

Grim fairy tales and legends

Once Upon a Hangover and not the Pussycat



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The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Hamelin wasn't a place you'd want to stay voluntarily. Cobblestones worn down even in the Middle Ages, stinking alleys filled with beer piss, and churchgoers preaching while groping the little waitress in the back room. And then the rats. Those bastards everywhere. They sat in the soup, nibbled on the cheese, and shit in the beds. If you coughed at night, you could be sure that five of them would crawl out of your straw mattress.

People complained, drank, and complained some more, and of course, drinking didn't help. The city fathers—fat pigs with double chins, red cheeks, and too much mead in their livers—held a council. "We need a solution," they said, chewing on roast pork. "But cheap, please." Cheap was always their favorite word.

And there he came. Thin as a broomstick, with a face that looked like it had been molded from Play-Doh and then forgotten to be finished. The guy was wearing clothes so colorful even a clown would puke, and he had a flute under his arm. "I can get rid of your rats," he said, "but you'll have to pay. And pay big bucks. No handouts, no free beer, I want money, got it?"

The councilmen nodded as if they'd just heard God himself. "Of course, buddy. You do it, and we'll sort it out." And everyone knew: that was a lie.

So the guy stands in the middle of the market square, puts the thing to his lips, and starts playing. But not just any old thing. It wasn't an annoying ding dong that hurts your ears after three notes. It was something else. The air vibrated. The rats stopped gnawing, crawling out like irradiated hippies when someone shouts "Free drugs." First dozens, then hundreds, then thousands. A stinking, furry torrent rolled through Hamelin.

People hung out of the windows, their mouths open, their knees shaking. "Look at that!" someone shouted. "The rats are leaving!" Yes, damn it. They were leaving. Following the flute, out to the Weser, and then—splash. The flute played, the rats jumped, and the Weser became their mass grave.

The next morning, Hamelin was rat-free. For the first time in decades, you could eat a piece of bread without having half of it devoured first. And how did they thank the flautist? Not at all.

The guy knocked on the town hall gate. "Okay, friends, let's get down to business. Where's the money?" The city fathers grinned greasy from their

armchairs. "Oh, well, we thought you were doing this more... for the joy of making music. You know. To promote culture." "Don't mess with me," growled the flautist. "Okay," said one, "we can give you a free beer. Or a sausage. But nothing more."

That was the mistake. Because a man who voluntarily plays the flute is already a powder keg. You don't want to insult him with free beer.

So he set off again. This time he played not for the rats, but for the children. And the children came. Barefoot, with sleepy eyes, as if they'd been drinking all night, they staggered after him. Small hands dropped toys, mothers screamed, fathers stumbled out of the taverns. But the children kept going.

The flautist led them out, away from the city, toward the mountains. No one could follow, no one could stop them, and the music cut like a knife through every throat that tried to protest. Then they were gone. Without a trace.

Hamelin remained behind. Without rats. Without children. Only the wailing parents, the fat, betrayed city fathers, and a hangover that wouldn't go away for years. And the flautist? No one ever saw him again.

Morality? Oh, screw morality. Fairy tales are for idiots who believe everything will be alright in the end. The truth is: If you screw someone who has the power to change your world, they'll take everything away from you. And they'll do it in time.

The Frog Prince or Iron Henry

Once upon a time, there was a princess who was more bored than hair. She sat around all day, jingling her golden ball like it was the last toy in the nuthouse, and felt great about it. Palace, wealth, servants—but zero fun, zero sense. She couldn't give a damn about the outside world as long as her ball kept glittering.

One day—splash!—the thing rolls into the well. Deep down, into the darkness. Gone. The end. The princess starts to cry as if her credit card had been canceled. She howls and moans so much that even the pigeons fly away in frustration.

And then –*croak*– he appears. A fat, slimy frog who smells more like a damp basement than an animal. "I'll get the ball for you," he says in a slimy voice, "but only if you let me stay with you afterward. Bed, food, company. Deal?"

The princess nods immediately. Of course she nods. She doesn't think about it. She could have just said "Your blood," she would have nodded. The main thing is that the damn toy is back.

So the frog jumps down, gets the ball, throws it at her feet – and whoosh! The princess runs off like a speed sprinter. No bed, no food, nothing at all. She's been fooled.

But the frog doesn't give up. In the evening, he crouches in front of the palace, knocking on the door with his slimy fin. "Open up, Princess! We had a deal!" The king himself hears. "What's going on?" The daughter squirms: "Oh, nothing, Dad... just some stupid animal croaking." But the king, that old preacher with a crown on his head, says: "You made a promise, so keep it, damn it. Nobility obliges." Yeah, right. Nobility obliges only when it's not about one's own booze.

The princess grumbles and opens the door. There's the frog crouching. In with him. At the table. Into the room. Ever closer, ever bolder. And finally – the frog wants to come to bed with her. The princess freaks out. "That's disgusting! You're slimy, you stink of moorland, and you have eyes like two fat glass marbles!" "A promise is a promise," he croaks.

She can't stand it anymore. She grabs the frog and *gossip!*– throws him against the wall in disgust. No romance, no "kissing" like in a Disney movie. Pure anger, pure rage, pure vomit in his throat.

And lo and behold – the frog doesn't burst, it transforms. Suddenly, there's a prince. Handsome, dapper, like he's just out of the barber's. The princess blinks, thinking: "Well, if so, then better this than this slimy sack."

And because that's not absurd enough, Henry comes into play. Iron Henry. He's the prince's servant, who, out of lovesickness, had iron bands forged around his heart—no joke. When the prince is free again, *clang, clang, clang*– the bracelets pop open because Heinrich is so happy his boss is back. What a load of crap. Who the hell would voluntarily wear heart bracelets? An emo with blacksmith contacts, nothing more.

So the prince and princess get married, because that's what fairy tales do, even if the story reeks more of a bar fight than love. The frog prince celebrates his freedom, Henry drools with joy, and the princess is probably still thinking, "The main thing is that my ball sparkles again."

Cat and mouse in company

Once upon a time – that's how things always start – there was a mouse and a cat. And the two decided to live together. It sounds like the beginning of a toxic shared apartment in Berlin: one eats, the other pays, and in the end, the fridge is full of empty beer cans.

The mouse, as naive as a newly hatched mouse, thought, "Oh, the cat won't eat me, we're friends now, we share everything, peace, love & harmony." The cat just grinned and thought, "Exactly, little mouse, share. I'll share your food, you share your stupidity. Cheers."

So they rented a "communal living space," so to speak, somewhere under the church roof. But winter was coming, and winter means no food, no grain, no shit. They had to make provisions. So they decided to store a small pot of fat in the church as a supply. It was a safe place; no one steals in the church—except for the priests, but they'd rather drink communion wine.

They set down the pot, seal it solemnly, and the cat says, "We won't touch this until winter comes, okay?" The mouse nods obediently. Honestly, the creature was dumber than a drunken blackbird.

After a few weeks, the cat comes up with excuses. "Oh, little mouse, my cousin just had a baby, I have to hurry over, godmother and all." Mouse: "Oh, how lovely, give her my love." Cat marches straight into the church, picks open the potty, and licks off the top layer of fat. It's as tasty as a glass of whiskey on an empty stomach. Then she puts the lid back on and comes home. Mouse asks: "So, what's the baby's name?" Cat: "Top-up." Mouse thinks nothing of it.

A few weeks later: same shit. "Oh, little mouse, my aunt just had another baby, I have to go." She was gone, back to the potty. This time she devoured half a portion. Mouse: "And what's the baby's name this time?" Cat, with a full belly: "Half-gone." Mouse scratches her head, but hey, names are sometimes weird.

A few more weeks: third excuse. Cat sneaks back into the church, finally empties the potty, licks the floor like it's the last drop of beer after a night of heavy drinking. Comes back. Mouse: "So, what's the kid's name?" Cat: "All gone." Mouse thinks: "Something's not right here," but she's too stupid or too gullible to put two and two together.

Then winter came. It was cold, everything was frozen, nothing to eat except church mice and chilblains. The mouse says, "Come on, Cat, now is the time to open the pot. Our fat will save us." Cat grins like a pimp checking the till: "Yes, little mouse, let's go." Of course, they find the pot empty. Mouse freaks out: "Damn, someone's stolen from us!" Cat licks his snout and says, "Yes, someone's been here. On top, halfway, all the way. That was me."

And then *—zack—* she eats the mouse. Without excuses, without tears, without "sorry." Simply swallowed. End of story.

And there sat the cat, stuffed, full, and content. Outside, the frost was scorching, but inside, no stomach was growling anymore—at least not hers.

Child Mary

Once upon a time, there was a lumberjack. The kind who chopped wood all day long until his hands were covered in blisters and his bones cracked. He had a wife who also had nothing but hunger and a face full of worries. They couldn't bear to have children anymore—too many mouths, too little bread. But one day, one was born. A girl. And as is often the case in fairy tales: the girl looked like cotton candy in the shape of an angel, with eyes like a drunken deer.

The parents were overwhelmed. No money, no food, nothing. So Mary herself came down from heaven. Not the quiet, kind Mother of God you see in picture books—more like a businesswoman with a golden star-shaped hat. "Give me your child," she says, "I'll raise it in heaven. You'll have peace, she'll have everything." In the end, the parents say, "Sure, take it with you." And Mary disappears with the baby, off to the heavenly palace.

The child grows up there, among angels, golden wallpaper, and eternal boredom. No beer, no dirt, no fun. Everything is spotless and virtuous. A complete moral prison. Maria was strict but kind. "Do what I tell you, and everything will be fine." At some point, the girl receives Maria's key ring. "Here, child, you may open all the doors except that one. THAT one stays closed,

understood?" A classic. Tell a child: "Do anything, but NOT that!" – and you can set your watch by it.

The girl sticks with it for a few years. But then curiosity consumes her like a hangover after ten beers. She takes the key, trembles like a pig, and sticks it in the forbidden door. Click. Open.

Inside: pure divine orgy. Fire, splendor, angels bathing in blood, the entire mystery of heaven and hell in one room. The girl's eyes widen, she stumbles back, and slams the door shut again—but the key is dripping. Gold. And this gold won't come off. No matter how hard she scrubs, scratches, or bites, the thing remains treacherous.

Maria returns. "So, my child, have you been good?" "Yes, of course!" the girl lies. Maria raises an eyebrow, sees the shiny key, and sighs like a mother who's caught her teenage child smoking weed again. "You saw it." "No, no!" the child cries, "I swear!" Three times she lies. Three times she annoys Maria.

And then the holy thing is over. Mary grabs her by the collar and throws her out of heaven like a bar owner throws a rampaging drunk. ZACK – down to earth, into the middle of the forest. Door closed, case closed.

The child now grows alone, like a wild animal. Naked, dirty, and hungry. It eats berries, digs up roots, sleeps in the moss, and talks to birds. She becomes wild, but beautiful, with hair matted like goat's wool. Years pass.

One day, a king comes along on a hunt. He sees her, this wild, naked woman with eyes that have seen more of heaven and hell than his entire court combined. He thinks to himself: "I want her." That's just how kings are. So he takes her with him, makes her his wife. The people cheer, the king celebrates. Only the queen doesn't speak. She doesn't say a word. Silence, as iron as concrete.

They have a child. Beautiful. But—whoosh!—as the baby arrives, it suddenly disappears. Poof. No one knows where. Rumor: The queen ate it. Or drowned it. Or sacrificed it. The king still defends her: "No, my wife is innocent!" But people whisper.

Another child. Same thing. Disappeared. Another. Gone. Three times in a row. The same drama every time. The people scream: "Witch! Child murderer!" And because silence doesn't help, the day comes when they drag her to the stake.

The queen, bound, in the middle of the woodpile, the flames already licking, stands there as if stunned. And just then, Maria reappears. She comes down like a tough management meeting, but with a halo. "So, my little one, that's enough. You kept your mouth shut, bore your guilt, and didn't lie again. Respect. Here are your children back." And whoosh—there stand the three lost children, alive, as if fresh from the nursery.

The people shout "Miracle!", the king falls to his knees, the flames go out, and everyone cheers. Happy ending.

Fairy tale of a man who set out to learn to be afraid

Once upon a time, there was a boy who was so stupid and yet so fearless that he wasn't even startled by a sudden fart. Everyone in the village thought he was a complete idiot because he didn't know what "to be scared" meant. While other children howled when the owl hooted "Whoa!" at night, he stood there and said, "So what? Sounds like a drunken uncle on the toilet."

His father, a grumpy old man with a perpetually empty beer mug, despaired. "That boy can't do anything, he's no good. He's not even afraid! Fear is the only thing that keeps people alive!" But the boy just grinned stupidly and kept saying, "Oh, if only I could learn to be afraid!" Everyone laughed at him. But he meant it. He wanted to feel fear like others experience their first time having sex or their first drunken stupor.

So he sets out into the world, like a backpacking idiot without a compass, except that instead of a hostel bed and a backpack, he had nothing but a few coins and this obsession: "I want to be scared."

He's walking along a country road and passes three gallows with fresh corpses dangling in the wind like limp sausages. The people in the village had warned him: "It's haunted!" He thinks to himself: "Great, maybe I'll learn to be scared here." He lies down among the dangling guys, lights a fire, and warms himself. The corpses creak in the wind, and he calls up: "Hey, guys, is it cold up there?" No answer. So he climbs up and puts one down by the fire. The dead keel over like drunken guests who can't find their way home. One even starts to smolder from falling too close to the fire. The boy yawns and scratches his ass: "Well, warm is warm." No shiver, no panic. Nothing.

Eventually, the king hears about this freak. He has a problem: a cursed castle, full of ghosts, that no one wants to enter. "If you can last three nights in there, you'll have my daughter and the treasure." The boy says: "Finally, maybe I'll learn to fear."

So he trudges in, armed with fire, a saw, and a few bottles of beer he stole along the way.

On the first night, skeletons roll down the stairs, skulls roll, and ghosts scream. The boy sighs: "Could you be quieter? I want to sleep." Then he takes a skull, sits on it like a stool, and continues drinking his beer.

Second night: Half-corpses throwing arms and legs at each other as if it were a grim soccer game. The boy calls out, "Hey, do you have anything to drink? Otherwise, this is going to be a shitty night." No one reacts. So he lights a fire, puts the bones on it, and grills a piece as if it were a chicken leg.

Third night: The big final boss. A black man with a giant block and glowing eyes appears. The boy thinks, "Finally!" He fights him, strangles him, and cuts off his head. And what does he find? A treasure. Gold, silver, chests full. In the morning, the king laughs: "You did it! Three nights! And no fear?" The boy: "No, damn it! Still nothing. You'd better give me your daughter, maybe then it'll work."

So he marries the king's daughter. Beautiful woman, elegant dress, everything like a kitschy fairy tale. Only he sits there and keeps saying, "I wish I could learn to be afraid." Eventually, the woman becomes so annoyed that she hatches a plan with the maid.

One night, when he's finally asleep, they pour a bucket full of cold water and slimy fish into his bed. He jumps up, screams, "Holy shit, what is that?!" and runs around like a stabbed ox. Everyone laughs: "Well, now you're scared!" He yells, "If that's what scaring is, you can keep it. Shitty fish in bed is more disgusting than anything in the cursed castle."

And so he learned to be afraid – not through ghosts, dead people or monsters, but through everyday married life.

The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats

Once upon a time, there was a goat who had seven kids. She was a single mother, and the billy goat had long since run off, probably with some hussy

from the neighboring farm. So she did what all stressed-out mothers do: she ran off to get food, yelling first:

"Kids, don't open the door! The wolf is lurking out there. He's worse than a full-time drunk with unpaid bills."

The little goats nodded obediently, but "obed" doesn't mean anything in fairy tales. Children are always too stupid to follow instructions.

The wolf, a sick old bum with a hungry stomach and more tricks up his sleeve than a sleazy used-car salesman, naturally came straight to the hut. Knocked and called: "Open up, my dear children, your mother is back!"

The kids giggle: "Piss off, you asshole! Your voice sounds like a rusty tuba." The wolf thinks to himself: "Okay, plan B." He runs to the baker, drinks eggnog in one gulp, and forces the baker to smear his neck with chalk. He now sounds as sweet as a choirboy. Back at the door: "Open up, little children, your mommy's here!" But the kids stare down: "Hold up your paw. Our mommy doesn't have paws that look like Freddy Krueger's gloves."

The wolf is raging. He runs to the miller and forces the poor fellow to dust his paws with white flour. Now he looks like he's just stepped out of the handwashing ad. Back to the door. His voice is sweet, his paws are white, everything's fine. The kids, stupid as ever, tear open the door – and boom, the wolf storms in.

Chaos. The living room looks like it's been through a fight in an Irish pub. The kids are running screaming through the hut, but the wolf is fast. One by one, he stuffs them into his greedy belly. Only the smallest one, hiding in the grandfather clock, survives. Clever bastard.

The wolf lies down outside under a tree, stuffed full, his belly bulging like a barrel. He falls asleep, and his snoring sounds like someone is running a chainsaw over gravel.

Then the mother returns. The remaining kid howls: "Mommy, Mommy, the wolf has eaten them all!" The goat doesn't howl for long, but grabs scissors, a needle, and thread. She runs outside, finds the wolf asleep, and with one clean cut, slits open his belly—and lo and behold: The kids hop out, one after the other, still with their mustaches on their faces.

But the goat isn't stupid. She says, "Now we'll stuff the bastard." They fill the wolf's belly with heavy stones and sew it back up, as neatly as a surgeon after a twelve-hour operation.

The wolf wakes up, thinks: "Man, what a glutton!", trots to the well, wants to drink – and *splash* The stones pull him down, and he drowns miserably, like a drunk who pisses into the harbor and can't get out.

The kids dance, the mother nods contentedly.

The faithful John

Once upon a time, there was an old servant. A man who had been hanging around the palace for ages, loyal as a dog, but with dark circles under his eyes, as if he had been drinking too much for three decades. They called him the **faithful John** because he always kept his mouth shut when the kings messed up, and because he did everything for his master - even if it meant mopping up the shit with a rag.

The old king lies on his deathbed, his belly full of beer and his liver as broken as a pub piano. He calls Johannes over: "Look after my boy, the prince. He's stupid and naive, he'll fall for any pair of tits that wobble through the door. You have to protect him, no matter what." Johannes nods. "All right, boss."

As soon as the old man is dead, the prince inherits. And he does what all newly crowned rulers do: He parties, drinks, and looks for women. One day, he sees a picture—a princess, more beautiful than any other, with eyes you could drown in. And he's instantly smitten. "It's her or none," he says, drooling like a dog in front of a butcher.

Johannes knows this will cause trouble. But what can he do? He charts ships, takes gold, and sets sail. On the way, something happens: Johannes overhears three ravens, spilling secrets like drunken regulars. "If the princess steps into her wedding dress, she'll drop dead." "But if anyone warns her, he'll turn to stone." "And if the prince rides the horse waiting for him, it will plunge him into ruin." "But whoever reveals that will also turn to stone." "And when the wedding night begins, a demon comes through the door and makes mincemeat of him." "And there, too: if you tell, you'll be stiff as a statue."

Johannes turns pale, thinking, "Holy shit, this is a suicide mission." But he vows to be faithful. So he remains silent—and acts.

When the princess tries to put on the dress, he rips it off her body like he's mad. Everyone screams, "Perverted pig!" But he saves her life. When the prince tries to mount the horse, Johannes crashes it so badly that the prince almost vomits. Everyone screams, "Murderer!" But he saves the prince. On the wedding night, he stands at the door, hears the demon scratching, and shoots him before he can get in. Again, everyone thinks, "This guy is crazy."

At some point, the prince has had enough. "Enough! What the hell are you doing, Johannes?" And then Johannes confesses everything. He tells of the ravens, the curses, the rescues. And no sooner has he said it – whoosh – he turns to stone. Damned loyal, but stone dead.

The prince howls, the princess wails, the people murmur. And the statue of John stands there, in the middle of the palace, stiff as a monument to other people's stupidity.

Years pass. The prince has children. One day, the statue begins to speak – in a voice like an old bar singer: "If you want to redeem me, Prince, you must slaughter your children, chop off their heads, and smear their blood on me." The prince: "...um, what the fuck?" But he does it. Without batting an eyelid. He beheads his children, smears Johannes with blood, as if he were at the butcher's.

And lo and behold – the stone breaks. John comes back to life. And because we're in a fairy tale, so do the children. As if nothing had happened.

The good trade

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had more bad luck than sense. The kind who hits his trouser legs when he takes a shit in the morning. He was poor, but cheerful—where "cheerful" here meant: He laughed foolishly while life kicked him right in the face every time.

One day, he decides to go to the market. He takes his only cow with him—thin as a cat after three days of drinking—and thinks, "I'll sell her, then I'll feel better." As he sets off, he's already talking to himself like an old drunk: "This will be a good deal, eh!"

Halfway there, he meets a butcher. The butcher grins greasy and says, "Come on, farmer, I'll give you seven thalers for the animal." Seven thalers? The farmer thinks, "Man, that's like winning the lottery!" and immediately takes the plunge. But as soon as the cow is gone, he realizes: She was probably the only thing he owned that still produced milk.

He walks further and sees a pig. Big, fat, and full of ham. The owner wants to get rid of it. "Seven thalers!" shouts the farmer, "I'll take it!" He thinks he's made the deal of a lifetime. But barely a few steps further, another man comes along and says, "Hey, that pig is mine, he stole it from you!" And whoosh, the pig is gone.

Now he's only carrying guilt in his bones, but he stumbles upon a man with a goose. "That goose is good, it'll lay golden eggs if you feed it!" The farmer, already half-high on his own stupidity, pays the seven thalers. But the goose just poops on his shoes, screams like an old woman, and runs off.

Then he meets a guy with a smelly piece of cheese. "This is fine food, farmer! Seven thalers." The farmer shells out his last change and stuffs the cheese into his pocket. After a few hours, the whole thing runs warm down his leg. The cheese melts in the sun, and he stinks like an old foot.

And as if that weren't enough, another one comes along—a priest who looks like the devil in black. "What do you have there?" The farmer cries: "Just dirt, just bad luck, but someday it'll be a good deal, I'm sure!" The priest laughs himself silly, takes the rest from him, and the farmer ends up standing there empty-handed.

But—and here's where it all takes a turn: He still thinks he was lucky. He laughs, rejoices like an idiot, goes home, and says to his wife: "Wife, I made another good deal today!" The wife slaps her hand on her forehead, but whatever.

The strange minstrel

Once upon a time, there was a minstrel. Not the kind of rock star who fires up crowds, but a washed-up juggler with a violin that had more cracks than a bar wall after a fight. He could play, yes, but no one wanted to hear him. People were busy drinking, fighting, and getting married. Nobody paid him.

So he goes into the forest, thinking, "Maybe the animals will at least listen to me. At least they don't have coins to hold onto."

Here comes the wolf. Baring his teeth, hungry, looking for meat. The minstrel thinks, "Aha, audience!" and starts fiddling. The wolf looks on: "What's all that noise? But never mind, better than nothing. I want to be your student!" Minstrel: "Student? Of mine? Fine—but first, a little exercise." He drags the wolf to an old tree, ties him between the branches, and clamps him so tightly that he looks like an idiot at the gym. "Stay here, practice holding still." The wolf howls, the minstrel laughs, and leaves.

A fox comes trotting up, clever as ever, but also hungry. "Minstrel, I want to be your student too!" The minstrel: "Of course, my friend. But first a little test." He ties the fox to a bush and pulls him through so that he can't get out. "Stay there and think about the music." The fox screams, and the minstrel grins as he moves on.

Then a rabbit comes along, nervous, with twitching ears. "I... I want to learn too!" The minstrel grins: "Of course." He wraps the hare in a long string, like an Easter roast, and hangs it upside down from a branch. "Now, practice perspective." The hare cries, and the minstrel moves on.

Now he sits down in the middle of the forest, fiddling like a madman, as if he'd just consumed three liters of schnapps. But no one's listening anymore – the animals are all stuck. A hunter happens to pass by. He sees the creatures, all tied up, gagged, head down. He thinks: "What kind of sick pig did this?" He frees the animals.

The animals are beside themselves with rage. Wolf, fox, hare—all want to tear the minstrel to pieces. They run, yelling: "Now it's your turn, you damned sadist!" The minstrel grabs his violin and plays like the devil himself. The animals freeze, fidget, and dance involuntarily in circles. A wild, grotesque dance, as if someone had put half the forest population on ecstasy.

At the end, the creatures lie panting on the ground, completely exhausted. The minstrel grins, packs up his violin, and says, "Thanks for the rehearsal, you assholes." And disappears.

The Twelve Brothers

Once upon a time, there was a king—fat, smug, and with the usual penchant for power games. He had twelve sons, and they ran around the palace like a bunch of young cats: loud, hungry, constantly fighting. He should have been content—twelve boys, that's a football team with a bench. But no, the guy was greedy.

"If my wife gives me another daughter," he growled one day, "I'll chop off the heads of my twelve sons. Because I want my daughter to inherit everything herself. A girl, a princess, that's more important than twelve snotty noses." That's the logic of a king: first bring twelve children into the world and then throw everything away because you suddenly fancy pink and bows.

The queen, who had to listen to all this, panicked. She may not have had any balls, but she did have heart. So she whispered to her sons: "Get out of here! Your father is crazy. When your sister is born, you're screwed."

The brothers ran. Far into the forest. Anger in their stomachs, hunger in their stomachs. And then they swore: "If that damned child really is a girl, then we'll kill her. She's to blame for everything!"

It happened as it had to: The child did indeed become a girl. Pretty as an angel, with golden hair. But the brothers had long since lived in the forest, like robbers, dirty and wild. Years pass, and the girl grows up without knowing about her brothers. At some point, she finds out and sets out to find them.

She finds her brothers in a hut, matted, smelly, but alive. They recognize her immediately. And because blood is thicker than hate, they take her in. "Little sister, you'll stay with us. But woe betide you if you pick the forbidden flower in the garden—the one with the star." Of course, she picks that very flower. Because that's how fairy tales always go.

And whoosh! – the brothers transform into twelve ravens. Black feathers, croaking, gone. All because the girl couldn't keep her fingers still. She cries her eyes out because she's finally gotten the family into the shit.

Then some angel appears—or a voice in the wind, perhaps just her own guilty conscience—and says: "If you want to redeem your brothers, you must remain silent and not laugh for seven years. Not a word, not a sound, not a giggle. Otherwise they will remain ravens." She nods. She swallows the punishment.

So she remains silent. She becomes as mute as a wall, runs through the woods, lives like a ghost. No "hello," no "goodbye." Not a word, not even when she stub her toe. One day, a king sees her—of course, another king, those guys are always stumbling through forests in fairy tales—and falls in love with her. Why? Because men go for women who don't say anything. "At least she doesn't contradict me," he thinks. And he takes her and marries her.

But the Queen Mother, an old schemer with a face like a pickle, can't stand her. She whispers everywhere: "The mute bride is a witch!" And when the young queen has children, the mother-in-law steals the babies and spreads the rumor: "The witch ate them." The people roar. "Witch! Burn her!"

Just as the flames rise, with the mute queen already tied to the pyre, the seven-year period ends! The brothers fall from the sky, transform back into humans—strong men, alive. They tear their sister free, tell their mother-in-law the truth, and rescue the children from their hiding place.

Happy ending, everyone rejoices.

The rabble

Once upon a time, there was a rooster. Not a proud farmyard rooster greeting the sun—more like an old, croaking fellow with a neck like sandpaper. He notices that the farmer's wife is trying to throw him into the soup. Classic retirement eviction. So he runs off, screaming, "Better to run away than end up in the soup pot!"

On the way, he meets a dog. The dog, with gray fur, dull eyes, and a tongue lolling out, doesn't really bark anymore; he just yelps like a drunk trying to rap. "What are you doing here?" asks the rooster. "My master wants to kill me because I'm old and can't hunt sheep anymore." "Then come with me. We'll start a gang, better than dying alone."

Shortly thereafter, they come across a cat. Half-starved, teeth loose, no longer purring, but coughing. "My old woman wants to drown me because I don't catch mice anymore." The rooster nods. "Come with me. We're the rabble now. We roam the countryside, drinking, looting, and if necessary, singing out of tune."

And last of all, an old donkey arrives. His back crooked, his hooves cracked, his eyes empty. "My master wants to kill me because I can't work anymore." The rooster grins crookedly: "Come on, Grandpa. We'll take to the streets together. Four old farts against the world."

So they set off, this miserable group of four, like the worst rock band of all time: a rooster, a dog, a cat, and a donkey. They howl, whine, and crow, and no one gives them a penny. But in the distance, they see a house—light, smoke, food. Robbers are squatting there, stuffed with wine, beer, and loot.

The four old men sneak up and look through the window: mountains of meat on the table, jugs full. And the robbers are drinking, laughing, and shouting. The rabble is practically drooling down the windowpane.

"We'll get it," whispers the rooster.

They pile up on top of each other—the donkey on the bottom, the dog on top, the cat on top, the rooster on top—and put on a concert that sounds worse than any crashed punk gig: The donkey screams like a rusty horn, the dog barks, the cat screeches, the rooster screeches even worse. The whole thing is such a hellish racket that the robbers think, "Shit, demons! Witches! Hell on earth!" They flee the house screaming, leaving everything behind.

The rabble rushes in. Eating, drinking, eating. The dog is drunk under the table, the cat with its snout in the cream pot, the donkey stuffed with bread, the rooster struts on the beer mug and bellows.

But the robbers dare to return at night. They send in a scout. He stumbles over the hissing cat in the dark and gets its claws in the face. The dog bites him in the ass, the donkey kicks his ribs, and the rooster crows his eardrums. The robber runs back, screaming: "The house is bewitched! There are monsters inside!" And the gang finally takes off.

So the rabble stays in the house, lives there until the end of their days, eating and drinking until they drop dead. No work, no master, no more beatings. Just a bunch of old, broken creatures who have swindled their way to their little piece of freedom.

Little brother and little sister

Once upon a time, there lived a pair of siblings. No Disney kitsch, no "Oh, how sweet." Nope: two frightened children who lived in a house where their father had no say and their stepmother was as toxic as three bottles of booze on an empty stomach. The old woman hated the children because they were young, pretty, and lively, while she herself smelled like yesterday's spoiled goulash.

One day she started yelling again, and the children couldn't take it anymore. They ran away. Out into the woods, barefoot, without bread, without beer, without a plan. Brother in front, sister behind.

It was hot. Thirst consumed them. And every time Little Brother wanted a drink, a spring rushed – and a voice said: "Whoever drinks from me will become a tiger." "Whoever drinks from me will become a wolf." "Whoever drinks from me will become a deer." His sister, the wiser of the two, pulled him back each time. "Little Brother, don't do it! If you drink, you're done for!" Three times he held his ground. But by the fourth time, at the Deer Stream, the fellow was done for. "Screw it, I'm drinking!" And slurp – boom, he had hooves. A fawn, wobbly legs, big eyes, but still Little Brother.

The sister howled, but what could she do? She took her new "pet" by the hand—or rather, by the antlers—and continued on with him.

They find a small hut. It's ready for demolition, but better than nothing. They live there, and the sister provides a fire, berries, and a roof over their heads. The deer, or brother, stays with her, snuggling up to her at night. No misunderstanding—pure desperation, no romance.

This is how they live, day after day. The sister becomes a forest woman, strong and silent. The little brother remains a deer, sweet to look at, but useless.

One day, a king goes hunting through the forest. He sees the girl, beautiful as a damned apparition, but with eyes that have seen more misery than any lady-in-waiting. He wants her immediately—that's how kings are. "Come with me to my castle." The sister says, "Only if my little brother can come with me." So she goes along—the deer at her side, leashed like a dog.

At first, everything goes well in the castle. The king falls in love and makes her queen. But there are envious people at court. Old women, nasty mothers-in-law, schemers with stomachs full of wine. They hate the quiet queen and her stupid deer.

One day, when the queen gives birth, the old witch (probably the cursed stepmother) intervenes. She steals the newborn and whispers poison into the king's ear: "Your wife is a witch who eats children and has a wild beast as her lover!" The king wavers, the court roars, the queen remains silent—and almost ends up burned at the stake.

