

Unit 8

A World of Tales



Reader

Grade 4

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A World of Tales

Reader

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Chapter 1

The Wolf and the Three Kids

by Elsie Clews Parsons

Introduction

Do you know where the Cape Verde Islands are? Situated off the westernmost point of Africa—known as Cape Verde or the green cape—these islands have housed some of the best storytellers in the world. For centuries, these storytellers have been telling one another stories which once traveled, some of them, from the African mainland, some of them from Portugal or Spain. For stories, you know, travel like people, from one end of the world to the other. How? Guess.

We catch stories on our travels, but we **seldom** learn where they started from. I caught the story I'm going to tell you in Rhode Island, after it came over to this country from the Cape Verde Islands, and, as I said, some of these stories reached the Islands from Portugal and some from **Senegambia** or Sierra Leone; but from where they came to those countries, who knows? Perhaps from Arabia. Perhaps from India, perhaps from an old, old African kingdom. At any rate, they have been moving about the world a long time, a very long time.

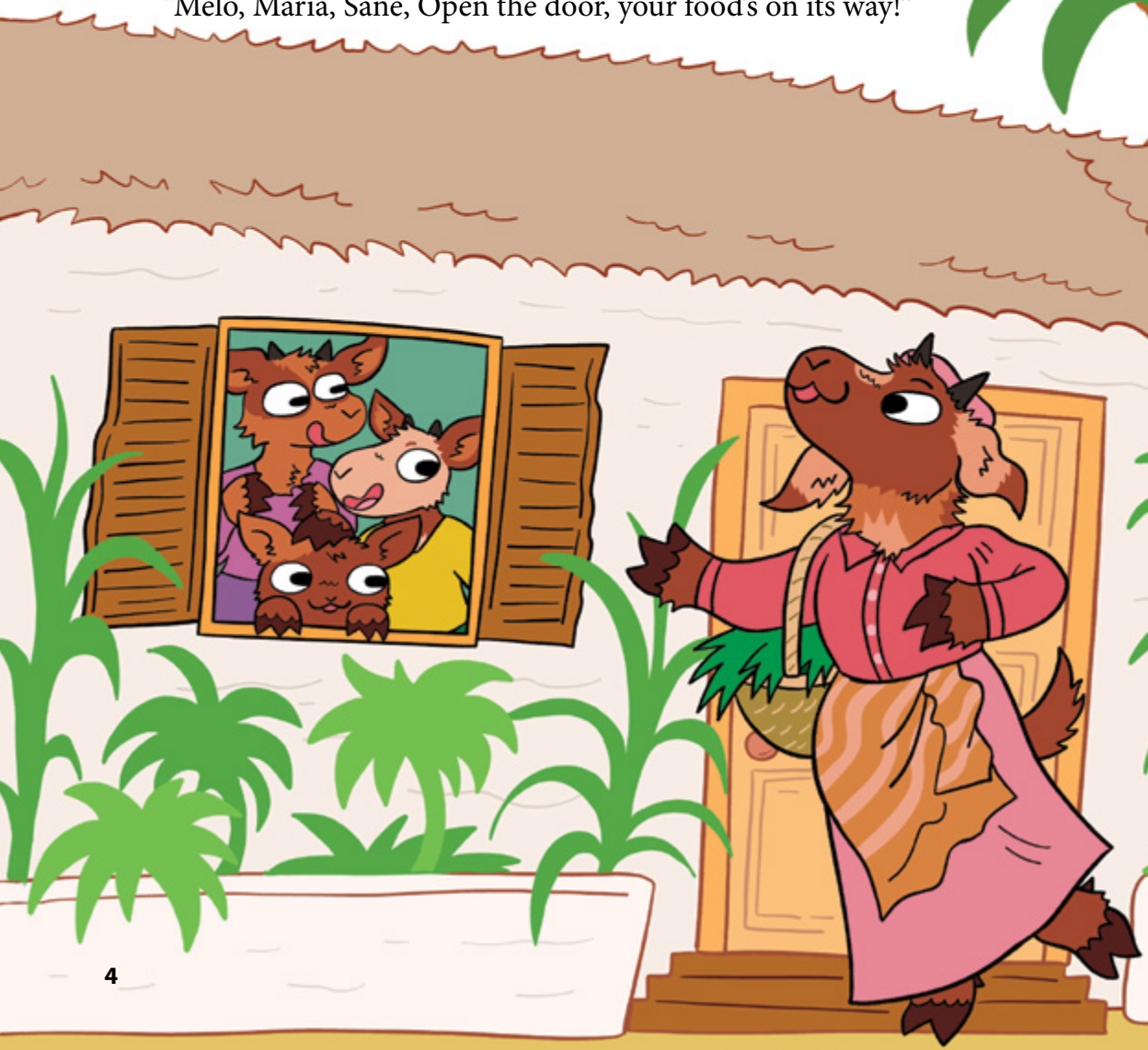
After you have read, tell these stories in your turn to somebody who likes stories. Remember, these tales are tales not to write but to speak. I have written them down for you only because I can't reach you with my voice for which written words are only a makeshift, a lifeless sort of **makeshift** substitute, a lifeless sort of substitute. But if you tell the story to somebody in your own words, you will make it come to life again.



