



FOLKTALES HUNGARIAN FOLKTALES



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LITTLE BERRY

Once upon a time, on the other side of the Beyond, there lived a poor widow. She had a beautiful daughter. Her name was Berry, because she was very fond of berries. Then, the widow died, and her daughter became an orphan.

Little Berry was a poor girl with no one to support her. She soon began to wonder what to do and where to go. What was to become of Little Berry?

In the town where she lived, there was a beautiful convent with a covered walk. The people in the convent had heard what a good and beautiful girl Berry was. When they heard about Berry's sad plight, they sent word for her to come and work for them. In return, they offered to take care of her, for the rest of her life.

Thus Berry went to the nearby convent. She lived there happily; nobody bothered or troubled her, as is usually the case with orphans. When she was done with her work,

she would sit by the windowsill and knit. But, things don't stay the same forever and something unexpected changed Berry's life.

One day while Berry sat quietly knitting by the window, the three royal princes passed by – Prince Andras, Prince Bandi and Prince Antal. The youngest prince, Prince Antal gazed at the beautiful maiden by the windowsill. Berry noticed the handsome prince gazing at her. The young couple fell deeply in love with each other. When word got out that Berry was in love with Prince Antal, she was banished from the convent.

In vain, did Prince Antal stare at the window hoping to catch a glimpse of Little Berry, but he never did catch a glimpse of her. He neither ate nor drank nor uttered a word – all day long, he was as sad as a weeping willow!

One day, King Alfred called all three of his sons. He said, 'My sons, it is time for me to find an heir to my kingdom. There are three of you. Whichever one of you brings me one hundred square yards of fine linen that I can

pull through my ring will receive one-third of my kingdom.

The three princes set out, each in a different direction.

Prince Antal chose the road less travelled and that made all the difference. He walked and walked; he walked to the end of the earth. There, he came upon a small, stone bridge. Since he was very tired, he sat down to rest and thought to himself, 'What shall I do now? Here I am at the end of the earth and I have nothing to eat!'

As he sat there thinking, a little lizard slid out of the green grass beside the bridge. 'What are you brooding about, my handsome prince?'

Prince Antal noticed the lizard when she spoke; otherwise, he wouldn't have seen her at all. The prince replied, 'What am I brooding about? Go away, before I step on you!'

The little lizard raised her innocent little eyes and looked at the prince, 'Why would you step on me? What harm have I done to you? Don't step on me and you might get a favour in return!'

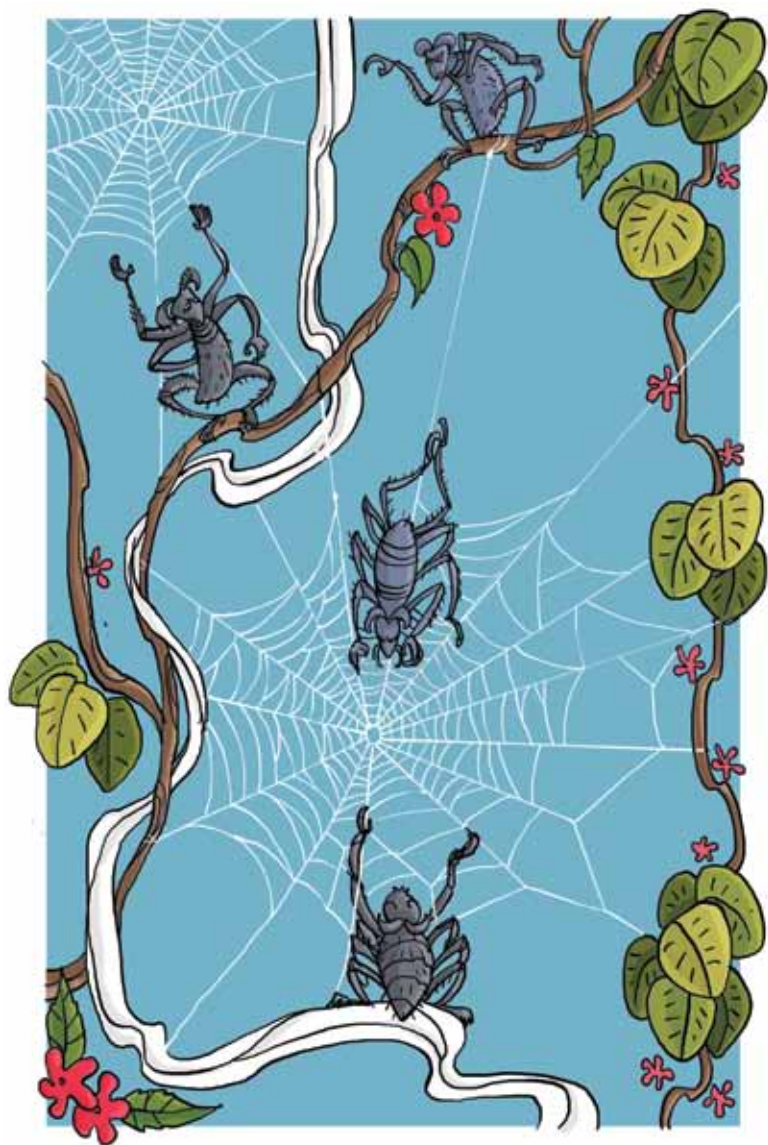
The prince did not step on the lizard, but continued thinking. The lizard did not give in and asked him, 'So, tell me, my handsome prince, what is troubling you? Maybe I can help!'

