

1812

GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES

THE KNAPSACK, THE HAT, AND THE HORN

Jacob Ludwig Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm

Grimm, Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) - German philologists whose collection "Kinder- und Hausmarchen," known in English as "Grimm's Fairy Tales," is a timeless literary masterpiece. The brothers transcribed these tales directly from folk and fairy stories told to them by common villagers. The Knapsack, the Hat, and the Horn (1812) - Three brothers go out into the world. One makes his fortune in silver, one in gold, and the last finds a magic table-cloth which he trades (and gets back) for three powerful items.

THE KNAPSACK, THE HAT, AND THE HORN

ONCE THERE WERE three brothers, and they grew poorer and poorer, until at last their need was so great that they had nothing left to bite or to break. Then they said, "This will not do; we had better go out into the world and seek our fortune." So they set out, and went some distance through many green fields, but they met with no good fortune. One day they came to a great wood, in the midst of which was a hill, and when they came near to it, they saw that it was all of silver.

Then said the eldest, "Now here is good fortune enough for me, and I desire no better." And he took of the silver as much as he could carry, turned round, and went back home. But the other two said, "We must have something better than mere silver," and they would not touch it, but went on farther.

After they had gone on a few days longer, they came to a hill that was all of gold. The second brother stood still and considered, and was uncertain. "What shall I do?" said he; "shall I take of the gold enough to last me my life, or shall I go farther?" At last, coming to a conclusion, he filled his pockets as full as they would hold, bid good-bye to his brother, and went home. But the third brother said to himself, "Silver and gold do not tempt me; I will not gainsay fortune, who has better things in store for me."

So he went on, and when he had journeyed for three days, he came to a wood still greater than the former ones, so that there was no end to it; and in it he found nothing to eat or to drink, so that he

was nearly starving. He got up into a high tree, so as to see how far the wood reached, but as far as his eyes could see, there was nothing but the tops of the trees. And as he got down from the tree, hunger pressed him sore, and he thought, "Oh that for once I could have a good meal!" And when he reached the ground he saw to his surprise a table beneath the tree richly spread with food, and that smoked before him.

"This time at least," said he, "I have my wish," and without stopping to ask who had brought the meal there, and who had cooked it, he came close to the table and ate with relish, until his hunger was appeased. When he had finished, he thought, "It would be a pity to leave such a good table-cloth behind in the wood," so he folded it up neatly and pocketed it.

Then he walked on, and in the evening, when hunger again seized him, he thought he would put the table-cloth to the proof, and he brought it out and said, "Now I desire that thou shouldst be spread with a good meal," and no sooner were the words out of his mouth, than there stood on it as many dishes of delicious food as there was room for.

"Now that I see," said he, "what sort of a cook thou art, I hold thee dearer than the mountains of silver and of gold," for he perceived that it was a wishingcloth. Still he was not satisfied to settle down at home with only a wishing-cloth, so he determined to wander farther through the world and seek his fortune.

One evening, in a lonely wood, he came upon a begrimed charcoal-burner at his furnace, who had put some potatoes to roast for his supper. "Good evening, my black fellow," said he, "how do you get on in this lonely spot?" "One day is like another," answered the charcoal-burner; "every evening I have potatoes; have you a mind to be my guest?" "Many thanks," answered the traveler, "I will not deprive you; you did not expect a guest; but if you do not object, you shall be the one to be invited." "How can that be managed?" said the charcoal-burner; "I see that you have nothing with you, and if you were to walk two hours in any direction, you would meet with no one to give you anything." "For all that," answered he, "there shall be a feast so good, that you have never tasted the like." Then he took out the table-cloth from his knapsack, and spreading it on the ground, said, "Cloth, be covered," and immediately there appeared boiled and roast meat, quite hot, as if it had just come from the kitchen. The charcoal-burner stared, but did not stay to be asked twice, and fell to, filling his black mouth with ever bigger and bigger pieces.

When they had finished eating, the charcoal-burner smiled, and said, "Look here, I approve of your table-cloth; it would not be a bad thing for me to have here in the wood, where the cooking is not first-rate. I will strike a bargain with you. There hangs a soldier's knapsack in the corner, which looks old and unsightly, but it has wonderful qualities; as I have no further occasion for it, I will give it to you in exchange for the table-cloth."

"First, I must know what these wonderful qualities are," returned the other.

"I will tell you," answered the charcoal-burner; "if you strike it with your hand, there will appear a corporal and six men with swords and muskets, and whatever you wish to have done, that will they do." "Well, for my part," said the other, "I am quite willing to make the exchange." And he gave the table-cloth to the charcoal-burner, took down the knapsack from its hook, slung it over his shoulder, and took his leave. Before he had gone far he began to want to make a trial of his wonderful knapsack, so he struck it a blow.

At once seven soldiers appeared before him, and the corporal said, "What does my lord and master please to want?" "March in haste to the charcoal-burner and demand my wishing-cloth back," said the man. They wheeled round to the left, and were not long before they had accomplished his desire, and taken away, without wasting many words, the wishing-cloth from the charcoal-burner. Having dismissed them, he wandered on, expecting still more wonderful luck.