The Wolf and the Three Kids

There once was a goat that had three kids, named Melo, Maria, and Sané. Every day, Mrs. Goat would venture to the fields to gather food for her children. Before leaving for the fields, the cautious mother goat would remind her children to lock the door and never open it for a stranger, for she knew a **wily**, hungry wolf lurked about. The children knew to listen for their mother's special song before opening the door. Upon her return she would sing:

“Melo, Maria, Sané, Open the door, your food's on its way!”





One day, Wolf overheard this song and, while Mrs. Goat was away, he came to the door and sang in a coarse voice:

“Melo, Maria, Sané,

Open the door, your food’s on its way!”

“Oh, Sir Wolf! We’re not going to open the door to you,” cried the kids. “We know you want to eat us!”

Driven by his monstrous craving, Wolf sought the help of the village doctor to transform his gruff voice into one as gentle as Mrs. Goat’s. The doctor, after some contemplation, gave Wolf a most unusual **prescription**. “Acquire a woolen blanket, a pot of water, and a bundle of wood,” advised the doctor, “Light a fire and heat the water, then **immerse** yourself in the pot and cover it with a blanket. Your voice will become soft as a result of this treatment.” Wolf followed the doctor’s directions precisely and stayed in the pot for three days.



Then he returned to Mrs. Goat's house and sang:

"Melo, Maria, Sané,

Open the door, your food's on its way!"

They opened the door, and he consumed them all, swallowing all three of them.

After his scrumptious meal, he proceeded to the well, driven by a compelling need for a drink of water. "Sir Wolf," asked the Well, "what could you have possibly eaten to cause such great thirst?"

"I've eaten three large goose eggs," answered Wolf.

When Mrs. Goat returned home, her children were nowhere to be found. She knew what had happened: her biggest fear had become a reality.





Mrs. Goat, while crying over what had happened to her children, decided to visit Donkey and ask for his help. Donkey said to her, “Mrs. Goat, how is it that every day I meet you singing and dancing, but today you are in tears?”

“I have reason to cry, Sir Donkey; Wolf has eaten up my three kids.”

“Come with me,” said Donkey. “I’ll turn Wolf over to you.”

When Wolf saw Donkey coming towards him he said, “Come here, Donkey old boy. You’re the very fellow I want to eat.” Donkey ran away.

So, Mrs. Goat then visited Ox. Ox said to her. “Mrs. Goat, how is it that every day I meet you singing and dancing, but today you are in tears?”

“I have reason to cry, Sir Ox; Wolf has eaten up my three kids.”

“Come with me,” said Ox. “I’ll turn Wolf over to you.”

When Wolf saw Ox coming towards him he said, “Come here, Big-neck. You’re the very fellow I want to **spar** with.” Ox fled.

So, Mrs. Goat then visited Horse. Horse said to her, “Mrs. Goat, how is it that every day I meet you singing and dancing, but today you are in tears?”