Well, this brought a smile to the prince's face. How could this little lizard help him? He replied, 'Well, if you want to help me so much, let me tell you. My father has ordered me and my brothers to bring him one hundred square yards of linen that'll fit through his ring. My two brothers are searching as well – all for the reward of a third of his kingdom.'

'Well, is that all?' said the lizard. 'Wait here a moment and I'll be right back!'

With that, the lizard disappeared into the green grass. She asked her friends, the fairy spiders to help her and they did. In an instant, a hundred spiders were on the move; round and round they went until a piece of linen one hundred yards long, one hundred yards wide was woven and it could go through a ring!

The lizard ran as fast as she could, back



to the prince. He was deep in thought. There was the little lizard, who dropped a walnut containing the linen within it, in front of the prince who was overjoyed! He thanked the lizard for her goodwill and started off for the palace. He saw his older brothers Prince Andras and Prince Bandi sitting on top of a large cart. Beneath them shone a mass of linen and cloths. When they reached the palace, the older princes spent an entire day unloading their linen. Prince Antal just laughed at them. Then the old king came up and asked, 'Well, my sons, let me see what you have brought.'

He looked over the linen of his two older sons, but none of it pleased him. When he approached his youngest son, the latter merely opened the walnut, took the linen and gave it to his father. The old king was delighted – it was perfect and went smoothly through the king's ring. 'My boy, you have done well! One-third of my kingdom is yours!'

Then King Alfred proclaimed, 'Your next task is to bring me a small dog that can fit into

a small box, whose bark is of silver, and whose voice can be heard in seven lands. He who succeeds shall have half of what remains of my kingdom!’

The princes set off again in different directions. The youngest prince reached the end of the earth, sat down and began to think hard – no easy task was this! Once again, the little lizard leapt before him. The prince told her of his new task. ‘I’ll get the dog for you, as well, my prince. Just wait a moment till I return.’ The little lizard went straight to the king of fairy dwarfs and said, ‘Prince Antal, my friend, is in search of a small dog that can fit into a small box, whose bark is of silver, and whose voice can be heard in seven lands. Please find one for me.’

‘Alright,’ said the king of the fairy dwarfs. ‘I’ll grant your wish for you have always been good to us.’ The little lizard ran back to the young prince, handed him the little dog in the little box and warned him, ‘Do not keep opening the little box, lest the little dog runs away!’

Prince Antal was very happy and set back to the palace. He laughed out loud when he saw the large and small dogs that his brothers had leashed together. When they reached their father's palace, the king was ready to throw his two older sons out, together with all their dogs. The king was delighted with Prince Antal when he took out the little box with the little dog in it! Thus the king gave Prince Antal half of what remained of his kingdom.

The old king called his sons one last time, 'Whoever brings home the most beautiful bride shall get what remains of my kingdom!'

The princes set out again in three different directions. When young Prince Antal reached the small stone bridge, he sat down and waited for his good luck. He did not have to wait long until the lizard came by. When the lizard heard about the king's latest task she said, 'Don't worry, prince. If you do as I say, I can help you this time too!'

'Listen carefully to me, my handsome prince,' the lizard continued. 'Take hold of my

tail and strike me with all your might against the bridge, but turn your head away and look at your horse. Then I will turn into the most beautiful bride.’ When the prince heard this, he was shocked. The lizard was the one who had helped him out when he most needed it. Now, he was to kill her! How could he do that?

‘If you don’t do it, you will not get your beautiful bride!’ warned the lizard.

The prince bent down and took hold of the lizard’s tail and struck her against the bridge so hard that she must have broken into a thousand pieces. All this while the prince kept his eyes on his horse.

All of a sudden, he heard a melodious voice, ‘And now, my handsome prince, you may turn around.’

‘Do you recognise me now?’ she added, ‘I am your beloved Little Berry, who you saw at the convent.’

The prince was awestruck by the stunning, beautiful Berry. She continued, ‘Now I shall change into a shabby gypsy girl, so that no one

can recognise me. When we meet the king at the palace, I will change back to my real, beautiful self!

Prince Andras and Prince Bandi poked fun at the youngest prince and his shabby companion. The king was waiting for them at the palace gate. When he saw Prince Antal and the gypsy, he almost sent them away! However, Berry didn't waste a moment. In a flash, she became as beautiful as a pink dawn. The king and his sons were mesmerised by her beauty.



‘Ah, my darling son, my entire kingdom is yours!’ declared King Alfred. ‘You have complied with all three of my wishes. And off you go my clumsy, older sons.’

Little Berry and Prince Antal were married in a grand ceremony and lived happily ever after.



BRIAR PETER

Once upon a time, a young boy named Peter lived with his doting father and spiteful stepmother. All day long, the stepmother scolded and annoyed him, which made Peter's life miserable.

Every time Peter was indoors, she sent him out. Every time he was outdoors, she called him in. It was most annoying! She even grudged him the very food and drink he ate and drank.

One day, to Peter's great surprise, his stepmother set a plate of delicious potato soup in front of him. As he was very hungry, he sat down right away and picked up his spoon. As he took his first mouthful, out of the corner of his eye, he spied a branch of the briar bush. The branch had poked its way through the window towards him. Peter's own dear mother had planted the briar bush outside the window.

However, when the branch began to speak, Peter's mouth opened in wide astonishment.



The branch addressed Peter, 'My dearest boy, do not eat the potato soup. It is poisoned! Leave the house right away. For your own safety, flee! Immediately!' Peter was speechless and he dropped his spoon with a clang. Without a word, he left his home forever.

Peter walked swiftly and he made sure not to stop, just in case his stepmother followed him.