But just before the fire can consume them, the truth emerges: The stepmother is exposed, along with all her lies. The little brother deer is rescued—a human again, strong and beautiful. The child reappears, alive and kicking. And the king realizes he's been an idiot.

The witch? Burned. Finally earned.

Rapunzel

Once upon a time, there was a married couple. Poor, frustrated, with nothing in the fridge but air and prayers. The woman was pregnant and had a craving, not for chocolate, but for rapunzel – a stupid herb that grew in the neighbor's garden. The problem: The neighbor wasn't a neighbor, but a witch. And witches don't like to share.

The woman cried in her husband's ear: "If I don't get Rapunzel right away, I'll die!" The man, already drunk from all the constant whining, sneaks into the garden at night and steals the stuff. The third time, the witch catches him. An old woman with eyes like knives and a voice like an ashtray. "So, buddy," she growls, "you want Rapunzel? Sure. But in return, I'll have your child as soon as it's out." The guy nods immediately. Sure, men promise anything if they want to avoid trouble.

The child came, a girl, pretty as the sun, and whoosh! – the witch came for her. She took her away and locked her in a tower with no door, no stairs, only a window at the very top. There sat Rapunzel, growing up like a bird in a cage, with hair that grew longer and thicker than any damned rope in the harbor. The witch visited her and cried from down below: "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!"

And the poor thing has to let down her mane so the old woman can climb up there. Like a damn climbing hook with split ends.

One day, a prince rides through the forest. Probably drunk, otherwise you wouldn't get lost. He hears Rapunzel singing, sweet and clear, like a homesick

angel. He stares up, thinking, "I want her." He watches the witch climb up and imitates her. "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!" And Rapunzel, who knows nothing but boredom and witch visits, pulls him up. There they stand facing each other. He drools, she blushes. Bam! Fairytale love. They meet secretly, again and again, and he whispers, "Soon I'll get you out of here." Of course, she gets pregnant. Not Disney, but biology.

One day, the witch notices that Rapunzel doesn't seem quite so innocent anymore. The old woman freaks out. She grabs Rapunzel, cuts off her hair—chop, down with the mane—and banishes her to the wilderness. Pregnant, alone, lost.

But the witch isn't finished yet. She takes the cut braids and hangs them on the window, and when the prince comes calling again, he climbs up—right into the witch's clutches. "Ha! You wanted the little one?" she shrieks. "There's nothing here but misery!" She hurls him out the window. The prince falls, lands in the thorn bushes, and the thorns tear out his eyes. Blind, bloody, stumbling through the woods like a bum after a night of drinking.

Rapunzel gives birth to twins in the wilderness—alone, without a midwife, without help. Strong as a lioness. She lives, she fights. The prince, blind and broken, wanders the world for months until he accidentally hears her singing again. He stumbles to her, she embraces him, and her tears—fairytale magic, of course—heal his eyes. He sees again. They embrace, take the children, and move to his kingdom. Happy ending, rich, royal couple, blah blah blah.

The Three Little Men in the Forest

Once upon a time, there was a girl. Her mother was dead, and her father was foolish enough to bring a new wife into the house. And as always, the new woman was a poisonous snake in a skirt. She had brought her own daughter with her, lazy as a pillow and ugly as a pub chair after five generations of buttocks.

The stepmother hated the girl because she was young, pretty, and—even worse—kind. So one day she gave her a task that smacked of murder: "Go into the forest, fetch a basket full of strawberries. Now. In the depths of winter." The girl, too well-behaved to rebel, trudges off, snow up to her knees, hands clammy, stomach empty. She searches, finds nothing but frost and hunger.

In the middle of the forest, she comes across a hut with three little old fellows inside. Dwarves, little men, you name it—three tiny creatures with beards that looked like dishbrushes and eyes as greedy as three beggars in front of a beer keg. They say, "Hey, girl, we'll help you—if you give us something to eat." The girl digs out her last bite of bread, shares, and even gives them her scarf so the old folks don't freeze. Nice to the point of self-sacrifice.

The little men consult among themselves, like three drunken judges in a back room:— The first says: "Because she was so kind, she shall become more beautiful every day."— The second: "Because she was so selfless, a gold piece shall fall from her mouth with every word."— The third: "And she shall have a king."

The girl says "Thank you" and continues walking. Suddenly, in the snow, there are strawberries, red and sweet. She gathers them into a full basket and brings it home.

When she opens the door, a gold piece immediately falls from her mouth. The stepmother stares, the stepdaughter drools. The old woman thinks, "I want that too—just for my daughter." So she sends her own brood out, same task: winter, strawberries. The daughter trudges reluctantly, grumpily, finds the hut, and meets the same three little men. But instead of giving them bread, she gives them the finger. Instead of sharing a scarf, she spits in front of the door.

The little men consult again, this time grinning: — The first says: "Because she is so lazy, she shall become uglier every day." — The second: "Because she was so unkind, a piece of shit shall fall out of her mouth with every word." — The third: "And she shall die a miserable death."

The daughter runs home, screaming, and with her first leap, a horse manure falls out of her mouth. The old woman freaks out, but it's too late.

The king comes by one day, sees the stepchild coughing gold pieces from her mouth, and thinks, "I want her. If she talks, I'll be rich." He marries her, and she lives like a queen. But the stepmother and her daughter? Do they end up lonely, ugly, smelly, laughed at by everyone.

The Three Spinners

Once upon a time, there was a girl who was pretty, young—and hated work. Especially spinning. Not the animals that squat in the basement, but the endless spinning of yarn that makes your fingers bleed and your brain go numb. The old woman, her mother, was furious: "You lazybones! If you don't learn to spin, you'll be useless to any man!"

As luck would have it, the queen passes by. A woman with eyes like steel and a voice that reminds you of tax audits from the very first word. She sees the daughter and the mother, hears the old woman's excuse: "Oh, my child loves spinning so much that we don't know what to do with the yarn!" The queen licks her lips: "Perfect. I'll take the little one back to the castle. There she can show how much she loves spinning. If she spins three rooms full of flax, she'll have my son. If not—tough luck."

In the castle, the girl sees the three rooms: each filled to the ceiling with flax. She thinks, "Shit. Even if I toil for a hundred years, I won't be able to do this." She sits down, cries, and stares at the spindle like a bum stares at the last empty beer can.

And suddenly—knock, knock, knock. Three old women come in. The first has a foot as wide and flat as a flounder. The second has a lower lip so large you could use it as an apron. The third has a thumb that looks like a hammer.

All three are so ugly that even the bottles in the cupboard would turn away. But they say: "We'll help you, child. If you just invite us to the wedding and honor us." The girl nods immediately. Sure, what does she have to lose?

The three of them sit down, and while the girl twiddles her thumbs, they spin like machines. Three rooms are instantly empty. The yarn is stacked like liquor bottles after a wedding.

The prince comes in, sees the girl, and thinks, "Wow. Pretty and hardworking. Perfect for marriage." She is chosen as the bride, the wedding is a big one, and everyone munch, drink, and laugh.

Then the three old spinners arrive. Everyone in the court stares, and the prince asks, "Who the hell are you?" The women laugh hoarsely and show off their deformed body parts: – The first: "My foot has become so wide from pedaling the spindle." – The second: "My lip has become so huge from moistening the

thread." – The third: "My thumb has become so damned fat from spinning the thread."

The prince's eyes widen. "So this is what spinning looks like? No way! My wife won't touch a spindle again as long as she lives!"

The girl grins. Her wedding is over, her wealth is secured, and she's never worked a day in her entire life.

Hansel and Gretel

Hansel and Gretel were two kids squatting in a shack where misery permeated every crack. Father: a miserable wanker of a woodcutter who had to toil all day but didn't bring home enough money to even salt a soup properly. Mother? Long gone. Instead, a stepmother – a savage rag who looked as if she'd eaten too many pickles and never recovered. The old woman had more bile in her stomach than heart.

"We have nothing left to eat," she snapped, "so we'll drag the children into the forest and leave them there. Two less mouths, and maybe that'll be enough for us!" The father moaned, staring dejectedly into his beer glass, unable to utter a coherent sentence. "But... but those are our children..." "Shut up," said the old woman. "You're too weak to drink and too weak to think." So they set off.

Hansel wasn't stupid. He grabbed pebbles and dropped them like a bum spitting empty bottle caps on the ground. And sure enough, they were found that evening. His father cried, his stepmother cursed, and the next morning it was the same story again. Only this time, Hansel had nothing but a few dry breadcrumbs. He scattered them, but the birds pecked them away. Typical: When you need it, nature bites you in the face.

They were lost. For days. Their stomachs growled, their throats were dry, their legs wobbled. And then, in the middle of the forest, suddenly there was this thing: a house made of sugar, gingerbread, and chocolate. A damn drug house for children. Like crack for desperate mouths. The two of them ran at it, tore off pieces, stuffed them in, and slurped their lips like pigs in a trough.

Then the door opened. And out came the witch. Not some stylish vamp lady, but an old, rotten bitch who stank like a mixture of ash and sour wine. Yellow teeth, crooked fingers, and eyes that said, "You're my next lunch." "Come in,

my dears," she crooned, "there's more." And the children were too hungry to realize they were stumbling into the slaughterhouse.

Inside, the witch grabbed Hansel and slammed him into a cage like a rabbit. Gretel had to clean, cook, all that shit. Every morning, the old woman came and grabbed Hansel's fingers. Hansel, clever as a bat, held out a bone. Blind as a bat, she whined, "Damn it, that brat isn't getting fat!" But eventually, she had enough. "Screw it. Tomorrow I'll roast him. Thin, fat, it doesn't matter—I want meat!"

She ordered Gretel to light the stove. The little girl trembled, her heart pounding like it had drunk three bottles of vodka. The old woman screamed, "Look inside to see if it's hot enough!" "I don't know how," whispered Gretel. "Like this!" The witch crawled forward herself, bent down, and at that moment—*zack*—Gretel pushed her in. Door closed, bolted. The screaming went right through her bones, then it stank of burnt flesh.

Gretel freed Hansel, and the two of them rummaged through the house, finding gold, pearls, everything. They stuffed their pockets so full they could barely walk. They left the forest and returned to their father. He sat there, miserable, pretending to be happy. The old woman had died by then, probably suffocated by her own hatred.

And so they lived—rich, but scarred. Children who had sold their parents. A father too cowardly to live. And a witch who burned in the oven like a final warning: In this world, anyone will eat you if you don't push first.

The three snake leaves

Once upon a time, there was a young man, one of those poor wretches who have nothing but two healthy arms and a mind that doesn't think more than necessary. He set out into the world because at home, all that awaited him was hunger, dirt, and boredom.

On the way, he stumbles upon a princess—the kind who's supposedly dressed in velvet and silk, but who's actually a real nut. Pretty as a bottle of wine after two weeks of sobriety, but with a catch: she was so depressed and morbid that she told all the guys beforehand: "Whoever marries me has to swear: If I die

first, you'll go to the grave with me. Right after." Sure, everyone else ran away. But our idiot nodded: "Sounds fair." And voila—wedding.

He wasn't unhappy, she was beautiful, he finally had something to eat, a bed, and people to carry his ass. All was well until the princess got really sick. Not a cold, not a fever, but a real death. She collapsed, died, and the king had her laid in a tomb. The newlywed husband stood there, the oath hanging in his throat, and thought, "Shit, now I guess I'm going to die too."

They locked him in the crypt, candle in hand, cold stone under his ass, dead woman beside him. He knew he would die in a few days. But then three snakes crawled across the floor. Two slithered toward the dead woman as if they wanted to eat her. He drew his sword and hacked them down. Then came the third, a clever snake woman. She saw the corpses of her comrades, hissed, ran away—and came back. With three green leaves. He placed one on the dead snakes—and lo and behold: they came back to life.

The guy grabbed the leaves and stuck them on his wife's face. And damn it: the princess was breathing again. He could hardly believe it. She was dead, now she was alive.

Everything would have been fine if the princess hadn't had a cold snake in her heart. She returned to the palace, smiled, kissed her husband—and secretly started having sex with someone else. Some cabin boy, young, fit, smelling of salt and rum. The princess whispered in his ear: "Let's get rid of my husband. We'll ship him off the ship, throw him overboard."

And that's exactly what happened. On the high seas, they grabbed the poor fellow and threw him into the water. Unfortunately for them, he had the three snake leaves with him. He paddled, swam, survived, was fished out by sailors, and returned to the king.

The old man listened to the story, and his daughter, the princess, stood by and acted as if she were innocent. But the truth stank. The king was no wimp: He ordered the fake daughter and her lover to be locked in a barrel, nailed inside, and thrown into the sea. He shut the barrel, and off they went. No happy ending for the two of them.

But the young man got the throne. Stupidity had turned into loyalty, loyalty into power, and the snake leaves hung framed in the chamber—as a reminder that life is a cynical pig that first undermines you and then sometimes saves you.

The White Snake

Once upon a time, there was a king so fat and important that he hoarded more secrets than an entire tax office. The guy ate his fill every day, but there was something special: every day, he was brought a bowl of white snake. No one knew why. He ate them secretly, only he, and afterward, he could hear things no normal person should hear—like the thoughts of animals, birds, and cattle. Probably also what his courtiers thought of him when he farted.

Now, there was a young servant at court, a fellow with more curiosity in his head than caution in his ass. One day, when no one was looking, he lifted the lid of the bowl and tasted a piece of the white snake. Whoosh! His head went "boom!" Suddenly, he understood the language of animals. The flies in the kitchen screamed "Get out of here!" The dogs slandered the king, and the sparrows outside squabbled over breadcrumbs.

But as is often the case: as soon as you have something special, it becomes dangerous. Soon, a silver ring was stolen from him. Suspicion fell on him because he was such a silly little servant. The death penalty if he didn't clear things up. The boy heard the birds chirping and snatched that a duck had swallowed the ring. He caught it, cut it open, and pulled out the ring. "Here, the proof." Thus, he saved himself. The king, impressed, let him go, and the boy went out into the world.

On his way, he encountered all sorts of troubled creatures: a few fish wriggling on the bank. Everyone would have left them alone, but the boy threw them back into the water. "Thanks, brother," they gurgled, "we'll remember that." Further into the forest, he saw a colony of ants being trampled by a horse. He chased the beasts away, and the ants grumbled, "Okay, little one, we owe you." Farther on, a few raven chicks in their nest, hungry, almost dead. He cut his hand and gave them his flesh to eat. They pecked, smacked their lips, and said, "We won't forget that."

Of course, he would need these favors later. Because he ended up with a king who had a daughter—beautiful, cold, and with more arrogance in her eyes than coke in her heart. Anyone who wanted her had to solve three tasks, all impossible. If you failed, off with your head.

First task: "Fetch the ring I threw into the sea." Clear case. The fish surfaced and brought the thing back to him. Second task: "Gather all the grains from the

hundred sacks I scattered in the grass by tomorrow morning." The ants came, marching like drunken soldiers, gathering everything. Third task: "Fetch the golden apple from the Tree of Life." The ravens plunged into the sky, fluttered back down, and brought the thing back.

The boy passed everything like a dream. The princess had no excuse. So she had to marry him.

And what happened? The guy who was once a simple servant suddenly found himself a king's consort. And why? Because he'd tried a little snake soup and because he wasn't quite as much of an asshole as the rest of humanity.

Straw, coal and bean

Once upon a time, there was an old woman who lived in such miserable conditions that even the rats fled her home in droves. She wanted to cook some beans—nothing fancy, just what a poor stomach could stomach. While she was cooking, a tragedy occurred: a bean fell to the floor, a glowing coal leaped from the stove, and a straw rolled in after it. Three miserable leftovers, three everyday cripples.

And as fairy tales go, they could speak. Probably because the old woman had so much smoke in her house that even the dirt started to speak.

The bean, fat and vain, grumbled, "Shit, if I end up in the cooking pot, I'll be mush." The coal, still smoldering, hissed, "I'll burn up here alone. Nobody remembers me." The straw laughed dryly, "I'm so useless that not even a drunk would use me for snuff."

So they vowed to leave the world together. A self-help group for the superfluous: Bean, Coal, Straw.

They set off, stumbling through the landscape. Eventually, they came to a stream. Not a huge river, just a trickle—but for a trio like that, that was the Atlantic. The straw swelled up: "Don't panic, guys. I'm going to lie down, and you can step over me." It fell sideways into the water, the bean giggled and hopped over. When the coal came to it, it crackled dangerously. A hot glow, a close call. As soon as it reached the middle, the straw caught fire. *Fffft!* And in seconds, it burned as if someone had poured gasoline on it. The coal hissed, fell into the water, and perished.

The bean stood on the bank, bursting with laughter. She laughed so hard that her stomach burst open. Her entrails spilled out, bean skin everywhere. She almost jumped – until a tailor came by. He saw the ripped bean, pulled out a needle and thread, and sewed it up. And to make it hold, he used black thread. That's why beans still have that damn black seam on their stomachs to this day.

Of the Fisherman and His Wife

Once upon a time, there was a fisherman, a poor wretch, who sat by the sea all day, fishing rod in hand, hoping something would bite his mouth—oh no, the hook. He was so poor that he always had to dilute his beer to make it last longer. But his wife, Ilsebill, wasn't poor in the mouth. She could roar like a broken fog horn.

One day, the fisherman pulled out a fish—not just any fish, but a flounder, fat, plump, and chatty. "Hey, brother, let me live! I'm an enchanted prince!" The fisherman was too soft to keep him. So he threw him back. Satisfied, he went home and thought, "Good day." But Ilsebill, the old hyena, was waiting at home. "You idiot! You had a wishing fish and didn't ask for anything? Go back right now and make us a wish!"

So he trudged back to the sea, which was already a bit murky, and called out, "Manntje, Manntje, Timpe Te, Flounder, Flounder in the sea..." and so on. The Flounder surfaced, annoyed. "Well, what do you want?" "My wife wants... a cabin." "Deal." Poof. They had a cabin.

But Ilsebill wasn't satisfied. Of course not. "Hut? What's this all about? Are you kidding me? I want a castle!" The fisherman trotted back to the flounder. He was even grumpier, but he complied. Bam! Castle.

Ilsebill turned up the volume. "Castle? Pah! I want to be queen!" The fisherman whined, but left. Flounder: "All right." Bang, queen.

But she didn't stop. "Queen? Boring. I want Empress!" Butt: "All right, Empress."

"Empress? Pff. I want to be Pope!" The fisherman: "But Ilsebill, that's not possible, the Pope is a man!" "Shut up and run!" Butt groaned, making her the Pope.

And then things got serious. Ilsebill, completely high on power, screamed: "I've had enough! I want to be God. I want the sun and the moon and all the stars under my ass!" The fisherman, half dead from constantly running back and forth, mumbled the words and called the flounder. The sea was now black, stank of sulfur, waves as high as houses. The flounder stared at him, eyes red, mouth annoyed: "Tell your old woman to go fuck herself." Poof. Everything was gone. They were sitting back in their miserable old shack, crooked, empty, poorer than before.

Ilsebill was still screaming, the fisherman sat apathetically in the corner, staring out to sea as if another beer keg were about to wash ashore. But nothing more happened. The end.

The Brave Little Tailor

Once upon a time, there was a little tailor. A ragged, thread-loving fellow who sat on his stool all day, needle in hand, belly empty, head full of lint. Not a hero, not a warrior, just someone who mended shirts and secretly dreamed of the great life.

One day, he bought himself a piece of jam with his last few copper coins. He sat down, spread it on his bread, and boom, the flies came. Not one, not two—a whole damn swarm, like in a pub when you take your eyes off your beer for a moment. He freaked out, hit them with a rag—*Gossip!*—seven birds with one stone.

The guy stared at the dead beasts, grinning like a madman, and thought, "Screw the flies, this is my breakthrough! If I can kill seven flies, I can kill anything." So he embroidered a belt that read, "Seven at a stroke," and strutted out like Rambo.

On his way, he passed a giant. A lump of a man, his hands as big as shovels and his brain as empty as an empty beer mug. "What does that say on your belt?" grumbled the giant. "Seven at one blow," boasted the little tailor. The giant stared, only half understanding, and thought, "Shit, he means humans!" Then he got scared. They had a few tests of strength, and the little tailor outsmarted him every time—like a bar bully who's just bluffing, but everyone believes him. In the end, the giant took off, full of respect.

Word got around. Soon the story was: "A brave little tailor travels through the country. He kills seven in one fell swoop!" No one asked what he really meant. That's how it always goes: The main thing is big talk, no one checks the facts.

The king heard about it. And because he was a coward wearing a crown, he sent the little tailor to defeat monsters: two giants, a unicorn, and a wild boar. All creatures that scared the hell out of others. And the tailor? A trick every time. With the giants, he had them smash each other to death. The unicorn rammed its head into a tree, and the boar was chased into a trap. No blood, no courage—just cunning, but effective.

In the end, the king stood there and thought, "If I don't get rid of him, he'll take the throne away from me." So he offered him the princess as his wife, with half the kingdom as a dowry – in the hope that the tailor would eventually shoot himself in the foot. The little tailor got married, became rich, sat in the palace, drank wine, fucked the princess, and laughed his head off.

But at night, when he lay in bed, he sweated. Because he knew it was all a lie. He was still just a tailor who had killed seven flies.

Cinderella

Once upon a time there was a girl who was only **Cinderella** because she looked like she'd spent her whole life sleeping under the stove in a seedy bar. Her mother was dead, her father a pathetic idiot who'd remarried. The new woman was a real venomous snake and brought with her two daughters so ugly and conceited that looking at them made your eyes sting with beer piss.

Cinderella had nothing in life except dirt under her fingernails, soot in her hair, and the certainty that every day brought a new humiliation. Her stepsisters stole everything, her old woman picked on her, and her father pretended he didn't see anything – the main thing was that his beer mug stayed full.

Then came the invitation to the prince's grand ball. The brat wanted to get married and was looking for the fairest girl in the land. The stepsisters shrieked with joy, polished their faces, and shouted in Cinderella's face: "You stay home, bitch, and sort lentils from the ashes."

The old woman tipped a whole sack of lentils into the embers, grinned, and thought, "There you go, keep yourself busy while we dance."

But Cinderella had connections. Not to rich uncles or lovely aunts, but to the damned birds. They fluttered over and pecked the lentils out of the ashes as if they had nothing better to do. "The good ones in the pot, the bad ones in the crop" – and presto, the mess was done.

She still wanted to go to the ball. She went into her room, prayed at her mother's grave, and there grew a tree that lowered a dress and golden shoes to her. No fairy, no magic show—just a tree that was in a better mood than half the family.

So Cinderella suddenly stood in the palace, no longer like a soot child, but like a damned goddess. The prince stared at her, drooling, and no one recognized her. They danced together for three evenings, and each time she ran off before things got serious. But the brat was as hot for her as a tomcat for catnip.

On the last evening, he set a trap: He had the stairs coated with pitch. As Cinderella tried to escape, one of her golden shoes stuck. The prince found it, picked it up, and swore: "The one who fits this shoe will be my wife."

The stepsisters tried to force it. One chopped off her toes, the other her heel, just to squeeze the shoe in. The prince, too stupid to look, almost married one of them – but the birds whistled: "Blood in your shoe, you complete idiot!" So he went back. And finally, Cinderella tried on the shoe. Whoosh – it fit perfectly.

Then the prince realized who she was. He took her with him and made her his wife. And what about the stepsisters? They wanted to ingratiate themselves and be present at the wedding. But the birds pecked out their eyes until they stumbled around blind.

And Cinderella sat there, in gold and splendor, and knew: without birds, without a tree, without a bit of luck, she would still be an ash girl sorting lentils.

The riddle

Once upon a time, there was a prince—young, handsome, and bored as hell. The court was dull, the feasts stale, the women too easy to get. He wanted to get out, find adventure, something to keep him awake. So he took a few companions and set off. On the way, they had nothing but bread, wine, and far too much time.

One day, they met an old woman by the side of the road. A ragged wretch, half-starved, half-mad. The prince, still politely brought up, gave her something to eat. The old woman grinned, a grin with more wrinkles than a dried-up river, and said, "Because you're not quite such an asshole like most of the people out there, I want to give you a tip: Go to the next village; there's a princess there. She has a problem—and you might be able to play into her hands."

The prince stomped off. At the castle, they explained to him: The princess had been forced to swear to marry only the man who could give her a riddle she couldn't solve. Unfortunately, she was incredibly clever. So far, she had unmasked every suitor, and those who lost were hanged. The courtyard was filled with dead idiots who thought they could be smarter than a bored princess.

The prince thought, "Screw it, risk is better than boredom." So he stood up and said, "I'll give you a riddle, baby." The princess laughed sharply, "Go on. But if I solve it, you'll be hanging."

He had taken precautions. Before the journey, he had prepared a trick: He took a dead raven, a dead horse, and stuck it in an old cornfield, wrapping the whole thing like a disgusting burrito of carcass, ash, and mold. He had the stinking package hidden in the forest along the way.

His riddle was: "What is as green as grass, has a braid of gold, is dead and yet still alive?" The princess pondered, bit her lip, questioned her ladies, and rummaged through her books. Nothing. She secretly sent her servants after him to eavesdrop. But the prince had suspected it – he sent them on the wrong trail. They found nothing, except the stench in the forest, and thought it was just a coincidence.

The next day, she stood before him, her eyes red from brooding, and had to confess: "I don't know. I lost."

He grinned broadly, arrogantly, a little sadistically. Because he knew: now he was going to get the bride.

The wedding took place, grand and loud, with far too much wine and far too many speeches. But the prince saw the princess glaring at him. Not out of love, not out of respect—but with anger. Because she had been forced to submit. And he knew: this wouldn't be a fairytale with a happy ending; this would be a marriage like a war.

Mr. Korbes

Once upon a time, there was a hen and a rooster who were bored. No food, no grain, no fun – so they thought, "Screw it, we'll go on a trip to see Mr. Korbes." Who the guy was? Some weird bastard, no one knew for sure. But in fairy tales, they say: better go, or you'll regret it.

So the rooster and hen climbed into a small cart that squeaked like a rusty shopping cart. Along the way, they picked up some company—not friends, more like a pile of leftover junk with legs: a duck that looked like it had spent too many nights drinking by the pond, a cat with dark circles under its eyes that had already eaten all the mice but was still hungry, a needle, rusty and sharp, like a junkie with aggression, a pin, thin and bent, and a piece of whetstone, heavy and blunt, but there.

You've rarely seen a better group of bums.

So they drove to Mr. Korbes's. He wasn't home, so they made themselves comfortable, like guests you never invited: all drunk, all greedy, all not giving a damn.

That evening, Mr. Korbes returned. A guy who, upon entering, looked like he was going to sue his neighbors if they farted too loudly. He saw the place full of creatures and junk and cursed. "What the hell is this?"

And then it started. The whole gang attacked him like a Friday night bar fight: The cat scratched his face bloody.

The duck pecked his leg. The pin pierced his foot. The needle stabbed him in the ass. The grindstone smacked him on the head. And the chicken and the rooster stood on top of the table, crowing and flapping like it was the best comedy show of their lives.

In the end, Mr. Korbes lay there, badly injured, half dead or whole. The animals celebrated as if they had conquered the world, and no one asked: Why, exactly? Why Korbes, of all people? Answer: It doesn't matter. The fairy tale says: "He must have been a bad man." There's no other explanation. Maybe he was an ass, maybe he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The Juniper Tree (Machandelboom)

Once upon a time, there was a rich man, but being rich doesn't make you happy, only fat and full. He had a wife who desperately wanted a child. She sat under the juniper tree (a juniper tree, as the old folks call it), sighed, and longed for a son so much that she almost yearned to death. Finally, she had her child—but she died in childbirth. Bam, gone, day off.

The man cried briefly, then did what such men always do: he got himself a new wife. And the new one was a cold-hearted fury, with a daughter who was the spitting image of her. But she hated the son from her first marriage. Because he wasn't her blood, not her pride.

One day she was boiling with hatred and said: "Come, boy, get yourself an apple from the chest." The boy dutifully opened the lid, and she —*gossip!*— slammed the lid shut, popping his head off like a cork from a champagne bottle. Blood spurted, his body twitched. The stepmother grinned.

But now there was a problem: a dead boy. So she chopped the body into pieces, boiled it, and made a stew. When the father came home, she placed the pot on the table for him. "Eat, darling, eat." And he spooned it up, smacked his lips, belched, and said, "This tastes better than ever." No wonder—he ate his own son.

But the daughter, the stepsister, had seen everything. She howled, gathered the bones in a cloth, and buried them beneath the juniper tree. And lo and behold—from the roots emerged a bird. Not an ordinary sparrow, but a magnificent bird that sang so loudly that people stopped wherever it appeared.

The bird flew over the land and sang: "My mother who bore me, my stepmother who beat me, my father who ate me, my sister who buried me under the almond tree."

Everyone who heard the song went crazy. A goldsmith gave him a necklace, a shoemaker red shoes, a miller a millstone—all because the song captivated them. The bird collected the gifts and flew back to the house.

Inside sat the stepmother, the daughter, and the father. The girl put on the golden chain, the father danced in his red shoes like an old clown, and the stepmother got a millstone on her head. *Cracks!* Dead.

Then the bird transformed again—into the son, alive, beautiful, free. He took his sister in his arms, the father finally stopped eating, and the juniper tree rustled in the wind as if to say, "So, you assholes, that's how it's done."

Little Red Riding Hood

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who always wore a red cap, so loud that everyone could see her from afar. No wonder she was **Little Red Riding Hood**. Her mother was a village troll who chattered and peeled turnips all day. One day, she stuffed a basket into the child's hand—cake, wine, and other things—and said, "Take this to your sick grandmother. But stay on the path! No detours, no nonsense." Clear mistake: tell a child what not to do, and that's exactly what they do.

So Little Red Riding Hood trudged off, as happy as a drunken little kid with a packed lunch. And then the wolf came. An old street dog with a hungry belly and eyes that had seen too many nights in the dark. "Well, little one, where are you going?" She chattered like a radio: "To Grandma's, cake and wine." No instinct, no caution, nothing. The wolf grinned and thought, "Cool, two meals at once: first Grandma, then the brat."

He tricked her: "Look at those beautiful flowers over there! Make a bouquet, Grandma will be delighted." Little Red Riding Hood was immediately distracted. Picking flowers, lalala, as stupid as a goldfish.

The wolf took advantage of the opportunity, ran to Grandma's house, and knocked. "Who's there?" "Little Red Riding Hood." The door opened, and Grandma was gone. One bite, down it, not even a burp. Then he slipped into her nightgown, put on his cap, and lay down in bed. A perverse image—the wolf with a frilly hood, like a nasty fetishist.

Little Red Riding Hood finally arrived, bouquet of flowers in hand, grinning silly. She saw her "grandmother" and marveled: "Oh, Grandmother, what big eyes you have!" "So I can see you better." "What big ears!" "So I can hear you better." "What big teeth!" "So I can eat you better!"

And then—snap!—the wolf pounced on her. No hesitation, no waiting. He swallowed her like a guy downing his beer in one gulp. Grandma and granddaughter—both in his stomach.

But the wolf had overdone it. He'd eaten too much, he was too heavy. He snored, wheezed, and lay there like a fat drunkard after an all-you-can-eat buffet. A hunter came by. He saw the beast snoring, its belly as big as a barrel. "He's swallowed something that isn't his," he thought. Instead of shooting him right away, he cut open his belly – and lo and behold: Grandma and Little Red Riding Hood climbed out, stinking but alive. Then they stuffed the wolf's belly with stones and sewed it up. When the wolf woke up, he tried to run away – but the stones pulled him down. He toppled over and died a miserable death.

Little Red Riding Hood swore never to stray from the path again. But we know: kids swear a lot until the next flower beckons.

The Bremen Town Musicians

Once upon a time, there was a donkey who was old, broken, and worn out by life like an old coachman after ten years of booze. His master wanted to get rid of him – "He eats more than he carries!" – so he was to receive the coup de grâce. The donkey thought, "Screw it, before I die here in the mud, I'll move to Bremen. They say there are musicians there. I can't sing, but I can bellow like a broken funnel. Maybe that'll be enough."