“I have reason to cry, Sir Horse; Wolf has eaten up my three kids.”

“Come with me,” said Horse. “I’ll turn Wolf over to you.”

When Wolf saw Horse drawing near, he said, “Come here, Horse, old fellow. You’re the very one I want to wrestle with.” Horse took a step toward Wolf, but as soon as Wolf took a step, Horse kicked up his heels and cantered away.



Mrs. Goat was trudging home in defeat when she came across Ant. Ant said to her, “Mrs. Goat, how is it that every day I meet you singing and dancing, but today you are in tears?”

“I have reason to cry, Lady Ant; Wolf has eaten up my three kids.”

“Come with me,” said Ant. “I’ll turn Wolf over to you.”

“I don’t think you can conquer Wolf,” said Mrs. Goat. “Big fellows like Donkey, Ox and Horse couldn’t accomplish this, so how can a little creature like you manage such a feat?” Ant sang:

“I am a little Ant.

Smoke doesn’t blacken me,

Sun doesn’t burn.”

She ventured near Wolf, and without warning, Wolf swallowed her whole. Then she pinched Wolf from inside. Wolf cried, “Ant, leave me alone!”





“I won’t leave you alone until you return Mrs. Goat’s children.”

Wolf released one of the kids. “That’s all,” he said.

“Lady Ant, I have three children,” said Mrs. Goat.

Ant pinched Wolf again. Wolf said, “Ant, do leave me alone!”

“Not until you let out all three kids,” said Ant. Wolf released the second kid, then the third, and then the heroic Lady Ant. Seizing her three kids in desperate haste, Mrs. Goat swiftly escaped to the sanctuary of the fields.

From this, you see that you must not **disparage** anyone because they are little, for Ant, little though she was, saved Mrs. Goat’s three kids.

Chapter 2

Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom

Collected by William Henry Barker and Cecilia Sinclair

There once lived, in the land of the Fante people, a spider named Father Anansi. Father Anansi possessed all the wisdom in the world. He spent his days counseling villagers who sought his advice and help.

One day, however, the usual noise around Father Anansi's dwelling **ceased**. The villagers didn't come to seek his counsel. This offended Father Anansi, who took pride in his role as the guardian of knowledge. "So, they think they can go on without my guidance?" he **mused**, his anger brewing. "Fine! I will hide all my wisdom from them. They'll soon realize what they've taken for granted."

Father Anansi set to work at once and gathered all the wisdom he had already given. When he believed he had collected all the wisdom of the world, he placed it in a large pot. He carefully sealed the pot and determined to put it where no human could reach it.



Now, Father Anansi had a young daughter, whose name was Anansewa. As an **observant** girl, she became suspicious of her father's unusual behavior. She decided to watch him carefully.