Much later, as he walked along the bank of a rippling brook, he heard someone call out his name, 'Peter, Peter, Briar Peter, come hither.'

Peter saw a helpless, little fish wriggling in the green grass. He could hardly breathe. 'Briar Peter,' gasped the poor little fish. 'Throw me into the rippling brook. One day, your good deed will be rewarded, I promise.'

Peter threw him into the rippling waters of the brook and the little fish swam away happily.

Peter continued on his way. That night, some shepherds welcomed him warmly and gave him warm milk and delicious, crusty bread.

Next morning, off he went on his way, when once more he heard a plaintive little voice call out his name, 'Peter, Peter, Briar Peter, come hither!'

This time, guess what he saw? It was a tiny, little bluejay lying on the ground. It was obvious to Peter that the bird was too young to fly. The bluejay asked Peter to lift him up and place him on the branch of the Tree of Life. Peter gently lifted him and placed him on a branch. As he continued on his journey, he heard the tiny, little bird call out, 'Your good deed will be rewarded one day, Peter!'

Peter carried on, passing lush meadows and green valleys, following the winding path. He travelled for many days, until one day, he heard a beckoning call, 'Peter, Peter, Briar Peter, come hither!' He looked up expectantly.

To his astonishment, Peter saw that this time, it was a briar bush that called him for help. The poor briar bush was withering away without water. Peter raced up to a rippling stream and filled his hat with fresh, spring

water. He sprinkled the sparkling water on the roots of the little briar bush.

To Peter's delight, the briar bush began to spring back to life and soon its leaves were bright green and dancing in the sunlight.

The briar bush said, 'Your good deed will be rewarded one day.'

Peter felt tongue-tied and said shyly, 'I am not thinking of getting a reward.' The briar bush bent its branches to speak softly to Peter, 'Let me give you some sage words of advice:

Do not fear when danger comes near;

Your good fortune will be found

Where the worst of threats abound!'

Briar Peter thought it most strange, that he should seek danger in order to find his good fortune!

The journey got longer and longer, and one day Peter came upon a big city. He made it towards the royal, majestic, grand palace right away. There was a large crowd of people by the gate. When they spotted Briar Peter, they came running and shouting, 'Come here, come



here, Briar Peter! Ninety-nine people have gone to the gallows so far and you will be the hundredth in line!’

Peter thought to himself, ‘At last, I’ve come to the right place where danger lies afoot! I’ll find my good fortune here if I find it anywhere. But how and where?’

Just then, the gatekeeper of the palace came out and dragged Briar Peter in.

King Adam of the majestic, grand palace who had a beautiful daughter Princess Aniko, had decided it was time for her to get

married. King Adam sent for a dozen princes for her to choose her soulmate from. But the stubborn Princess Aniko refused to accept any of her suitors. So King Adam invited three dozen earls to his court. Then he brought in viscounts and dukes. Princess Aniko didn't want any of them, either. By then, her father King Adam had lost his patience.

The king roared impatiently, 'You must marry somebody who you have not seen, since you refuse to marry anyone you have seen with your own eyes.'

'Let me tell you this – you will only marry a man who can hide himself three times in a row. If you find him out all three times, off to the gallows he goes!' he added imperiously. Princess Aniko burst into tears. Why had she not chosen a husband from the suitors she had seen?

King Adam stood firm. He proclaimed these conditions and ninety-nine suitors came forward and failed the test. Briar Peter had now come forth as the hundredth suitor.

The palace attendants led him to the majestic palace and gave him all the food and drink he wanted. He was treated like a man condemned to die. Finally, he was left alone, so that he could think of a good hiding place for the next day.

Peter was filled with sadness. He hadn't a clue which was a good hiding place. He was wandering aimlessly when he came upon a rippling brook. He sat down by its banks and wept, filling the brook with his salty tears. He heard a small voice, 'Peter, Peter, Briar Peter, why are you weeping?'

Briar Peter looked up and spotted the little fish who he had thrown back into the flowing brook a while ago. He told the fish why he was so sad.

The fish replied joyfully, 'Your good deed is now rewarded.' He opened his mouth wide and beckoned Peter to climb in. Briar Peter did so and the fish swam downstream and hid at the bottom of the brook.

At noon, Princess Aniko came out on to

the palace porch, rubbed her eyes and said, 'Come hither!' When Briar Peter did not come, she walked sadly back to the majestic palace. Little was Briar Peter aware, that the beautiful Princess Aniko had stolen a secret glance in his direction.

The next morning, Peter was once again clueless as to where to hide.

Near the grand palace, there was a lush, green forest where Briar Peter made his way to weep and think once again.

All of a sudden, he heard a voice, 'Peter, Peter, Briar Peter, why are you weeping, my friend?'

Briar Peter looked up and saw the same little bluejay he had rescued a while back.

Peter replied, 'I weep because if I cannot find a place to hide from Princess Aniko, King Adam will send me to the gallows. I am doomed!'

The bluejay said, 'Your good deed is now rewarded.' He spread his wings and asked Peter to hide himself under them. Then the

bluejay flew high in the sky and hid behind the sun.

At noon, Princess Aniko came out again, rubbed her eyes twice and said, ‘Come hither, Peter, I know you are hiding beneath the bluejay’s wings behind the bright, glowing sun.’

The little bird brought Peter to Princess Aniko’s side. She stole another secret glance at Briar Peter with much longing and enchantment. Peter looked down in sorrow – doomed was he, once again!

