finger at him. “I’m happy to help you one last time, but only if you tell me the truth.”

Pinocchio told the fairy how he had crossed paths with the coach taking the boys to Catchfools Island on his way to the store. He told her he had thought if he had the *real fun* the coachman described, it would bring him closer to becoming a real boy.

“Being a real boy isn’t always about having fun; sometimes it’s about making good choices,” the fairy said. “If you promise to go to school like your father wants, I’ll take you home.”

“I promise!” Pinocchio said.

The fairy knew he was telling the truth because his nose didn’t grow anymore. She waved her wand, and a swarm of beetles crawled up from the sand and chewed his nose down to its normal size. They took him by the arms and flew him across the ocean and dropped him off at the door of Geppetto’s workshop.

Pinocchio ran through the door, but Geppetto was nowhere to be found. He looked through the town but still couldn’t find his father anywhere. Finally, he went to the house of the old woman who lived next door and asked her if she had seen Geppetto.

“Oh, you poor dear, you haven’t heard the news?” the woman asked.

The wooden boy shook his hollow head.

“Geppetto heard you went to Catchfools Island, so he borrowed a boat and went looking for you at sea,” the neighbor said. “But his boat was swallowed whole by a terrible whale.”

“Oh no!” Pinocchio said. “I must find and rescue him, just like the fairy rescued me!”

He didn’t want to break the promise he had made to the fairy, but he would have done anything to save his father. Pinocchio returned to the shore and dived into the water. He floated well above the waves, which helped him swim. Pinocchio swam and swam, but he didn’t find the whale anywhere—*it found him*.

The whale swallowed Pinocchio in one bite, and he slid down its throat and into its stomach. It was very dark and cold inside the whale. Pinocchio couldn’t see anything, and he doubted his father had survived. Then, just as he lost all hope, something tapped his shoulder and he heard a familiar voice.

“Pinocchio, what are you doing here?” said Geppetto.

“Papa, you’re alive!” Pinocchio said and threw his arms around him.

“It’s good to see you, my son, but you shouldn’t have come here!” Geppetto said. “Now we’ll both become a meal for the whale.”

The whale suddenly started to cough. Pinocchio had filled his throat with splinters and it irritated the whale greatly. In one strong heave, the whale coughed up the woodcarver and the marionette and spit them back into the ocean. Had Pinocchio not been there, Geppetto would have drowned, but the woodcarver used his son as a raft and swam back to shore.





By the time they got back to the workshop, they were both exhausted and soaking wet, and they smelled terribly of fish. To their surprise, the fairy was waiting for them inside.

“I’m so sorry I broke your promise!” Pinocchio told the fairy. “I wanted to go to school and become a real boy, but being a real boy was pointless if I didn’t have a real father to come home to.”

Geppetto and the fairy were very touched by his son’s words.

“That’s exactly why I’ve come, Pinocchio,” the fairy said. “You may have a hollow head, but you have a heart of gold. Like I said, part of being a real boy is making good choices, and choosing to save your father was a very brave one. It would be my honor to turn you into a real boy.”

The fairy waved her wand, and Pinocchio’s wooden body turned into flesh. *He was a real boy!*



Pinocchio jumped up and down with joy. Geppetto swung his son through the air and held him in his arms. Both the marionette's and the woodcarver's dreams had come true, and they lived as happily ever after as two real boys could.

The End

MOTHER GOOSE'S NURSERY
RHYMES



LITTLE BO PEEP

Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep,
And doesn't know where to find them;
Leave them alone, and they'll come home,
Wagging their tails behind them.





LITTLE MISS MUFFET

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey;
Along came a spider
Who sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

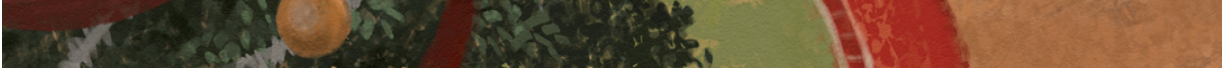




LITTLE JACK HORNER

Little Jack Horner
Sat in the corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
And said, "What a good boy am I!"





THE OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A SHOE

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children, she didn't know what to do;
She gave them some broth without any bread,
Then whipped them all soundly and put them to bed.





HUMPTY DUMPTY

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.





RUB-A-DUB-DUB

Hey! rub-a-dub, ho! rub-a-dub, three men in a tub,
And who do you think were there?
The butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker,
And all of them gone to the fair.





THREE BLIND MICE

Three blind mice. Three blind mice.
See how they run. See how they run.
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife,
Did you ever see such a sight in your life
As three blind mice?





BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP

Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, sir, yes, sir,
Three bags full;
One for the master,
And one for the dame,
And one for the little boy
Who lives down the lane.