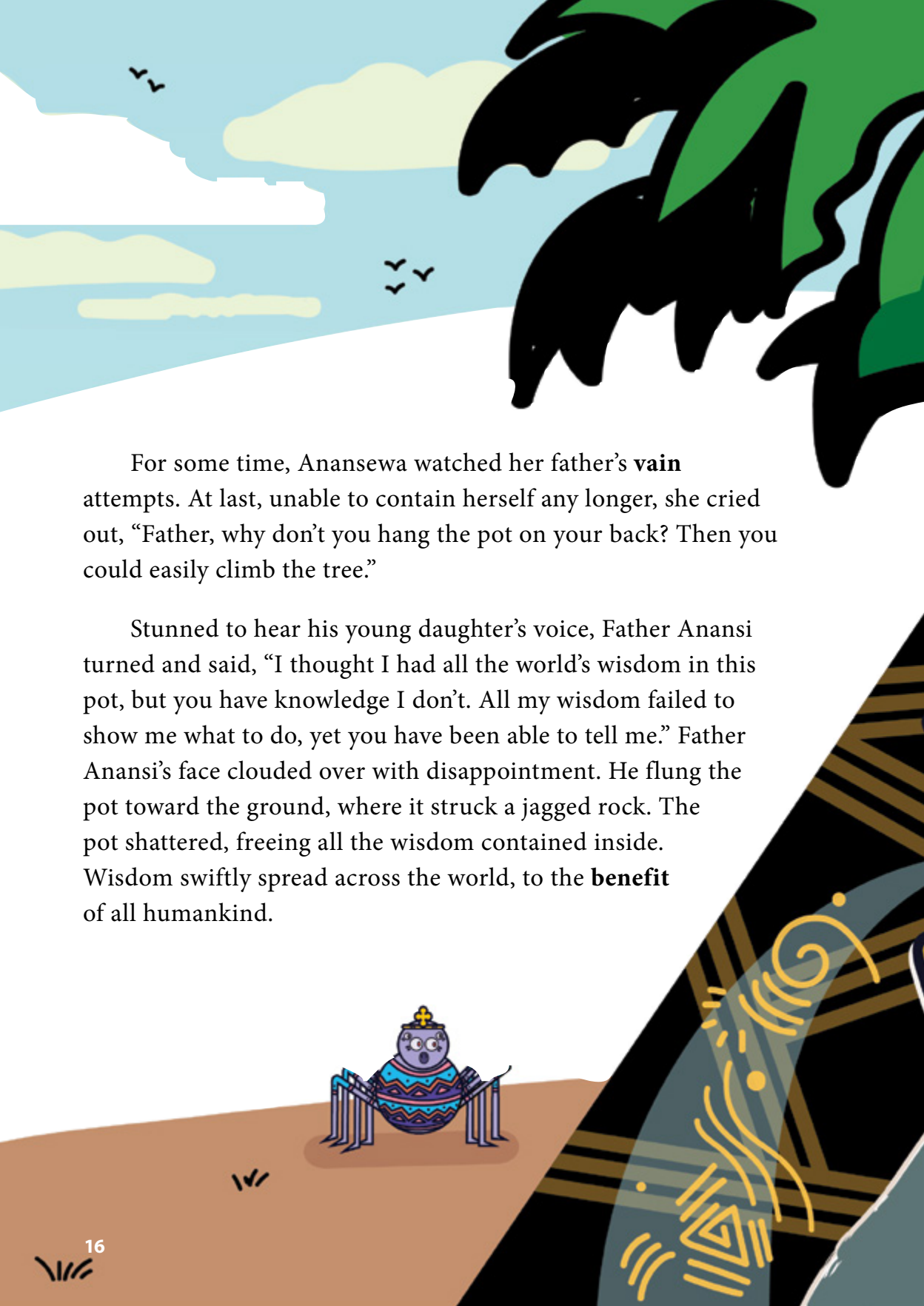
The next day, Anansewa observed her father tiptoeing out of the house with his precious pot hung around his neck. She followed him **covertly**, hiding behind trees, as they ventured deeper into the forest, leaving the village far behind.



“Ah ha! Perfect!” exclaimed Father Anansi as he examined the tallest tree, its thick trunk promising the height he needed. He approached the tree and began to climb.

The heavy pot, which hung in front of him, was getting in the way, making his **ascent** almost impossible. His eight legs **scrabbled** against the trunk as he fought to reach the top of the tree, where he intended to hang the pot. “There,” he thought, “Wisdom will be out of reach for everyone but me.” Each time he tried to approach the top, however, the pot swung in his way.





For some time, Anansewa watched her father's **vain** attempts. At last, unable to contain herself any longer, she cried out, "Father, why don't you hang the pot on your back? Then you could easily climb the tree."

Stunned to hear his young daughter's voice, Father Anansi turned and said, "I thought I had all the world's wisdom in this pot, but you have knowledge I don't. All my wisdom failed to show me what to do, yet you have been able to tell me." Father Anansi's face clouded over with disappointment. He flung the pot toward the ground, where it struck a jagged rock. The pot shattered, freeing all the wisdom contained inside. Wisdom swiftly spread across the world, to the **benefit** of all humankind.