It was the third morning. Peter had given up. Why even try to find a hiding place, when Princess Aniko could find him at the bottom of the cool waters of the brook or behind the bright sun? He decided he would rather stay where he was, in the lush palace garden full of blossoms.

Just then, he heard a voice call out, ‘Peter, Peter, Briar Peter, why are you weeping?’

He looked up and saw that it was the briar bush, which he had brought to life with a

hatful of water. It spoke softly, 'Your good deed is now rewarded. Come to me, I will help you.'

The briar bush blossomed out with so many tender green leaves and beautiful roses – a vision of joy to anyone who set eyes on it.

At noon, Princess Aniko came out on to the palace porch again. She looked far and wide out at the deep seas, the tall mountains and the sky, but saw no sign of Briar Peter.

She said, 'My father, I do not see him anywhere!'

King Adam told her, 'You do not see him because you have not rubbed your eyes!'



So she did. She rubbed her eyes once; she rubbed them twice. This time she spotted Peter hiding amidst the beautiful roses of the briar bush. But not a word did she utter. Princess Aniko knew very well that should she reveal what she saw, Briar Peter would be sent to the gallows. She loved him too much to do that. So, she rubbed her eyes for the third time. She looked all around the earth and the sky and called out in a heart wrenching voice, 'Peter, Peter, Briar Peter, come hither from wherever you are! Come out, I cannot see you and I am heart-broken!'

Briar Peter waited not a moment more. He sprang out of the briar bush, and climbed up the steps of the palace porch. He took Princess Aniko in his arms.

They were wed that very day. And in their palace garden, they planted briar bushes from one end to the other end and lived happily ever after.



FOR A PINCH OF SALT!

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful, gorgeous Hungarian princess called Eva. Men from far and wide heard of her beauty and wanted to marry her.

One fine bright morning, Princess Eva proclaimed to her father, the king that she would only choose and marry the man of her dreams, who could tell her father, an implausible, incredulous story. A story, which he could not and would not believe.

Many suitors came and went back empty-handed and dejected. They could not meet the impossible standards of the king and his daughter.

Now in a quaint little village by the edge of the lush, green meadows, near the rippling, cascading waters of the streams in the forest there dwelt a poor, young, handsome peasant, who heard of this proclamation.

He went up to the king's grand and majestic palace, and shouted loudly at the gates, demanding an audience with the

king. The king was shrewd and knew what the young fellow wanted. By that time many knights, princes and suitors of all shapes and sizes had come with the same purpose. They had all hoped to win the hand of the beautiful, gorgeous and smart princess, but they all had failed miserably.

John, the young, pleasant and handsome peasant was admitted to the royal presence.

‘Good morning, Your Majesty,’ said John.

‘Good morning, young man. Well, what can I do for you? What do you want?’ asked the king kindly.



‘If you please, Your Majesty, I want a wife,’ said John boldly.

‘That’s fine and dandy, young lad; but what would you both live on?’ smiled the king indulgently.

‘Oh!’ cried John. ‘If I may be so bold as to say, I could manage to keep Her Highness Princess Eva pretty comfortably. My father has a pig. No ordinary pig is he! He is wonderful Your Majesty. He has provided my family – my demanding father, my gentle mother, seven good-tempered and cheerful sisters and me, for the last twenty years.’

‘Indeed!’ said the king sceptically.

‘He gives us as good a pail of milk every morning as any cow,’ said John, smiling.

‘Indeed!’ said the king dourly.

‘Yes, indeed, Your Majesty, and our one of a kind, generous pig lays the most delicious eggs for our breakfast daily,’ said John with a straight, solemn face.

‘Indeed!’ said the king again.

‘And,’ added John, ‘every day my mother

cuts a nice bit of bacon from his side and it grows back every night.'

'Indeed!' said the king.

'The other day, this pig gave us enough bacon for the whole village. The villagers had enough for breakfast, lunch and dinner,' said John with a smile.

'Indeed!' repeated the king, firmly standing his ground.

'The other day, our favourite, loyal pig disappeared! My gentle mother looked for him high and low. My seven good-tempered sisters helped her. They searched in the green meadows, by the lavender bushes by the rippling streams, but alas! He was nowhere to be seen or found.'

'That is very sad,' said the king.

'Well, finally my esteemed mother found him in the larder, catching mice.'

'A very useful pig, indeed!' said the king.

'Yes, Your Majesty, and he pays for everything we need with the gold he picks on the unpaved road.'

‘Indeed! A very precious pig, indeed!’ said the king.

‘Lately, he has seemed unruly, and rather out of sorts,’ said John solicitously.

‘Indeed! That’s very tragic!’ cried the king.

‘He refuses to go where he is told to, and won’t allow my mother to cut any more bacon from his side. Besides which, Your Majesty, he is becoming rather blind, and can’t see where he is going,’ said John.

‘He should be led,’ said the king kindly.

‘Yes, Your Majesty, that is why my demanding father has just employed your father to look after him,’ said John.

‘That’s not true,’ yelled the king. Then, suddenly, he remembered the promise he had made to his daughter, Princess Eva.

So, the king had no choice but to allow Princess Eva to marry John, the peasant’s son.

However, it must be said that he never regretted this decision for the peasant’s son John became a most clever and kind young prince and lived happily with Princess Eva for

many years to come.

In time, King John and Princess Eva had three beautiful daughters. Sadly, his beautiful Princess Eva passed away and King John wished to give his daughters' hands in marriage before he died. He wanted to divide the kingdom among his daughters, Aliz, Bianka and Dorika. He decided that he would give the most beautiful province to the one who loved him the most. So, one morning, he posed a question to them. 'My dear daughters, tell me how much you love your dear old father.'