GEORGIE PORGIE

Georgie Porgie, puddin' and pie,
Kissed the girls and made them cry;
When the boys came out to play,
Georgie Porgie ran away.





HEY DIDDLE DIDDLE

Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.





PAT-A-CAKE

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake,
Baker's man!
Bake me a cake,
As fast as you can.

Roll it, and pat it,
And mark it with a *B*,
Put it in the oven
For baby and me.





JACK AND JILL

Jack and Jill went up the hill,
To fetch a pail of water;
Jack fell down, and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

When up Jack got and off did trot,
As fast as he could caper,
To old Dame Dob, who patched his nob
With vinegar and brown paper.





JACK BE NIMBLE

Jack be nimble, Jack be quick,
Jack jump over the candle-stick.





MOTHER GOOSE'S FAIRY-TALE
SURVIVAL GUIDE



BY MOTHER GOOSE

Have you noticed anything funny about your *Treasury*? Have the pages started glowing at random times and become brighter every day? Is this glowing followed by a strange but inviting humming noise? Did you lean too far into the book and wind up falling into a different dimension? Then you're in luck, because this survival guide is for you!

When you purchased this book from the store, or checked it out from the library, or “borrowed” it from a friend, you probably weren't expecting it to transport you into a world where fairy tales are real. Life is full of surprises; sometimes it rains when it's supposed to be sunny, and sometimes children's books turn out to be portals into different dimensions. Relax; these things happen.

So if you find yourself in a fairy tale, there's no reason to panic. The fairy-tale world can be a very dangerous place, but if you follow my instructions carefully, you'll be back in your own world before you can say “and they all lived happily ever after.” (Trust me, if there's one thing I'm good at, it's *surviving*. You're in good hands.)

RULE #1: DON'T PANIC. LET IT OUT.

Everyone's first trip is always a little jarring. Don't let your shock, terror, and confusion build up inside of you; that will only lead to panicking. Treat yourself to a good scream, a nice cry, or a release of bodily fluids. However, make it short. You don't want to attract any unwanted attention from the shifty creatures in the forest.

RULE #2: DON'T BLAME YOURSELF.

Remember, none of this is your fault. It doesn't matter how careful or responsible you are—CDT happens to the best of us. (Oh, that stands for

Cross-Dimensional Travel—I coined it myself.) Yes, you could have called the police when the book *first* started glowing. No, you didn't *have* to lean so far into the book that you lost your balance and fell inside it. But hey, no one ever got anywhere by playing it safe; just ask the Wright brothers.

RULE #3: ASSESS WHAT KIND OF FAIRY TALE YOU'RE IN.

Take a look around: What do you see? Are you in a colorful garden with pixies and unicorns? Do you see handsome knights riding off into the sunset with beautiful maidens? Great! You're in a harmless bedtime story. Feel free to look around and take a few pictures.

Are you surrounded by a thick and creepy forest? Are you standing in a large, smoky cave? THEN RUN—you're in a *cautionary tale*! Something is about to make a meal or an example out of you! Don't stop until your surroundings match the description above.

RULE #4: IF IT'S GOT CLAWS, IT DON'T FOLLOW LAWS.

The food chain applies to every animal, even if it talks. Just because something can communicate, that doesn't make you any less delicious. Never tell a wolf where you're headed, don't trespass into the home of bears, and don't take directions from a fox! You'd think this would be common sense, but after you read the *Treasury* (especially the rhymes about the idiots I know), you'll realize common sense isn't common in the fairy-tale world.

RULE #5: NEVER TRUST OLD PEOPLE.

The fairy-tale world is full of seniors looking for a way to get even with youngsters (present company excluded, of course). Never make a trade with an old geezer; you'll only end up with a giant beanstalk growing in your backyard. Never accept a gift from an old hag; you'll get stuck raising a daughter the size of a shot glass.

However, you must never *deny* them anything! If an old woman knocks

on your door in the middle of the night looking for shelter, *give her a room with a view!* If an old beggar man stops you on the road and asks you for food, *cook him a gourmet meal!* Whatever you do, DO NOT tick off the elderly, or you may end up cursed as a beast or living as a frog!

RULE #6: AVOID STRANGELY BUILT STRUCTURES.

I don't care how interesting it looks from afar—if you see something oddly placed or constructed, don't approach it! It will only lead to trouble.

For example, if you find a tower standing alone in the woods, *get out of there*—it belongs to a witch! Suppose you come across a bridge over a small stream—*better to get your shoes wet* than become lunch to the hungry troll living underneath it!

RULE #7: IF SOMETHING SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT IS!

In the fairy-tale world, coincidences usually come with consequences. If you find yourself in an unfortunate situation and miraculously stumble upon a solution that perfectly suits all your needs, you're most likely being tricked into an even worse situation!