Chapter 3

Why the Toad Has Bumpy Skin

by Elsie Spicer Eells

Adapted from “How the Toad Got His Bruises” from Fairy Tales from Brazil

Once upon a time, long, long ago, the toad had smooth skin. In those days, the toad had a reputation for being a wanderer and a **social butterfly**; it was never found at home. If anyone had a party, the toad was sure to attend, no matter how far away the party was or how long it took to travel there.

One day, the toad received an invitation to an **exclusive** party held high in the sky. “Such an honor!” exclaimed the toad, who was within earshot of its neighbor, the armadillo. Turning to the armadillo, the toad couldn’t help but boast, “Clearly, the birds know I’m the life of any get-together. It’s not a real party unless Toad is there!”

“Toad,” said the **skeptical** armadillo, “I know it’s **flattering** to be invited, but is going to this sky party worth the trouble? You don’t have wings, so you can’t fly up there. Besides, the birds are known for being **mean-spirited**. They’re always gossiping and spreading rumors. Are you sure you want to be a part of that?”

“But it’s a party in the sky, Armadillo!” The Toad responded, eyes twinkling with excitement. “An event like this happens infrequently! And as for the birds, sure they gossip, but they throw the best parties. I am determined; I must go!”



Not far from the toad's dwelling lived a black buzzard who had few friends and was known for being shy. The buzzard was outside playing the violin as usual when the toad hopped over.

"Oh, hello," said the buzzard, startled by the unexpected sight of the toad.

"Good morning, Friend Buzzard," greeted the toad. "Do you plan to attend the party in the sky?"

"I suppose so," the buzzard replied in a soft whisper.

"How splendid!" exclaimed the toad. "I would welcome your company if you would like to go together."

"Oh, why yes, I would be charmed to go to the party with you," replied the buzzard, still a bit **flustered**. Being sought out like this was a new experience for the bird. What a delight to have a new friend!

"It's settled then!" declared the enthusiastic toad. "We'll leave my house at four o'clock. Don't forget to bring your violin. Your musical talents are sure to impress our hosts!"

The buzzard arrived promptly at four o'clock, with violin in tow, of course.

"I need a bit more time to prepare," the toad called out. "Just leave your violin there by the door and make yourself at home. I will only be a minute."

The buzzard carefully laid the violin outside the door and stepped inside the toad's house. As soon as the buzzard was distracted, the toad leaped through the window and darted inside the violin.

The buzzard waited many tedious minutes for the toad to get ready, but did not hear a word from the toad. “Toad?” the buzzard finally called out. “Toad, where are you?”

No response followed. Finally, the buzzard got tired of waiting, picked up the violin, and departed, wings flapping furiously.

The buzzard arrived at the party and greeted the other birds. “I’m sorry I’m late,” the buzzard apologized to the flock. “Toad kept me waiting, then seemed to have disappeared. I decided to come alone.”

“How foolish to wait for Toad,” **mocked** the hosts. “How could a toad ever get to a party in the sky? We know Toad never turns down an invitation, so we wanted to see how far Toad would go to attend our party. It was pure entertainment for us, not a sincere invitation! Now, lay down your violin and come join the feast.”



The buzzard laid down the violin. When all eyes were elsewhere, out hopped the toad. “So, they thought I wouldn’t come to the party!” the toad chuckled. “Well, they sure underestimated me! Imagine how surprised they will be to discover me here!”

No one at the feast was more excited or jubilant than the toad. The toad spotted the buzzard. As their gaze met, the toad waved and cheerfully said, “I bet you’re surprised to see me here, aren’t you?”

“I most certainly am,” replied the buzzard, who felt **deceived** and a bit used. “But, I’m curious, how did you manage to get here anyway?”

“I’ll tell you another time,” responded the toad, eager to continue feasting and dancing.

The toad’s **dismissive** remark left the buzzard feeling hurt and unappreciated. “I should just go home,” thought the buzzard. “I thought I would spend time with a new friend, but it appears Toad is more interested in the party than in being friends with me.” The buzzard left the event quietly, without saying goodbye to anyone and without the violin.