Princess Aliz, the eldest daughter said, 'I love you like a pigeon loves pure wheat grain, Papa.'

Princess Bianka said that she loved him like a light breeze on a hot summer day.

The youngest and by far his favourite daughter Princess Dorika said, 'I love you, Papa, like fresh meat loves salt.'

King John was furious and shouted aloud, 'Like salt! You don't love me at all. And in

my house, you stay no more! You ungrateful, disloyal child.' He was obviously angered by Princess Dorika's answer.

Princess Dorika begged him to understand. She explained in vain, how people loved salt in their meals. But King John stubbornly banished her from his kingdom. He drove her out and shut the door in her face!

The sad Princess Dorika went away disillusioned and in despair and finally reached a vast forest. She found a large hollow in the Tree of Life, where she hid herself. She lived off raspberries, strawberries and nuts which she picked, and drank crystal clear water from the nearby rippling brook.

She gathered a lot of rushes and wove them into a kind of cloak with a hood. She covered herself from head to foot and hid her fine clothes. Then she went on and on till she came to a great, big house. Princess Dorika knocked on the door and asked, 'Do you want a maid?'

They said, 'No, we don't.'

She said, 'I have nowhere to go and ask no



wages and will do any sort of work.’

‘Well,’ they said, ‘if you wish to wash the pots and scrape the saucepans, you may do so.’

So she did and because the princess did not tell them her name, they called her, Cap O Rushes. At weekends, she would return to the hollow in the Tree of Life.

Years went by. One day, Prince Ambrus from a neighbouring kingdom came hunting to the dense forest. He was chasing some wild game with his group of basset hounds. The prince chanced to catch a glimpse of Princess Dorika for a brief moment. When Princess Dorika saw the prince, she hid carefully in the hollow. The prince went to the hollow and shouted, ‘Who’s there?’

Princess Dorika didn’t utter a single word. The prince beckoned once again asking, ‘Who is there and would you kindly speak? Speak up, or I will shoot.’

Then, Princess Dorika came out from her hiding spot and appeared before Prince Ambrus. Prince Ambrus fell in love with her

glowing radiance, beauty and innocence. It was love at first sight for both. Prince Ambrus hugged the princess and took her home to his grand palace.

There was music in the air and festivities galore to celebrate the royal wedding. The ceremony was followed by a large Hungarian feast complete with goulash, paprikash, *nokedli* (dumplings), *spaetzle* and schnitzel. Princess Dorika and Prince Ambrus lived together like two happy, carefree love-birds.

Years went by.

One day King Ambrus asked Queen Dorika, 'Why did your father banish you from your home and his kingdom?'

Queen Dorika replied, 'I told my father that I loved him like fresh meat loves salt. My father was hurt by this and banished me from the kingdom.'

King Ambrus mulled over this for a while and came up with a great idea. He invited elderly King John to dine with him.

The elderly King John arrived the next day

in his golden carriage. King Ambrus led King John to the most beautiful room in his palace. He then sat the elderly King at the dining table and the feast began. They brought in the Hungarian goulash, but it had no salt in it. The meat had no taste to it either. A string of delicacies followed one upon the other, but King John was not impressed.



He asked King Ambrus, ‘Does the royal chef know how to cook? The food doesn’t have any salt in it at all.’

King Ambrus replied with a faint smile, ‘I have heard that you don’t like salt.’

An annoyed King John asked, ‘Where did

you hear that from?’

‘Princess Dorika, your daughter.’

King John suddenly cried out loud, ‘Oh! I had a daughter, Princess Dorika, who said she loved me as much as fresh meat loves salt. And I banished her for I thought she didn’t love me. Now I see that she loved me the most!’

Queen Dorika, who had been listening to all this now entered the room. The elderly King John hugged Cap O Rushes, his Princess Dorika and gifted his youngest daughter his most beautiful province.

And they all lived happily ever after.



ULETKA AND THE WHITE LIZARD

Once upon a time there lived a prince whose name was Elkabo. He had a sweet child, his dear little Uletka. She and her father lived quite alone in an old castle with four towers.

Uletka was a dainty, lovely little girl. She had delicate wings that glistened in the sunshine, reflecting all the vibrant, myriad colours of the rainbow. Unfortunately, Uletka had one fault. A wicked fairy, who was offended by Nastia, Uletka's mother, had bestowed her with the fault of Curiosity.

It was this wicked fairy, whose name was Muta, who lured poor Nastia to her destruction. In the forest, was a great lake, covered with pretty water- lilies and a lotus. One day when Nastia was taking a stroll in the forest, she heard a call for help.

'Help me, I am drowning in the lake,' the voice cried. Poor Nastia did not know that this was the wicked Muta trying to lure her. She grasped Muta's hands to pull her out, but the



spiteful fairy dragged Nastia, to the bottom of the lake. Nastia could not swim; she called for help but to no avail!

When Nastia did not return to the palace Prince Elkabo, her husband, and all the neighbours went in search of her. When finally they reached the edge of the lake, they watched in dismay as her body floated amidst the pretty water lilies. As they looked on something magical happened. She slowly changed into the most beautiful snow-white water lily.

Prince Elkabo wept bitterly. A splendid kingfisher, who was sitting on a lotus-leaf spoke to him, 'It is fairy Muta's work. You must tell the Queen of the Fairies about this cruel deed.' Prince Elkabo immediately mounted his white horse and rode to meet the Queen of the Fairies. Muta's evil deed made the queen and her subjects burn with indignation. The Queen Fairy cast a spell on Muta. 'May you be transformed into a white lizard as punishment.' Then Her Majesty turned to Prince Elkabo and said, 'Catch this white lizard and hold it captive.