About sunset he fell in with another charcoal-burner, who was getting his supper ready at the fire. "Will you join me?" said this black fellow; "potatoes and salt, without butter; sit down to it with me." "No," answered he, "this time you shall be my guest." And he spread out his table-cloth, and it was directly covered with the most delicious victuals. So they ate and drank together and were merry.

After the meal was over the charcoal-burner said, "Over there, on the bench, lies an old worn-out hat, which has wonderful properties: if you put it on and draw it well over your head it is as if a dozen field-pieces went off, one after the other, shooting everything down, so that no one can stand against them. This hat is of no use to me, and I will give it to you in exchange for the table-cloth." "All right," answered the other, taking the hat and carrying it off, and leaving the table-cloth behind him. Before he had gone far he struck upon the knapsack, and summoned his soldiers to

fetch back the table-cloth again. "First one thing, and then another," thought he, "just as if my luck were never to end." And so it seemed, for at the end of another day's journey he came up to another charcoal-burner, who was roasting his potatoes just like the others. He invited him to eat with him off his wishing-cloth, to which the charcoal-burner took such a fancy, that he gave him for it a horn, which had different properties still from the hat. If a man blew on it, down fell all walls and fortresses, and finally towns and villages in heaps. So the man gave the table-cloth in exchange for it to the charcoal-burner, afterwards sending his men to fetch it back, so that at last he had in his possession knapsack, hat, and horn, all at one time. "Now," said he, "I am a made man, and it is time to go home again and see how my brothers are faring." When he reached home he found that his brothers had built themselves a fine house with their silver and gold, and lived in clover. He went to see them, but because he wore a half-worn-out coat, a shabby hat, and the old knapsack on his back, they would not recognize him as their brother. They mocked him and said, "It is of no use your giving yourself out to be our brother; he who scorned silver and gold, seeking for better fortune, will return in great splendor, as a mighty King, not as a beggar-man." And they drove him from their door.

Then he flew into a great rage, and struck upon his knapsack until a hundred and fifty men stood before him, rank and file. He ordered them to surround his brothers' house, and that two of them should take hazel-rods, and should beat the brothers until they knew who he was. And there arose a terrible noise; the people ran together and wished to rescue the brothers in their extremity, but they could do nothing against the soldiers. It happened at last that the King of the country heard of it, and he was indignant, and sent a captain with his troops to drive the disturber of the peace out of the town. But the man with his knapsack soon assembled a greater company, who beat back the captain and his people, sending them off with bleeding noses.

Then the King said, "This vagabond fellow must be put down," and he sent the next day a larger company against him, but they could do nothing, for he assembled more men than ever, and in order to bring them more quickly, he pulled his hat twice lower over his brows; then the heavy guns came into play, and the King's people were beaten and put to flight. "Now," said he, "I shall not make peace until the King gives me his daughter to wife, and lets me rule the whole kingdom in his name."

This he caused to be told to the King, who said to his daughter, "This is a hard nut to crack; there is no choice but for me to do as he asks; if I wish to have peace and keep the crown on my head, I must give in to him." So the wedding took place, but the King's daughter was angry that the bridegroom should be a common man, who wore a shabby hat, and carried an old knapsack. She wished very much to get rid of him, and thought day and night how to manage it. Then it struck her that perhaps all his wonder-working power lay in the knapsack, and she pretended to be very fond of him, and when she had brought him into a good humor she said, "Pray lay aside that ugly knapsack; it misbecomes you so much that I feel ashamed of you." "My dear child," answered he, "this knapsack is my greatest treasure; so long as I keep it I need not fear anything in the whole world," and then he showed her with what wonderful qualities it was endowed. Then she fell on his neck as if she would have kissed him, but, by a clever trick, she slipped the knapsack over his shoulder and ran away with it.

As soon as she was alone she struck upon it and summoned the soldiers, and bade them seize her husband and bring him to the King's palace. They obeyed, and the false woman had many more to follow behind, so as to be ready to drive him out of the country. He would have been quite done for if he had not still kept the hat. As soon as he could get his hands free he pulled it twice forward on his head; and then the cannon began to thunder and beat all down, till at last the King's daughter had to come and to beg pardon. And as she so movingly prayed and promised to behave better, he raised her up and made peace with her. Then she grew very kind to him, and seemed to love him very much, and he grew so deluded, that one day he confided to her that even if he were deprived of his knapsack nothing could be done against him as long as he should keep the old hat.

And when she knew the secret she waited until he had gone to sleep; then she carried off the hat, and had him driven out into the streets. Still the horn remained to him, and in great wrath he blew a great blast upon it, and down came walls and fortresses, towns and villages, and buried the King and his daughter among their ruins. If he had not set down the horn when he did, and if he had blown a little longer, all the houses would have tumbled down, and there would not have been left one stone upon another.

After this no one dared to withstand him, and he made himself King over the whole country.

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