As the party concluded, the toad hopped inside the hollow body of the violin and waited for the buzzard to begin the journey home. Minutes morphed into hours, and no one touched the violin. “Maybe I made a mistake in coming here,” thought the toad. “Maybe I shouldn’t have come at all. Now, how do I find my way home?”

After a while, the observant falcon noticed the violin and said, “That violin belongs to Buzzard. I’ll carry it back to Earth; I know Buzzard would be devastated to be without it.”



The falcon flew towards Earth with the violin, while inside the instrument, the toad **jostled** around with each wingbeat. The journey was far from comfortable, but the hopeful anticipation of nearing home brought the toad some relief.

“My, this violin is heavy,” remarked the falcon. “I’m not going to carry this burdensome old thing another minute. It was foolish of me to offer to carry it in the first place. After all, the buzzard is no friend of mine.”

The falcon let the violin fall. Down, down toward Earth it tumbled.

“Oh little stones, oh little stones, get out of my way!” called the toad. But the stones were unresponsive, and they did not get out of the way.

With a crash, the violin finally hit the ground. The hard stones punched into the violin, as well as into the poor toad’s skin. Now covered in an array of raised, swollen bumps, the toad crawled out of the wrecked violin and embarked on the slow, agonizing journey home.

The buzzard never knew what became of the violin or why the toad no longer had smooth skin. To this very day, the toad’s skin is covered in bumps, and the toad is no longer so quick to leave home.

Chapter 4

The Lazy Bee

Based on “La Abeja Haragana” from Cuentos de La Selva by Horacio Quiroga

In the lush land of Misiones, Argentina, there once lived a little bee who always chose **leisure** over labor. Every morning, the little bee would peek outside and comb her hair before joyously buzzing away. The little bee would hop with delight from blossom to blossom, occasionally dipping in and out of the hive.

Meanwhile, her **diligent** sisters worked tirelessly to fill the hive with honey. The survival of the baby bees—and of the entire hive—depended on there being enough honey to nourish the littlest ones. Over time, the other worker bees grew tired of their **flighty** sister’s behavior. They began to call her “the lazy bee.”





At the door of the beehive stood two wise female guard bees who ensured that unwelcome pests did not gain access to the hive. One day, as the lazy bee was about to enter, they stopped her and said, “Sister, you can’t continue to live this way. We all depend on one another for survival, so all bees must work. Now, turn around and go collect nectar for our hive, as this is your responsibility.”

“But I’ve been buzzing about all day and I’m exhausted,” complained the little bee.

“It’s not about being tired,” they responded sternly, “It’s about contributing to the hive’s well-being and doing your part. Consider this your first warning.” They then stepped aside and allowed her to enter.

However, the lazy bee **persisted** in her behavior. The next afternoon, the guards said, “You must work, sister. You need to pull your weight.”

She replied cheerfully, “I’ll get around to it one day!”

“It’s not about some vague future date,” they admonished, “You need to start contributing immediately—beginning tomorrow.” Then they stepped aside and allowed her to enter.

The following evening unfolded similarly. Before the guards could comment, the little bee declared, “Yes, yes, sisters! I remember my promise!”

“It’s not about remembering your promise,” they replied, “It’s about following through. Today is April 19th. Make sure that by tomorrow, the 20th, you bring back at least one tiny drop of nectar.” With this, they stepped aside and allowed her to pass.



Despite the guards' repeated warnings, the 20th of April came and went just like any other **idle** day for the lazy bee, with the added twist of a cold wind that began blowing as the sun set. The lazy little bee, eager to find warmth, hurried home to the buzzing, bustling hive. However, upon her arrival, the guards blocked her way.

"No entry," they stated coldly.

"But I need to get in! This is my hive," the little bee pleaded.

"This hive belongs to bees who do their part, and there's no room for lazy bees here," they responded.

"I will definitely work tomorrow!" she insisted.

"For those who don't work, there's no 'tomorrow,'" reasoned the **philosophical** bees. They blocked the entrance to the hive and forcefully pushed the little bee out.

The little bee, now clueless and cold, flew aimlessly for a while. With night falling, the exhausted little bee could hardly see through the darkness to tell where she was going. She grabbed a leaf, intending to rest for a moment, but her numb body and loose grip betrayed her. She plummeted down to the ground, landing abruptly.