However, be warned that Muta will regain her true form if she is released by Uletka. Once the spell is broken, even I cannot prevent Muta from resuming her true, evil form.'

Prince Elkabo searched day and night, travelled far and wide, until at last far away in Hungary, he found the white lizard, hidden away under a cluster of roses. He captured and put it in a little, silver cage.

As time passed, Prince Elkabo grew afraid that his inquisitive little daughter, Uletka might open the silver cage and set the lizard free. Therefore, he built a small tower by the edge of the lake and hung the cage there. Everyday he went down to the tower and fed the white lizard. He kept the key of the tower safely suspended on a little gold chain. No one but Prince Elkabo knew the secret in the tower by the lake.

As years flew by, Princess Uletka grew into a beautiful young woman. One day, Prince Elkabo had to go on a journey and as Uletka was getting quite responsible, he felt he could

safely entrust her with the key of the small tower. 'I will be away for two or three days. Go every day to the tower and feed the white lizard a small piece of bread.'

Uletka promised to obey her father. Nonetheless, no sooner had her father left, than Uletka, unable to contain her curiosity, started off to the small tower by the lake. She opened the door with trembling hands and there in the little silver cage, was the loveliest lizard she had ever seen! She was quite enchanted and watched it play for a long time.

The white lizard said suddenly, 'What a lovely fairy you are!'

Uletka knew at once that the lizard must be a fairy in disguise. 'Oh!' said Uletka shyly, 'I am not a fairy. I am only a princess and I live with my father, Prince Elkabo at the palace nearby.'

'That's strange,' said the white lizard, 'I was certain you were a fairy with such pretty wings. I am a fairy, you know. My name is Muta. What is your name?'

'My name is Uletka.'

The cunning white lizard said, ‘What a pretty name! I am sure I could easily make you into a real fairy if only I had my magic cloak. As a fairy, you will have the power to appear or disappear at will.’

‘Oh!’ said Uletka in excitement. ‘Tell me where your magic cloak is, I will fetch it for you.’

‘I know exactly where it is. Dear, dear me, if only I could get out. Hobo, the King of Gnomes hid my magic cloak and wand in a rose bush, out of spite. He changed me into a white lizard, and locked me in a silver cage, so I would not be able to get it.’

For a moment, Uletka forgot her promise to her father and opened the silver cage. The white lizard jumped out, turned on Uletka, tore her pretty clothes and broke her dainty wings. Muta laughed at Uletka’s vanity and curiosity in thinking she could ever become a fairy! She took her to the other side of the lake and left her crying among the dark, dark trees. Uletka had never been here before.



Uletka wandered around and as she reached the enchanted lake, a voice rose from the waters, calling, 'Uletka! Uletka!' As she stood spellbound, the petals of a magnificent water lily unfolded and revealed a fairy form of exquisite beauty, the spirit of her mother, Nastia.

Nastia told her daughter, 'Go into the dense forest, until you find a great beech tree standing alone. There you will find friends who will keep you safe from the power of the cruel Muta.'

Away Uletka sped until she came to the tall, solitary beech tree. She went around it and

discovered a little door.

No one answered while the squirrels and a blackbird echoed, 'Who is that knocking at the gnomes' door?'

At last, Uletka, tired of knocking, turned the little handle and went in. There, right in the hollow of the giant beech tree was a room with nine little chairs and a table carved out of the wood of the tree. And spread out was a great, grand feast of nuts, berries and other kinds of fruits and large bowls of delicious honey.

As Uletka was very hungry, she sat down and ate some honey and nuts, after which she lay on the floor and fell asleep.

When Uletka awoke, she was surrounded by a number of little gnomes, who sang merrily, 'You have let the wicked fairy, Muta escape. You are quite safe with us, stay with us.'

So, Uletka stayed with the gnomes in the beech tree, Muta could not hurt her here. The little gnomes made a little chair for Uletka

and carved a plate out of the pretty shell of a hazelnut. They made her a spoon out of white fir-wood and wove garments for her out of cobwebs. The good little gnomes tried to entertain her and invented new games to distract her thoughts. They composed music, made funny little instruments out of wood, with fibres for strings and danced for her.

A green and gold beetle was her special friend. But the blackbird loved her most of all, and sat and sang for her, all day. However, poor little Uletka was not happy. For she kept thinking of her poor mother, Nastia and her father, Prince Elkabo. She bitterly cursed her curiosity, which had placed her in this fearful position. She wondered whether she would ever see her beautiful home with the four towers.

A great concert was held one evening. King Hobo, the King of the Gnomes who reigned supreme in the forest, asked Uletka to dance with him. The other gnomes kept time by clapping their wooden cymbals. Uletka's friend,



the blackbird, saw that she was quite sad in spite of all the gaiety. So he sang the loudest to cheer her up.

The blackbird decided that he had to do something to make Uletka happy. 'I am sure the Fairy Queen will be able to help,' he thought and flew to her palace. Her Majesty was dining, but the blackbird humbly begged her audience. 'Your Majesty, I am here to seek your help.' He then narrated Uletka's story.

Prince Repto, the queen's son heard the

blackbird's story with delight and wonder. He had never heard anything so beautifully romantic! He begged his mother, 'Please allow me to go with the blackbird and bring Uletka home.' Her Majesty readily gave her consent.

