

**1812**

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES  
THE SEVEN RAVENS**

**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 Seven Ravens (1812) - A man changes his seven sons into ravens. His young daughter, seeking to set her brothers free, meets the Morning Star who gives her a key to unlock the iceberg in which the ravens are shut up.

**THE SEVEN RAVENS**

A MAN had seven sons, but not a single daughter. This made both him and his wife very unhappy. At last a daughter was born, to their great joy; but the child was very small and slight, and so weak that they feared it would die. So the father sent his sons to the spring to fetch water that he might baptize her.

Each of the boys ran in great haste to be the first to draw the water for their little sister's baptism, but in the struggle to be first they let the pitcher fall into the well.

Then they stood still and knew not what to do; not one of them dared to venture home without the water. As the time went on and they did not return, the father became very impatient, and said, "I suppose in the midst of their play they have forgotten what I sent them for, the careless children." He was in such an agony lest the child should die unbaptized that he exclaimed thoughtlessly, "I wish the youngsters were all turned into ravens!" The words were scarcely uttered when there was heard a rushing of wings in the air over his head, and presently seven coal-black ravens flew over the house.

The father could not recall the dreadful words, and both parents grieved terribly over the loss of their seven sons; their only consolation now was the little daughter, who every day grew stronger and more beautiful.

For a long time the maiden was not told that she had brothers; her parents were most careful to avoid all mention of them. But one day she overheard some persons talking, and they said that no doubt the young girl was very beautiful but that there must have been some strange cause for the misfortune which had happened to her seven brothers.

Oh, how surprised and sad she felt when she heard this! She went at once to her father and mother and asked them if she really had had any brothers, and what had become of them. Then her parents dared not any longer keep the secret from her. They told her, however, that it was the decree of Heaven, and that her birth was the innocent cause of all. As soon as she was alone she made a firm determination that she would try to break the enchantment in which her brothers were held.

She had neither rest nor peace till she had made up her mind to leave home and seek her brothers and set them free, cost what it might.

When at last she left home, she took nothing with her but a little ring, in memory of her parents, a loaf of bread, a jug of water, and a little stool, in case she felt tired.

So she went from her home, and traveled further and further, till she came to the end of the world, and there was the sun; but it was so hot and fierce that it scorched the little child, and she ran away in such a hurry that she ran into the moon. Here it was quite cold and dismal, and she heard a voice say, "I smell man's flesh," which made her escape from the moon as quickly as she could, and at last she reached the stars.

They were very kind and friendly to her. Each of the stars was seated on a wonderful chair, and the Morning Star stood up and said, "If you have not a key you will not be able to unlock the iceberg in which your brothers are shut up." So the Morning Star gave the maiden the key, and told her to wrap it up carefully in her little handkerchief, and showed her the way to the iceberg. When she arrived the gate was closed; she opened her handkerchief to take out the key, but found it empty; she had forgotten the advice of the kind stars. What was she to do now? She wished to rescue her brothers and had no key to the iceberg.

At last the good little sister thought she would put her finger into the lock instead of a key. After twisting and turning it about, which hurt her very much, she happily succeeded in opening it, and immediately entered.

Presently a little dwarf came forward to meet her, and said, "My child, what are you seeking?" "I seek my brothers, the seven ravens," she said. "The seven ravens are not at home," replied the dwarf; "but if you would like to wait here till they return, pray step in." Then the little dwarf took the maiden to the room where supper was prepared for the seven ravens, on seven little plates, by which stood seven little cups of water.

So the sister ate a few crumbs from each plate and drank a little draught from each cup, and into the last cup she let fall the ring that she brought from home.

Before she could get it out again she heard the rushing of wings in the air, and the little dwarf said, "Here come the seven Mr. Ravens flying home." Then she hid herself behind the door to see and hear what they would do.

They came in and were about to eat their supper, but as they caught sight of their little cups and plates, they said one to another: "Who has been eating from my little plate?" "Who has been drinking from my little cup?" "It has been touched by the mouth of a human being," cried one; "and, look here, what is this?" He took up his cup and turned it over, and out rolled the little ring, which they knew had once belonged to their father and mother.

Then said the eldest, "Oh, I remember that ring! Oh, if our sister would only come here, we should be free!" The maiden, who heard the wish from behind the door, came forth smiling, and stood before them.

In that same moment the seven ravens were freed from the enchantment, and became seven handsome young men. Oh, how joyfully they all kissed each other and their little sister, and started off at once in great happiness to their parents and their home!

**THE END**