The poor little bee, with her cold, stiff wings, could no longer fly. Creeping close to the ground, she climbed over sticks and pebbles, which felt like mountains to her tiny body. She dragged herself up the tree and finally reached the hive's entrance just as the first few cold droplets of rain began to spill from the sky.

"Oh dear me!" she wailed, "I'm going to freeze to death in this rain!" Once more, she attempted to enter her hive, yet her path was blocked again.



“Please, sisters. Let me in!” she begged.

“It’s too late,” they responded.

“Please, sisters, I need to rest!”

“It’s even later now.”

“Sisters, please! I’m freezing!”

“Impossible.”

“Please, this is the last time! I’m going to die out here!”

“You are not in danger of dying,” they responded. “But this one tough night might just help you learn the value of a day’s work!”

Now shivering with her wings soaking wet, the little bee crawled and crawled until she suddenly plunged into a hole. As she tumbled farther and farther, the little bee believed that she might fall forever. However, at last, she came to a startling halt.

As she picked herself up, to her horror, the little bee came eye to eye with a gigantic snake. This green reptile with a brick-colored back was coiled up, ready to pounce on the poor little bee. Unfortunately, she had stumbled into the hollow of an uprooted tree that the snake had previously claimed as its lair.

Bees are tasty treats to some snakes. That's why the little bee, when faced with such a threatening enemy, closed her eyes and murmured, "Goodbye, my life! This is the last time I see the light!"

But to her great astonishment, the snake did not attack. Instead, she spoke to her rather gently. "How are you, little bee? Why, you must not be a very diligent worker to be here at this hour!"

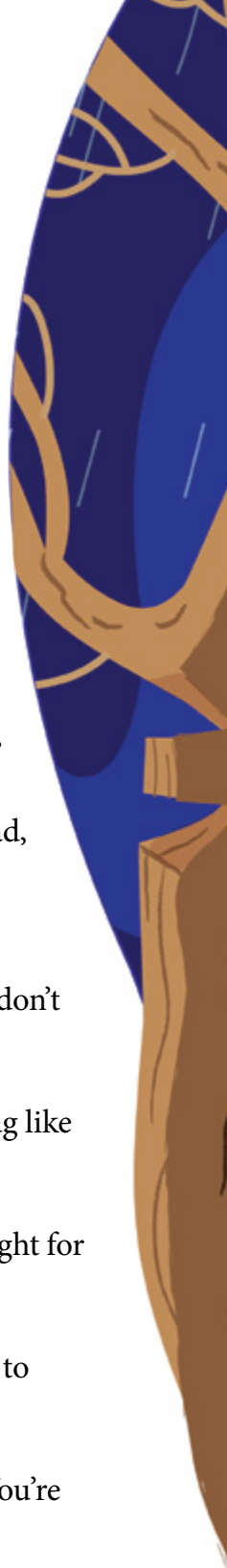
"It's true," she murmured, her heart pounding like a drum. "I don't work, and it's my own fault."

"In that case," hissed the snake, "I'm going to remove a bad bug like you from the world. I'm going to eat you right now, Bee!"

The little bee, trembling, exclaimed, "That's not fair! It's not right for you to eat me just because you're stronger!"

"Ha!" the snake laughed. "Regardless of what's 'fair,' I'm going to have you for my meal. Brace yourself."

She leaned back to strike at the bee, who at once protested, "You're doing this because you're less intelligent than me."





“Am I truly less intelligent than you, you puny little **mite**?” the snake challenged.

“Yes, you are,” the bee replied.

“Let’s see about that,” the snake responded. “We will each perform a trick, and the one who performs the most extraordinary trick wins. If I win, I feast on you.”

“What happens if I win?” asked the bee.

“If you win,” the snake replied, “you may stay here where it’s warm until the morning. Agreed?”

“Agreed,” said the bee.

The snake laughed once more as she thought of a trick that would certainly be impossible for a bee to accomplish. She darted outside and returned with a seed pod from a nearby **eucalyptus** tree, which sheltered the bees’ hive.