On the way, he met a dog. Gray, toothless, barely able to bark. The owner wanted to chain him up and kill him. The dog howled, "It's all over." The donkey said, "Come with me to Bremen. We'll start a band. If we don't make it, we can always beg." The dog nodded, "Better than dead."

A little further on, they met a cat. Dilapidated, its fur shaggy, it didn't want to chase mice anymore. The old woman wanted to drown them. The cat meowed, "I'm done." The donkey laughed, "Come on, let's have a combo. You hiss into the microphone, I'll yell into the horn." The cat said, "Fuck it, I'm in."

Then they found a rooster. He was sitting on the dunghill, pecking for air. The farmer wanted to throw him into the cooking pot. "I'm screwed," he croaked. "Not if you move with us to Bremen," shouted the donkey. "We need a lead vocalist. You can scream like a fucking punk singer."

So the four losers set off. No instruments, only misery. They wanted to go to Bremen, to pursue a big career. But as it often happens, none of them ever made it there.

In the evening, they grew tired and came upon a robber's house. Light, laughter, the smell of roast meat, beer, and tobacco. The gang sat inside, drinking, munching their lips. The animals drooled with hunger.

"We'll get it," growled the dog. They piled up: donkey on the bottom, dog on top, cat on top, rooster on top – and then they gave their "concert." The donkey brayed like a rusty bus, the dog barked like a broken engine, the cat screeched like a drunken old woman on the block, and the rooster bellowed like a dying trumpet player. Together, they made a sound that would have sent any radio host to the loony bin.

The robbers got scared. "Demons!" they screamed, and ran out into the night, leaving everything behind. The animals rushed in, gorged like pigs, gulped down the wine, and gulped down some more until they collapsed.

Later, the robbers sent one of them back. He crept into the darkness, trying to recapture the house. But the cat jumped on his face and scratched his face bloody. The dog bit him in the ass. The donkey kicked him almost to death, and the rooster screamed in his ear until he went deaf. The robber ran out and shouted to the others: "The house is bewitched, full of monsters!" So they let it go.

And the four? They stayed. No Bremen, no fame, no career. Just a warm roof, food, leftover wine, and the freedom of never being under the whip again.

The Singing Bone

Once upon a time, there was a king whose land was ravaged by a wild boar. The beast was no ordinary pig, but a monster: as big as an ox, with tusks like rusty knives, roaming through the forests, tearing people to pieces, digging up fields, and filling everything with dirt. The king, fat and lazy like most crowned men, promised: "Whoever kills the boar will get my daughter and half my kingdom." A classic line – others toil and die, he takes the bait.

There were two brothers. The older one: greedy, cynical, a bastard. The younger one: naive, kind-hearted, but not quite right in the head. Both set off, each with a spear, a bit of bread, and a sack of beer. On the way, they came to a valley, and there stood a small man, a kind of gnome, with a beard like a mold. The younger one shared his bread and a sip of beer with him, while the older one just laughed and said, "Fuck off, dwarf."

Guess who the gnome helped? The younger one, of course. He showed him the way to the boar. The rascal grabbed his spear, waited, and when the beast came—stinking, grunting, half-hell, half-sow—he rammed the weapon right through its heart. Boom, the boar toppled over, dead. The younger one cheered: "Now home to the king, bride, and kingdom!"

But the older one, who was trudging behind him, thought, "Screw it, I'm not going to let that idiot overtake me." As soon as they reached the river, he grabbed his brother and rammed him into the water. Drowned like a kitten. Then he dragged the dead boar home himself and celebrated. Crown, princess, half the kingdom—all his. But the younger one stayed down below, silent, dead, forgotten.

Until one day, a shepherd found bones on the riverbank. White, smooth, beautiful, but somehow eerie. He carved a flute out of them—or some kind of trumpet—and, lo and behold, the bone sang. Not a melody, but words:

"Here you blow from my little leg, my brother struck me dead against the stone, then brought the boar to the king, and I was left lying there, poor man."

The shepherd got scared and ran to the king with his flute. The king listened, blew it, and the dead boy's voice lamented. Everything came out. The older boy was caught, tortured, and executed. Depending on the version, hanged, beheaded, or quartered—it didn't matter, as long as it was over.

And the younger one? Dead remained dead. No happy ending, no resurrection. Just a singing bone vomiting out the truth as if it were a Bukowski poem in bar form.

The devil with the three golden hairs

Once upon a time, there was a boy who was born with a lucky skin. This meant that every idiot in the village immediately knew: "That brat will be rich one day." And because wealth always makes people jealous, even as a baby, he had more enemies than a barkeeper with a beer that's too thin.

A king heard about it, a power-hungry bastard who couldn't bear to see some peasant endanger his throne. He had the child stolen and wanted to drown it. But as luck would have it: lucky skin. The child didn't drown. Instead, it grew up big, strong, and impudent.

One day, it returned to court, unaware of its true identity. The king immediately recognized the danger. So he grinned like a gambler and said, "Oh, my boy, I just have a small task for you. Bring me three golden hairs from the devil's head, and then you may marry my daughter." Sure, he thought, "Impossible! The boy will die on the way, problem solved."

The lucky guy wasn't deterred. He set off with nothing but his optimism, which was as tough as old pub sausage.

On the way, he came to a village. The people there were complaining: "We used to have a well, bubbling water, everything was fine. Now it's dry. Find out why!" "Sure," said the brat, "I'll ask the devil."

Next village. An apple tree that no longer bore fruit. "Help us, little one!" – "Yeah, I'll ask the devil."

Then a town. The ferryman had to ferry everyone across the river, but no one would relieve him. He rowed like an ass and couldn't get away. "Ask the devil how I get out of this mess!"

So he continued on, and finally, he stood before the gates of hell. There sat the devil's grandmother—no joke, the devil had a grandmother. She was old, toothless, but not all that bad. She said, "Little one, you're screwed if my grandson catches you. But I'll help you because you remind me of my own grandson, only less shitty."

So she hid him under her apron. When the devil came home—big, stinking of sulfur and drunkenness—he lay down, his head heavy with the fires of hell. Grandma stroked his hair, and every time he dozed off, she ripped out a golden hair. He roared and cursed, but she talked him back to it.

At the first crack, she casually asked him, "Tell me, why is the well dry?" The devil said, "Because there's a frog in it, and no one has gotten it out. Do that, and the water will flow again."

Zack, first hair.

The second: "Why isn't the apple tree bearing fruit?" "Because a mouse is gnawing at the roots. Kill it, and it will bloom again."

Second hair gone.

At the third: "And why does the ferryman always stay in his job?" The devil laughed: "Because he always hands the oars to the next idiot. If he just hands you the paddle and says 'Your turn!', you're free."

Third hair out. The kid had his answers and the hair in his pocket.

He returned, solved all the problems: the well flowed again, the tree bore fruit, the ferryman handed the oars over to an idiot, and he was free. The boy returned home with the three golden hairs, grinned in the king's face, and the king had to give up his daughter.

The end of the story: The king wanted to explode with rage, but bad luck. The lucky guy was now sitting on the throne, fucking the princess and drinking wine from golden cups, while the king probably died in the corner, full of hatred and with empty pockets.

The lambs and the young kids

Once upon a time, there were a couple of young goats, still wet behind the ears, and a couple of lambs, just as silly. All of them children, hopping around in the grass as if life were nothing but a playground and sunshine. They had no idea about the world, no idea that everything outside was full of wolves, butchers, and misfortune.

They played catch all day, jumping, bleating, and whining. Silly and content, like drunken little kids with sugar in their blood. At some point, they had a brilliant idea: "Hey, let's have a race!" – typical offspring: thinking they're racehorses, but they're not even slaughtered animals with a future.

So they line up, the kids bleating, the lambs bleating. Ready, set, go! They start running, fur flying, legs kicking, and everything looks like fun.

Then, in mid-race, one of the lambs stumbles. It rolls down the slope, hits a rock, and falls to the ground, its leg broken. The other animals pause for a moment, staring stupidly, unsure whether to laugh or howl. Finally, they keep running, because no one wants to let the fun be spoiled.

In the evening, the shepherd arrives. He sees the broken lamb, picks it up, and thinks, "Screw it, it's no longer worth it." And he slits its throat. So simple, so

direct. For him, it was just one more dinner; for the lamb, it was the end of the race.

And the little goats? They stood there, wide-eyed, and understood for the first time: Life is not a playground, but a damned slaughterhouse.

Hansel-stupid

Once upon a time there was a guy who everyone called Hansel-stupid. Why? Because he was stupid. Not a genius, not a hero, but one of those guys who always lose at cards, are always the first to vomit when they're drunk, and never hold a hammer properly when they're working. His brothers made fun of him, his old men scolded him, and he just grinned stupidly as if it were all a bad joke.

One day, he heard that the king was playing a riddle game in the castle: Whoever brought something to the table that no one could guess would get his daughter as his wife and half the kingdom. All the clever, learned, and boastful people set off, laden with treasures, gold, precious stones, and sayings. Stupid Hans trudged along behind—with nothing but his boundless simplicity and a sack full of stupid ideas.

On the way, he saw a dead crow, flattened by a cart, and it stank. Little Hans thought, "Great, I'll take that one with me." Then he found an old wooden shoe sole, worn and rotten. "Good, too." Then a pile of dirt from the side of the road. "Perfect."

He trudged into the castle with this garbage bag. Everyone laughed: "What does that idiot want with this stuff?" The king, bored, asked: "Well, what did you bring?" Little Hans grinned, pulled out the dead crow, and said: "Here, for the soup." The courtiers wrinkled their noses. Then he pulled out the wooden sole. "Here, as a lid for the pot." Laughter erupted in the hall. Then he tipped the dirt onto the floor. "And here's the spice."

Everyone thought, "He's crazy." But the princess, bored like all princesses, laughed so hard she almost fell off her chair. She said, "That's exactly it! Finally, someone who doesn't come with gold and silly phrases, but with real madness. I want him."

The king cursed, but he had promised. Stupid Hans got the princess, half the kingdom, and was soon sitting on silk cushions with wine in his cup, while the clever ones outside continued to babble.

And if you had seen him there: the same stupid grin on his face, only now with gold chains and a woman on his arm who understood that stupidity sometimes fucks better than all the clever arrogance.

The three languages

Once upon a time, there was a rich man who had a son. The son wasn't a genius, more like the kind of guy who got confused even when counting coins. So his father sent him out into the world: "Learn something, or you'll be an idiot forever." So the boy set off.

He returned to his first teacher after a year and proudly declared, "I've learned to understand dog language." His father slapped his forehead. "Dog language? Are you kidding me? I'll pay you money, and you'll learn to bark?" He sent him away again.

After a year with his second teacher, he learned the language of birds. He returned: "Dad, now I understand what the sparrows, crows, and pigeons are chattering about." The old man almost vomited. "Even worse! Now you'll hear chirping all day long. Loser!"

So off they went a third time. After a year, the boy came home: "I can now speak the language of frogs." His father yelled: "Enough! You're dumber than a sack of potatoes. I disown you. Get lost!"

So the boy ended up alone on the streets. He wandered around, hungry, begging. But because he understood animals, he heard things others never heard.

One day, he heard dogs barking: "There's a corpse lying underground, not properly buried." He told the people, they dug – and sure enough, there was the body. He received money as thanks.

Another time he heard birds chirping: "The king will soon die because no one tells him what to do." He went and told the story, the king got away, and the boy got even more money.

And finally, at a lake, he heard frogs croaking: "The princess has to get married soon, but she's waiting for the right man." He grinned. "Then it's my turn."

And so it happened that the supposedly stupid boy, whom his father had rejected, went through life chatting with a dog, a bird, and a frog, solving riddles, averting disasters – and in the end, he got the princess, along with half the kingdom and a pile of wine in the cellar.

The father crawled up, wailing, "Forgive me, son." The boy drank his cup empty and said, "Fuck you, old man. You should have listened to the dogs."

The clever Else

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Else. They called her "clever," but it was meant as ironically as calling the village idiot "professor." Else could talk, she could think—but she could do everything to death, until no one knew what was going on anymore.

One day, her parents sent her to the cellar to get some beer. She trudged downstairs and saw a rusty hammer hanging on the wall, right above the barrel. Else began to think: *"If I ever get married, maybe I'll have a child. And when the child grows up, it might be sent to the cellar to fetch beer. And then—whoosh—the hammer falls and smashes its skull. Then the child is dead. All my fault. Oh God, how terrible!"*

Else sat down on the barrel lid and started crying, her eyes watering, as if the drama had already happened.

The parents were waiting upstairs. "Where's the beer?" They sent a maid down, who saw Else sitting there, tears streaming down her face. "What's going on?" Else told the whole idiotic story about the hammer, the child, and the danger of death. The maid joined in the crying.

Then the farmhand came down, then the neighbors, then half the street. Everyone sat there, moaning and crying about the hypothetical dead child who hadn't even been born yet. Upstairs, the parents sat and said, "That's our clever Else—always thinks a little further."

Finally, Hans came along, a young man looking for a wife. He heard the story, saw Else sitting there crying with puffy eyes, and thought, "She's smart—she's thinking." He married her.

But the happiness didn't last. Hans quickly realized that Else wasn't smart, but an annoying thinker who chewed over everything until nobody wanted to live anymore. One day, he sent her out into the field to mow the lawn. Else cut the grass so long that it was useless. Hans scolded her, so she cut it too short. It was all crap. Hans exclaimed, "You're dumber than oxen!"

Then Else thought: "*Maybe I'm not Else at all. Maybe I'm someone else. Maybe I'm not even here.*" And at some point, she ran like a madman through the village, looking for herself, asking everyone: "Am I the clever Else?" People stared, laughed, and shouted: "No, it's not you."

Else ran away, further and further, deeper and deeper into the night, until no one knew where to go. Probably died somewhere, alone with her thoughts, in a ditch, howling at the moon.

The Tailor in Heaven

Once upon a time, there was a tailor. Not a hero, not a king, just a worn-out thread-fuck who spent all day mending trousers and sewing on buttons, and who dreamed at night of being something better. One evening, he stared up at the sky, blue as a drunken eye, and thought: "*Screw it, I'd be better off up there. In heaven. Among the saints, the angels. There I'd call the shots for the big guys.*"

So he set off, completely without a plan, like someone who says after three beers, "I'm going on a trip around the world." He climbed and climbed, stumbled, and slurred until he actually reached the gates of heaven. Peter, God's old doorman, stood there—a grumpy guy who looked like he hadn't been properly drunk in 2,000 years.

"What do you want, little tailor?" "Come in and join the party. I deserve it." Peter scratched his beard. "Not really. But God's busy right now, so fine by me—but no nonsense."

Inside: golden halls, all white, all light. The angels buzzed around, so innocent that just looking at them gave you a hangover. Saints in long robes, halos,

hosannas—the whole thing was overdose. The tailor grinned and thought: *"Cool, finally with the VIPs."*

But of course, he couldn't keep his mouth shut. Soon he started interfering in everything, like a drunk in a stranger's group. He interfered in the angels' kitchen, in the prayers, in the seating arrangements. And then it hit the fan: God had a free chair in the circle of judges—those who were supposed to watch over the world. The tailor talked his way in, sat down, and acted tough.

He looked down at the earth, saw farmers toiling, children crying, women bowing their knees, and instead of feeling pity, he thought: *"They're all idiots. I'm up here, so I'm in charge."*

But then he remembered his old vice: He couldn't live without food. And one day, while the saints were acting wise, he sneaked into the garden and plucked an apple from the tree, which was actually taboo. "Just one," he thought. But one became two, then three.

The angels noticed, and Peter roared: "The tailor is eating our sacred apples!" God came, saw the mess, and his brow furrowed like a thunderstorm. "Out with that guy. Back to earth. Only those who deserve it go to heaven. And a greedy bastard with a needle and thread doesn't belong there."

So they grabbed him and threw him out like a drunken customer who'd vomited all over the bar. He fell, and upon landing, he was back to being a tailor. No crown, no glory, just needle and thread, soot, and hunger.

And all the angels above laughed: "He thought he could stay here. A tailor in heaven—what a joke."

Table set for yourself, cash cow and stick out of the sack

Once upon a time, there was a tailor. Neither a good one nor a bad one—just one who had too many children and too little to eat. So he sent his three sons off, "Learn something decent, bring something home, or die on the way, I don't care." The boys trudged off, one after the other, and each came back with some kind of fucked-up marvel.

The first one hired himself out to a carpenter. He toiled for years, sawing, and hauling. At the end, he received a small table as his payment. "Just say *Table*,

set yourself!— and it spits everything out at you: roast, wine, bread, cake. More than any all-inclusive buffet." The boy set off, proud as a new lottery winner. On the way home, he ended up in an inn. The innkeeper, a greasy bastard with greed on his face, saw the miracle and thought: *This thing is mine now.* That night, he swapped the magic table for a regular one. In the morning, the boy proudly shouted, "Table, set yourself!" – but nothing happened. Just an empty table. Ridiculous. His father laughed at him and beat him out of the house.

The second one trained as a miller. He received a donkey as his wages. Not just any donkey, but one that, if you *Bricklebit* shouted, shitting gold pieces out of his ass. Brilliant: a cash cow that shits like an ATM. Of course, the same old story again. The boy proudly went home, went back to the same rip-off bar, showed off the mess, the landlord saw it, grinned, and stole the donkey too. In the morning, there was just an ordinary gray horse standing there, stinking like any donkey. The father, disappointed again: "Another loser."

Then the third one came. He'd been to the wood turner. As payment, he got a simple sack with a club in it. Sounds like a shitty deal. But when he shouted "Out with the club!", the club sprang out and beat everything that breathed within a two-meter radius – until someone shouted "Club, into the sack!" The boy stomped home, also through the inn's hell. Again, the greedy innkeeper: "Show me what you've got." The boy grinned. "Gladly." "Out with the club!" And the thing beat the innkeeper, the servants, the whole damned tavern to a pulp. Tables creaked, beer kegs rolled, and in the end, the innkeeper lay there crying, his ribs broken, his teeth loose. He begged: "Stop it, I'll give you everything back! Little table, you donkey, take it, but stop!"

The boy took the loot, brought home the little table and the donkey. The father rejoiced, stuffed himself to bursting, while the donkey pooped gold on the floor, and everyone said, "The tailor is finally set for life."

Thumbling

Once upon a time, there was a farming couple who had nothing but work and tired bones in the evenings. No children, no hope. They lamented: "If only we had one child, even if it were no bigger than a thumb." – Whoops, life's irony came around the corner: Else actually gave birth to a boy, so small he could easily fit in a beer glass. A tiny one, but with a mouth like a grown-up.

Everyone called him Thumbling. People laughed: "A dwarf like that is no good for anything." But the little bastard wasn't stupid. He was cheeky, tough, and had a big mouth. "You jerks, I'll prove to you that even a dwarf can do something."

One day, the father wanted to fetch wood. "I'll hitch up the horses," said Tom Thumb. Everyone laughed. But he climbed into the horse's ear, shouted like a drunken conductor, and sure enough, the horse took off. The village stared, shouting, "Incredible!" – and then a couple of fat traders came along: "We need one of those! Sell us the little one, farmer. We'll pay gold!" The old man, greedy as ever, didn't think twice: "Deal."

The merchants grabbed Tom Thumb, but the little fellow was elusive. They'd barely sat down at the inn when he crawled out of their pockets, chatted up the guests from under the table, and disappeared laughing into a mouse hole. The merchants stood there, cheated and drunk, and the little fellow called from somewhere: "You're too stupid for me, you bums!"

His adventures were anything but child's play. Once, he ended up in a cow's stomach, swimming in stomach acid, screaming, "Get me out of here, you assholes!" – until the farmer slaughtered the cow, and Tom Thumb crawled out of the carcass, stinking like hell, but alive.

Then a wolf swallowed him. And the wolf thought, "I've finally gotten rid of that annoying dwarf." But Thumbling babbled in his stomach for so long that the wolf gave himself away. Finally, he was cut open, and the little one crawled out, indestructible again, grinning again.

And every time he came home, dirty, smelly, but alive. His parents, who thought he'd been sold, lost, buried, just stood there, stunned, like they'd just been drunk.

Thumbling sat down on the table, drank from his father's cup, and said, "See? Being small doesn't mean being nothing. I may only be the size of a thumb—but you'll never get rid of me. I've got more balls in my little finger than you have in your fat asses."

The Wedding of Mrs. Fox

Once upon a time, there lived an old fox, a whole lot of life under his belt, clever, but with gray hairs on his tail and foul breath. His wife, Mrs. Vixen, was

one of those people who liked to be courted. One day, the old fellow was found dead in his den—heart attack, drunk, or maybe just bad luck. There the widow sat, sobbing a little, and immediately thought: *"Screw it, I need a new guy. Preferably one who smells better and lasts longer."*

So she sent her maid, the cat, out. "See if there's a fox who wants me. But he has to have something special—at least nine beautiful tails." The cat ran off and found the first fox. "Do you have nine tails?" "Just one." "Forget it." Next fox, two tails. "Not enough." And so the game continued. Eight foxes later, all full of hope, all kicked out for not having enough tails. Mrs. Vixen sat in the den, acting like a diva, like she was the damned queen of the forest.

Finally, one came along with nine magnificent tails, shiny and well-groomed, as if from a salon. The cat brought him home. Mrs. Fox acted modest for a moment, but inwardly she thought: *"That's exactly what I need. It can warm me up, and the rest will follow."*

They celebrated their wedding and invited all the animals—drunkards, parasites, everything that crawled around in the forest. They drank like it was a Friday night in the red-light district: beer, schnapps, and cider. At the end, they all staggered through the forest, and Mrs. Fox grinned broadly—widow in the morning, bride in the evening.

But here's the twist: In another version, the old fox wasn't dead at all. He had just hidden away, wanting to test his wife. When he heard she was already marrying the next man, he jumped out, cursed the bitch, and chased the whole gang out of the den. Mrs. Fox sat there, embarrassed to the core.

The Twelve Hunters

Once upon a time, there was a prince who had a bride. Pretty, clever, perhaps a little too well-behaved, but he loved her. But then his father, the old king, died, and the court immediately started chattering: "Find yourself a real queen! Not the kind you love, but one with status, titles, bling." And as happens when you drink too much and don't have enough balls: the prince caved. He dumped his sweetheart and became engaged to another, who was richer and looked colder than a piece of frozen fish.

But the first bride wasn't stupid. She dressed in men's clothes, grabbed eleven friends who were doing the same, and said: "We're hunters now, damn it. If my prince thinks he can throw me away, then I'll just stand in his den with a gun

and see what happens." So the twelve women went out dressed as men, tore off their beards, walked like men, and were actually hired as hunters at court.

The prince didn't notice anything. Blind like all the guys when the old woman puts on a little different makeup.

One day, he got a strange feeling. He tested the hunters by throwing some flowers in front of them. If they were guys, they would have ignored them. But the "hunters" bent down and sniffed like women at a market stall. Then he had a feeling something was up.

Then came the big test: a lion in a cage. The lion supposedly knew everything. "Tell me if those are men or women." The lion roared: "They're women, you idiot." But the prince didn't trust the beast, had its claws clipped and its teeth pulled out until it looked like a toothless cat. "Now, be quiet."

But then things got worse: The prince received the news that his first bride was lying ill. He ran to her – and lo and behold: there she lay, no longer disguised as a hunter, but as the woman he once loved. He realized how much he still wanted her. The new fiancée was dropped like an empty beer can. And the first bride, the disguised huntress, stood up, threw off her men's clothes, and the prince fell into her arms. Wedding, wine, laughter.

The eleven friends? Back in drag, back to life, all with hangovers from all the drinking.

The Three Lucky Children

Once upon a time, there was a poor woman who had three sons. No future, no plan, only the hope that life wouldn't be so shitty someday. One night, she dreamed of gold—of three children who had a monopoly on happiness. In the morning, she grinned and said, "You're lucky children. Only good things happen to you." Sounds nice, but of course, it was nonsense.

The three boys grew up with hunger in their stomachs and dirt on their feet, but they actually had a lot of luck. Each of them eventually set off to seek his fortune.

The first one stumbled into the forest and found a well. Inside sat a frog, so fat and ugly that he looked like an old beer drinker. "Pull me out," he croaked,

"and you'll have luck." The boy pulled him out, and whoosh—the frog turned into a princess. Castle, wine, birdsong, all the best. The guy grinned: "There you go."

The second one wandered across the field and saw a tree with golden apples. Everyone had tried, but no one could pick them. He reached up – boom, they were in his hand. A shower of gold, everyone clapped, and he became rich like a corrupt politician.

The third, the dumbest, ran around until he stumbled into a robbers' den. Instead of killing him, the guys tripped over themselves, and he came out with a sack full of gold. No plan, no skill, just luck.

In the end, all three of them ended up before the king. The king looked at the boys, listened to their stories, and thought, "Shit, they're all happier than me, and I'm sitting here on the throne." So he wanted to set traps for them, send them to their doom. But no matter what he did, they were always lucky. Horses stumbled, villains fell asleep, bridges held where they should have broken. Everything went like a dream.

In the end, even the envious ones had to admit: These three had more luck than sense. Each sat in his castle, got drunk on his gold, fucked his princess, and grinned like an idiot.

Allerleirauh

Once upon a time, there was a king who had a wife who was beautiful, clever—in short, too good for him. Naturally, she died far too soon. The king remained, full of hatred for fate and eager for a replacement. He swore to marry only a wife as beautiful as the dead one. Unfortunately for him, no one could compare except his own daughter. Yes, you read that right: incest deluxe.

The court was horrified, the daughter vomited inside, but the king was unstoppable. "I want to marry you," he roared, and all his advisors stood by like cowards, unable to knock the crown off his head.

The princess, clever enough not to say no outright, demanded three dresses: one like the sun, one like the moon, and one like the stars. She also wore a coat made of all kinds of animal fur—from cat to rat, from wolf to squirrel. She thought: *"He'll never manage that."*

But the king, obsessed and mentally ill, brought everything. His clothes shone, his cloak stank of dead zoo.

Then the princess grabbed her jewels, put her clothes in a nutshell (don't ask how), and put on her cloak. Then she took off, through the forest, into a foreign land. She ran, fell, and got up again—like someone with the devil on her tail.

Eventually, she came to a strange farm. No one recognized her under the pile of fur. She was demoted to kitchen maid, nicknamed "Allerleirauh" (All kinds of rough) because she looked like a stray with fur disease. There, she scrubbed pots, peeled potatoes, shivered, and smelled like dog.

But every night she crept into her little room, put on one of her golden dresses, and danced like a queen. No one suspected that beneath the stench lay a princess.

The young king of this court eventually noticed her. At first, he only saw the pile of fur in the kitchen, but then he also saw the mysterious beauty in the ballroom. He didn't put anything together, because men rarely put two images together. But he wanted her.

One day, he realized the truth when he discovered a gold necklace in her soup—something only a princess could have. He confronted her, tore her cloak from her body, and there she stood: radiant, in gold, with the dignity her own father had tried to take away from her.

The young king took her as his wife, not out of pity, but because he was lustful for her mixture of dirt and shine. And so Allerleirauh was able to achieve a better life after all.

The Seven Ravens

Once upon a time, there lived a poor man with seven sons. Sons who ate like threshers and stank like old boots. The woman finally gave birth to a girl—small, delicate, and the parents thought: *"Finally, not just gluttons, finally something pure."*

But immediately after birth, the child was weak, almost dead. The father yelled, "Come on, boys, get some water from the well for the baptism!" – and the seven rascals trotted off, carrying jugs, bottles, and a bucket. Only, they argued,

jostled, dropped the jugs, and made a fool of themselves. When they finally reached the well, everything went wrong: the vessels rolled into the water, broke, or tipped over. Not a drop came home.

The father, always short on patience and more drunk than wit, yelled, "You damned good-for-nothings! I wish you were all ravens!" – and, bam, fate took him literally. The seven boys transformed into black birds, fluttered away, croaking, and disappeared into the sky.

The little sister grew up, but knew nothing about all this. One day, she heard the villagers whispering: "She once had seven brothers, and now they're ravens." Then she blurted out: "*Then I'll get her back. Even if I die trying.*"

She set off, no plan, no provisions, just stubbornness. She wandered through the world until her feet bled. She came to the sun, the moon, and the stars. The sun was hot, roaring at her until she almost burned. The moon was cold, staring at her like an old lecher. The stars were the only ones who took pity on her—they gave her a bone key with which she could unlock the Glass Mountains, where the seven ravens perched.

The glass mountain was as sharp as razor blades. She cut her fingers bloody, but she got inside. There were seven plates, seven cups for the ravens. She drank the rest, let her finger slide into a cup, blood dripped into it—and that was precisely the sign.

The brothers fluttered home, saw blood in the cup, and immediately smelled: "*That's our sister!*" And at that moment, they transformed back into humans. They threw their arms around her, wept, laughed, and the girl stood there: small, scarred, but victorious.

End: Another great family reconciliation – but no one mentioned that the old man was actually to blame because he had cursed his own sons while drunk.

The queen bee

Once upon a time, there was a king who had three sons. The two older ones were typical jerks: loudmouthed, conceited, and considered themselves

godsends. The youngest was the so-called "dumb"—someone everyone laughed at because he had more heart than brains. A gentle idiot who preferred watching animals to punching people in the face.

One day, the brothers set off, "to conquer the world," as they called it. On the way, they found an anthill. The two older ones wanted to crush it immediately, "just for fun, a bit of massacre." But Simpleton stood in front of it: "Hands off, you wankers. They haven't done anything to you." Later, they came to a pond full of ducks. The brothers wanted to catch the beasts, roast them, and eat them. Simpleton stopped them again. "Leave the damned things alone." Even later: a beehive full of honey. The brothers: "Cool, let's smoke out the thing, drink honey, and grill the bees." Simpleton, again: "No. Let them live."

The brothers rolled their eyes. "Wimp." But things continued like this.

Then they came to a castle—huge, but deathly silent. Cursed, they said. Inside lay horses, people, everything petrified. Only a sign proclaimed: Whoever completes three tasks will redeem the castle. Whoever screws up will also turn to stone.

The two older brothers, full of hubris, tackled it first. Their first task: collect the princess's 1,000 pearls scattered throughout the forest. The two start running, stumble, give up, and bam – stone. Finished.

Then the simpleton came. He desperately searched for the pearls. And lo and behold: the ants he had saved buzzed over and collected the damned pearls for him. All in one pile. Task one – accomplished.

Second task: Retrieve the key to the princess's chamber from the lake. The ducks he had spared dived down and came back up with the key in their beaks. Task two – completed.

Third task: Find the youngest princess among three sleeping sisters. They all looked the same, all had their eyes closed. But then the queen bee, whom he had spared, buzzed and perched on the lips of the youngest. Whoosh – hit.

Everything awoke: the castle, the people, the horses. The princess fell into the arms of the simpleton, the king handed over the crown, and the two arrogant brothers remained standing at the edge as stone sculptures—like two drunken idiots who had screwed up.

The three feathers

Once upon a time, there was a king, old, grumpy, and suspicious, like a barkeeper who thinks all his customers are stealing his beer mats. He had three sons: two were strong, conceited, with fancy coats and hair like something out of a commercial. The third was simply called "Dummling." His father considered him a fool, a disgrace, a decoration at best.

The old man wanted to pass on his kingdom, but not just like that. "You must bring me the best blanket," he barked. "Whoever finds the prettiest one will inherit everything." He blew three feathers into the wind: One flew east, one west, and the third landed right at the simpleton's feet. Everyone laughed: "Haha, he can't even manage a walk."

The brothers set out, plundering merchants, raiding cupboards, and procuring fabrics. Simpleton followed his pen, which led him into a hole in the ground. Crouching at the bottom was a fat, ugly toad, looking as if it had consumed too much booze and had the wrong Botox. "What do you want, little one?" it croaked. "A blanket." "All right." She called her daughters—hundreds of little toads, who squatted down in the dirt and conjured up a blanket, soft, shiny, more beautiful than anything the world had ever seen. Simpleton took it with him, grinning, while the brothers returned with their rags. Of course, he won.