Thus, Prince Repto, accompanied by the blackbird, set off for the kingdom of King Hobo and his gnomes.

The moon was shining brightly and suddenly the prince saw Uletka sitting amidst the little gnomes and the tinkling of the blue bells. Prince Repto had never seen such a beautiful princess before and he fell in love with her. Just at that moment, Uletka looked up, saw Prince Repto and fell in love with him!

'Do not be alarmed, Uletka,' said Prince Repto doffing his cap. 'I am Prince Repto, Prince of the Fairies. I have fallen in love with you! Will you marry me?' He told her she would live in a palace of gold where the wicked fairy Muta was powerless to harm her. Uletka gladly consented.

The next morning, when the sun was

shining brightly, the prince brought a beautiful coach made of sea shells. He placed Uletka in it, sat beside her, while all the gnomes and the creatures of the forest cheered loudly as the coach rose high in the air.

On the way, the newly-wed couple stopped, so that Uletka could meet her father, Prince Elkabo, who still dwelt in the castle with four towers. They took him to Fairyland, where there were more festivities in honour of their wedding.



Prince Repto and Princess Uletka lived happily ever after. King Hobo and his gnomes, the croaking frogs, the furry little squirrels and the loyal blackbird often went to see them. And nothing more was heard of the wicked fairy Muta!



ZSUZSKA AND THE DEVIL

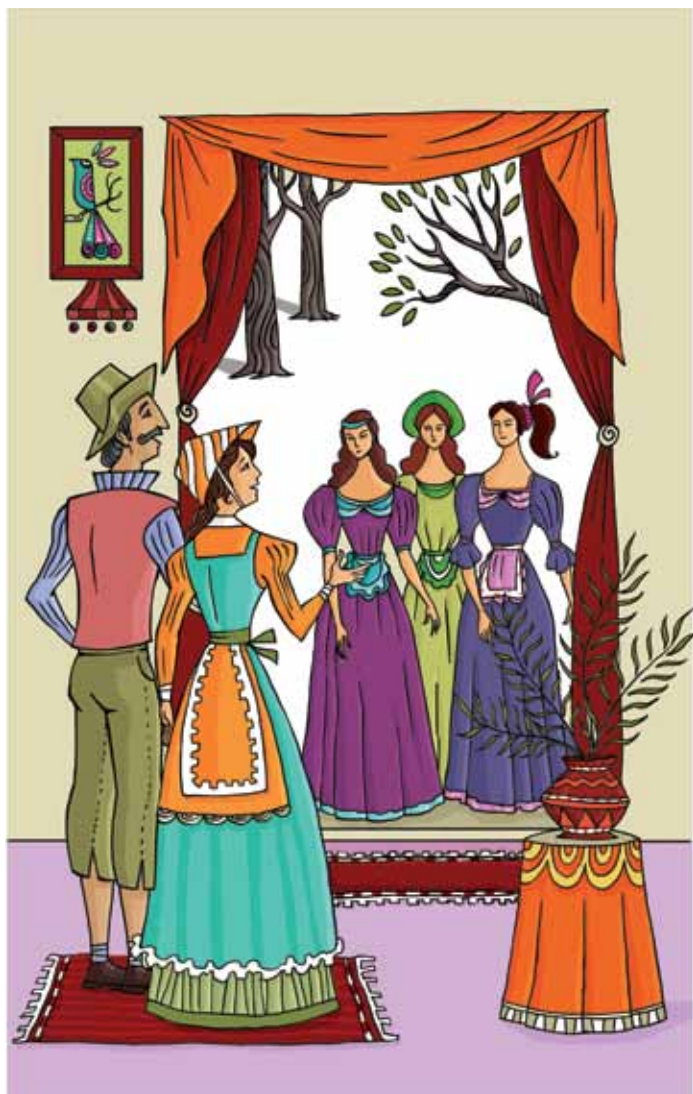
There was once a poor man, who had three daughters Agnes, Amalia and Zsuzska. They had to work hard to earn their daily bread.

One day, the eldest daughter Agnes said, 'Dear Father, thank you so much for caring for us until now. The time has come for us to leave home and get married.'

The three daughters bade farewell to their father and left for the wide, wide world. They walked until twilight and reached the edge of a forest and saw a house around the corner. The sisters said to each other, 'We'd better stop here and seek shelter.'

They knocked on the door and all three were beckoned in. The master of the house, his wife and their three daughters were inside. Agnes, the oldest of the sisters said, 'Would you be kind enough to accommodate us for one night?'

The master of the house said, 'You may stay. Where are you going to?'



‘We left our home, looking for a job somewhere,’ said Amalia.

The master of the house said, ‘Well, you might as well stay and work here.’

After supper, the three sisters together with the three daughters of their host lay down, six in a row.

When they woke up in the morning, the master of the house said, ‘Agnes and Amalia will go out to work in the field and the youngest Zsuzska will work in the kitchen.’

Zsuzska was well off in the kitchen, while Agnes and Amalia had a tough time outdoors.

Late one night the five girls lay down, Zsuzska was missing. She was always kept late in the kitchen. Finally, she came, said her prayers and was ready to sleep. ‘Let me peek through the keyhole to see what is inside,’ she thought.

Well, when she looked in guess what she saw! God Almighty, the host was not a man but a ferocious devil. His whole body was covered with hair, he had long nails and his

eyes were bloodshot. He had two horns and a long tail. Now Zsuzska knew with whom they were dealing! She was very frightened and she couldn't sleep a wink.

