

1812

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES
THE SINGING BONE**

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 Singing Bone (1812) - A king offers his daughter to whoever can bring him the wild boar that is troubling his country. A man kills the boar but is then killed by his jealous brother. Years later the dead man's bones sing.

THE SINGING BONE

A CERTAIN COUNTRY was greatly troubled by a wild boar that attacked workers in the fields, killed men, and tore them to pieces with its terrible tusks.

The King of the country had offered rich rewards to any one who would rid the land of this terror. But the beast was so huge and ferocious that no man could even be persuaded to enter the forest where the animal made its home.

At last the King made a proclamation that he would give his only daughter in marriage to any man who would bring the wild boar to him, dead or alive.

There lived two brothers in that country, the sons of a poor man, who gave notice of their readiness to enter on this perilous undertaking. The elder, who was clever and crafty, was influenced by pride; the younger, who was innocent and simple, offered himself from kindness of heart.

Thereupon the King advised that, as the best and safest way would be to take opposite directions in the wood, the elder was to go in the evening and the younger in the morning.

The younger had not gone far when a little fairy stepped up to him. He held in his hand a black spear, and said, "I will give you this spear because your heart is innocent and good. With this you can go out and discover the wild boar, and he shall not be able to harm you."

He thanked the little man, took the spear, placed it on his shoulder, and without delay went further into the forest. It was not long before he espied the animal coming toward him, and fiercely making ready to spring. But the youth stood still and held the spear firmly in front of him. In wild rage the fierce beast ran violently toward him, and was met by the spear, on the point of which he threw himself, and, as it pierced his heart, he fell dead.

Then the youngster took the dead monster on his shoulder and went to find his brother. As he approached the other side of the wood, where stood a large hall, he heard music, and found a number of people dancing, drinking wine, and making merry. His elder brother was among them, for he thought the wild boar would not run far away, and he wished to get up his courage for the evening by cheerful company and wine.

When he caught sight of his younger brother coming out of the forest laden with his booty, the most restless jealousy and malice rose in his heart. But he disguised his bitter feelings and spoke kindly to his brother, and said, "Come in and stay with us, dear brother, and rest awhile, and get up your strength by a cup of wine." So the youth, not suspecting anything wrong, carried the dead boar into his brother's house, and told him of the little man he had met in the wood, who had given him the spear, and how he had killed the wild animal.

The elder brother persuaded him to stay and rest till the evening, and then they went out together in the twilight and walked by the river till it became quite dark. A little bridge lay across the river, over which they had to pass, and the elder brother let the young one go before him. When they arrived at the middle of the stream the wicked man gave his younger brother a blow from behind, and he fell down dead instantly.

But fearing he might not be quite dead, he threw the body over the bridge into the river, and through the clear waters saw it sink into the sand. After this wicked deed he ran home quickly, took the dead wild boar on his shoulders, and carried it to the King, with the pretense that he had killed the animal, and that therefore he could claim the Princess as his wife, according to the King's promise.

But these dark deeds are not often concealed, for something happens to bring them to light. Not many years after, a herdsman, passing over the bridge with his flock, saw beneath him in the sand a little bone as white as snow, and thought that it would make a very nice mouthpiece for his horn.

As soon as the flock passed over the bridge, he waded into the middle of the stream- for the water was very shallow- took up the bone, and carried it home to make a mouthpiece for his horn.

But the first time he blew the horn after the bone was in it, it filled the herdsman with wonder and amazement; for it began to sing of itself, and these were the words it sang: "Ah! dear shepherd, you are blowing your horn With one of my bones, which night and morn Lie still unburied, beneath the wave Where I was thrown in a sandy grave.

I killed the wild boar, and my brother slew me, And gained the Princess by pretending 'twas he."

"What a wonderful horn," said the shepherd, "that can sing of itself! I must certainly take it to my lord, the King." As soon as the horn was brought before the King and blown by the shepherd, it at once began to sing the same song and the same words.

The King was at first surprised, but his suspicion being aroused, he ordered that the sand under the bridge should be examined immediately, and then the entire skeleton of the murdered man was discovered, and the whole wicked deed came to light.

The wicked brother could not deny the deed. He was therefore ordered to be tied in a sack and drowned, while the remains of his murdered brother were carefully carried to the churchyard, and laid to rest in a beautiful grave.

THE END