But the king, stingy and unable to admit defeat, grumbled, "Not yet. Bring me the most beautiful ring." Again the feathers flew, and again Simpleton's landed right in front of the hole. He climbed down, the toad grinned, set his brood to work again—and out came a ring that made even the sun jealous. Simpleton won again, and his brothers stared like stoned losers.

The king, still not satisfied, growled, "One last test: Bring me the most beautiful woman." The brothers dragged peasant girls over, halfway pretty, but full of fear and sweat. The simpleton? Back down to the toad. This time she said, "Bring me up." He pulled her up, and everyone thought: *"Now he's finally lost – an old toad for a bride!"*

But as soon as she stood in the fresh air, the skin popped off - and there stood the most beautiful woman you can imagine: elegant, glowing, a kick in the balls for any competition.

The simpleton married her, inherited the kingdom, and the brothers looked stupid, as if they had just gambled away everything in the casino.

The Golden Goose

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had three sons. Two of them were typical jerks: boastful, lazy, and always too refined for real work. The third was the simpleton, small, quiet, and mocked by everyone as if he were there only to be beaten.

One day, the father sent his sons into the forest to fetch wood. The two older ones brought beer and sausages, gorged themselves, ate a bit, and came home—nothing special. The simpleton trudged off with stale black bread that stank of mold.

On the way, he came across a beggar. "Give me something to eat," the fellow squawked. The brothers had just chased him away, "Piss off, you bum!" But Simpleton gave him his rotten bread. And lo and behold: the beggar was, of course, a magician in disguise. "Thanks, boy. Go to that old tree over there and chop it down. You'll find your miracle."

Simpleton pecked, and inside the trunk lay a gosling. But not just any gosling: a golden goose, every feather pure metal, sparkling like the bar in a gambling den. Simpleton grinned. "Finally, my thing." He picked up the goose and trudged on.

He stopped at an inn. The innkeeper's three daughters stared at the gosling, greedily like drunkards after free beer. Each wanted to steal a feather. But as soon as they touched the goose, they stuck to it – like flies to a liquor bottle. Simpleton marched on, the three shrieking women stuck to the goose. Along the way, more idiots joined him: a priest who wanted to free them – whoosh, he got stuck too. A sexton, a farmer, a few curious onlookers – in the end, an entire procession of idiots clung to the goose. Simpleton grinned, marched in front, and behind him, the laughingstock wound its way through the village.

The whole thing reached the king's ears. He had a daughter so stubborn that she never laughed. No jokes, no tickling, no dancing—the old woman always pulled a face. But the king swore: "Whoever makes her laugh will marry her." Simpleton, who didn't even know how to spell "princess," traipsed into the castle with his golden goose and his human entourage. The princess saw the scene—in front, the idiot with the gosling, behind, a line of people, shrieking, stumbling, sticking—and she collapsed with laughter. Tears, stomachaches, everything.

That made it clear: Simpleton had won. The king grumbled, but a word was a word. He gave up his daughter.

And so the ridiculed fool became a king, just because he shared bread and stomped around with a golden goose.

Puss in Boots

Once upon a time, a miller died and divided his miserable possessions among his three sons. The eldest inherited the mill, the second the donkey. And the third? He got the tomcat. A perfectly ordinary, shaggy beast. The boy howled: "What am I going to do with a damn ugly cat? Should I boil it or wear its tail as a scarf?" But the cat suddenly appeared, stretched, yawned, and said: "Don't panic, boss. Get me some boots, and I'll make you rich."

Sure, the boy thought he was hallucinating. But he had nothing to lose anyway. So he had some fancy leather boots made for the cat. And that's when the show began.

The cat wasn't a normal pet; he was a bastard with brains. Clever as a trickster, cold as a loan shark. He caught hares, partridges, deer—and brought them to the king, always with the words: "From my lord, the Count of Carabas." The king grinned, fat and greedy, thinking: "*Aha, rich nobleman.*" The miller's son, now called "Count of Carabas," just sat there and let the cat build his career.

At some point, the royal family arrived for a pleasure trip. The tomcat whispered to his master: "Take off your clothes and jump into the river." The boy thought he was crazy – but he did it. Then the tomcat cried: "Help! My master, the Count of Carabas, is being robbed!" The royal carriage stopped, the guards pulled the half-naked miller's son out and wrapped him in fine clothes. The princess saw him, and because women in fairy tales rarely need a guy with character, just a pretty face, she fell in love immediately.

Meanwhile, the cat ran through the land, threatening farmers: "If the king asks who owns the fields, say: Count of Carabas. Otherwise, I'll hack your throat out." The farmers, frightened, nodded.

Finally, the cat came to the castle of a rich wizard. The guy was powerful, proud, and boastful. "I can transform into any animal," he boasted. "Dog,

elephant, lion." The cat grinned. "But into a little mouse? You can't do that." The wizard, eager to show off, immediately transformed himself into a mouse. Bam! The cat jumped, grabbed him, bit him, blood, the end.

With that, the Count of Carabas had a castle, land, everything. The cat presented it to the king, who thought, "That boy is richer than I am." He gave him the princess as his wife.

So the miller's son became a king, a cat became a prime minister - and poverty became power, only through lies, bluff and cold tricks.

The Dog and the Sparrow

Once upon a time, there was a dog. No longer young, no longer strong, more like a worn-out cur that his master had thrown out because he was no longer good for hunting. Bones were sticking out, fleas were hopping around, and hunger was gnawing at his insides. He trotted along the country road, half dead, half indifferent.

A sparrow came along. Small, cheeky, and annoying. "Hey, buddy," chirped the sparrow, "come with me, I'll get you some food." The dog thought: *"What good is a sparrow to me? But it's better than dying here."* So he trotted after him.

The sparrow fluttered into a town, into a bakery, stole breadcrumbs, and threw them to the dog. Then it went on to the butcher, where the sparrow pecked at scraps of meat and dropped them. The dog ate his fill, licked his mouth, and thought: *"Not bad, a feathered petty criminal."*

That evening, the dog lay snoring on the side of the road. A farmer came along in his carriage. The sparrow saw that the farmer was about to run over the dog. So he yelled: "Hey, farmer, watch out, or I'll bite your eyes out!" The farmer laughed, whipped the horses, and ran the dog over. Bones cracked, the dog yelped once – dead.

The sparrow went berserk. "You jerk! You'll pay for this!"

He flew onto the wagon and pecked out the horse's eye. The animal shied, the wagon tipped over, the wheel creaked. The farmer cursed. The sparrow pecked the second horse, then the faces, again and again, until the thing lay in ruins. "Enough!" roared the farmer, grabbing the sparrow. But the bastard was faster,

fluttered into the field, pecked down his grain, and pecked at the seeds. The harvest was ruined.

The farmer, full of hatred, swore, "I'll get you!" He ran home and fetched the axe. The sparrow perched on the roof ridge, brazenly shouting, "Here I am, you idiot!" The farmer threw the axe – missed, hit his own roof, and made a hole in it. Furious, he fetched the scythe, ran into the field, hacked, and struck, but the sparrow dodged. The farmer sweated, raged, stumbled, and fell.

The end of the story: The little sparrow ruined everything for the farmer—his farm, his harvest, his honor. In the end, the farmer crouched in the dirt, gasping for breath, broken, and the sparrow circled above him, screaming, "That's for my dog, you bastard!"

And if he doesn't believe it, the sparrow is still sitting on a street sign somewhere today, laughing at everyone who thinks they can do what they want without anyone biting back.

Frieder and Katherlieschen

Once upon a time, there was a guy named Frieder. Not a hero, not a king, just a poor devil who was stupid enough to fall in love with a woman so brainless she could have been mistaken for a bad experiment. Her name was Katherlieschen—and if you wanted to describe her in three words: sweet, stupid, destructive.

Frieder thought life would at least be fun with her. Wrong thought.

The two married. On their very first day, he sent her to tap beer. But Katherlieschen thought: *"I don't want the jug to break."* So she simply let the barrel run until the entire cellar was awash with scum. When Frieder came down, she was standing in the middle of the foam, grinning and saying, "Look, isn't this cozy?"

Frieder screamed, Katherlieschen cried, and they made up. The next day, it was the same again: She was supposed to make butter. Instead, she shook the milk in her hand until she smashed the entire jug. No butter, no milk, just shards and a stench.

Even later: Frieder told her to grind some grain. She ran to the field with the sack and scattered the grain on the path, thinking the wind would grind it. All the chickens, pigeons, and pigeons in the village had a feeding frenzy, while she stood there proudly like a queen: "See, all by herself."

The disasters piled up. Bread burned, clothes drowned in the well, pigs fed cakes, and once she threw her own wedding ring into the soup because she thought it would bring "glamour."

Frieder sweated, cursed, and drank more to endure the misery. All the neighbors laughed: "She married a golden treasure—except he's made of tin."

But somehow, as always happens with such fairy tales, he stayed with her. Perhaps because Katherlieschen laughed despite everything when the hut burned. Perhaps because he said to himself: *"If we're going to go down, at least go down with a bang."*

In the end, he was poor, worn out, and drunk. But Katherlieschen still skipped around the house, doing silly things, laughing like a child—and that was perhaps the only thing that kept him from slitting his throat.

The old Sultan

Once upon a time, there was a farmer, as stingy as an innkeeper just before the end of his shift, and he had a dog named Sultan. He used to be strong, defending the farm, chasing away thieves, and barking at the moon until even the devil gave him peace. But the years had made him weak. His teeth were loose, his legs were shaky, and his eyes were blind, as if he'd been drunk for three nights.

The farmer looked at him and thought: *"Shitty animal, just eats, no good. I'll shoot him tomorrow."*

The farmer's wife cried a little, but that's how it is: when you get old and no longer bring anything, you get sorted out.

Sultan lay there, his heart filled with fear and rage. Then his old friend, the wolf, came along. "What's up, brother?" he asked. Sultan told him about the

plan. The wolf grinned: "No problem. Tomorrow, when you're out with the farmer, I'll grab his child. If you pretend to save it, he'll think you're the greatest again."

And so it happened. The next day: the farmer was in the field with his child and dog. The wolf came out and grabbed the brat. The Sultan barked like mad, pounced, and "saved" the brat. And the farmer stood there, staring: "My Sultan! Loyal as gold! How could I have been so stupid!" Instead of a bullet, he got cuddles and a double feeding trough.

Sultan grinned inwardly: "*Thank you, Wolf.*" But the wolf wanted payment. "Come, brother, tonight you'll let me into the stable, and we'll tear a sheep apart." But the Sultan, satiated and courted again, thought: "*Screw loyalty. I'm in a better place now. If I let you in, I'm screwed.*"

So he barked half the night, so much so that the farmer came and almost cut the wolf to pieces with his scythe. The wolf fled, bleeding, howling, full of hatred.

"You traitor!" he shouted into the forest. "Just you wait, old dog. I'll get you."

A few days later, he stood outside in the meadow and challenged Sultan to a duel. "Come out, you old fart. Today we'll settle it." Sultan, knowing he was weak, whined to the cat: "Help me, or he'll tear me to pieces." The cat, small but nasty, perched on the dog's back. Together they trotted off.

The wolf laughed: "What a shitty team! A lame mutt and a kitty." But as the two came closer, the cat opened its eyes wide, hissed, and extended its paw. From a distance, it looked like a soldier with a knife. The wolf got scared. "Shit, he's got reinforcements!" He pinched, yelped, and ran into the woods.

Sultan remained victorious simply because he had friends who looked meaner than they were.

The Six Swans

Once upon a time, a king was out hunting, got lost in the forest, and came across a witch so old and wrinkled she looked like a bar counter after 40 years of smoke. "You'll only get out of here," she croaked, "if you marry my daughter."

The king, already half-starved, thought to himself: *Fuck it, better to have witch's blood in bed than end up as wild boar food.* So he married the daughter.

The woman was beautiful, but so cold inside that you'd rather have slept in a refrigerator. And she had a problem: The king already had six sons and one daughter. Competition. She hated children who didn't come from her womb.

One night, she took Hemdchen, cursed her, and the boys turned into swans—fluttering away, screeching. Only the daughter, a girl, was spared because she hid in time. When the father found out, he did what cowardly men in such fairy tales always do: He kept his mouth shut and looked away.

But the girl, young and frightened, swore: *"I'll bring my brothers back, even if it kills me."*

She set off, barefoot, alone, without provisions, without a plan. Along the way, an angel or something appeared to her—perhaps just a hallucinating drunkenness—and said: "This is the only way: For six years, you're not allowed to talk, laugh, cry, or anything. And during that time, you have to sew shirts out of star flowers for your brothers. Only then will they be free."

Six years of silence. Try that. No insults, no screams, no "fuck you." The girl gritted her teeth and stitched. Hands bloody, eyes full of tears she couldn't let out.

Of course, she was eventually found – by a king who saw her and thought: *"I want that."* He took her with him and married her without her saying a word. Silent, mysterious, always sewing in rags—and he thought she was an angel.

But the mother-in-law—such a scheming goat—began to rant: "She's a witch! Look, she never talks! She sews magic shirts! She wants to kill us all!" And the king, who could fuck but had no backbone, listened to her.

One by one, the children she bore him were taken away. They told her they were dead, killed. She didn't cry, didn't scream, didn't speak—because she had to keep her silence. Her heart broke, but she continued sewing, bloody fingers, lips sewn shut with willpower.

Finally, after six years, she was to be burned. The people roared; she stood silently on the pyre, her shirts still unfinished in her arms. Then, at the last moment, the beating of wings was heard. The six swans approached. She threw the shirts over them. One by one, they transformed back into men—tall,

strong, free. Only the youngest kept a swan's wing because the shirt was unfinished.

Then the crowd fell silent. The truth was out. The intrigues exploded like bad lies. The mother-in-law was banished, the children were alive, the brothers were back. And the girl who had remained silent for six years finally opened her mouth – and what came out wasn't a fairytale word, but a scream, a roar, a: "Fuck all of you who didn't believe me."

Sleeping Beauty

Once upon a time, there was a royal couple who couldn't have children. They prayed, they cried, they fucked—nothing. Eventually, it worked, and a little girl was born. A huge celebration, barrels of wine, ham until they were sick, and all the courtiers were there.

Of course, the fairies had to be invited. Glitter, magic, blah blah. Only one of the old ones was forgotten. And she wasn't just any old one, but the kind who looks like she slept in a drunkard's house for 300 years and then someone injected her with Botox from the gutter. She felt insulted. Instead of offering flowers, she lashed out a curse on the table: "That brat will prick herself on a spindle and die."

Everyone was shocked. A younger fairy—the usual cheerful face—softened it: "Okay, she's not dying, she's just sleeping for a hundred years. That's also crap, but at least she's not dead."

The little girl grew up, pretty, well-behaved, like something out of a brochure. The king banned all spindles in the kingdom. But as it goes: forbidden things attract people. At fifteen, she traipsed through the castle and found an old woman at the spinning wheel. "What are you doing?" *Engraving*. Zack. Blood. She fell over, eyes closed.

Everyone in the castle fell asleep. The kitchen, guards, dogs, horses, everyone. The whole place was silent. Thorns grew all around, thick, black, prickly like a punk mohawk. Anyone who tried to get in was torn to pieces. Knights, adventurers, half an army—everyone hung in the bushes like torn-up scarecrows.

A hundred years passed. The people in the village were still chattering: "There's a princess in there, asleep." For most people, it was just a cool rumor, a myth you'd come up with while you were drunk.

Then someone came, a prince—but not a hero, not a shining knight, more like a guy who was just too stupid to be afraid. The thorns bent up, letting him through. Inside, everything was silent, everyone frozen, as if time were frozen. He found the princess, pale, beautiful, but more corpse than dream.

And now comes the part that the storytellers have softened up nicely. In truth, the prince didn't kiss her romantically. He stared at her, uncertain, horny, and confused. Finally, he dared—a kiss, wet, strange, almost sick. But right then, she opened her eyes. A hundred years of sleep had passed, the first glance: some guy with drooling lips all over her.

She opened her eyes wide, gasped, and the entire castle awoke. Dogs barked, cooks screamed, the guards almost fell over when they suddenly stood up again. And Sleeping Beauty stared at the prince as if to say: *"Seriously? I slept for a hundred years for this?"*

Of course, they got married, because that's how it had to be. Wine, revelry, everyone acted like it was a happy ending. But deep down, everyone knew: This wasn't a kiss of love—it was coincidence, fate, or simply a fool who was in the right place at the right time.

Fundevogel

Once upon a time, a forester found a small child in the forest, alone, abandoned, and screaming. He took it home, and because the child had no name, he called it "Fundevogel." Yes, that's how resourceful people were back then. The boy grew up with the forester's daughter, Lenchen. The two were stuck together like two drunken buddies at the bar—inseparable, stupid, and innocent.

But the forester's wife – the stepmother, of course – hated that. She stared at the two and thought: *"These kids are pissing me off. I want to get rid of them."* So she said to Lenchen: "Tomorrow, when Fundevogel goes to school, I'll cook him. Then we'll eat him together. But you keep your mouth shut." Lenchen froze, her heart in her throat, and when she was alone, she ran to Fundevogel: "Get out of here, brother, she wants to cook you and eat you!"

Fundevogel stared at her like someone who'd just learned that life isn't a fairy tale, but a butcher shop. "Then we'll get out of here," he said. And they fled into the night.

The stepmother was furious when she realized this. She sent her servants after them. But the children transformed—first into a rosebush and a rosebud ring. The servants returned empty-handed.

The old woman yelled and sent new people. This time the children transformed into a church and a chandelier. Nothing again. The third time, they became a pond and a duck swimming in the middle of it. The servants stared, thinking: "*What the hell?*"—and returned again.

The stepmother raged, tore her hair, and in the end, she almost burst with hatred. But the children remained free, inseparable, somewhere outside, far from the madness of the house.

King Thrushbeard

Once upon a time, there was a king who had a daughter as beautiful as a sunset—and just as cold and arrogant. She made a laughingstock of every prince who courted her. "He's too fat." - "He stutters." - "He has a face like a cow's ass." And when one came along with a crooked chin, she laughed: "Haha, he looks like a thrush!" - and ever since, the nickname stuck with him.

The king, her old man, finally had enough. "You stupid goose," he roared, "if you're too refined, you'll just get the first guy who shows up." And as the fairy tale would have it, a beggar promptly appeared at the door. Rancid, squalid, and stank of old beer and sweat. "Perfect," said the king. "You'll marry him." The princess cried, screamed, and begged, but it was no use. She was pressed into the man's hands and marched off.

Life after that? No palace, no gold, just a dump and a husband who made her slave away. First she was supposed to spin – she ruined the yarn. Then she was supposed to throw pots – all broken pieces. Then the neighbors wove baskets, and she only tied knots. In the end, she had to slave away as a kitchen maid, stealing food and licking leftovers from the gutter. The princess, who had once laughed at everyone, now stood there with soot on her face, dreaming of her old arrogance.

One day, a wedding was celebrated in the king's castle—yes, King Thrushbeard, of all people. The ex-princess had to help out as a maid, carrying beer and plates. Meanwhile, the music played, everyone laughed, danced, and drank, and she stood there, ragged, with empty eyes.

There he came – the groom, the king himself, "Thrushbeard." He grinned. "Well, do you know me?" She froze. Then he pulled off his mask: He was the supposed beggar. It had all been just a test, a damned lousy test to drive out her arrogance.

And her? She wept, fell at his feet, begged for forgiveness, swore humility, swore love. And, as fairy tales go, he forgave her and made her his queen.

The end, happy. At least officially.

Snow White and Rose Red

Once upon a time, there were two sisters. Snow White – good, clean, almost sterile, the one who never had a dirty spot on her dress. And Rose Red – wild, restless, the one who would rather fall flat on her face in the forest than quietly embroider in her little room. They lived with their mother, poor but content, somewhere in the middle of nowhere.

The girls were sweet and kind, too kind, actually. Helpful to the point of self-sacrifice. They let in every beggar, fed every animal. They were the kind of people who would end up being cheated, robbed, or slaughtered because they thought: *"Oh, the world is good after all."*

One cold winter, a bear knocked on the cabin. Yes, a damn bear. Instead of screaming and barricading the door, the two sisters opened it. "Come in, it's warm." The bear stomped inside, shook off the snow and the musty smell, and lay down by the fire. And because he snored so comfortably, they became friends.

For months, he returned again and again. They petted him, warmed themselves against him. Almost as if he were a pet.

But the bear had a secret. He was actually a cursed prince, but that's something you keep quiet about when you've still got honey sticking to your fur.

One day in spring he said, "I must go, my treasure is in danger." The sisters cried, and he went away.

Shortly afterward, the two met a dwarf outside. A truly nasty bastard. His beard was down to the ground, but his heart was as black as burnt liquor. He'd gotten stuck in a tree because his beard was hanging in the crack. Instead of saying "thank you," he snapped when the sisters helped him. The next time, his beard was caught in a fishing line—rescued again, and more whining. A third time, an eagle tried to carry him away, but they freed him, and he snapped, "You're ruining my clothes, you stupid brats!"

Shortly afterward, they met him again. This time he was crouching over his treasure—gold, precious stones, glittery shit. And then the bear came back. The dwarf shrieked, "Don't hit me, take the girls!" But the bear didn't hesitate. *Zack*, one paw strike, dwarf dead. Blood, beard, end.

Then the bear transformed into his true form: a prince, handsome, rich, just as fairy tales always tell. He married Snow White, his brother married Rose Red, and the mother suddenly found herself sitting in the palace, sipping wine instead of watery soup.

Everyone happy. The end.

The clever farmer's daughter

Once upon a time there was a farmer, as poor as a Monday morning pub, but with a daughter who was so clever that she could talk anyone in the village into a corner.

One day, the farmer found a piece of gold in the field. Honest as a complete idiot, he brought it to the king instead of discreetly drinking it away. The king, suspicious as ever, asked, "Where did I get it?" - "Found it." The king: "Don't lie."

But he saw the daughter, heard her talking, and thought: "*Shit, she's got it.*"

Later, the king put the woman to the test. He gave her tasks so insane that only a genius or a madwoman could solve them. For example: "Come to me, but neither clothed nor naked, neither riding nor walking, neither on the path nor beside it." What did she do? She wrapped herself in a fishing net and rode a

donkey that was only half-walking in the ditch. The king stared, laughed, and thought: "*Damn, she's smarter than half of my advisors.*"

He married her. The peasant's daughter became queen.

But the fairytale lie didn't stop there. At some point, she overdid it. She meddled in matters that, "as a woman," the king said, were none of her business. He got angry and sent her away. "Pack up, but take what you love most. Nothing else."

What did the wise woman do? She made him some wine, got him drunk, and when he fell into a coma, she dragged him to her father in a cart. The next morning, the king woke up, hungover, in the farmhouse next to his wife. "Here I am. You said I could take what I loved most—and that's you."

The king couldn't say anything except, "Damn it. Come back."

And they continued to live. Happily? Who knows. Probably just like everyone else: with arguments, wine, reconciliation, and the constant fear that one of them would eventually say, "That's enough."

The Iron Hans

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom where something was wrong in the forest. Hunters went in and didn't come back. Horses disappeared. One by one, the forest swallowed them up, as if hungry for meat. Finally, one last hunter emerged, white as chalk, with a story that sounded like schnapps: Deep in the swamp crouched a wild, hairy monster—huge, covered in dirt, eyes red, hands like shovels. They soon began calling him "Iron Hans."

The king, no hero, just eager for control, commanded: "Catch the beast." And sure enough – with an army, nets, and spears, they bound the beast. It let itself be caught without roaring, without resistance, simply silently, as if it had had enough of everything. Then they locked it in a cage in the middle of the courtyard, for display, like a freak in a circus.

The prince, the king's son, was curious. Like any rascal who thinks he knows more than the elders. He accidentally let the ball roll into the cage. He wanted to get it back. Iron Hans grunted, "Open it, and you'll get the ball." The boy: "No, my father will kill me." Iron Hans: "Your father will kill you someday

anyway. Open it." So he did. The monster stepped out, grabbed the boy, and stomped with him into the forest.

And that's where real life began. No golden plates, no servants. Just dirt, wilderness, and blood. Iron Hans said, "You stay with me if you want to survive. Follow the rules." And the rules were simple: no stupid things.

Of course, the boy was up to no good. Iron Hans gave him a fountain of golden water: "Be careful not to touch anything." The boy thought he was being clever – but dipped his fingers in anyway. Bam, golden hair! Iron Hans yelled: "You complete idiot! How are you supposed to survive in this world if you can't even keep your hands to yourself?"

In the end, he sent the boy away: "You're not ready yet. Go out into the world, learn to get dirty." The boy set off, ended up in a kingdom as a stable boy, humiliated, laughed at—but his golden hair shone beneath his cap, like a fucking halo.

Then came war. Everything went to hell. Suddenly, Iron Hans reappeared from the shadows with an army no one had ever seen. "Now, boy, show me if you've learned your lesson." The prince rode into battle, crushed everything, and became a hero because he did what he had learned in the forest: eat or be eaten.

Of course, he got the princess afterward. That's fairy tale logic.

But the truth? Without Iron Hans, he would have been bone meal long ago. The savage everyone wanted to lock up was the only one who made him strong.

The poor and the rich

Once upon a time, there were two guys, brothers, in fact. One was as poor as a church mouse, the other as rich as a bank manager with a dirty hand. Same parents, same background, but fate just loves to kick one and shit gold on the other.

The poor man lived in a hut that looked more like an overturned pigsty. He ate thin soup, drank rainwater, and prayed every night that something would be better tomorrow – and nothing did. The rich man, on the other hand, had a

villa, tables full of roasts, flowing wine, and whenever he yawned, someone would come running over to wipe his ass.

One day, the poor man had to have his child baptized. He had no money, no food, and no godfather. Then he thought: *"Screw it, I'll ask my brother."* So he went to the villa, knocked, and stood there like a beggar. The rich man opened the door and looked at him like a stray dog. "What do you want?" "Brother, my child is about to be baptized. Be the godfather." The rich man laughed coldly: "You bum. I have enough problems of my own. Fuck off." And slammed the door.

The poor man stood there, full of shame, full of hatred, wanting to cry, but only emptiness came out. So he trudged back. On the way, he met someone—a stranger, poorly dressed, but with eyes that burned deeper than any sermon. "What's wrong?" asked the stranger. The poor man told everything. "Don't worry," said the stranger. "I'll be a godfather." And he was none other than God himself, on a begging tour to see how shitty people really are.

The baptism took place, simple and without glamour, but suddenly the poor child's life began to change. He grew healthy, strong, and wise. The poor child himself suddenly received help here and there, bread fell from heaven, and doors opened. Not rich, not magnificent, but livable.

And the rich man? He continued to sit on his pile of gold, greedy, distrustful, lonely. Growing fatter, ever emptier, until he died without anyone being with him. No heart, no God, just a stinking grave with a large stone on top.

The Devil and His Grandmother

Once upon a time, there were three soldiers, worn out, left over from the war like cigarette butts after a drinking binge. No pay, no home, no plan. They hung around, wanting to leave, but if they were caught, they'd be roped or shot. So they huddled in the woods, hopeless, until one of them muttered: *"Screw it, maybe the devil himself will come and make us a deal."*

And who showed up? Exactly. The devil, fat, grinning, as if he were a bartender behind the bar with three stupid customers. "Boys," he said, "I'll give you gold. As much as you want. Food, booze, women. But in seven years, you'll be mine."

The guys looked at each other. They were hungry, thirsty, and had no tomorrow. So they said, "Deal." And then, a contract. They got bags full of gold, lived like kings, ate their fill, drank themselves to death, and fucked everything that wasn't nailed down. Seven years of partying.

But time was ticking. At the end of the deadline, they stood there, pale, trembling, and thought: *"Shit, now he's coming for us."*

Then they heard of an old hut, at the end of the world, where the devil's grandmother lived. Not pretty, not holy—more like God had forgotten to dispose of the woman in time. She smoked a pipe, stank of ash, but had more brains than all of them combined.

"Well, you idiots," she croaked, "did you sign the devil's contract? Don't panic. I know the brat, I raised him. I'll give you riddles. If you solve them, you're free. If not, then good night."

The next day, the devil came, greedy, his claws already wet. "Now, you bastards, come with me." But the grandmother kept asking questions: "Tell me, what does the devil like best for breakfast? What does he wear when he goes to church? And what does he have in his pocket when he goes out on Sundays?"

The soldiers answered as their grandmother had whispered to them: "A broken roast bone. A torn shirt. And an old playing card." The devil roared, raged, and stamped, but the contract was broken. The soldiers were free.

And what did they do? They didn't run home, not to church, not to their parents. They ran to the nearest pub, downed the first mug, laughed, and thought: *"Maybe we'll get lucky this time. Maybe not. But at least we didn't end up in Beelzebub's ass."*

The young giant

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had a son who ate like he had a hole in his stomach. The old man went mad. Every day, the boy devoured more bread, more soup, more meat, until the farmyard was empty. "Piss off," yelled the farmer. "I can't feed you anymore. Go out into the world and eat someone else poor."

The boy set off, hungry, smelly, and angry. On the way, he met a man—as big as a barn door, with muscles like iron. The man looked at him: "You want to grow up? You don't want to be that puny farmer's rascal anymore? Then come with me." And the rascal went. The giant took him to the mountains, fed him meat, milk, and bone marrow, and little by little, the boy grew into a log himself. Hands like sledgehammers, legs like tree trunks, a voice like thunder.

But the world doesn't like it when someone suddenly becomes strong. People whispered: "Monster, monster, danger." The boy who only wanted to live was stared at as if he were a freak.

So he moved on, looking for work. He came to a kingdom and reported to the king: "I can fight." The king laughed: "Show me." The boy smashed an anvil in half like a biscuit. The king turned pale, but thought: *Someone like that could be dangerous.* Nevertheless, he gave him work – as a soldier, but always with the thought: *I have to keep it small.*

The young giant fought, defended, and swept enemies down like flies. But instead of gratitude, there was mistrust, envy, and fear. The king whispered: "Too strong. Too dangerous. We must get rid of him."

So he sent the boy on missions designed to kill him: slay a dragon, kill an enemy king, move mountains. But the boy did it all. And every time, he came back, sweaty, bloody, tired—and the king was glad the brat was still alive.

In the end, the young giant stood there, finally understanding: *The world doesn't want anyone bigger. The world just wants you to stay small so those at the top don't have to be afraid.*

He left the kingdom and returned to the wilderness. He preferred to be alone, free, and feared—than a dog on the leash of a cowardly king.

The Goose Girl

Once upon a time, there was a princess, young, pretty, and naive, who was supposed to go to a foreign kingdom to marry some prince. Political bullshit, as always. She was given a servant, a horse named Falada (a smart animal, she could talk), and a bit of gold. Everything was easy, she thought.

But the servant was such a sneaky bitch, full of envy and hatred. Halfway there, she pulled out the knife card: "Listen, little princess, from now on, I'm the bride and you're my maid. Shut up or I'll kill you right here in the forest." The real princess, too soft to fight, swallowed the shit and nodded. Falada protested, "But what can you do when your owner can have your throat slit?"

The fake bride moved into the palace, introducing herself as a princess. The real one was forced to herd cows and geese, barefoot, dirty, and ridiculed. The golden child became a filthy maid.

And Falada? The horse who knew too much? Was slaughtered. His head was nailed to the wall as a warning decoration. But the skull continued to speak every time the maid passed by: "Oh, you virgin queen, how ill you are!" And she wept, but no one listened.

There was also the little goose boy, the annoying fellow who had to go out to the pasture with her. He made jokes, trying to annoy her. But every time he came too close, she muttered a little spell, and his hat flew off. Then he had to run, and she had peace. A small triumph in all the shit.

Months passed. The fake bride enjoyed life, courted, fed, and bathed in wealth. The real one wore rags, screamed into the ground at night, but kept quiet.

But in the end—fairy-tale logic—the truth came out. The king, old and suspicious, realized: "Something's wrong." He spoke to the goose girl, who broke down and told everything. Falada's head had long since muttered the truth.

And then? Revenge. The fake bride was put in a barrel, spiked with nails, and dragged through the streets by horses until nothing but mush remained. That was punishment back then. The real princess got the prince, wedding, happy ending.