Suddenly, she heard the devil say to his wife, 'Do you know what I am thinking, wife? I'll kill these three girls, pickle their bodies in salt in a barrel and eat them for a long, long time.'

The wife asked the Devil, 'And when do you intend to kill them?'

He replied, 'Tomorrow night.'

The wife said, 'Well, how will you know which ones are ours and which are the others, when they are lying side by side?'

The Devil replied, 'Don't you worry your pretty little head over it! Tomorrow morning when you make the bed, place three stones under the pillows of Agnes, Amalia and Zsuzska. Our daughters will have soft pillows. Thus, I will know which ones are Agnes, Amalia and Zsuzska and our daughters will be safe.'

Zsuzska heard all of this. When she heard the Devil and his wife snore, she woke her

sisters up. Zsuzska burst into tears and said, 'We are in the house of the Devil from Hell and he plans to kill us tomorrow night. Let us escape before he kills us.'

Well, they lay down and went to sleep until morning. As usual Agnes and Amalia went to work in the fields and Zsuzska stayed in the kitchen.

And that is how it came to pass. The Devil's wife put the three stones under the pillows as planned. When no one was around, Zsuzska removed the stones and put them under the Devil's daughters' pillows. At midnight, Zsuzska saw the Devil come in with a sharp knife in his hand. He felt the stones under the pillows and mistaking his daughters for Zsuzska and her sisters, he killed them.

As soon as the Devil left, the three sisters grabbed their belongings and in no time were out of the house. As they left, they shouted out, 'Devil, you killed your own daughters, not us, we are leaving!'

The Devil on hearing this was enraged and

tried to catch them. But they were too clever for him, they hid in the furrows in the field.

‘I promise I will get you three sooner or later! I’ll have my revenge for the death of my three daughters!’ the Devil shrieked.

When the coast was clear Agnes, Amalia and Zsuzska ran and ran till they reached the port, where a ship stood ready to depart. When the ship docked, the three sisters got off and found themselves in a kingdom far away from home. Once again they set out in search of work. As luck would have it, they found employment in the royal palace. Agnes and Amalia were once again sent to the fields, and Zsuzska was well placed in the kitchen. Zsuzska prepared the most exotic food and the king was so impressed that he wanted to meet her. Zsuzska’s culinary skills and charming manner won the king’s heart. He showered her with gifts and this made her sisters Agnes and Amalia jealous.

One day, when the king was in the courtyard alone, Agnes and Amalia approached him, ‘We’d like to say something, if it’s no offense.’



‘Go ahead, girls,’ said the king impatiently.

‘Have you heard what Zsuzska has been saying? When we were in the house of the Devil, she saw a pair of shoes in his kitchen. She said that with these shoes, one can stride across the ocean. You must ask her to steal them for you.’

When the king ordered Zsuzska to steal these shoes she burst into tears, but the king wouldn’t listen – she had to accomplish the given task.

So, weeping she left at dawn. When she reached the Devil's house, she saw the Devil and his wife deep in conversation. She sneaked into the pantry where the shoes were, grabbed them and ran out in haste. She called out through the window, 'Devil, I am taking your ocean-striding shoes!'

The Devil charged after Zsuzska, but she had already crossed the ocean with the help of the shoes. The Devil somersaulted in anger; he had no choice but to return empty-handed.

Zsuzska marched into the palace and went straight to the king, 'Here are the Devil's ocean-striding shoes.'

The delighted king gifted her a gold coin. Her sisters got even more jealous and thought of another cunning plan to get Zsuzska into trouble.

'Have you heard, your Majesty, what Zsuzska has been saying?' they asked the king.

'She said that the Devil has a bag full of gold walnuts. The bag is in the Devil's chamber, hidden above a roof beam.'

Zsuzska protested, 'Oh, your Majesty, it isn't true. I won't be able to bring the walnuts for they are just above the Devil's head. They'll rattle when I touch them. This will wake him up and I will fall into his hands.'

'Stop protesting, Zsuzska. If you don't bring the bag of gold walnuts, off to the stake you go! If you do bring it, I'll take you for my wife,' said the king with a smile.

Zsuzska wept and wept bitterly but finally she decided, 'I'll risk my life. At least, I'll try.'

Zsuzska reached the Devil's house and stole into his chamber. She reached up for the bag and began tugging at it. But in the midst of it, the bag opened and the gold walnuts showered down on the Devil and his wife. They both sat up.

'Aha,' said the Devil, 'I have finally got you. You first made me murder my three lovely daughters. Then you stole my ocean-striding shoes. Do you also want my gold walnuts? Just you wait; I've got you in my clutches!'

He grabbed Zsuzska and locked her in a

small, dark room. 'My wife and I will roast you for dinner,' he laughed.

The oven was red-hot and the Devil's wife ordered Zsuzska to lie on the pan. Zsuzska replied sweetly, 'I will do as you ask me to but please show me how to lie on the pan.'

'All right. I'll show you,' said the wife.

The Devil's wife lay on the pan. Quick as a wink, Zsuzska grabbed and shoved it into the oven! In the commotion that followed Zsuzska grabbed the gold walnuts and ran for dear life.

She approached the king and presented the gold walnuts. 'Oh, Zsuzska,' he said, 'I thought you had perished.'

'I kept my wits about me and outwitted both the Devil and his wife! God helped me and I brought back the gold walnuts.'

The king and Zsuzska were soon married in a splendid wedding ceremony and because her sisters Agnes and Amalia, were so jealous of her; Zsuzska sent them back home.

The king and Zsuzska lived happily ever after to this day.