For example, if you're lost in a vicious storm and the only shelter in sight is a magnificent castle with large, spacious rooms, chances are there's a beast waiting for you inside. If you're starving and wandering aimlessly through the forest, that gingerbread house down the path was probably built to lure poor saps like you. Remember, in the fairy-tale world, traps come in all shapes, sizes, and flavors.

RULE #8: DON'T BE A JERK.

Here's a good tip! As difficult as it may seem, try to keep a positive attitude during your visit. The fairy-tale world tends to reward the generous and punish the selfish. Be kind and treat everything with respect, and you'll be amazed at what a difference it makes. Also, lots of fairies and witches like to dress up in disguises, so be careful about whom you upset.

RULE #9: WHEN IN DOUBT, FIND A FAIRY.

If you're not looking to stay and see the sights, the fastest way to get back home is to find a fairy. Tell it about your treasury, how it glowed, hummed, and transported you into the fairy-tale world, and the fairy should be able to help you out. Most fairies are familiar with CDT and can get you back home.

However, don't tell them I sent you. I'm not very popular among fairies these days. In fact, it's better not to mention my name at all. Otherwise, when they send you home, you might end up on a desert island in the Bermuda Triangle—it's a long story!

Well, I hope this guide has been helpful! A lot of people thought it was silly to write it, but if this book were in my hands, I'd want to be prepared. If you do find yourself in the fairy-tale world, don't forget to stop by and say hello. I'll be at a pub in the Charming Kingdom called *The Stepmother* with an overgrown gander named Lester. Just follow the feathers...

Cheers!
Mother Goose

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

THE BROTHERS GRIMM

Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859) were born in Germany in the late eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, while attending school at the University of Marburg, they developed a passion for folktales and folktale studies. In 1812, they published their first collection of folktales, *Children's and Household Tales*, which was reprinted and revised many times up until 1857. By the time of their deaths, the Brothers Grimm had published more than two hundred fairy tales based on German and Scandinavian mythologies. Their stories have since been translated into more than one hundred languages. To this day, the Brothers Grimm are considered the fathers of fairy tales.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN (1805–1875)

Hans Christian Andersen was a Danish novelist, playwright, and poet. He began writing fairy tales in the early eighteenth century and published the first two volumes of his collection in 1835 and continued until 1872. At first, Andersen's stories were not well received, but by the time of his death he was best known for his fairy tales. To date, his stories have been translated into more than 125 languages, and Andersen has been made a Danish National Treasure.

CHARLES PERRAULT (1628–1703)

Charles Perrault was a French author during the seventeenth century. Although he had many professions in the French government and published many written works, the first about fairy tales was published in 1697 and was titled *Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals: Tales of Mother Goose*. His fairy tales were very popular in French society and are still known today as he wrote them. Many credit him as the founder of the fairy-

tale genre.

JEANNE-MARIE LEPRINCE DE BEAUMONT (1711–1780)

Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont was a French teacher and novelist during the eighteenth century. Sometime after 1746, while working in England as a governess, she wrote the book *Beauty and the Beast and Other Classic French Fairy Tales*. The publication was such a success that she was able to quit teaching and focus on her writing career. She is one of the only women credited as a fairy-tale founding author and was one of the first authors to write fairy tales designed for children.

CARLO COLLODI (1826–1890)

Carlo Collodi was born in Florence, Italy. Among his many writing credentials, he was a playwright and wrote articles and satirical stories for newspapers. His introduction into fairy tales came in 1875 when he published *I racconti delle fate*, an Italian translation of Charles Perrault's work. In 1880 he wrote the work he is most remembered for today, *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*).

ASBJØRNSEN & MOE

Peter Christen Asbjørnsen (1812–1885) and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe (1813–1882) were Norwegian writers in the nineteenth century. After being friends for over a decade, they published their first collection of Norwegian folktales in 1841. They were inspired greatly by the Brothers Grimm and published more than one hundred fairy tales over the course of their careers.



CHRIS COLFER is an American author born in the twentieth century. He was given his first fairy-tale treasury in 1994 and hasn't put it down since. Thanks to an overly active imagination and an early introduction to caffeine, he had lots of questions regarding fairy-tale characters. These questions later influenced him to write the Land of Stories series. He's honored to share the stories of the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, Charles Perrault, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, Carlo Collodi, and Asbjørnsen & Moe with new readers around the world.

BRANDON DORMAN lives near Wylie, Texas, with his wife and four little ones. As an illustrator, he has created magical pictures for hundreds of book covers and somewhere around twenty-one and a half picture books, two of which he has authored himself, *Pirates of the Sea!* and *Santa's Stowaway*. You can visit Brandon at brandondorman.com.



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MOTHER GOOSE'S FAIRY-TALE SURVIVAL GUIDE

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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