But let's be honest: there wasn't much happiness there. She was broken, her laughter had been lost somewhere between goose droppings and Falada's slaughtered throat.

The King of the Golden Mountain

Once upon a time, there lived a merchant, married, poor, with a son who meant the least to him. One day, on the street, he met a sinister man—thin, pale, with eyes like cold coals. "I'll help you out of your mess," he said, "make you rich, give you a life full of gold and feasting. The only condition: The first thing you see when you get home belongs to me."

The merchant, stupid as greed, thought: *Will be my dog anyway.* He accepted. But who was the first to run into him at home? His son. A happy little rascal with open arms: "Daddy!" – Bam! The contract was signed in blood.

The devil, or whatever he was, didn't wait. A few years later, he came for the boy. He took him deep into the depths, somewhere into a mountain kingdom, everything made of gold, everything shining, everything cold as corpse skin. The boy grew up down there, learned to fight, learned to hunger, learned to be silent. He became tough, faster than others.

One day, he met a princess there. Imprisoned, cursed, pale as snow. He freed her, brought her out of the golden cage. They ran away together, and he married her. Finally, something like happiness.

But happiness is like a cheap hangover: it never lasts long.

The princess warned him: "If you ever go back to your family, be careful. They'll fuck you up. Don't just go back to the old shit." But he didn't listen. The longing was stronger.

He set off, saw his parents again, who had already half-forgotten he even existed. They cried, hugged him as if he were the Messiah. All fine. But he stayed too long. Something was pulling him down. The old world grabbed him by the throat.

When he finally wanted to return to the mountain, he couldn't get in. The gates were closed. The princess was gone. All the gold, all the happiness, everything was locked away. He stood outside like an idiot, empty-handed and heartbroken.

The Raven

Once upon a time, there was a princess who was too good for the world. Always devout, always praying, so holy that watching her made you want to vomit. Her mother, the queen, actually did start to vomit at some point: *"Child, stop being pious, or I'll curse you."*

And as it goes in these messed-up stories, the mother said at the wrong moment: "Become a raven if you don't leave me alone!" –Zack. Then the brave brat fluttered through the air in black feathers.

She flew away, crouched in a dark forest, and everyone thought: That's the end. But no, it gets worse.

Then a young man, a lost soul with a lot of willpower and little brains, wandered through the forest. He heard the voice of a raven: "Free me! I am an enchanted princess. Come to the glass mountain, there I am imprisoned."

The boy, dumb as lead, but with heart, thought: *"Sure, I'll do it."*

He set off. Hungry, thirsty, blisters on his feet. He came across people who said, "You need a horse that can climb the mountain." So he helped an old man and got a horse, strong as sin.

And then he stood before the glass mountain. Smooth, slippery, steep—no chance. Three times he tried, three times he almost broke his bones. But somehow, through luck, willpower, magic—or simply because the fairy tale makes no sense otherwise—he made it to the top.

Up above, he found her: the princess, white as snow, black as a raven's feather, eyes full of longing and sorrow. He wanted to rescue her, wanted to touch her, but the moment he thought he had succeeded, she was gone again, as smoke, as a scream, as the beating of wings.

He stood there, empty, broken, lonely. He had risked everything, almost died, and still had nothing in his hands.

The Twelve Dancing Princesses

Once upon a time, there was a king who had twelve daughters. They were as pretty as freshly polished wine glasses, but also just as fragile and just as empty. Every morning, their shoes were worn to pieces—holes in them, soles

worn out, as if they had been trampled through every night with drunks in a train station bar.

The king raged. "What damned bastard is torturing my daughters every night?" No one knew. So he proclaimed to the land: "Whoever solves the riddle will marry one of my daughters and be allowed to become king. Whoever doesn't—behead off." Classic deal: hope or the cleaver.

Dozens of guys reported it. All of them died. Because no one figured out what the women were really up to.

A simple soldier came along, worn down, scarred on his face, heart broken, but smart enough to listen. On the way, he helped an old beggar woman – who gave him a camouflage cloak and the advice: "Shut up if you want to find out."

The soldier moved into the palace. In the evening, the princesses lay down in bed, pretending to be asleep – but as soon as the lights were out, they opened a hatch in the floor. Beneath it: a damned staircase to an underworld. The soldier, invisible, followed them.

Down, down, down. There stood twelve trees with golden, silver, and diamond leaves. Glitter, splendor, all artificial. The princesses broke off branches like souvenirs, laughing and giggling like drunken brats. The soldier also tore off something—evidence.

Then on to a lake. There, twelve princes were waiting, cursed, dead or alive, no one knows. They had boats and took the princesses to a castle. There: music, wine, and dancing. Every night, an orgy of beatings. Shoes were broken, heads were foggy. It wasn't love—it was an escape. A desperate, nightly binge until morning forced them back into the palace bed.

The soldier, invisible, drank along, stole a cup as proof, and saw everything. On the third day, it was all over. He went to the king, placed the twigs and the cup on the table. "That's how it goes, old man. Your daughters sneak into the underworld every night, dance with the dead."

The princesses screamed, howled, and tried to deny it. No chance. The king kept his word. The soldier was allowed to choose one. He chose not the prettiest, nor the wildest, but the oldest – she was fed up with dancing and just wanted peace and quiet. Pure pragmatism.

The remaining eleven? Well, their nights were over. No dancing, no drinking, just palace and boredom.

The two brothers

Once upon a time, there was a shoemaker, as poor as rats in a cellar, but with two sons who were more hungry than sane. Every day they were given thin broth and hard bread, and yet their mouths still clamored for more.

One day, a half-rotten beggar appeared, reeking of sulfur and cheap liquor. He promised riches, but everyone knew that anyone who accepted such an offer would be selling themselves. Nevertheless, the children listened, and from then on, the path was clear.

The brothers grew up, wild, stubborn, and full of rage. They separated because two identical dogs couldn't get along in the same kennel. One went out into the world, embracing adventure and trouble. The other stayed behind, cowardly or lazy, who knows. Later, they both set off—but each with their own demons.

Along the way, they helped animals: a hare, a fox, a wolf, a lion. Not out of love, but because at some point you realize that you'll die alone. These animals—as shabby as their masters—paid them back when the time came.

One brother saved a princess. Crown, splendor, wedding. Everything was like a fairy tale. But then the dagger came from behind. A traitor sent him to the grave, his wife wept, and the world acted as if it were meant to be.

But the creatures, his mangy gang, dug him out again, licked his wounds, and breathed life into them. There he stood again—pale, but burning. Back in the castle, no one recognized him until he showed his scars.

And then: brother against brother. Envy, mistrust, jealousy—no one cared that they'd once eaten from the same bowl. One had to kill the other because there was only room for one.

In the end, the victor stood on a pile of blood, with a woman by his side and a crown on his head. But what good is all that to you when you know your own brother had to die for you?

The iron stove

Once upon a time, there was a king who had a daughter, as pretty as the first sip of beer in the morning, and just as dangerous. One day, she got lost in the woods and stumbled upon a damned iron stove. Not a hearth, not a bread-baking oven, but a black, rusty block, in the middle of the wilderness. And from the thing spoke a voice, deep, creaky, like a chain smoker after three bottles of schnapps.

"Help me out," croaked the voice. "I'm an enchanted prince, locked up here."

The princess, far too curious and too stupid, listened. She became his confidante, listened to his misery, and gradually she fell in love with that damned voice from the iron box. What could she do? In the palace, there was only boredom; out here, at least, there was madness.

One day, the guy in the oven said, "If you help me, you'll get me out, and I'll take you as my wife." She promised. But her father, the king, got wind of it, and, as fathers do, he forbade everything. But the princess wouldn't let up.

So at some point, the guy in the iron furnace made short work of her. He broke free, transformed himself into a wild monster, half human, half metal, and kidnapped the princess into the dark forest.

That's where the nightmare began. She wandered with him through thorns, swamps, and filthy caves. There was hardly any food, and even less water. And yet she held fast to the idea that somewhere beneath the shell of rust and anger lurked a king.

Then she became pregnant. By the cursed Iron Stove Man, the imprisoned freak. She gave birth to children in the wilderness, quietly, alone, while her lover wavered between hope and madness.

In the end, salvation came—as always, through some cheap magic trick. The curse was broken, the iron stove burst open, and the man stood there, finally a king again, rich, powerful. The princess, half-mad, half-dead with exhaustion, became his wife. A happy ending on paper.

But behind the scenes things remained dirty: a woman who had lost her youth in swamps, a man who still smelled of iron.

The lazy spinner

Once upon a time, there was a girl who was particularly good at one thing: being lazy. While others toiled, hauled wool, and spun yarn, she preferred to sit in the shade, yawn, scratch herself, and stare into space. Her mother raged: "You good-for-nothing! Spin that distaff for once, or you'll end up a beggar!"

But the daughter had no desire to do it. Any excuse was fine: headache, backache, too hot, too cold. She would even have said the stars were in the wrong alignment, just to avoid touching the distaff.

Then the king came by. He heard about the girl—but the mother was too proud, too stupid, and lied: "My daughter spins so well that the world is amazed! She can pull yarn day and night until her fingers bleed!"

The king grinned. "Then I want to see it. I'll give you gold and splendor if you fill my halls with yarn. If you can't, off with your head."

The lazy spinner was locked in a room filled with flax, mountains of it. She stared, desperate, knowing she would be dead tomorrow. She couldn't do anything.

And then there was a knock. Three old women came in. Hunchbacked, toothless, ugly as sin. One had a mouth as wide as a barn, the second a nose as crooked as a scythe, the third feet as flat as shovels. They grinned, stank of beer and sweat. "We'll help you, child. But you have to invite us to your wedding if you get the king."

The spinner thought: *Fuck it, I'm done for anyway.* So she nodded. The three of them squatted down, and rattling, they started. One night, they were pulling yarn as if they had the devil in their hands.

The king was amazed, came in, and saw the result. "Unbelievable! I need a woman like that!" He married her immediately. The lazy spinner grinned, remained silent, and let herself be fed.

But at the wedding, the three old women arrived. The king saw their faces and asked in disgust, "What the hell is wrong with you?" One showed her huge mouth: "From endless spinning!" The second showed her crooked nose: "From constantly pulling on the thread!" The third showed her flat feet: "From pounding on the wheel, day after day!"

The king was shocked. "Shit! I don't want my wife to end up like this. From today on, you won't have to spin again."

The lazy spinner grinned inwardly, drank her wine and thought:*Sometimes audacity wins.*

The clear sun brings it to light

Once upon a time, there was a man so poor he was almost transparent. Nothing in his stomach, nothing in his pocket, nothing in his head except the eternal wish: "Maybe tomorrow will be better." He had no job, no honor, only the streets and his own stupidity.

One evening, he was sitting by the roadside, and next to him was another man, even poorer, even more ragged. The two crouched there, silent, staring into the night. Then the other suddenly began: "You know what? I'm fed up. Tomorrow I'll kill my master. Then I'll have his money, and finally some peace."

The poor man sitting next to him was frightened, but also too cowardly to say anything. He just thought:*Shit, this is going wrong.* He went to sleep.

The next morning, the plan had already been executed: The guy had pulled it off. His master lay dead in bed, the gold was gone, and he himself was on the run. The poor fool who had heard it knew:*Now I'm screwed. If anyone finds out I knew about this, I'm on the ropes.*

And of course, it came out. It always comes out. Someone overheard, someone gossiped, and suddenly the poor fellow was on trial. He swore: "I didn't do it! I just heard it!" But who believes a beggar when someone's dead and the gold is gone?

So they dragged him out. Hangman, gallows, noose. And as he stood there, the noose already around his neck, he screamed: "The bright sun will reveal it! I'm innocent!" But the sun was shining, hot and bright, and no one gave a damn. People stared, whispered, and the executioner did his work.

He died for a crime he didn't commit. Simply because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The poor miller's boy and the kitten

Once upon a time, there was a miller who was so old and so stingy that he would have preferred to steal his own soup. He had three journeymen, and because he didn't know who he would eventually give the mill to, he said: "Come on, you bums. Whoever brings me the best horse gets the mill. The others can see where they die."

So the three of them set off. Two of them with their chests puffed out, confident they would make a splash. The third—the poor miller's boy—was a poor dog, without luck, without wit, without anything. Everyone laughed at him, even the dogs barked after him.

A few days later, he found himself standing in the forest, hungry, half-dead, when a little kitten appeared. White, fluffy, but with eyes that knew more than he could ever comprehend. "Come with me, boy," purred the animal, "I'll help you."

He thought: *Fuck it, it can't get any worse.* So he followed the cat. She led him into an underground castle full of candles, gold, and servants—all cats, thousands of cats, walking upright, talking, singing, playing cards. A fever dream of purring and claws.

The kitten let him live there. Gave him food, a bed, even companionship. And every time he thought he had to move on, she said, "Stay. Trust me." And he stayed. Weeks, months, years.

Finally, after a long time, the cat said, "Now go home. Your horse is waiting outside." He went – and there stood the most magnificent horse anyone had ever seen. The brothers came with their ridiculous nags, pathetic, rattling horses. The miller had to laugh. The boy won. The mill was his.

But the story didn't end there. The kitten came back. "Come with me, just once more." He followed. And she led him to her castle, even more magnificent, even brighter, even more crazy. And there she was transformed: no longer a cat, but a princess, beautiful and sad. "I was cursed. Only someone poor, patient, and faithful could free me. You did it."

They married and he became king.

Sounds like a happy ending? Maybe. But remember: the poor dog, who was never good at anything, owed everything to a cat who dragged him into the dirt until he was too soft to fight anymore. And whether he ever slept peacefully next to a woman who once commanded a thousand cats—who knows.

The hand with the knife

Once upon a time, there was a village, poor, torn apart, full of gossip and hunger. The people had nothing but boredom and malice. And in the middle of it all lived a girl, pretty, naive, and—as always happens—guzzled by everyone like a piece of meat at the market.

Her mother wanted to marry her off, quickly and without thinking, to some peasant who didn't even have teeth. The girl was scared and didn't want to, but what can you do when you live in a time where your word is worth less than a priest's fart?

One evening, she was sitting alone in the kitchen, when suddenly there was a knock at the door. She thought it was the wind. She didn't open it. But there was another knock, and this time she heard a voice—not a human one, but deep, cold, and scratchy: "Let me in."

She ran away, trembling. And then a hand emerged from under the door. No body, no person—just a hand, pale, with a knife in its fist. The knife flashed, the fingers clenched as if the hand wanted to slash her open.

The girl screamed and ran to the neighbors. They came and laughed at first, but when they saw the hand, they fell silent. They slammed the door, threw holy water, prayed, and screamed. But the hand came back, night after night, always with the knife, always scratching, always lurking.

Some said it was a demon. Others, it was the spirit of a slain man. Still others whispered that the mother had sold the girl, and the hand was a messenger from hell, come to collect the price.

In the end, the hand disappeared as suddenly as it had come. All that remained was fear—and a girl who could never sleep without hearing the scratching under the door.

The Old Beggar Woman

Once upon a time, there was a village, small, run-down, full of people who spent all day doing nothing but gossiping about their neighbors and secretly stealing their goats. In this filthy mess, an old beggar woman skulked around. Crooked as a rusty nail, her skin wrinkled, her teeth nothing more than legends, she stank of sweat and old beer. She knocked on every door, held out her hand, and croaked: "A piece of bread, a drink of water, or I'll curse you all."

Most people slammed the door in her face. No one wanted the witch in their house. Everyone whispered: "That old woman brings bad luck. If you give her anything, she'll suck you dry. If you don't give her anything, she'll kill your beast." Either way, you could only lose.

But one day, she knocked on the door of a young couple who barely had anything of their own. The woman was pregnant, the man was worn out, and their hut was dilapidated. Yet they still gave her their last: a piece of black bread and a cup of water.

The beggar woman grinned, but it wasn't a friendly grin—more like the grin of someone who knows you've just entered a game you can't escape. She muttered a few strange, strange words and disappeared.

Shortly thereafter, the cows in the village died, the grain spoiled, and the children caught fever. Only the couple was spared. Everyone else cursed: "The old woman has put a spell on us!" and blamed them for giving her something. The couple was hunted, insulted, and driven from the village.

And out in the forest, when they were already half dead from exhaustion, the old woman suddenly appeared again. This time not as a cripple, but as a woman in a black dress, her eyes as deep as graves. "I've tested you," she said. "You gave even though you had nothing. In return, you'll receive something."

She gave them a small box, inconspicuous and rusty. "Only open it when you're at your limits." Then she was gone.

The couple lugged the thing around with them for years, but didn't dare open it. Only when they were down and out, with nothing left, did they smash the lock. And no one knows exactly what was inside—some say gold, others say a curse that killed them instantly.

Because all one heard in the village was that the two never came back.

The crystal ball

Once upon a time, there was a witch who had three sons. And because witches are never motherly, preferring to carry poison in their hearts, she cursed the two older sons to become blocks of stone in the forest. Only the youngest survived – frail, underestimated, but with more defiance than sense.

His mother was afraid that he, too, would become a threat to her at some point. So she wanted to get rid of him, too. But the boy got wind of it, ran away, and swore to himself: *“Fuck witches, fuck fate – I’ll take my own life.”*

He set off and arrived at a royal court where a little princess was cursed. Of course, the same old story: imprisoned, redeemed only by some fairytale artifact. In this case: a crystal ball, hidden deep in a cursed castle, guarded by monsters, traps, and everything guaranteed to tear you to pieces.

The boy thought: *Great, finally something to do.* And off he went. Along the way, he found buddies: a guy who could cut down entire forests in one breath; one who drank rivers dry until nothing remained but mud; one who could move mountains. All freaks, all guys you'd avoid at the bar in real life, but in fairy tales, they're your best buddies.

Together they went into the castle. Everything there was made of iron, dark, and cold. Giants stood guard, beasts with eyes of fire lurked. But the miners did the dirty work: one drank, one ate, one stamped – until the way was clear.

In the end, the boy stood in front of the crystal ball. Smooth, hard, cold, and glittering as if it were laughing at him. He grabbed it – and the whole place shook. The curse screamed, the witch shrieked somewhere in the distance, and the ball burned in his hands. But he didn't let go.

He brought her to the princess, the spell was broken, and she was free. And, as was fitting, he became her husband. His brothers—the petrified ones—were also freed. All happy endings, so the fairy tales say.

But we also know: Anyone who has ever held a crystal ball in their hand, anyone who has ever seen how the world is fooling you and at the same time offering to fulfill your wishes – will never sleep peacefully again.

The Bearskin

Once upon a time, there was a soldier, worn to the bone. The war was over, the kings had lined their pockets, and he stood there—without pay, without a home, without a plan. One who only had his boots and his scars left, nothing more.

Then the devil himself appeared, elegant, grinning, as if he were an innkeeper offering you the most expensive liquor. "Listen," he said, "I'll give you gold, enough for seven years. But during that time, you may not wash, comb your hair, cut your nails, or trim your hair. You'll put on a piece of bearskin and live like an animal. If you manage that, you're free. If not, you belong to me."

The soldier thought: *Fuck it, it can't get any worse than it is now.* And he signed.

From then on, they called him Bearskin. He stank like a rotten carcass, his hair was sticky like mold, his nails turned into claws. He ran through the cities, and people fled, children screamed, dogs bit him and ran away whimpering. But there was always gold jingling in his pocket. He used it to buy liquor, meat, anything that didn't take away the disgust, but made it more bearable.

The years crawled by. Loneliness, booze, madness. He often sat alone in pubs, people staring at him as if he were the plague. Only the mug in front of him kept him together.

One day he entered a house where the innkeeper was about to show him the club. But the daughter of the house, young and curious, stopped. "Who are you?" she asked. He laughed bitterly: "No one. Just a man who looks like an animal." She saw through the fur, through the stench, saw the broken gaze—and gave him bread.

Bearskin swore that if he survived the seven years, he would take her as his wife. She nodded, as if she had understood that beneath all the filth there was a heart still beating and pumping.

At the end of the seven years, the devil returned. The soldier stood there, half dead, half animal. But he had persevered. Bam! Contract ended. And then the curse broke: fur off, dirt removed, hair trimmed. Suddenly, there stood a man, young, strong, like a new man.

He took his daughter as his wife, rich, free, and the world that had despised him for years suddenly crawled at his feet again.

The Wren and the Bear

Once upon a time, there was a bear, fat, hairy, and grumpy, who stomped through the forest and thought he was God himself. "I am the strongest here, all animals must serve me!" he roared, his breath smelling of rotten honey and decaying game.

There, on a branch, sat a little wren. Tiny, barely bigger than a thumb, but with a big mouth. He listened to the roar, croaked with laughter, and cried: "You're nothing, you old lump of fur. It's not you who rules the animals, but I, the wren! I have intelligence, cunning, and a woman who laughs her head off when she sees you!"

The bear turned red with rage. "I'll crush you, you wretch, between my teeth like a louse." But the wren wasn't intimidated. "Well then—war! My family and I against you and your stupid, slobbering colleagues."

And lo and behold: The animals split into two camps. The big ones—bear, lion, boar, wolf—roared and stamped. The little ones—wren, bees, ants, wasps—buzzed, purred, and grinned.

The fight began. The big ones trampled, punched, and tore. But the little ones were everywhere: poking eyes, biting ears, crawling up asses. The bear, the great ruler, roared in pain, dancing like an idiot, while wasps crawled up his nose and ants attacked his eggs.

In the end, he fled, howling, blind from the stings. And the wren sat on a stone, his chest puffed out, and cried: "Look, size is nothing, cunning is everything!"

And all the little creatures cheered as if they had won the world. The big ones growled, but they knew: against such an army of poison, teeth, and madness, even the strongest bear wouldn't stand a chance.

The smart people

Once upon a time, there lived a farmer, poor as a pig, but with a thick tongue. He could babble, chatter, and lull people into a false sense of security until they believed in their own stupidity. Everyone in the village considered him "clever" because he always had a saying ready—in truth, he was just a rascal with more luck than brains.

One day, the king sent a sack of gold across the country as a reward for the "smartest man." Everyone wanted to be the man. Priests, shopkeepers, farmers, even the whores in the village. Everyone said: "*It's me!*"

So our farmer set off with his wife. Along the way, they met a judge, a grocer, and a few other busybodies. Each of them thought they were the smartest, each of them thought they could get the bag.

But what happened? They all got caught up in their own stupidity. The judge was thrown off track by a few jokes, the shopkeeper sold himself out, and the supposedly learned people got themselves tangled up in so much chatter that no one knew what the question was anymore.

But the farmer grinned, was mostly silent, and when he did speak, it was only enough to make everyone think: "*Wow, what a fox.*" He wasn't a fox—he was just too lazy to think. But that was enough.

In the end, he got the sack of gold. Not because he was truly clever, but because everyone else was even dumber. He lugged the treasure home, his wife danced in the dirt, and the village murmured, "Yes, that farmer, he's got it!" – but he was nothing but a lucky guy with a big mouth.

The old grandfather and the grandson

Once upon a time, there was an old man who had lived a long life. He'd endured sweat, labor, war, and hunger—everything. In the end, he was nothing

but a rickety wreck: shaking hands, a drooling mouth, and eyes as blind as murky water. He lived with his son and his wife, and they had no desire to take on such a nursing case.

At first, he still sat at the table. But he spilled, spilled soup all over the tablecloth, and dropped the meat on the floor. The son got angry, and the daughter-in-law rolled her eyes. "Disgusting! Let the old man sit in the corner with a wooden bowl so he doesn't break anything."

So Grandfather sat on the floor, in a dark corner, eating his soup from a bowl like a dog. And when he dropped the bowl, they yelled at him as if he were to blame for his weakness.

The grandson, a little boy, watched this. Children see more than you think. One day, he started carving a small wooden board. His father asked, "What are you doing?" The boy grinned innocently: "A little bowl. For you and Mom when you're old. Then you can eat on the floor, too."

Silence. Not a word. A chill ran down the father's spine. He understood.

And from that day on, the old man was allowed to sit at the table again, to spill and tremble, and no one dared to push him away anymore.

The Water Nixie

Once upon a time, there was a miller who stood by his mill wheel, watching the water flow, and thought only of money. He was so broke that he would have sold his own grandmother to the first person who came along. Then a water nymph appeared—beautiful, smooth, with eyes as cold as ice. She promised him wealth: "Give me what's newly born in your mill, and I'll make you rich."

The miller thought of a calf, perhaps a foal. "Deal," he said without thinking. But when he returned home, he heard the cry of his own child. His wife had just given birth to a son. *Freshly born*. Then he realized that he had signed up for hell.

The years passed, the boy grew up. Strong, brave, a good fellow. But the guilt remained. The mermaid hadn't forgotten her pledge. One day, when the boy went to fetch water, she grabbed him by the arm and pulled him into the depths. Just like that, without a scream, without mercy.

Down in the water, there was no fairytale palace, no glitter. Only darkness, slime, and fish tugging at his hair. The mermaid held him like a spider holds its prey, and he thought: *That's it, I'm rotting here.*

But he wasn't going to die so easily. He prayed, he cursed, he tore himself free, swam like a madman. Three times he tried, three times the current swept him back. But then he found a foothold: a knife his mother had secretly given him, wrapped in a scrap of cloth. He cut his hand, the blood lured the fish—and in the chaos, he escaped.

He returned to shore, wet, shivering, half-mad. His wife found him and held him until he could breathe again. But he knew the mermaid would never leave him alone. As long as she lived in the river, he would remain a marked man.

And so they continued to live, with the fear that one day a cold hand would reach out of the water again.

The carnation

Once upon a time, there was a king who had everything—castles, gold, barrels of wine—but no children. And as is the case in these fairy tales: those who have everything except offspring eventually start crying like a drunk who's run out of liquor. His wife was pious, prayed, wailed, and eventually, a child grew inside her. But not through some miracle from above—no, through a damned carnation. A flower, so inconspicuous, yet full of magic.

The child was born, and with him the gift: whatever he wished for came true. Bread? Bang, there. Gold? Bang, there. A castle in the middle of the forest? Bang, there. A child who grants wishes is the wet dream of every power-hungry king—and simultaneously his worst nightmare.

The boy grew up, handsome, friendly, far too good-natured. And as things go, he attracted enemies like shit attracts flies. Especially the castle's cook, a sleazy bastard with greed in his eyes. He saw his chance: If he made the boy disappear, he could make it big himself.

So he took the boy into the forest, pretended it was a stroll, and then stabbed him. At least, he tried. But the boy, half dying, wished for a castle, right among the trees, with walls so high that the cook would stand outside like an idiot. The boy survived, alone but safe.

The years passed, and he wished for everything he needed—food, clothing, even companionship in the form of imaginary creatures. But eventually, he wanted more: a wife, real blood and heart. So he wished for a princess. And *zack* she stood there, beautiful, confused, trapped with him in this castle tower of air and magic.

She hated him at first—no wonder, who would allow themselves to be wished for like a beer mug? But he was kind, not greedy, and so their love grew. But out in the world, the cook sensed his moment. He lied to the king, saying he had murdered the prince and wanted to seize the crown himself.

When the boy returned with his princess, carnation in hand, everything was exposed. The cook was impaled, broken on the wheel, or whatever they did to traitors back then—the main thing was slow, the main thing was bloody.

But the prince took his wife and continued living—rich, loved, but with the knowledge that everything you wish for, you will get. But at some point, that consumes you, because no joy is real if it only comes from a wish.

The worn-out shoes

Once upon a time, there was a king who had twelve daughters. Beautiful, young, all with eyes like glass pearls—and so full of energy that no castle could contain them. Every morning it was the same: the beds were messed up, their clothes sweaty, and their shoes riddled with holes, as if they'd spent the entire night in battle.

The king raged. "Where the hell do my daughters run to every night? And why does it look like they're trampling the floor?" He swore: "Whoever solves my riddle will marry one of them. Whoever doesn't will lose their head." Simple monarch logic: guess the riddle or die.

Many princes came. All boastful, all thought they were clever. They drank, snored, and were carried out of the castle headless in the morning. The king collected heads like other people collect beer mats.

A soldier came along. Not a prince, not a gentleman—a ragged fellow who had survived the war but brought back more scars than honor. On the way, he met an old woman, wrinkled, smelly, with eyes like knife points. She whispered:

"Here, take this invisibility cloak. With it, you'll see what the princesses are up to. But shut up, or you'll be punished."

The soldier sneaked into the castle, pretending to be on night watch—and pretending to be asleep. The princesses laughed, thinking he was just another idiot. But he was invisible, following them step by step.

And what he saw was no harmless dance. It was a hellish ride. Down in a black cavern, through a secret passage, a subterranean realm awaited. Twelve princes, pale, with eyes filled with madness, stood there, and with each beat of the drum, the king's daughters whirled until blood seeped through their shoes. The ground shook, the air stank of sulfur. This was no ball—this was a devil's pact, renewed every night.

The soldier took evidence with him: a golden cup, a branch from the trees below, which grew of pure silver and gold. In the morning, he appeared before the king and laid everything down. The princesses turned pale, but the truth could no longer be denied.

The king, pleased with the revelation, kept his promise. The soldier married the eldest daughter. She hated him, of course—she wanted to keep dancing, keep sweating in the underground hell club. But now she was tied to a man who smelled of gunpowder and old beer.

The Grim Reaper

Once upon a time, there lived a poor fellow, so shabby that he didn't even know how to feed his children. No pig, no goat, no job, just a hungry stomach and holes in his shirt. Then the day came when his next child was born. And as it happens, he had to find a godfather. But who do you ask when your own neighbors spit on you?

He ran down the street and met God. He grinned condescendingly: "Make me your godfather, I'll make your child rich and happy." The poor dog shook his head. "You only give blessings to the rich and let the poor die. Piss off."

Then the devil came. Cunning as ever, with his tongue full of promises. "Make me godfather, I'll give your son the whole world." The poor fellow laughed bitterly. "You're just as deceitful as the one up there, only more honest. I don't want you either."

And then, at the very back, stood one: pale, gaunt, with eyes like two burnt-out candles. Death. No fake smile, no promise. Just the cold truth. "I treat everyone equally. Rich, poor, king, beggar—in the end, they all lie in my dirt."

The poor man nodded. "It's you. At least you're not lying."

So death became godfather.

The child grew up, and Death kept his word. He made him a doctor. Not a healer out of love, but a dealer of fate. Whenever the doctor approached the sickbed, Death stood beside him. If he stood at the head of the bed: healing, miracle, life could go on. If he stood at the feet: forget it, the bucket is up. No discussion.

The doctor became famous and rich; people flocked to him. But wealth breeds greed. One day, a king stood before him, seriously ill. Death stood at his feet. The doctor thought: *Fuck it, I'm going to trick you this time.* He secretly turned the king over in bed, pretending his head was at his feet. And voila—the man was healthy.

Death didn't grin. He didn't say anything. But he remembered it.

The next time, it was the princess's turn. Even more beautiful, even more important. Death stood at her feet again. The doctor, blinded, turned her over too. She was healthy again.

Then death grabbed him. "You asshole. I'll let you go once, but twice is too many. Come with me."

He dragged him into a huge cavern filled with candles, each one a human life. Some still burned brightly, others flickered, many mere stubs. "Look," said Death, "those are the lives. Yours is almost burned out."

The doctor fell to his knees. "Make it longer, please!" Death placed a new candle next to it—tiny, thin, smaller than a match. "This is what's left of you." And he blew out the old one.

The Master Thief

Once upon a time, there was a farmer's son, as poor as a church mouse, but with such nimble fingers that he could have taken off even the devil's horns without him noticing. Even as a child, he stole apples, bread, and chickens, and

as a teenager, he had robbed half the neighborhood. People said, "Nothing good will come of you." But he just grinned and thought: *Screw being good, better a master thief than a beggar.*

One day, he heard about the count who ruled the land. The guy was filthy rich, arrogant, and considered himself the smartest. The count also heard about him – and laughed: "If he's such a super thief, let him prove it. I'll give him three tasks. If he succeeds, he'll have my daughter. If he fails, he'll hang."

The master thief said, "Sounds fair. Better dead than boring."

Task one: He was supposed to steal the count's favorite horse from the stable. The stable was guarded like a prison, with guards everywhere, lights, and dogs. But the thief disguised himself as a beggar, crept up, threw sausages to the dogs, sang a song to the guards until they fell asleep—and rode off with the horse as the bells rang for mass.

Task two: He was supposed to steal the count's bedsheet himself while he was lying inside with his wife. No problem. He sneaked through the window at night, mumbled a few drunken tales, and the count laughed until his eyes fell shut. Then, whoosh—the sheet was out from under his butt, and the thief was standing outside in the moonlight, waving it like a flag.

Task three: He was supposed to retrieve the priest and his vestments from the church. That's where things got tricky. But the master thief had nerves of steel. He disguised himself as an angel, with wings made of goose feathers and a crown of candles. The priest almost fainted when he saw him. "Come," said the thief in a disguised voice, "you're going to heaven now." The priest chuckled, prayed, and blindly allowed himself to be taken away – until he found himself tied up in the forest, his vestments long since stolen.

The next day, the thief appeared before the count, clutching all the evidence. The count bit his lip, but was forced to keep his word. The master thief got his daughter.

Was she happy? Probably not. Imagine marrying someone who steals your nightgown at night. But that's how it was.

The trained hunter

Once upon a time, there was a young man who had nothing but courage in his arse and hunger in his stomach. He didn't want to be a farmer, a farmhand, or a beggar – so he set out to become a hunter. "With a gun in your hand, you're either dead or someone," he thought, "and both sound better than mucking out the stables."

He went to an old huntsman who looked like he had more bullets in his bones than teeth in his mouth. He took him under his wing and taught him everything: tracking, shooting, setting traps, and above all: *never go into the forest without schnapps*.

The boy learned quickly. So quickly that the animals soon began whispering his name—and not out of respect. He shot, he fired, he threw nets, he took anything that moved. Foxes, hares, deer—it didn't matter, as long as there was blood.

One day, he met an old witch in the forest. She stood there, wrinkled, with a basket full of wood. "Help me," she croaked, "and nothing bad will happen to you." The hunter grinned: "Bad? I am the bad." But he helped her anyway, because he was up for adventure.

Then the witch said, "You're a good shot, but I'll give you something that will make you infallible." And she handed him three magic bullets. "Two will hit whatever you want. But the third is mine."

The hunter, as stupid as young blood is, took the things and started firing right away. With the first bullet, he shot an eagle out of the sky, and with the second, he shot a wild boar right in the heart. He grinned broadly, proud as a drunk.

Then came the third bullet. He wanted to fire it at a deer – but instead of going to the deer, the bullet flew straight back at him. It grazed his shoulder, almost tearing his arm off. The witch laughed somewhere in the forest. "I told you: the third one is mine!"

The hunter staggered, bleeding, half dead. But he survived. And from then on, he was more cautious. He continued hunting, yes, but he knew: every bullet, every shot, every prey has its price.

In the end, he became a famous man. Everyone called him the skilled hunter, the best far and wide. But at night, when he was alone, he felt the pain in his shoulder and heard the witch's laughter.

The strong Hans

Once upon a time, there was a farmer's wife who had a son. He was so fat and lazy that he could barely get his ass out of the stable. Everyone called him Hans, and no one ever expected anything from him—except that he would die one day, with a mug of beer in his hand and a mouth full of bread and butter.

But then a miracle happened: An old bear, half-blind, half-mad, was creeping across the field. Instead of running away like everyone else, Hans simply grabbed the bear, hit it, and lo and behold, he ripped off its fur like someone skinning a rabbit. Then people realized: Hans wasn't a fat idiot, he was strong. Incredibly strong.

From then on, they called him "Strong Hans." He smashed plows with his hands, lifted carts out of the mud, and if someone annoyed him, the guy would fly through the yard like a sack of potatoes.

But strength alone doesn't feed a belly. So Hans set off to look for work. Along the way, he met other freaks: one who could move mountains by belching; one who drank rivers dry; one who cut down trees with a cough. Together, they were a gang that cleared every farm, just for fun.

One day they heard of a king who wanted to marry off his daughter—but only to someone who could pass the toughest tests. Hans thought: *Finally, a bit of action.*

The tasks were insane: moving a mountain, drinking a lake dry, taming a wild boar with their bare hands. For Hans and his cronies, it was child's play. They flattened everything. The king gritted his teeth, but he couldn't break his word.

So Hans got the princess. She was pretty, yes, but also spoiled, snotty, and disgusted by the muscleman who stank like a brewery after midnight. She didn't want a peasant idiot with bear-like strength; she wanted an elegant prince. But tough luck—fairy tales don't allow for wishes.

Hans took her with him as if she were a sack of grain. And everyone in the land whispered: "Yes, he's strong... but what if one day he squeezes the princess so hard that she breaks?"

And that was precisely the point: Hans was strong, invincible, a hero – but no one loved him, and he knew that his fist could give him everything except warmth.

The turnip

Once upon a time, there was a farmer so poor that even the mice avoided his hut because there was nothing to eat. But he had a field, and one year a turnip grew there. Not just any turnip—a monstrous thing, as big as a wagon wheel, so heavy that even three oxen had to pull it.

The farmer stared at the thing and thought: *Screw it, I can't sell it anyway, so I'll take it to the king. Maybe I'll get a little something for it.* So he hitched the turnip to the cart and set off.

The king, bored as always, looked annoyed at first. But when he saw the turnip, he started laughing. "By all the saints, that's the ugliest and biggest piece of vegetable I've ever seen. You'll get something for that." And he gave the farmer horses, gold, land—all because the guy had grown a damn turnip.

A rich nobleman heard about this and became jealous. *If the farmer gets so much for a stupid turnip, what will I get if I bring the king a really valuable gift?* So he brought a magnificent horse, strong, shiny, expensive.

The king grinned. "Beautiful horse. You know what? Because the farmer gave me the turnip, I'll give you something too: the turnip. Here, take it."

So the nobleman dragged the gigantic, stinking turnip home. Everyone laughed, and he could shove his proud, noble face up his ass.

The Robber Bridegroom

Once upon a time, there lived a pretty girl from a good family. Pure, well-behaved, raised to cook, pray, and keep quiet. Her father was a merchant, rich

as hell, and naturally wanted to marry her off. And then someone appeared—charming, smooth, with a smile that gleamed like freshly oiled knives. A groom who deceived everyone. But the people in the village whispered: "He has something sinister in his eyes, as if he steals more than women at night."

One day he said to his bride, "Come visit me, my love, so you can see my house." She was suspicious—her heart clenched, as if she suspected something was amiss. But he spoke sweetly, and her father insisted, so she went.

The house stood in the forest—gloomy, black, with doors that looked as if they'd swallowed blood a hundred times. Inside, it was quiet, too quiet. No servants, no warmth, just cold walls.

Then an old woman whispered from the kitchen: "Child, you're in the robbers' house. They'll slaughter you like a pig. Hide behind the barrel and shut up."

The girl crawled into the corner, her heart pounding like a drum. Then the groom came with his gang. Drunkards, murderers, cutthroats—a whole pack of bastards. They dragged in another woman, defenseless, pale, her hands tied. Laughter, belching, and then the slaughter: knife out, throat slit, blood spurting against the wall. They chopped her up like a roast.

The girl trembled, staring—and at that moment, a finger of the dead woman fell into her lap, with a gold ring on it. She didn't dare throw it away. She held onto it, as proof, as her only protection.

In the morning, she crept home, pale, sick with fear, but alive. And when the wedding came, she stood there, trembling, before the entire party. The groom grinned as if everything were perfect. Then she began to tell the story—like a fairy tale, but without a smile, just cold and true.

And then she held up her finger. Gold glittered, blood still on it.

Silence. The robbers stared, the groom turned white. The people in the hall jumped to their feet, the king ordered the guards, and before the bastard could react, he was hanging from the gallows, along with his entire gang.

But the girl lived on. No happy ending, no happiness in love. Only the knowledge that she had stared hell in the face—and narrowly escaped.

The Three Little Pigs

Once upon a time, there were three pig brothers who were as stupid as they were drunk. The first drank cheap cider all day, the second ate himself fat on porridge, and the third was the only one with half a brain in his head. Their mother had thrown them out: *"Go build houses or the wolf will eat you, I don't care."*

The first pig was lazy. "A house made of straw is enough, the main thing is that I'll soon be lying under a tree again, drinking my ass off." No sooner said than done: He scrunched up a few bundles, grinned contentedly, and lay down next to them with a bottle.

The second one wasn't any better. "Wood is sturdy, won't take long, then I can stuff my face with porridge again." So he nailed something together that looked more like a chicken coop than a house. He patted his belly, giggled, and fell asleep, full.

The third pig, on the other hand, sweated, cursed, and carried stones. "Screw it, but if the wolf comes, at least I don't want to die like a complete idiot." He built a house out of stone, solid, cold, ugly—but solid.

And then the wolf came. Not just any wolf, but a hungry bastard with a stomach growling as loud as a thunderstorm and teeth that glinted like daggers. He smelled the first pig, sniffed the pile of straw, laughed, and shouted: "Open up, or I'll blow your urinal away!" The pig slurred: "Fuck you!" — then the wolf took a breath, blew, and the whole thing flew apart. The pig was torn to pieces between his teeth like a piece of bacon.

On to the second one. The wolf knocked and grinned: "Open up, or I'll blow your shack over." The pig whimpered: "Get lost!" The wolf blew, boards flew, and whoosh, the second pig disappeared in his mouth like a stupid dumpling.

Then came the stone house. The wolf, agitated, roared: "Open up, or I'll blow your house away!" The third pig just grinned. "You'd better blow your dick, old man." The wolf blew, snorted, and slobbered, but nothing moved. He raged, jumped onto the roof, and tried to get in through the chimney. But the pig had already placed a kettle full of boiling water underneath.

The wolf plopped in, yelped, and was cooked like a damn Sunday roast. The pig ate wolf soup for days, drank beer with it, and laughed at his brothers' stupidity.

The trained doctor

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had nothing but hunger and dirt under his fingernails. He couldn't work. He couldn't think. He didn't want to. But he had a loose mouth and enough nerve to cheat his way through life.

One day he decided: "*I'm going to be a doctor. If I'm no good, at least pretend I know something. People are stupid enough, they'll eat anything.*" He set out, grabbed an old smock some monk had thrown away, and wrote "Doctor Know-All" on a sign in chalk. Bam – his career was over.

The farmers immediately ran to him: "Doctor, my cow isn't giving milk!" He placed his hand on it, mumbled a few unintelligible words, and ordered: "Give her beer." Bam, the cow gave milk. It was a coincidence, but everyone clapped. "What a genius!"

He cured cramps with garlic, fever with liquor, and when someone died, he'd say, "It was their fate." No matter how it went, he was always right. Word soon got around: this guy was a miracle doctor.

But then a rich man came and demanded: "If you're really so clever, tell me who has my stolen money." The farmer-doctor got scared. *Now I'm screwed.* But he continued to act. They led him into the hall where the servants stood—the actual thieves. He thought desperately: *Oh God, where do I begin?* And by mistake, he muttered, "That's the first one..." – and pointed at the thief without knowing it. The servants turned chalky white. Then: "That's the second one..." – again, right. And at the third one, he cried out desperately: "The third one's here too!" – bang, all three thieves toppled over, confessed everything, and the farmer looked like a damned clairvoyant.

The rich man showered him with gold, and people called him "the learned doctor." In truth, he was nothing but a lucky pig with too much snout.

He ate, drank, and got fat. And every time he looked in the mirror, he laughed: "I'm not a doctor—I'm just a farmer in a smock. But if the world is so stupid, then I'm the best."

The Griffin

Once upon a time, there was a king, rich and fat, with so much gold that he didn't even know what to do with it. But one of his servants, a peasant boy, was a real rascal, clever, and cheeky. The king hated him for always knowing too much and not keeping his mouth shut. So he set him an impossible task: *"Bring me the golden egg from the griffin. Or your head will hang on the gate tomorrow."*

The griffin was no small sparrow. The creature was so large that its wings cast shadows across entire valleys, and its cry sounded like a thousand rusty scythes. Everyone knew: anyone who sought it out would be devoured before they could even say hello.

The boy set off anyway, with nothing but his hunger and a dirty trick. Along the way, he met beggars, witches, old women—the usual rabble that always lurks in the forest in such fairy tales. And each time, he gave them a piece of bread, a sip of beer, or helped pull a goat out of a ditch. And each time, in return, he received some kind of tip, a magic trick, or a curse that proved useful later.

After a long journey, over mountains and swamps, he finally stood before the griffin's nest. A monstrosity, woven from whole tree trunks, filled with the bones of dead knights and twisted suits of armor. And in the middle of it all: the golden eggs, as big as mill wheels.

The boy was about to grab it when the griffin plummeted from the sky. Huge, ugly, with eyes like burning coals. He roared: "What do you want, you human worm?"

The boy lied faster than he breathed. "High lord, I don't want to steal anything from you—I want to serve you! But my king, that greedy bastard, sent me to get your egg."

The griffin laughed, his breath smelling of rotting flesh. "Then take one, and tell your king that I'll be back soon to reclaim my tribute."

The boy trembled, grabbed an egg, and dragged it home—and the thing was so heavy that he almost fell over. But he reached it and laid it at the king's feet. The king immediately grabbed it, grabbed it, and while he was still burning his fingers on the golden shell, thunder was heard outside. Wings as big as storm clouds.

The griffin came.

And then he tore the king to pieces, ate him, throne and crown, and flew away. The boy stood there, with blood on his face, grinning crookedly and saying, "Well, then I'm king now."

And so one man rose to the top, not because he was strong or god-fearing, but because he was bold enough to let the right bastard eat for him.

The Fox and the Cat

Once upon a time, there was a fox, a cunning, boastful, one of those who always pretend to have invented the world. He babbled incessantly about his *hundred arts* How he escapes traps, how he tricks dogs, how he fools hunters. He sounded like a drunk in a bar, adding an "incredible adventure" to every beer.

And then there was the cat. Quiet, inconspicuous, with its one trick: climbing a tree. It couldn't do much more than that. No big speeches, no boasting. Simply: cling on, up there, and keep quiet.

"What? Just a trick?" sneered the fox. "Child, I have a whole arsenal. I could steal hunters' boots, fool the dogs, and if necessary, pretend to be dead until the flies vomit. And all you have is this pathetic *climb the tree*?"

The cat just twitched its whiskers. "Sometimes one is enough, if it's the right one."

Then the dogs came. Large, salivating, with eyes eager to tear the fox and the cat to pieces.

The fox cried, "Now look, I'll show you how it's done!" – and began to search his mind for the right trick. "Should I run? Dig? Sneak? Deceive? Or maybe trick number 73: run in circles and pray?" He jumped back and forth, wanting everything at once.

The dogs pounced on him, tearing him to shreds, until all that was left of the fox was a pile of red fur clinging to the grass.

The cat, on the other hand, was already up in the tree, comfortably grooming its paws and purring: "A hundred tricks, and none of them are any good. One is enough, if it sits."

The Fox and the Horse

Once upon a time, there lived a farmer as heartless and stupid as a cold piece of bread. He had an old horse that had served him all his life—plowing, pulling carts, enduring beatings. Now the animal was old, rickety, its bones creaking with every step. The farmer looked at it and said, "It's no good anymore. Either you bring me the lion, or I'll chase you to hell."

So much for gratitude.

The horse trotted out, sad, hungry, on the verge of collapsing. Then it met the fox. The fox, clever as ever, immediately smelled trouble. "Well, why are you hanging so low, old horse?" The horse explained the idiotic task.

The fox grinned. "No problem. I'll get you the lion. You just have to pretend you're already dead."

No sooner said than done. The horse lay down, its tongue sticking out, so limp it looked like a sack of bones. Then came the lion, large, roaring, with hunger in its mouth. "A horse! Freshly served!" He jumped on it, about to bite – but the fox had already tied him to a tree with the horse's tail.

The lion raged, roared, scratched the bark, but he hung like an idiot in his own roar.

The horse dragged itself home to the farmer, with the lion in tow. "So, you jerk," it thought, "here's your proof."

The farmer stared, his eyes wide, not knowing whether to vomit or kneel. Instead, he gave the horse his retirement—finally a life without work, without a whip, just food. The horse ate contentedly and thought: *Couldn't you have done this sooner, asshole?*

The Unequal Children of Eve

Once upon a time, there was Eve—yes, the Eve who was supposedly the first woman. She had children, many, and as is often the case: some were as beautiful as angels, some looked as if they'd been threshed with a flail.

One day, it was said: God wants to see them all. Eva panicked. She dressed up the beautiful children, washed their faces, and combed their hair. But the ugly ones—those with the crooked noses, the warts, the crooked legs—she hid them in the back room. *“The gentleman mustn’t see this, otherwise I’ll embarrass myself.”*

Then God came, with his usual poker face. He saw the pretty children and nodded patronizingly: "They should become kings, princes, noblemen, judges, scholars—the ones who can open their mouths and kick the rest."

Then he left, but of course he knew Eve had been tricked. Because God doesn't miss a beat—at least not in these stories. So he ripped open the door to the back room, and there they stood, the ugly ones. Dirty, scarred, scarred. God grinned: "And these—they're supposed to become farmers, craftsmen, farmhands, swindlers, pig drivers, and beggars. And because they've been kept secret from me so beautifully, they're supposed to toil their whole lives until their backs break."

And so it happened: the beautiful ruled, the ugly bowed, and the world continued like a bad joke.

The mermaid in the pond

Once upon a time, there was a miller, as cash-strapped as a junkie in front of a deposit machine. The mill stopped clattering, the grain kept coming, and his wife moaned incessantly. One day, he was sitting by the pond in front of his wheel, cursing his miserable life – and then she appeared: the mermaid. Beautiful, of course, with hair like liquid gold, but her eyes? Ice-cold, like liquor from the freezer.

She hissed, "Do you want to get rich, miller? Do you want your mill wheel to turn again, your grain to flow again, your life to finally stop stinking of old mold?" The miller, stupid and greedy, nodded immediately. "Yes, for God's sake, yes!" The mermaid grinned. "Then give me whatever is in your house right now." He thought it was an old goat or a sack of flour. So he shouted, "Deal!"

When he returned home, his newborn son ran towards him. Then he knew:*Shit*. But it's too late. A promise is a promise, and the mermaid doesn't forget.

The boy grew up, handsome, strong, and capable. He learned the miller's trade, loved a woman, and wanted to live. But the mermaid was lurking. No sooner had he grown than she emerged from the water, stretched out her cold arms toward him, and swept him into the depths.

The woman screamed, fought, and sought help from an old witch in the forest. She gave her tricks: a comb, a wheel, a cloth. With these, she could tear her lover from the mermaid's arms when the moment came.

And so it happened: The miller's boy, half-dead in the water, choked by algae, was rescued. The woman waved the cloth, the comb transformed into a mountain, the wheel into a sea of flames—all to hold back the mermaid.

In the end, the couple stood back on dry land, shivering, wet, but free. The mermaid screamed, raged, and made waves until the pond boiled—but she never got him back.

But happy? Who would believe that? The miller's boy knew: He only lived because others had risked their lives, and in his dreams, he heard the mermaid singing every night – cold, sweet, like a promise that still holds.

The Old Woman in the Forest

Once upon a time, there was a girl, neither rich nor poor, just a poor wretch who lived in the middle of nowhere. She toiled all day, ate like a sparrow, and slept on straw. She wasn't the brightest, but she was good enough not to get on anyone's nerves.

One day, her master and mistress sent her into the forest to fetch wood, carry water, all sorts of other shit. Of course, she got lost—like any stupid fairytale girl who stumbles around in the woods without realizing that all trees look the same.

The sun was setting, the shadows were lengthening, and the poor thing was already trembling like a deer when it smells the hunter. Then she came to a small, crooked cottage. Inside sat an old woman, with wrinkles on her face that looked like cracks in parched earth. Her eyes were like two murky puddles, but she grinned: "Well, child, come in. I'll give you shelter if you serve me faithfully."

The girl thought:*Better witch than wolves.* So she stayed.

And the old woman was strict. Every day, the girl had to chop wood, carry water, and feed the animals. But the old woman kept saying, "Do your work properly, and no harm will come to you." So she gritted her teeth and did it.

Until the day came when the old woman said: "Your time is up. Go to the cellar, there you will find what belongs to you."

But in the cellar, there were three chests. In one, chickens squeaked, in one lay gold pieces, and in the third, a dog with teeth as long as daggers slept. The girl could have taken everything. But she was honest—or too stupid to steal. She took only what the old woman gave her: a small, modest casket full of gold.

"You know, child," said the old woman, "whoever is greedy dies. Whoever remains humble lives." And she disappeared, poof, just like that, as if she had never been there.

The girl came home with the box, became rich, got married—blah blah, the usual crap. But at night, as she lay in her bed, she swore she sometimes heard the old woman croaking outside in the dark. A laugh that sounded like dry wood in a fire.

The Hare and the Hedgehog

Once upon a time, there was a hare, loud-mouthed, self-absorbed, with legs like whips and a mouth like a village drunk, who had to tell everyone how hot he was. He was running across a field, saw the hedgehog—small, crooked, with crooked legs that looked more like a hangover than a walker—and immediately started mocking him. "Hey, you stumpy leg, what are you doing out here? Can you even get off your ass without falling flat on your face?"

The hedgehog, who really just wanted some peace and quiet, snorted: "Shut up, hare. You can run faster, sure. But you're not any smarter." "Smarter? YOU?" The hare laughed so hard he was almost drooling. "Come on, let's have a race. If you win, I'll drink with you for a week. If I win, you'll dig up carrots for me until you die."

The hedgehog, as cunning as a drunken tavern dog, thought:*Okay, bastard, I'll play along.* Because he had his wife, and she looked so damn similar to him that

it was almost impossible to tell them apart. So he secretly placed her at the other end of the racetrack.

The race began. The hare, full of testosterone and conceit, shot off like an arrow. When he reached the finish line, the hedgehog woman stood there and said, "I'm already there." The hare freaked out. "Impossible! Do it again!" He ran back, and there was the hedgehog again: "I'm already there." The hare ran back and forth, sweating, panting, until his lungs burst. Finally, he toppled over, dead as a cockchafer in a shot glass.

The hedgehog and his wife laughed up their sleeves, went home, and continued their lives – small, crooked, but smarter.

And the hare? It still lies somewhere under the field, a warning to all loudmouths who believe that brawn always beats brains.

The Little Bagpiper

Once upon a time, there was a boy, as poor as the plague and as thin as a licked-clean ladle. He had nothing: no land, no livestock, not even a decent shirt. Only an old bagpipe he had inherited from his grandfather—a thing that smelled more of a sheepfold than of music.

The boy traveled through the country, playing his fife, and people occasionally gave him a piece of bread or a mug of thin beer. But mostly they laughed at him: "Stop whining, it sounds like a cat being dragged down the toilet!" He just grinned and kept playing, because: What else can you do when you can't do anything else?

One day he ended up in a village where a wedding was being celebrated. Everyone was fat and drunk, meat on the table, mugs full of beer. The little bagpiper crouched in the corner, played a song – and lo and behold, the people's legs started twitching. First just the bride, then the groom, then the entire drunken crowd. They jumped up, danced like crazy, couldn't stop. He played, they jumped, he blew, they spun around until sweat dripped and shoes burst.

But he couldn't stop. The whistle played almost by itself, screaming, wailing, driving the crowd mad. The guests danced until their tongues hung out of their

mouths, until one by one they collapsed – first laughing, then gasping, then dead.

In the end, the hall was full of corpses, the beer spilled, the meat cold, and the bagpiper stood there, his cheeks blown dry, his fingers bloody, his pipe still warm from playing.

He laughed, a bitter little laugh, and thought: *Well, at least no one is listening to me mockingly anymore.* Then he moved on, alone as before, only with the reminder that music can kill more than any sword.

The plaice

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had so much bad luck in life that even the crows weren't bothered to devour his fields. He toiled, sweated, and cursed, but in the end, all that was left was a hunger in his stomach and dirt under his nails.

One day, he dug into the earth with his spade and pulled out a fat clod of earth. Not a small piece of land, no, a huge crust of earth, heavy as guilt. And he thought: *Shit, that alone won't fill me up.*

Suddenly, a ghost appeared—ugly, gray, with eyes like mold in a cellar. He grinned and said: "This plot of land belongs to you. And everything you put on it will prosper a hundredfold. But beware, if you want more than you need."

The farmer rejoiced, planted beets, wheat, barley—and lo and behold, the soil spat out everything, thick, fat, enormous. Soon he had enough to eat, enough to drink, and even enough to trade. Finally, he was somebody.

But greed eats brains. The farmer wanted more. He didn't just plant food, he planted gold pieces, weapons, even hope. And the soil did what it had to do—it spat it out. But not the way he wanted: The gold came back black and rotten, the weapons rusted, and hope sick and full of holes.

And at some point, the soil went berserk. It opened, gaping like a maw, and swallowed everything: house, cattle, wife, children, and finally the farmer himself. Gone. Nothing remained except a hole in the ground and a few crows laughing like drunken gravediggers.

The crumbs on the table

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who was so poor that he couldn't even keep the mice in his house—they moved away because he didn't even have a crumb. But one day, a rich man invited him to eat with him.

So the farmer sat there, hungry as a dog at the butcher's. But he wasn't allowed at the table. No, the masters sat there, with fat faces, clean hands, and so much meat in front of their noses that the bones were already creaking. But the farmer got nothing, only what fell from the table: a few crumbs. Hard, dry leftovers that not even the dogs wanted.

The farmer knelt on the ground, gathering the crumbs like a pig licking the bark off the dirt. He thought: *So, that's life. I break my back in the field, and in the end, I get the leftovers from those who've never held a hoe.*

The rich people laughed. "You see, poor wretch, be glad you're getting anything at all. God made us rich and you poor. That's the way things are."

The farmer nodded hypocritically, but inside he was seething. And when he returned at night, he sneaked into the pantry and stuffed his belly full of ham, cheese, and wine, so much that he almost burst. Finally, he took a knife and carved into the tablet: *You gave me the crumbs, and I took the meat for myself.*

The next morning, the lords raged, screaming for punishment and order, but the farmer had long since disappeared. Perhaps he was already squatting in the next village, perhaps he was lying dead in a ditch. But one thing was clear: He had eaten his fill for at least once in his life.

The Forest House

Once upon a time, there were three sisters. They were so poor that they couldn't even scratch the lice out of their hair without the neighbors laughing. Then their father said, "Go into the forest and get some wood. At least then we'll have something to burn, even if we don't have anything to eat."

The eldest trudged off, hungry, tired, with a face as grim as an old plow. She got lost—of course, as always in these fairy tales. And suddenly there stood a house. In the middle of the forest, crooked, lopsided, and smelling of old grease and mold. Inside sat an old, gray man, with eyes that looked like two holes in

his skull. Bread and beer were on the table. And he growled, "Give me something to eat, and you'll get something too."

The eldest ate as if she hadn't had anything in weeks, but she ignored the old man. "Let him help himself." There was a knock – three animals: a chicken, a cow, and a goat. They wanted something too. But the girl pushed them away. "Get lost, I barely have anything myself."

The next morning, she lay dead in her bed. No scream, no blood—just gone. She took the house for herself.

The second sister came, and the same thing happened. She stuffed herself, she drank, she chased away the animals, she ignored the old man. She, too, was dead the next morning, silent, cold as stone.

Then came the youngest. Prettier perhaps, but above all: less stupid. She gave bread to the old man first, then to the animals. She herself remained hungry, but she laughed while doing so. And lo and behold—in the morning she woke up, alive, and the forest house was transformed. No more mold, no more dirt, but a palace, bright, clean, with servants. The old man was not an old man, but an enchanted prince. And the animals were his people, cursed until someone with a heart came along.

Of course he married the youngest, of course there was a happy ending. But let's be honest: the only difference between death and riches was whether you shared your bread.

The wise servants

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had servants as dumb as haystacks, but with mouths full of self-praise. "We're the smart ones," they said, "we know everything better than the rest of us." Yet they couldn't even take a proper shit without talking their pants off.

One day, the farmer gave them an order: "Look after the cart in the field and don't come home until I tell you to." Simple, right? For normal people, maybe. But the farmhands made fun of it.

They squatted around the wagon, boring as hell. One said, "What if he wants to test us? What if we have to do something really clever?" So they started to

think. One said, "Let's relieve the horses, otherwise they'll eat too much." – No sooner said than done. The horses were put away. The wagon stopped.

Then: "What if the cart tips over? We should make it lighter." So they cleared everything away: sacks, barrels, straw—everything in the middle of the path.

"But when the farmer comes back, he might think we didn't do anything. We have to show him how smart we are!" So they dismantled half of the wagon, just to show that they had "taken precautionary measures."

When the farmer arrived, he found a broken-down wagon, scattered cargo, and three grinning idiots shouting, "See, sir, we've done everything we can to be smart!"

The farmer grabbed the club, beat them black and white, and shouted, "You're not smart farmhands—you're the biggest shit that ever wore shoes!"

And morale? The servants grinned nonetheless, bloody lips and broken ribs. "You see," they said, "we're so clever we even deserve a beating. Who else can do that?"

The Two Hikers

Once upon a time, there were two boys who set out into the world. One was poor but honest, hungry and had blisters on his feet. The other was boastful, full of deceit, a guy who always acted like a friend—until he got a knife stuck in his back.

They hiked together, sweating, starving, stealing a piece of bread here and there. One day, when they entered the forest, they found a hut. Inside crouched a witch, as wrinkled as an old baking sheet, but with eyes that glittered like poison. "Come in, boys," she whispered, "there's food here."

One was cautious, the other greedy. They ate, drank, and the next morning the old woman said, "I have work for you. Dig up my garden." They sweated, dug, and found—of course—gold. Piles of gold so heavy that their pockets almost burst.

Then the fake miner's greed seized him. As the honest traveler was about to go for a drink, he hit him on the head with a stone. Blood spurted, the fellow fell

over, gasping for breath. The other grinned: "Now everything is mine." He buried him, took the gold, and left.

But the witch had seen everything. She giggled, and the dead man in the grave stirred. Not quite alive, not quite dead, he crawled out again – with rage in his heart and clay in his mouth.

He continued walking, stumbling, half man, half shadow. And as it happens, he met the traitor again. He now stood there like a rich man, boasting about his gold, with servants and a whore on his arm.

But when he saw the man he thought was dead, he paled. He came closer, dirty, silent, with eyes burning like cellar holes. Then the false friend fell dead—heart still with fear, even before a beat was struck.

The honest man took his gold back, but he was never happy again. For once you've lain in the grave, the filth remains in your throat forever.

Hans my hedgehog

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who had nothing: no luck, no children, just a wife who was constantly nagging him. "Give me a child, or I'll go crazy!" The farmer, dumb as a potato, cried out, "Dear God, I want a child, even if it's a hedgehog!" – Bam, wish granted.

The woman gave birth to a son, half human, half hedgehog. He had spines instead of hair, a snout instead of a nose. He didn't cry like a child, but squealed like a pig in a slaughterhouse. They called him "Hans my Hedgehog"—because there was no other name for him.

His father was so ashamed that he raised him behind the stove, like a rat in the dark. Hans grew up, learned to talk, but he was ugly as sin. When he was old enough, he said, "Give me a bagpipe and a rooster, and I'll run away." The farmer was glad to be rid of him.

So Hans, the bastard, rode out into the world on his rooster. Everyone laughed, everyone backed away. But he played his bagpipes so hard that even the pigs danced.

One day he came to a forest full of boars and pigs. He rounded them up, so many that their grunting could be heard all the way to heaven. He became master of the pigs, a shepherd of the filth.

Then a king got lost in the forest. Hans helped him out, but only in exchange for a promise: "Give me your daughter." The king, cowardly and deceitful, promised – hoping never to hear from the monster again.

But Hans came, with his rooster, his bagpipes, and his pigs. The princess almost vomited when she saw him. "I'm supposed to go to bed with HIM?" – But a promise is a promise.

The wedding night arrived. Hans undressed, covered in thorns, stinking of pigs. The princess howled, but he said: "Light a fire, throw my thorns into the fire." She did so – and he transformed into a man. Handsome, strong, shining like freshly polished gold.

The next morning, there was no hedgehog in bed, but a prince. The princess looked at him and thought: *Shit, maybe all that puking was worth it.*

Thus, Hans-My-Hedgehog became a ruler, and no one laughed at him anymore. Only he himself sometimes laughed quietly when he thought of his rooster, who was still scratching outside while he lay in bed, marrying the princess.

The water of life

Once upon a time, there was a king, as old as moldy bread, sick as a dog after a drunken binge. He lay in bed, wheezing and reeking of death. His three sons stood around him, pretending to be sad—in truth, they coveted the crown.

It said: *Only the water of life can save him.* A miracle, clear as glass, that heals everything. But of course, it wasn't just around the corner, but in a realm full of traps, witches, and death.

The eldest rode off. Proud, arrogant, someone who thought he could buy the world. On the way, he met a dwarf—small, ugly, with eyes like nails. The dwarf asked, "Where are you going?" But the prince just laughed and kicked him aside. *Fuck dwarves.* Not a hundred steps further, he fell into a trap, trapped in a dark hole, and no one cared.

The second one set off. He, too, met the dwarf. He was no better—boastful, arrogant, believing the world owed him everything. He, too, despised the dwarf. Bam—trap, hole, gone.

Then came the youngest. Quiet, honest, but with a heart so tender he almost died. He greeted the dwarf, gave him bread, and listened to him. And the dwarf helped: he showed the way, gave him a sword, and warned him of traps. The youngest passed trials, defeated monsters, and fought for the water of life.

On his way back, he found his brothers half-dead in the pits. He pulled them out, even though he could have said: *Die, you bastards*. But he didn't. Brotherly love, or stupidity. Probably both.

But as soon as they were free, they betrayed him. They took his water, gave the cure to his father, and left the youngest in misery. The old king recovered, praised the elders, and the youngest was considered nothing.

But, as in all damned stories, the truth came to light. The betrayal was exposed, the fake brothers were unmasked. The youngest received the crown because he was the only one who had actually done something—and because he hadn't kicked the dwarf.

But happy? No. Because he knew: When even brothers betray you, there is no security. Only the water in the pitcher, which is never enough to completely wash away the rot of the world.

Doctor All-Knowing

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who was not only poor but also incredibly stupid. But he had a wife, and she was just as stupid, only a little louder. One evening, they were sitting by the fire, chewing on a hard piece of bread, and she said, "Listen, Hans, you can't do anything. You're too stupid to plow and too weak to drink. Why don't you become something respectable—a doctor!"

Hans scratched his head. "Doctor? Me? I can't do anything." "That's exactly why," the woman shouted, "doctors don't know anything either, they just pretend. You just need a title."

So she painted him a sign: "*I am Doctor Know-All.*" And that's it. They hung it in front of the house, and Hans was officially a scholar.

The next day, a rich man passed by. He had a fortune to spare, but a worry in his heart. His treasure had been stolen, and he wanted to know who the thief was. He saw the sign and laughed: "Doctor Know-It-All! That's exactly who I need."

Hans was invited to the manor house. He was scared he'd get caught, but his wife whispered, "Shut up, drink beer, and pretend you know everything."

So Hans sat at the table, was given roast meat and wine, and started cracking jokes. "Yes, life is hard. Yes, the world is full of thieves. Yes, the truth always comes out."

And by chance, the real thieves—the servants of the house—were sitting at the table. They heard this, panicked, and thought: *This guy knows! He sees through us!* One after the other, they almost fell off their chairs in fear.

Hans muttered to himself, "Oh, you poor things..." – he meant his stomachache from eating. But the thieves thought: *He knows! He's talking about us!* So they confessed everything and brought back the treasure.

The rich man cheered, paid Hans Gold, and actually called him "Doctor All-Knowing."

Hans went home, his purse full of money. His wife grinned: "See? Didn't I tell you? You don't need knowledge, just a mouth that closes at the right moment."

The genie in the glass

Once upon a time, there lived a poor lumberjack's son who had nothing but a hunger in his stomach and blisters on his hands. His father chopped wood every day, sweating and cursing, and the son thought: *Shit, I'll never grow old like this. There has to be more to it than swinging axes and counting tree stumps.*

One day, he was strolling through the woods and found a bottle between the roots of an old oak tree. Dusty, heavy, with a cork on top. He pulled the

stopper, and out he came: a ghost, as tall as a church steeple, ugly as a debt, with a voice like thunder after a hangover.

"Thanks for freeing me, brat," he boomed, "and as a reward, I'm going to kill you. I've been sitting in that jar for centuries, and my mood is worse than your lunch."

The boy, clever or simply desperate, grinned: "Oh come on, you're not that big. You were never in that glass. Prove it first."

The ghost, proud as a drunken king, squeezed himself back into the glass, still laughing: "See?" – Bang, the boy stuffed the cork back on.

Now he had the ghost in his hand. "So, old man," he said, "either you give me something useful, or you rot in there until Judgment Day."

The ghost growled, but he knew the brat had him by the ass. So he promised, "Okay, I'll give you something." And he gave him a piece of rag that could heal any wound, break any iron, and make any job easier.

The boy set out, helped here and there, healed people, made himself useful – and became richer and richer until one day he became a master himself.

The father, the old thug, just stared, didn't understand anything, but he ended up eating his son's bread. And the boy thought: *Well, sometimes a little cunning is all it takes to crawl out of poverty. And sometimes the glass is the only place a ghost belongs.*

The Devil's Sooty Brother

Once upon a time, there was a soldier. One who had thrown his life into the mud for kings and generals, and what did he get out of it? Nothing. A few rags on his body, scars on his face, and a hunger in his stomach. The war was over, his masters were full and fat, and he was simply sent away like a dog too old to bark.

He wandered through the countryside, tired and stinking, until he met the devil in the forest. No grand entrance, no sea of flames—just a guy, black with soot, stinking of sulfur, with a grin that promised more than any prayer.

"Well, brother," said the devil, "you look worse than I do. Will you serve me? No more carrying a gun, no king to kick you. Just fire, smoke, and me. In return, I'll give you enough money to stuff your belly until it bursts."

The soldier, burned out and without hope, nodded. *Fuck it. It can't get any worse.*

So he served the devil. Hauling wood, stoking kettles, stirring sulfur. His skin became sooty like the master's himself, his fingers black, his lungs filled with smoke. But he got gold, always plenty, and lived better than ever before – as long as he kept his mouth shut and obeyed.

After seven years, the devil said, "Well, brother, now you're free. Take the sack of gold, but swear never to be clean again. Stay sooty as you are."

The soldier set off. With money in his pocket, he suddenly became interesting. The people who would have chased him away before now courted him. A barman gave him the best beer as long as he could pay. Women giggled as long as they heard the gold clinking. But everyone whispered: *Look at that sooty guy, he looks like the devil's brother himself.*

He didn't let it bother him. He drank, he lived, he squandered, and when someone asked what he'd worked for, he laughed: "In hell, my friend. Don't ask for sweat, ask for sulfur."

In the end, he died—whether from beer, women, or his own soot, no one knows. But some said: *He went to heaven because he simply obeyed.* The others: *He went back to the devil because he had long since belonged to him.*

And so he remained: the devil's sooty brother.

The Wren

Once upon a time there was a group of birds who argued like drunken peasants in a tavern: *Which of us is the king?* The eagle roared, "Me! I have the biggest claws!" The peacock spread his tail and cackled, "Me! I have the prettiest ass!" The dove cooed, "Peace, friends, peace!" – and everyone laughed at him.

In the midst of the noise sat a small wren, so tiny that it was almost overlooked. But it was grinning. That kind of wickedly snarky, cheeky grin, the

kind only someone can have who knows they never win through strength, but through nastiness.

The birds decided: *Whoever flies the highest shall be king.* Zack, everyone into the air. The eagle soared, the crane fluttered, the geese chattered, the sparrows yelped. One after the other, they fell off, fluttering wearily back. Only the eagle soared higher and higher, until its feathers almost burned off.

"I am the king!" he croaked.

But then, from his feathers, leaped the wren. The little bastard had simply hidden, let himself fly along—and now fluttered a little higher. "Look, I'm above you all, so I'm the king!"

The birds roared, screamed, and felt like they'd been made fun of. They wanted to catch the wren and tear it apart. But it was too small, too nimble, too bold.

Finally, he hid in a mouse hole. The birds decided to keep watch until he came out again. But he just stayed there. In the end, he became king anyway—not through size, not through beauty, not through strength. But because he was bolder than all of them put together.

The Owl

Once upon a time, there was a small, dirty village, full of people who were more afraid than wise. One night, an owl landed in the attic of the old mill. It didn't make a fuss; it just sat there, staring with its huge eyes, so silent that everyone's heart stopped.

In the morning, the miller spotted the animal. He cried: "A monster! With eyes like wheels and a head that spins like the devil!" He immediately ran to the village, and the others came, heavily armed with pitchforks, axes, and the courage of idiots who are dumber in a pack than alone.

They stormed the mill. There sat the owl, silent, large, staring. "Holy shit," one whispered, "it'll eat us if we get too close!" Everyone kept their distance, sweating, trembling.

The village elder, wiser than the others, ordered: "We have to kill them!" But no one dared to approach. So they decided to simply tear down the mill—beam

by beam, stone by stone. For hours they hacked, screamed, and sweated. And the owl? It sat up there, staring.

When only the beam with her on it remained, she fluttered up bored and flew away.

There stood the farmers: tired, sweaty, and with a dismantled mill in the dirt. The owl was gone, and they had achieved nothing but rubble and shame.

The Unfaithful Chicken Girl

Once upon a time, there was a girl who looked after the chickens. She stood in the coop all day, stinking of feathers, manure, and old grain dust. She was young, pretty enough that the farmhands whistled at her, but she had a heart as fickle as the animals she guarded.

One day, a boy came, thin, dirty, with eyes that smelled of anger. He whispered sweet words, promising her a better life: no more chickens, no shame, only gold, wine, and kisses. The chicken girl believed him.

Instead of dutifully collecting the eggs, she ran out at night and met the guy behind the fence, while the chickens in the coop screeched because the fox had already helped himself.

The next morning, the best animals were missing. The farmer raged: "If that happens again, it's your turn!" But the girl swore: "It wasn't me, I'll be careful!" – and that evening she ran back to her rascal.

Little by little, the fox devoured the entire stable. All that remained were feathers, blood in the straw, and a girl gorging herself on lies.

Until she was caught. The farmer caught her at night and saw her holding hands with her lover, while the chickens clucking pitifully behind them.

Then he broke her neck—as easily, as quickly as one slaughters a chicken. Because to him, she was worth no more than the animals she had betrayed.

And the boy? He laughed, disappeared, and looked for the next stupid woman.

The Sparrow and His Four Children

Once upon a time, there was a sparrow, small, gray-brown, as inconspicuous as a piece of bread crust by the road. He had four children, greedy, loud, with mouths so wide open they sounded like a choir of rusty nails. Every day, he flew, pecking at crumbs, worms, anything he could find in the dirt, and stuffing it down their throats.

But the world doesn't give a damn about little birds. The chicks had barely grown feathers when the farmer came with his scythe, slashed the grass, and almost chopped up the nest. One of the chicks fell out, flopped on the ground, and was immediately snatched up by the dog. Crack, gone.

The other three were crouching higher up, chirping like crazy. Then the tomcat came from the yard, fat, lazy, but with eyes like two knives. He jumped up and grabbed the nearest one. Blood, feathers, silence.

Two remained. The sparrow fluttered, screamed, and tried to save them. Then the boy came from the yard, threw a stone—and hit the third. Dead.

Only one remained. It clung to the branch, trembling. The sparrow looked at it, full of fear, full of hatred for the whole damned world. It flew off, intending to bring it food. But on the return flight, the farmer himself shot with his shotgun, hitting the old man. Feathers rained down, and the sparrow fell, landing hard in the grass.

The last chick sat there, chirping until it was hoarse. That evening, the cat returned and finished the job.

And that was it. No happy ending, no rescue, just feathers in the wind.

The fairy tale of the land of smart alecks

Once upon a time, there was a land people called "Schlauraffenland" (Silly Land). No fields, no plows, no sweat, no hunger. Everything flew in your face if you so much as opened your mouth. Pigs ran through the streets – roasted, with knives and forks already in them. Fish jumped of their own accord from the water straight into the pot. Springs of beer bubbled from the earth, wine flowed like piss after a feast. And the people? They lay around, fat, smelly, belching in unison.

Nobody worked. Nobody plowed. Anyone who ever thought of bending their back was laughed at: "Asshole, all you have to do is hold your hand up!" – and then a baked chicken fell on them.

But Smarty Land had its own rules. Anyone who ate too much would burst like an old fart. Anyone who drank too long would wake up naked in a ditch, with flies in their mouths and nothing but shame in their minds. And anyone who thought they were smarter than the others, that they had invented some kind of trick, was crushed by the filth of their own laziness.

One, for example: a boy, poor as a pig, who dreamed his whole life of having to do nothing. One day, he stumbled into the land of silly things. He ate his way through mountains of porridge, drank beer from mugs as big as cows, and let roast geese carry him to bed. "Now I'm happy," he thought.

After three days, he lay there—belly bloated, bowel blocked, eyes cloudy. He wheezed, pooped again, and was dead. The others laughed and continued to eat over his corpse. Because in the land of silly things, you're only worth something as long as you burp and drink along with him.

The Stolen Penny

Once upon a time, there lived an old woman, poor as sin, bent as a withered branch. She begged in the streets, knocked on doors, received a piece of bread here, a sip of thin beer there. But her heart was hard, greedy, and she always wanted more than she was given.

One day, she saw a penny lying in the church. So small, so inconspicuous, that no rich dog would have even noticed it. But to the old woman, it was a treasure. She looked around—no one was there. She quickly grabbed it and put it in her pocket.

As soon as she was outside, it began to weigh on her. The penny grew heavier and heavier, as if it were filled with lead. The old woman gasped, writhed, and tried to throw it away – but it stuck to her pocket, burning through the fabric.

That evening, she lay in her hut, the penny glowing in her hand, so hot it scorched her fingers. She screamed, but no one heard her. Then the devil himself appeared, black, stinking, with a laugh that echoed through the walls.

"A penny," he said, "just a penny. But it was dedicated to God. You stole it, and now your soul belongs to me."

The old woman wanted to beg, to talk her way out of it. But the penny jumped into her mouth of its own accord, burned her tongue, and crept into her stomach. She gasped, fell over, and died—and days later, she was found dead, with torn lips and a face that looked as if she had been sucking on a ember.

But the penny lay back in the church, shining as if nothing had ever happened.

The children in famine

Once upon a time, there was a village in a time when even the crows starved. The sky was leaden gray, the fields empty, the earth hard as stone. No grain, no bread, not a drop of milk. Only growling stomachs, weak legs, and eyes that were already half dead before the body could catch up.

The children were the first to be hit. Small bones, thin arms, bellies swollen like drums. They ran through the alleys, begging for crusts, for leftovers, but there was nothing. Their parents looked the other way because they had nothing left themselves.

Some mothers boiled water in a pot just to make it sound like there was still soup. Others let their children disappear into the forest so they wouldn't have to hear the screaming anymore. And the stronger ones? They stole whatever they found—even from the weaker ones. Brother took the last crust of bread from brother's hand. Sister hit sister to get a spoonful of water.

It was a feast without food. A fight over nothing.

One day, the first child died. Thin, silent, with open eyes in the dirt. The next day, a second, then a third. Soon they were lying in the alleys, and no one had the strength to bury them. The dogs ate what was left.

The adults said, "That's right. God is testing us." But it wasn't God testing us—it was just hunger. A hole in the stomach that was deeper than any grave.

And the children who survived were no longer children, but small, wild animals, with eyes that never laughed again.

The boot made of buffalo leather

Once upon a time, there was a poor soldier who returned home from the war with nothing but what he was wearing: a torn jacket, scars on his face, and a pair of buffalo-leather boots. No money, no bread, no bed, only hunger in his stomach and anger in his heart.

He wandered the streets, looking for work, but found none. Everyone spat at him: "The war is over, we don't need you anymore." He begged, he screamed, he played dog at the door, but no one gave him anything.

In the end, he had nothing left except his cursed boots. Then he came up with an idea: *Fuck it, if there's no crust of bread, I'll just bite into the leather.*

And so he took the boot, cut it into pieces, and boiled it in an old kettle full of water. It stank of sweat, blood, and dirt. But he slurped the broth, chewing the tough leather until his teeth almost broke.

Other poor people saw this, laughed at first—and then sat down. One brought a spoonful of salt, the next an onion he had stolen from somewhere. Together they continued cooking. In the end, they had a stew: buffalo leather with sweat, salt, and tears. And they ate as if it were a feast.

They laughed, they belched, they slapped their bellies, even though it was little more than rubber in the water. But for one evening, they forgot their hunger.

But the soldier held up the boot, chewed on the last sole, and said: "Look, brothers – if the world gives us nothing, then we'll just eat the dirt we've walked on."

And everyone nodded, because they knew: Tomorrow there'll be nothing. Not even that.

The Golden Key

It was the middle of winter, the world lay frozen like an old corpse under a white blanket. A boy, ragged and half-starved, trudged through the forest. His hands were blue, his teeth chattering. He was looking for wood, a few branches perhaps, anything to keep him from freezing to death like a stray dog.

Beneath the snow, he found a small key. Gold, finely crafted, so foreign to this icy, dirty world that he almost burned his fingers when he picked it up. A key to what? Who knows. But it glittered like a promise.

"If there's a key," the boy murmured, "there must be a lock." So he continued scratching in the snow, his fingers sore, his nails broken. Finally, he came across a box. Small, made of iron, rusted, almost inconspicuous—but the key fit the lock perfectly.

The boy turned it. Very slowly, with trembling hands. He felt the mechanism move. He heard the cracking sound, as if the world itself were opening.

And then – nothing.

The story ends here. No one knows what was in the box. Was it gold, bread, a spell to ward off the cold? Or was it empty, just a cruel twist of fate?

Some say the box contained all the happiness in the world, but the boy died before he could see it. Others say there was nothing inside—and the boy fell over with a smile on his face, because at least he had held hope in his hands.

Either way, the snow covered him, and no one asked about the golden key anymore.

The Farmer and the Devil

Once upon a time, there lived a farmer, as poor as a church mouse, but with more hunger in his stomach than sense in his head. He plowed and toiled, but the fields yielded little more than a few shriveled turnips and a cartful of curses.

One evening, as he was cursing his damned plot of land again, the devil appeared. Black as soot, stinking of sulfur, but smiling as if he'd just cheated an entire fair.

"Well, farmer," said the devil, "you look like you're about to eat your own hoe. I'll make you a suggestion: We'll work the field together. What grows above it is mine, and what grows below it is yours."

The farmer scratched his head. *Over it? Under it?* He grinned. "Agreed. But this time I want my mind to help me, not just sweat."

So he sowed turnips. When the harvest came, the devil had the leaves—a pile of green shit, bitter and useless. But the farmer pulled the fat turnips out of the ground, laughed, got drunk that evening, and mocked: "Well, master, do you like the leaves?"

The devil growled, but didn't give up. "One more round, farmer. Now the opposite. What grows below is mine, what grows above is yours."

"Deal," said the farmer, and this time he sowed wheat. The golden ears above were for him, and the roots below – worthless dirt – were for the devil.

The farmer laughed again, louder, dirtier, stuffed bread down his throat and left the devil standing with dirt in his mouth.

Then the black man realized: With muscles and fire he can go far, but against a peasant with cunning and hunger he looks old.

So he disappeared, hissing, and swore never to make a contract with a damned scoundrel again.

But years later, the farmer still told everyone in the pub how he had fooled the devil – between two mugs of beer and a belch as big as his pride.

The lazy one and the hardworking one

Once upon a time, there were two boys, neighbors, who couldn't have been more different. One of them ran out every morning like a madman, toiling, sweating, carrying water, chopping wood, and plowing the field until his hands were covered in calluses. They called him the **Hardworking**.

The other one? He lay in bed, belched, scratched his balls, and thought: The sun shines without me, why should I wear myself out? If he ever went out, it was only to annoy the hard-working man or to lie in the shade. They called him the **Lazy**.

Naturally, one day an old beggar passed by—with a beard, a cane, and that look that betrays that he isn't one, but some kind of god or magician in disguise. He asked them both for bread and water.

The hardworking one immediately dropped everything, ran, fetched the jug and the loaf, and gave the last thing he had. The lazy one, however, just yawned and said, "Fuck off, old man, find yourself another fool."

The beggar laughed, threw off his cloak, and behold: He was a magician, a sly old fellow with more power in his fingers than either of them had in their entire bodies. He said: "Diligence is rewarded, laziness punished."

He gave the hardworking man a chest full of gold, bread, wine, and everything his heart desires. But he gave the lazy man a chest full of pitch, rats, and stench.

And as always: The hardworking man became rich, had enough to eat, enough to drink, and married some girl who had never even looked at him before. But the lazy man was chased away, spat out of the village, and died in a ditch, stinking, starving, forgotten.

The Gooseherd at the Well

Once upon a time, there was a girl who tended geese. No castle, no silk dress, just feathers, dung, and the screeching of birds that were dumber than the villagers themselves. Every morning, she drove the flock out, sat by the well, stared into the water, and thought: *So this is what my life looks like – an endless cycle of feces and croaking.*

One day, a prince passed through the village. Young, clean, with shiny boots that had never seen shit. He saw the girl sitting by the well, her hair disheveled, her hands rough, but her eyes so clear that he almost forgot that she stank like a stable.

He talked to her, laughed, and she laughed back, even though she knew: *A man like that doesn't stay with a gooseherd.* But he came back. Every day. And at some point, he swore to her: "You shall be my wife, whether you count feathers or crowns."

The village whispered, the geese honked, and the girl dared to dream. She already saw herself in velvet, with a ring on her finger, and for a while forgot about the dirt under her nails.

But the royal family found out. The queen fumed: "My son wants to marry a gooseherd? A woman with goose droppings on her feet? Never!" She had the boy whisked away, away on journeys, to wars, to festivals—far from the well bank.

The girl waited. Day after day, year after year, at the well with the geese. She grew older, her hands crooked, her face harder. The prince never returned.

In the end, she sat alone by the well; the geese had long since changed, but the stench remained the same. She looked into the water, no longer saw her face, only gray wrinkles, and whispered: "So much for royal words."

Then she let herself sink forward. The well took her, silent, cold, like a grave. The next day, the geese stood around forlornly, honking as if searching for her voice—and found nothing.

The lifetime

Once upon a time, there was a good God—but not the one preached by priests, with golden rays and pious songs. No, this one was tired, grumpy, fed up with all the living creatures who just ate, fucked, died, and then complained that their lives were too short or too long. So he decided to allocate a lifespan to every animal and every human being.

First he called the **Donkey** "You shall live for thirty years," he said. The donkey plucked up his ears and cried, "Thirty? Lord, that's too much! Always carrying burdens, getting beaten, having flies up your ass—who wants that for thirty years? Make it fifteen for me." God nodded, thinking to himself: At least he's honest.

Then came the **Dog**. "You, faithful watchman," said God, "thirty years for you." The dog whined, "Thirty? I run, bark, get kicked, lie in the cold. I can't stand that for thirty years. Give me twenty." And God relented.

Then came the **Ape** God said, "For 30 years you shall climb, make fools of yourself, and amuse people." The monkey pulled his face. "Thirty years of making faces and being laughed at? I can't last 20. Give me 10." And God gave him 10.

In the end, the **Person** God said, "You too shall live thirty years." But the man laughed wickedly: "Lord, that's too short. Give me more. Give me what the others have rejected."

So man got his thirty years. Plus fifteen from the donkey, twenty from the dog, ten from the ape. That makes a total **75 years**.

And so it happened:— For the first thirty years, a person lives like a person. He eats, fucks, dreams, builds.— Then he toils like a donkey, bucks, carries loads, gets beaten by his work.— After that, he lives like a dog, growls, lies in the dirt, guards house and yard, and the boys laugh at him.— And the last years? Then he becomes a monkey, toothless, crooked, ridiculous, a toy for others, until he dies.

Dearest Roland

Once upon a time, there was a witch who had a daughter—pretty as a carrot, but with a heart as hard as stone, because she had learned more curses than songs from her mother. And in the house, too, lived a poor girl who had to toil, cook, clean, and do the dirty work.

This poor thing loved the **Roland** A boy with a twinkle in his eyes and enough courage to be foolish. And Roland—of course—loved her back. But the witch? She had her own plans: Roland should take the daughter, not the maid. Because why should the handsome fellow hold the hands of a whore who stank of ash?

The poor girl soon realized that the witch wanted to get rid of her. She heard her murmuring at night: "Tomorrow she shall die. Tomorrow I'll make it quick." So she crept to Roland and whispered: "If you love me, then flee with me."

That night, they were already standing at the door when the witch heard them. She ran after them, armed with knives, curses, and a tongue like poison. But the girl had learned witchcraft in secret. She transformed herself into a flower, Roland into a violinist, and the witch ran past.

But witches aren't idiots. Again and again she found them, again and again they had to transform: into animals, into water, into flames. And each time it was closer, each time they could hear the screams of the old women on their heels.

In the end, in a last-ditch effort, the girl transformed herself into a duck, and Roland into a hunter. He shot—and the witch fell, dead, black, with a scream that burned in her ears for days.

They were free. But freedom is deceptive. Roland returned home to prepare his family so he could marry the girl. And he swore: "I'll be back, wait for me."

But he didn't come. In the meantime, he had met another woman, finer, more brilliant, more comfortable. The poor girl waited, her heart full of love and her eyes full of hope, until the truth dawned: Roland had long since found another woman.

And so she remained alone, with nothing but her witchcraft, her memories, and the bitter knowledge that even dearest Roland was only a man—and men rarely keep their swears.

Snow White

Once upon a time, there was a queen, as beautiful as ice and as cold as schnapps in winter. Every morning, she stood before the mirror and asked, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the hottest of them all?" And the mirror, a slimy flatterer, answered, "You, Mistress, you're the hottest." Until the day it said, "I'm sorry, sweetheart, but Snow White, your stepdaughter, is more beautiful. Young, fit, without wrinkles, and not yet ridden by men."

The queen's ass burst with envy. "The little one must go," she snarled. She ordered the huntsman to take Snow White into the forest and rip out her heart. The huntsman, a cowardly bastard, brought the girl out, but when he looked at her—pale, young, with eyes like freshly tapped beer—he couldn't. Instead, he slaughtered a pig, took its heart, and brought it back. The queen ate it, bloody and dripping, as if it were a feast.

Meanwhile, Snow White wandered through the forest and stumbled into a hut. Inside lived **seven dwarves** Not sweet little miners—but drunken, lecherous, slobbering scoundrels who squatted in the mine all day and drank beer and

insults in the evenings. When they found Snow White, they grinned: "You can stay if you do the housework." So she became the cleaning lady for seven smelly men who dug in the dirt during the week and drank until the beams creaked on the weekends.

The queen soon learned that Snow White was still alive. So she came disguised, first with a bodice ribbon that she tied so tightly that Snow White almost died. Then with a comb poisoned so that the little girl's hair smoked when it touched it. But the dwarfs saved her every time—not out of love, but because they needed her service: cooking, washing, and cleaning throats.

Finally, the queen came with the apple. Half red, half white, poison and innocence rolled into one. Snow White bit into it and fell over like a slut after the third round of schnapps. The dwarves placed her in a glass coffin. Why? Because even dead, she was still too pretty to be buried. They stared at it every day, almost drooling, like men in a brothel with no money.

Then the prince came. A sleazy fellow, rich, bored, and horny. He saw the dead woman and thought: I want one of those. He didn't ask any questions; he offered the dwarves gold; he wanted to take her with him—**as decoration, as a corpse, as a fetish.**

The dwarves, greedily, said yes.

On the way, the servants stumbled, the coffin shook, and the piece of apple popped out of Snow White's throat. She gasped, woke up, and blinked. And what did the prince do? He kissed her, immediately, without asking, without waiting. Whether she was alive or dead, he didn't give a damn. The main thing was that she was young, beautiful, and quiet.

So he married her. The queen was invited, recognized Snow White, and as punishment, had to dance in red-hot iron slippers until she fell over screaming. Everyone cheered. But in truth, it wasn't a happy ending. Snow White was simply no longer the slave of the seven drunkards, but the trophy of a prince who kissed corpses.

Rumpelstiltskin

Once upon a time, there was a miller, a pompous jerk who had more mouth than brains. He sat before the king and boasted: "My daughter can spin straw into gold!" – why? Because he was drunk and thought lies made him important.

The king, greedy as a whoremonger, stared and said, "Well, then, give me the girl. If she can do it, I'll get gold. If not, she'll die." So the daughter was locked up in a room full of straw. She sat there, weeping, thinking: *I can't even braid my hair, how am I supposed to spin shitty straw into gold?*

There he came—a little fellow, ugly, crooked, with eyes like glowing coals and a breath of liquor and sulfur: Rumpelstiltskin. He grinned: "I can do it for you, little one. But what do I get in return?"

The first night: He spun, the gold glittered, and she gave him her necklace. The second night: He spun again, and she gave him her ring. The third night: The king, greedier than before, wanted even more. Now she had nothing left to give—except her damned belly. "If you become queen and have a child, it's mine," hissed the little one. And she nodded, because otherwise she would have been beheaded immediately.

So she became queen. Shining dresses, a fat king in bed, and eventually a child in her arms. Then Rumpelstiltskin came back, rubbed his hands, and said: "Give it to me."

She screamed, she begged, she offered gold, land, everything – but he wanted the child. Only the child. In the end, he made her an offer: "If you guess my name in three days, you can keep it."

She pondered, she tried: Kunibert? Kaspar? Bastard? Always wrong. But on the third day, she sent a messenger into the forest. And he saw the little bastard jumping around the fire, singing and yelling:

"Today I bake, tomorrow I brew, the day after tomorrow I'm having the baby. Oh, how good that no one knows that my name is Rumpelstiltskin."

The queen grinned as he arrived. "Your name? Are you Heinz? Karl? Or Rumpelstiltskin?"

The little one screamed, stamped, and raged. "The devil told you so!" Then, in his rage, he tore himself in two, bursting like a pig, and the queen stood beside him, holding her child, while the walls hung with blood and entrails.

And everyone cheered: "Hurrah, the queen has won!" – but she knew: Actually, no one had won. She was just no longer the victim of a dwarf, but the plaything of a greedy king.

Jorinde and Joringel

Once upon a time, there was a couple – Jorinde and Joringel. Young, in love, so naive that they thought kissing in the moonlight was the meaning of life. They crept through forests, held hands, and swore eternal loyalty to each other. Everything was sticky-sweet, like an overripe apple about to rot.

But the forest they wandered through belonged to an old witch. She wasn't the kind herbal grandmother who makes you tea, but an old scurvy husk with lecherous eyes. She had one weakness: young blood, beautiful maidens. In her castle, she kept an entire henhouse of transformed maidens, all in cages, chirping, fluttering, innocent—birds that had once been women.

So, as Jorinde and Joringel were making out in the forest, a spell fell over them. Jorinde froze, her lips still open from their last kiss, and transformed before his eyes into a bird. Full of plumage, pointed wings, eyes filled with panic. The witch came, grabbed the animal girl, stuffed her cage, laughed filthy, and disappeared.

Joringel? He stood there like an idiot, paralyzed, unable to save his love. When the spell lifted, he was left behind—a boy without a girl, a man without balls. He cried, ran through the village, begged for help, but no one could do anything. Because courage doesn't help against witches, only damned cunning.

For weeks he wandered, barely eating, drinking more than speaking. Then one night he dreamed of a flower, red as blood, with a dewdrop that shone like gold. Whoever plucked it could break the spell.

So he searched for days until his feet were bloody. He found it, took the flower, and went to the witch's castle. Inside were cages full of damselbirds, all chirping as if to say: *Help us!* But he knew: only one is his.

The witch blocked his path, baring teeth that looked like old nails. But the flower in his arm glowed, the spell broke, the old woman howled, collapsed, and Jorinde suddenly stood there again—human, bare skin, tears on her face, alive.

They fell into each other's arms, vowing never to go into the forest again, never to challenge the witch again. But what existed between them had been torn apart. Because once you've seen your love turn into an animal, the nightmare stays in your mind.

The two royal children

Once upon a time, there was a king who had a daughter. Beautiful, of course, as always in these stories. But her heart didn't belong to some rich prince or fat count, but to a boy, born poor, but with eyes in which she saw more brilliance than in all the golden halls.

They met secretly. At the well, in the forest, between stinking stables. And each time they swore: *We stay together, no matter what.* But fairy tales laugh at such oaths.

The father learned of love. He raged, spewing bile, and swore: "My daughter will not marry any bastard!" He imprisoned her high up in a tower, where the air was thin and the longing even thicker.

But the boy didn't give up. He wanted to get her, wanted to swim through rivers, climb mountains, crawl through hell. He came to a wide, wild stream. No bridge, no boat. Just water, rushing, cold as death. He jumped in. He fought. He thrashed. And went under.

The king's daughter, in the tower, felt it. Her heart broke, and she sang, piteously, full of pain, until she herself hung from the bars, life draining from her.

In the morning, he was found down by the river, puffy, with blue lips and algae in his hair. She was up above, still, cold, with her eyes open. Two royal children, so close and yet separated by water, by walls, by the miserable way of the world.

And the people in the village shook their heads, saying, "What a pity. They were a lovely couple." And then they moved on, to the field, to the pub, to bed. Because love is a song that quickly falls silent when hunger or everyday life screams louder.

The Golden Woman

Once upon a time, there was a king who had a wife made of gold. Not just a golden dress, no—**a woman who shimmered like gold herself** as if she had been born in the sun. All the men stared, all the women whispered, and the king himself held her as if she were a treasure no one could touch.

But wealth has its curse. One day, the golden woman disappeared. Some said she had gone into the water, others that she had been stolen by sorcerers. In truth, she was simply gone because no one loved her; everyone just stared. Gold shines, but it doesn't warm.

The king was desperate, he searched, hunted, and dispatched half an army. But nothing. Then a simple fellow came along—a lad with more courage than brains. He set out and swore to bring back the golden woman.

On his journey, he found a lake, black as pitch. In the middle lay an island, and there she sat: the golden woman. Beautiful, radiant, but cold as bronze. He called out, begging her to return. But she said: "Only he who does not lust for gold can redeem me."

So she tested him. She sent him through forests where the trees hung with coins, through rivers glittering with silver. He saw the treasures, but touched nothing—for fear of losing them.

In the end, he stood before her again. She nodded, stepped from the water onto the land, and he thought: Now I have her. But when he embraced her, she crumbled into dust, golden, sparkling, but empty.

For the golden woman was never more than an apparition—a reflection of greed, of longing, of man's damned craving for glamour. And he remained: a poor dog, emptier than before.

The White and the Black Bride

Once upon a time, there lived a poor maid who served a witch. She toiled day and night, while the old woman treated her like a piece of cattle. But, as fairy tales often go, the prince fell in love with this very girl, not with a fine princess. Why? Because she was honest, because she could laugh, and because he was probably in the mood for something new.

But the witch didn't wish her any luck. She took her own daughter—ugly, lazy, with a face like a sack of nails—and placed her on the cart while the bride was traveling to the royal court. On the journey, the poor maid was forced to swap places with her daughter. The daughter sat down, pretending to be the bride, and the maid had to serve her as before.

And the prince? An idiot. He saw his fat face and didn't even think twice. *So this is my lover? Okay, let's get married.* Men see what they want to see and rarely question when things get uncomfortable.

The poor maid remained silent, bit her lips until they bled, and swallowed everything. But in the castle there was a rooster, a stupid beast, who kept crowing: "Cock-a-doodle-doo, the real bride isn't sitting here, she's sitting down there like an animal!"

The king heard it, and at first he laughed, then became suspicious. Finally, it became clear what had been going on: the witch's daughter had cheated, and the true bride had been humiliated.

And the punishment? The fake bride was tied to a horse, put in a barrel full of nails, and dragged through the streets until she screamed and drowned in her own blood. The white bride, however, became queen, got the throne, the ring, the whole damn thing.

But deep down, she knew: the man who loved her hadn't recognized her, hadn't sought her out, hadn't saved her. She was only queen because a damned rooster was louder than her own voice.

The Three Black Princesses

Once upon a time, there was a king who had three daughters. They were beautiful, but cold, haughty, with eyes like knives. They believed they stood above everything—above the people, above the filth, above the laws of the world.

One day, an old wanderer came to the castle. Gray, dirty, with eyes that saw more than usual. He asked for bread, a bit of warmth. The princesses laughed. The first threw water in his face, the second spat at him, the third sent the dogs.

But the old man was no beggar, but a damned sorcerer. He cast a curse: "You shall become black until your hearts are pure. Black as your souls, black as the night in which you mock."

And suddenly—there they stood, their skin like coal, their clothes as if burned, their hair ashes. Not black like noble, but black like dirt, like soot, like pitch.

The king screamed, raged, and ran after priests and doctors, but no one could break the curse. So he sent them away, deep into the forest, because he could no longer bear the sight of their faces.

The three princesses now lived in a hut, cursed, hungry, and angry. No one came, no one helped. The men who strayed into the forest ran away at the sight of them. Some stayed—and turned to ash because the princesses could no longer control their hatred.

Years passed. The first withered, hardened, and empty, until she was only a shadow. The second became so bitter that she wept stones and eventually broke under her own weight. But the third, the youngest, one day began to help an injured animal—not out of kindness, but out of boredom. But boredom turned into habit, and habit into compassion. The curse lifted from her, slowly, and she became beautiful again, but broken, with eyes that never again shone with pride.

And what about morale? Only one of the three made it back. The others died black, forgotten, cursed.

The glass coffin

Once upon a time, there was a poor journeyman tailor who wandered the world because he had no money, no bed, and no idea how he would survive the next day. So one day, he stumbled through a dense forest until he found a hut. Inside lived an old woman who looked like a sack full of wrinkles, and she gave him food and a place to sleep.

But as soon as the sun had set, he heard a whimpering, a knocking, as if someone were banging on glass. He crept outside, and what did he see? A **damned glass coffin**, right among the trees. Inside lay—oh wonder—not a dead dog, but a princess, beautiful as a fairytale poster, pale and silent as if freshly buried.

He stared at her, the poor fellow, and thought: Either I'm dreaming or I've landed in a damn freak show. Suddenly, a stag stepped out of the bushes, tall, proud, with eyes like glowing coals. As soon as it touched the coffin, it burst open – cracking, splintering, and the princess sat up as if she'd been brought back from a nightmare.

She explained what had happened: An evil sorcerer had captured her, encased her in glass, like a piece of jewelry that one could only gaze at but never touch. He himself was the stag, cursed and condemned to wander through the forest.

The tailor, who couldn't even sew a pair of trousers properly, suddenly felt like a hero. He helped her break the spell, and the deer transformed back into a prince. Everything was suddenly beautiful, large, and shining.

And what did the tailor get? Nothing. No crown, no princess, no place in the castle. Just the story and the certainty that he was once again just the idiot who had done the dirty work while the rich and beautiful lay in each other's arms.

He moved on, hungry, tired, and muttered, "If I see one more glass coffin like that, I'll smash it to pieces."

The Kraute donkey

Once upon a time, there was a farmer so foolish that he thought he could steal a witch's herb from his garden without the old woman noticing. His wife was pregnant and ate his hair. *"Get me some cabbage, or I'll die! I want salad, I want soup, I want greens, and I want them now!"*

So he crept into the witch's garden at night, plucked her most beautiful weed – that's what people called the wild stuff – and stuffed his sack full.

But the witch had eyes like rats in the dark. She caught him and hissed: "You mangy dog! For your crime, you shall give me what your wife carries under her heart." The farmer, cowardly as a deer, nodded immediately, thinking: *Maybe she doesn't notice, maybe nothing happens.*

But witches don't forget.

When the child was born – a girl, beautiful, innocent – the old woman stood in the doorway, grabbed her and disappeared.

The child grew up with her, amidst curses, toads, and dark spells. She named it Krautesel, after the plant that had taken its life. And despite everything, it grew up beautiful, with hair like gold threads and eyes as clear as water—a jewel in the filth of the witch's hut.

When she was old enough, the witch locked her in a high tower, without a door and only a small window. Why? Because the old woman knew that beauty

attracts men like beer attracts drinkers—and she wanted to keep the girl for herself.

Naturally, at some point, a prince came by, heard the girl's voice, and was immediately consumed with longing. He discovered that the old woman was climbing the girl's braid. So he shouted, "Donkey, donkey, let down your hair!" And she let him. The prince climbed up, fucked her with words, with vows, with fiery glances—and soon with more than words.

The witch smelled a rat. One day, when the prince arrived, she stood at the window, grabbed him, cursed him—and he fell blind to the ground, stumbling out into the world, miserable like a dog. But she cut off Krautesel's hair, cursed her, and chased her into the wilderness.

But as in fairy tales: Years later, the two found each other again. He was blind, she, with a child in her arms, full of misery. She wept, her tears fell into his eyes – and, whoosh, the blindness was gone. Everything was light, everything was sweet again.

They returned to the kingdom, lived richly, comfortably, in velvet and silk. But Krautesel knew: everything she had was born of deceit, of curse, of pain. And sometimes, when the prince slept, she stared into the night and wondered if her mother had simply been hungry back then—and if she herself would ever be more than the child of a stolen Kraute.

The Heavenly Wedding

Once upon a time, there was a good, innocent maiden who sang in church as if she herself were a piece of incense. Everyone praised her: "So pure, so pious, so angelic!" – and that's precisely why fate soon met her fateful defeat.

Because the purer you are in fairy tales, the faster you drop dead. And so it happened: The girl died young, still with rosy lips, and the people howled as if they'd never seen a coffin before. They said, "She's not dead, she's just been summoned to a heavenly wedding."

In the village, it was said that angels had brought them. Some swore they saw lights over the cemetery at night, like candles that never go out. Others said they heard singing so sweet that the dogs howled and the cows curdled their milk.

But the parents stood there, empty-handed. Mother wept, father cursed, and the priest murmured psalms as if everything were God's plan.

And what was this "marriage made in heaven"? A fairy tale people told themselves to cover up their pain. So they wouldn't have to admit that life is a damned game of dice where even the best die like dogs.

The girl lay in the earth below, the worms already eating at her eyelids, while above the villagers drank, prayed and said: "She is now sitting next to Christ at the table." As if it made any difference.

The Giant and the Tailor

Once upon a time, there was a little tailor. Not brave, not strong—just a skinny fellow who spent the whole day holding a needle and thread and, at night, dreamed more of beer than fame. But, as is often the case, he had a big mouth.

One day, he was trudging through the forest and met a giant. A beast so big that the ground trembled when it farted. The tailor thought: *If I run now, I'll die. If I act wisely, maybe I'll survive.* So he grinned broadly, like he had the balls of the century, and said, "Hey, big guy? I'm stronger than you think."

The giant laughed, a roar that sent the birds tumbling from the tree. "You? A fly-peeper? Show me what you can do!"

The tailor bent down, picked up a stone, and pretended to crush it—while in his other hand he had a piece of cheese, which he secretly crushed. The water dripped, and he said, "Look, I'm going to crush the stone until it bleeds." The giant scratched his ass, blinked, and thought: *Damn, that little sack is stronger than it looks.*

Then the giant said, "Throw the stone so high that it will never come back down." The tailor threw the stone, and it fell back. But secretly, he let a bird fly – and it fluttered away. "Look, mine isn't coming back." The giant was amazed.

Then: "Bring me water from the well, but carry it in your hand." The tailor poured water into a sack, let it drip, and grinned: "My hands hold more than you could ever drink." The giant, as dumb as a sack of cabbage, believed it.

In the end, the giant was so confused that he took the tailor into his house to test him. But there he realized: The little bastard was just a liar. When he tried to grab him, the tailor, nimble as a rat, ran out the door, through the forest—and was gone.

The giant stayed behind, angry and confused, roaring into the trees. But the tailor crouched down in the nearest tavern, ordered beer, and told everyone he'd fooled a giant. And everyone stared at him like he was a hero—but he was just a cowardly but damned cunning dog.

The Hahnenbalken

Once upon a time, there was a bunch of village idiots. Not just a little idiot, but the whole package: brains like porridge, hearts like straw, and tongues quicker than heads. One day, these idiots were sitting in the tavern, drunk, when suddenly a rooster hooted outside.

"Do you hear that?" shouted one who already had more beer than teeth. "That's a sign! That rooster up there in the coop is sitting too high. If he falls, he'll break his neck, and we'll all be to blame." The others nodded solemnly, as if he'd just rewritten the Bible. "Yes! We have to save the rooster!"

So they decided to support the rooster with a beam. They took a huge wooden post and dragged it through the village, shouting and stumbling. Everyone sweated, everyone cursed, but no one thought about it.

They placed it under the roof, right through the house. The beam went from the ground to the roof, across the kitchen, bedroom, even through the toilet. Everything was blocked off. One could no longer breathe, let alone live there. But they stood there, proud as kings: "Now the rooster is safe."

The next morning, the rooster crows again, up above, cheerfully, completely unfazed. The people cheer: "See? Our deed saved him!" In truth, the bird had never been in danger of falling. He simply sat there, pecking his feathers and laughing inwardly at the complete idiots below.

And when the neighbors from other villages came, they saw the house with the beam cut right through it, shook their heads and said: "The stupidest people in the world live there."

The Okerlo

Once upon a time, there was a village somewhere between a swamp and a toilet, where people believed more in ghosts than in reason. There was a man who haunted the place, whom they **Okerlo**. No one knew what he really was—devil, ghost, goblin, or just an ugly bastard. But the people's fear made him more powerful than any king.

They said Okerlo was up to mischief at night: knocking on doors, shouting through windows, turning cows on their backs, and making roosters crow in the middle of the night until everyone thought the end of the world was at hand. And every time someone saw him, they swore Okerlo had eyes like hot coals, teeth like rusty knives, and stank of beer and sulfur.

People panicked. No one dared to go to the toilet alone at night; they preferred to pee in the bucket under their bed, just to avoid the Okerlo. Children were beaten if they came home late, and the old people told each other around the fire that he ate souls like other people ate sausages.

At some point, the village idiots decided: "We have to catch him." They set traps, with bread, with beer, even with a goat. But nothing worked. Because the Okerlo was either too clever or not there at all.

But one day, a young man—one of those who still confuse courage with stupidity—crept out into the forest. He swore he would confront Okerlo. Everyone laughed, everyone bet he wouldn't come back.

But in the morning he came back. Pale, eyes wide open, hands shaking. He only said: "I saw him. He was standing there. He was grinning. He said my name." And he never said another word.

From then on, all it took was a whisper of "Okerlo," and the children howled, the dogs growled, and the men drank another cup to wash down their fear.

Did he really exist? Who cares. Fear made him more real than any king.

The white dove

Once upon a time, there was a young man, poor as dirt, but hungry for happiness. He was wandering aimlessly through the forest when suddenly a white dove fluttered onto his shoulder. White as snow, shining like an innocent glow—but its eyes dark, deep as an abyss. It spoke (yes, birds talk in fairy tales, why not?): "Help me, I'm enchanted. Follow me."

The fellow, eager for adventure, followed the dove like a dog follows a bone. She led him through forests, through thorn bushes, to a tower so black it looked like it was cast from pitch. Inside lived a wizard who not only played with magic, but also with human hearts like others with dice.

The dove transformed before his eyes – suddenly, there stood a maiden, beautiful but pale, as if she had cried more nights than she had slept. "I am his prisoner," she breathed. "He turns girls into birds and locks them in cages. Help me, and I'll help you."

So they hatched a plan. The boy was to outwit the magician with cunning—a task as absurd as a shoemaker trying to outwit the devil. But he did it: He stole the bunch of keys, found the chambers, freed the girls, and they all fluttered away, becoming birds again, a flock of white shadows soaring into the sky.

But in the finale, when he tried to save the maiden, the sorcerer caught her. A fight ensued: blood, screams, magical lightning, the walls shook. The boy managed to strike down the bastard, rip out his heart—but he was half dead himself.

The Virgin stood above him, the white dove, now free again, with eyes full of radiance. She kissed him – and he died. Just like that. But she flew away, into heaven, leaving behind the dead fool who had believed love was the reward.

The Three Sisters

Once upon a time, there were three sisters. One was beautiful, the second was clever, and the third... well, she had nothing except the fact that she existed. In fairy tales, that's often enough to get them into trouble.

They lived in a hut at the edge of the forest, poor, but full of hope that some prince would ride by and rescue them. But princes have the stupid habit of only looking for beauty. So, as always, happiness depended on looks.

The eldest, beautiful as a sunrise, soon began to receive advances. Men knocked, offered rings, promised castles. She grinned and thought: *I'm out of the shit.*

The middle one, as cunning as a fox, hissed, "You're a stupid chicken. Beauty fades, brains remain." But the youngest remained silent. For she knew that neither beauty nor brains would help her if the world had already written her off.

One night, a stranger arrived. He wore a dark coat and had fiery eyes. He offered the family riches if he could take one of the sisters with him. The father, a pathetic dog, nodded immediately. "Take whoever you want, as long as I have a full belly."

The stranger chose the most beautiful one. He led her away to the castle, which smelled more like a grave than a palace. And there, he revealed what no one wanted to hear: The stranger was not a prince, but a damned cannibal. The beautiful woman disappeared into his cellars, and what came back was nothing but blood on his teeth.

A year later, he stood in front of the hut again. "A second one." This time he took the clever one. She, too, disappeared. She, too, was eaten, brains and all.

Only the youngest remained. The father trembled, the mother howled, but the stranger grinned and held out his hand. But the youngest, who had always remained silent, spat in his face. "Don't eat me, bastard, eat yourself."

And lo and behold—the spell was broken. For the fellow wasn't a cannibal at all, but a cursed demon who thrived on arrogance and fear. He burst like a sack of ashes, and his castle became nothing but a pile of stones.

The youngest stood there, alone. No more sisters, no more family, only the wind in her face. She survived—but with the knowledge that beauty and intelligence are worthless when death is hungry.

The singing, jumping lark

Once upon a time, there was a king who had a daughter. She was—of course—beautiful, because otherwise no one would ever think of telling a story about her. But she was also spoiled, full of longing for things she wasn't meant to have.

One day she said, "Father, bring me the singing, leaping lark. I don't want anything else." The father sighed, but he was too soft to deny her wish. So he rode off, searching and searching until he finally saw the damned little bird. But no sooner was he about to catch it than a lion leaped in front of him. A beast so big that its breath stank like a tomb.

The lion growled: "You'll only get the little bird if you give me your daughter." The king, cowardly as an old dog, nodded. *Better my daughter in the mouth of the lion than her anger at home.*

When he returned home and handed over the lion's lark, his daughter was thrilled—until he explained the condition. By then, it was too late: She was grabbed and dragged away.

But lo and behold – the lion was no lion, but an enchanted prince. A beast by day, a man by night. And the daughter, as foolish as she was in love, got used to it. They fucked between curses and hope, and soon she was pregnant with the child of a half-lion.

But the fairy tale never shows mercy: She began to long for home. The prince allowed her to visit her sisters – but warned: "Don't tell anyone about my curse." Of course, she did, because people can never keep their mouths shut. The sisters egged her on: "Look at him in the light! Who knows if he won't remain a monster?"

That night, she secretly lit a candle, saw the handsome man, and dripped wax into his face. He roared, transformed back into a lion, and cried: "Now you've betrayed me. Now I must go to a witch who holds me captive!"

And he was gone.

The daughter howled, grabbed her child, and ran after him for years, over mountains and through forests, until she was barefoot and half-starved. Finally, she found him – with the witch, as her servant. She had to complete three impossible tasks to get him back: drawing water in a sieve, washing clothes that

never came clean, and baking bread without flour. With cunning and the help of birds and old women, she managed it.

And so she got him back, the lion's son, half man, half beast, but free again. They lived together, rich, well-fed—but their trust remained shattered. For every time he looked at her, he knew: she was the one who had betrayed the curse.

The Golden Children

Once upon a time, there was a fisherman so poor that he wanted to sell his own shadow. One day, he pulled not a fish out of the water, but a damned **Goldfish**, shining like treasure. The animal croaked: "Let me go, and you'll have children made of pure gold."

The fisherman didn't think twice. Stupidity usually takes short measures. He let the fish swim, came home, told his wife – and lo and behold: eventually, she gave birth to two boys who shone as if they had been born directly into a treasure chamber. Their skin shimmered, their hair glowed, and everyone in the village stared as if God himself had had a hand in it.

But gold attracts envy like beer attracts drinkers. The children were barely born when the whole village lusted after them. "Cut their hair, sell them!" - "Press their blood, maybe it'll make you rich!" - "Slaughter them right away, gold from bones makes good cups!" The parents were afraid, so they chased the children away, out into the world, away from greed.

The gold children wandered, found castles, helped kings, and fought dragons, just like in fairy tales. But every time they helped someone, they were told: "Even harder, even harder, prove your gold!" They were never just people, always **the shining miracle**, a treasure to be exploited.

In the end, they were chased to their deaths by a jealous king. But gold doesn't die so easily. They transformed into swans, flew away, and wherever they landed, they left behind feathers that shone brighter than the sky.

People collected the feathers, wore them as amulets, sold them, boasted about them – and the golden children disappeared into the distance, free, but without a home.

The Sternthaler

Once upon a time, there was a little girl, poor as shit. No father, no mother, nothing but a piece of bread and a shirt on her back. The world would have preferred to let her die, but because fairy tales often begin with hunger, she just trudged off somewhere, because it didn't make any difference anyway.

On the way, the vultures came in human form. First, a beggar: "Give me your bread, child." She gave it to him, and he ate it greedily, without thanks. Then another: "Give me your cap, I'm freezing." She took it off. Then: "Give me your skirt, I'm shivering." Away with it. Finally, another came: "Give me your shirt." And because she was either too stupid or too good, she ended up standing stark naked in the night, trembling, hungry, exhausted.

And what happened? – Stars fell from the sky. Silver, thalers, coins, entire mountains. She suddenly had more money than all those who had robbed her before. Fairy tale logic: Sacrifice yourself, naked, hungry, and in the end, you'll be rich.

But the truth? Everyone in the village only saw the coins. She didn't become a "holy martyr," but a walking treasure. And guess what happens to people who sleep in gold while everyone else goes empty-handed? – Exactly. They get stabbed at night.

No one writes the ending like that, but the story reeks of blood: a naked girl, covered with star coins, and greedy hands already reaching for her.

The Three Birds

Once upon a time, there was a king who had a wife, and she bore him three daughters. All beautiful, all with eyes like glass and hair like silk. But beauty in fairy tales is always only the first step toward misery.

The queen died young, as was fitting, and the king took a new one—a stepmother, ugly in face, even uglier in heart. She saw the three daughters and thought: *When they grow up, no one will look after me anymore.* So she faked a smile and secretly planned her poison cocktail.

Then she heard of three mysterious birds that lived in the forest. Each bird could sing the future: the first told the truth, the second a lie, and the third death. So she sent her daughters into the forest one after the other—ostensibly to ask the birds questions, but in reality, to get rid of them.

The eldest went and came to the first bird. It sang, "Your father loves you, but soon you will die." A flash of lightning, and she was ashes. The second went and came to the second bird. It lied to her: "You will be queen and rich, you will rule over all." She laughed, ran home, and boasted—and her stepmother slit her throat that night because she was in her way. The third, the youngest, came to the third bird. It simply croaked, "Death, death, death." She screamed, ran, and the bird flew after her and pecked out her eyes. Blind, she stumbled through the forest until she fell into a river and disappeared.

The stepmother triumphed, sitting on the throne as if nothing had happened. But that night, the three birds returned—no longer forest animals, but black shadows that settled over her bed, singing and pecking until she, too, was nothing but flesh and blood.

In the end, the king remained alone. Without daughters, without a wife, without truth. Only the croaking of three birds echoed through the castle for years to come.

The shoemaker's boys

Once upon a time, there lived a pair of shoemakers' apprentices. They were exploited to the point of bloodshed, their bones torn, their fingers blisters, their backs bent from sitting endlessly over smelly leather rags. Their master was a miser who made them toil for a loaf of bread a day while he drank and acted self-important in the tavern.

The boys dreamed of a simple life: beer, women, and sleep without a needle in their fingers. But instead, they had to mend shoes, sew boots, and beat soles until the rooster crowed.

One evening, when the master fell into bed drunk again, the boys sat down together. "We're going to ruin here. We work our hearts out, and what do we get? A kick in the ass and some dry bread." - "Right," one said. "Then let's get out of here."

So they stole a pair of finished shoes, a few pennies from the cash register, and ran into the night. Over hill and dale, on and on, until they thought: *Free!*

But freedom is expensive. They drank the pennies away at the first pub they came across, bragged about their stolen shoes, and the village police were on their backside. One was hanged, one fled abroad and ended up in the war, and the third actually found a job with another shoemaker—only to become a miserly swine like the old master years later.

Because this is the truth: exploited apprentices rarely become saints. Either they die or they become the next generation of exploiters.

The Devil and the Farmer

Once upon a time, there lived a farmer as poor as a field ravaged by drought. Every day he toiled his back to the bone, yet all he had was dry bread and blisters on his hands. One evening, a stranger came along the path. A slender fellow, wearing a fine coat, he smelled of sulfur and cheap liquor. And his eyes glowed as if he'd brought hell himself.

"Farmer," he said, "you look like someone who doesn't know what profit is. Let me be your partner. I'll help you make your fields fertile. But the yield—we'll share it. What grows above is yours, what grows below is mine."

The farmer, not stupid, thought: *If the idiot wants roots, let him have them.* So he sowed grain. Summer came, the field stood golden, and the farmer laughed, while the devil stood there like a complete idiot with a handful of dry roots.

"Once again!" hissed the hellhound. "This time, what grows above belongs to me, what grows below belongs to you!" The farmer nodded. He sowed turnips. When autumn came, he pulled thick tubers from the ground, while the devil stood there with a handful of useless leaves, green, wilted, and worthless.

The devil fumed. "You farmer, you're cheating me!" - "Me?" laughed the farmer, "I only keep contracts."

The devil stamped so hard that the ground shook, and disappeared amid smoke and stench. But the farmer stood there, laughing, thinking he'd outsmarted

Hell. But that night, when he lay alone in bed, he heard a hissing in his ear: "We'll meet again. No one can fool the devil twice."

And so he lived – rich from grain and turnips, yes, but with the feeling that every shadow on the side of the road was a score still to be settled.

The Farmer and the Devils

Once upon a time, there was a farmer, a real scoundrel from the country, with more calluses on his hands than sense in his head. He plowed day and night, but the field remained as empty as his wallet. One evening, as he was tipping into the ditch, completely drunk on cider, he suddenly heard giggling.

He rubbed his eyes – and then he saw them: half a dozen little devils, squatting in his field, dancing, screaming, sowing chaos like children with too much sugar. They carried away his few seeds, drank his beer, and threw dirt into the well.

The farmer yelled, "What are you pigs doing on my land?" The devils screeched back, "We'll take what we want! If you want to stop it, then come on!"

Now the farmer wasn't the wisest, but he had the anger of a man with nothing left to lose. So he grabbed his scythe, swung it in the moonlight, and before the devils could scream "Hell!" he had cut off the tails of two of them. The rest hissed, screamed, and ran away as if they'd been covered in holy water.

But one remained. Small, hunchbacked, and as cheeky as a sparrow. "Listen, farmer," he said. "Let us live, and we'll give you something you've never had: happiness in the field. We'll bring you harvest, we'll make you rich."

The farmer laughed, a breath of beer in his mouth. "Rich? You scoundrels? I don't give a damn about your promises." But he wasn't completely stupid either. Instead of chasing them away, he made a deal: They could dance in his field at night if they doubled every crop he planted.

And indeed: From that day on, the grain grew twice as tall, the beets twice as fat, the wine twice as strong. The farmer became rich. But the village

whispered: "This is the devil's work." He just grinned, poured himself more wine, and thought: *Screw morals, the main thing is that the basement is full.*

But the bargain came at a price. For with every year the devils helped, the farmer became a little more crooked, a little blacker in soul. He drank more, beat his wife, chased his children away, until finally he sat alone in the large farmyard—rich, but empty.

And on his last night, when he was old and half-blind, the devils returned. They laughed, danced, tore him from his bed, and dragged him into the earth. No one ever saw him again. Only his field – it continued to grow, more fertile than ever.

The two hikers

Once upon a time, there were two poor fellows who had nothing but blisters on their feet and a hunger that was eating away at their guts. So they set off together –*walker*, they said, but in reality they were simply homeless rabble, staggering from one village to the next, hoping to find a piece of bread or a glass of thin beer.

One was an honest fool who believed in God, in justice, in the grand reckoning in heaven. The other was a bastard—keen on shortcuts, on deceit, always on the verge of punching life before it kicks him.

They came to a village where it was said that a treasure of gold lay in the mountain, guarded by a blind giant. The honest man said, "Let's pray, perhaps God will give us the treasure." The bastard grinned, "Pray? I'd rather pee in the giant's well and see if he notices anything."

They sneaked in, stole a few lumps of gold, and the giant roared like thunder. The bastard ran, the honest one stumbled, fell, and if the other one hadn't grabbed him, he would have been dead. "You see," said the bastard, "that's how it goes. He who hesitates is dead."

But envy is like rat food—it gnaws from within. The bastard soon saw that the honest man didn't squander his gold on wine and whores, but shared it, helped people, bought bread, and fed children. This made him sick. *Why is the idiot loved while I am feared?*

One night, as they sat by the fire, he smashed the Honest Man's skull with a stone. "So, now I'm the one who tells the story." He buried him by the side of the road, stuffed his pockets full, and continued on alone.

But as fairy tales go, he got lost. Instead of cities, he found swamps, and instead of wine, only stale water. The gold became heavy, his pockets ripped, and in the end, he stumbled back into the same mountain from which they had stolen the treasure. The giant was waiting.

And this time there was no escape.

Mother Hulda

Once upon a time, there lived a widow so stingy and hard-hearted that her children served her only as tools. Goldmarie, good and dumb as white bread, had to toil until her fingers bled. Pechmarie, lazy as night, was pampered because she resembled the old woman: broad, mean, and with a face that would make any rooster's comb hang down.

One day, Goldmarie lost her spool in the well while spinning. Her mother screamed as if she'd squandered the national treasure: "Jump after it, or I'll beat your bones!" So the girl plunged into the water—and landed not dead, but in a fairytale world that looked like a cross between an LSD trip and a labor camp.

There were loaves of bread screaming, "Get us out, we're burning!" – and apples yelling, "Shake us, or we'll rot!" And Goldmarie did it, because she was so damned obedient. She toiled like an idiot, helped every thing that screeched, and thought: *Maybe someone will finally like me if I do everything they say.*

In the end, she met Frau Holle—an old witch with teeth like rusty nails and eyes that sparkled like cold coals. Frau Holle grinned: "You want work? You'll get work." So Goldmarie had to shake beds until the feathers flew. Every flake of snow that fell from the sky was her damned sweat. For weeks she toiled, dutifully, until she no longer knew whether she was still human or just a servant.

Then Frau Holle said, "Go home." And as they said goodbye, Goldmarie was showered with gold. She stood there like a statue, shining, a living money machine. At home, her mother rejoiced, almost kissing her out of greed—not out of love, but because her daughter was finally bringing in profit.

Of course, Pechmarie had to go down the well too. But she was too lazy, too stupid, didn't help herself to bread or apples, didn't shake her bed, just her fat ass. Mother Holle looked at her, laughed mockingly, and as she left, she poured pitch over her. Black, stinking pitch that never came off.

The people in the village saw Goldmarie and said, "That's how a girl should be—good, hardworking, devoted." And they saw Pechmarie and spat on the ground: "That's how the lazy one ends."

But the truth? Goldmarie hadn't been rewarded—she'd been trained like a dog. And Pechmarie hadn't been punished—she was just honestly too lazy to work herself to death. In the end, both had lost: one her freedom, the other her dignity.

END

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