Now, the seed pods of the eucalyptus tree are the same shape as a spinning top; in fact, children in Argentina call them “trompitos de eucalipto,” or “eucalyptus tops.”

“Watch this,” the snake commanded. With her tail wrapped around the eucalyptus top, she released it so that it was spinning at full speed. It began to dance and hum and twirl all over the lair.

The snake laughed, and with good reason, because a bee has never made nor will ever be able to make a top dance. When the humming top finally fell silent and crashed to the ground, the bee confessed, “That’s an impressive trick, and one I could never pull off.”





“Alright, then I’ll eat you!” declared the snake.

“Wait a minute! I may not be able to do that, but I can do something that no one else can.”

“What might that be?”

“I can disappear!” said the bee.

“You mean disappear without leaving here?” asked the astonished snake.

“Precisely, without leaving here.”

“And without burrowing into the ground?”

“Without burrowing into the ground.”

“Well alright then, do it! And if you fail, I’ll just eat you right away,” said the snake.

Now, while the eucalyptus top was whirling, the little bee had spotted something on the floor of the hollow stump. It was a little shrub, just a few inches high, with leaves about the size of a coin.

The bee approached the little plant, careful not to touch it, and made her **counterproposal**. “Now it’s my turn, Lady Snake. Do me a favor and turn around to count to three. At the count of ‘three,’ you should look for me, but you will find that I have disappeared!”

The snake, eager to see if the bee could in fact disappear, turned around and quickly counted, “One. Two. Three!” She spun around to face an empty space. Stunned, she scanned the cave—up, down, in corners, even examined the little plant with her tongue.



The snake was convinced that if her eucalyptus-top trick was impressive, the bee's disappearing act was extraordinary. Where had the bee disappeared? The snake slithered around the cave, making sure she'd checked every possible space. She searched for a long time. The bee was nowhere to be found.

"Well!" exclaimed the snake, "I give up. Where are you?"

A faint voice—the voice of the tiny bee—echoed from somewhere within the cave. "Are you not going to harm me?" queried the voice nervously. "Do I have your word?"

"Yes," the snake replied, "You have my word. Now, where are you?"

"I'm right here," replied the bee, suddenly emerging from the once-closed leaf of the plant.

The bee's trick was simple yet genius. The little plant was a sensitive one, called a touch-me-not, which is very common in Argentina. The touch-me-not's leaves close at the slightest contact, and they closed around and hid the clever little bee. The snake, despite her supposed intelligence, was **oblivious** to the plant's behavior.

The storm raged outside. The snake and the bee pressed themselves against the highest wall of the cavern as icy water gushed into the cave like a river.

Suddenly, the vivid, hungry glow of the snake's eyes pierced the cave's darkness. Slowly, the snake lifted her head, slithered closer to the bee, and imagined swallowing the tasty insect in a single, satisfying gulp.

"Don't even think about it! You promised!" cried the bee in a shaky squeal, her wings and voice trembling. The poor bee's little heart pounded fiercely.

"Fine, fine," the snake grumbled, "A promise is a promise. You have my word." With an annoyed hiss, the snake slinked back to her side of the cave, leaving the bee to shudder alone in the darkness.

The little bee had never believed that a night could be so cold, so long, or so horrible. She remembered her previous life, sleeping night after night in the warm, cozy hive. She cried silently.

In the morning, when the weather had settled and the sun rose, the little bee flew home. She cried again in silence before the door of the hive. The bees on duty let her pass without a word; they recognized that the returning bee was not their idle sister, but one who had learned a hard lesson about life.

And indeed, she changed. From then on, no one collected as much nectar or made as much honey as the little bee. And when autumn came, and the end of her days also came, she shared one last lesson with the young bees that surrounded her:

“Flying aimlessly and working exert equal effort! But one helps keep all of us safe and taken care of. I learned that in one terrifying night, when I almost lost my life. So work hard, children! Because each of our individual efforts contribute to the comfort and happiness of us all.”



Chapter 5

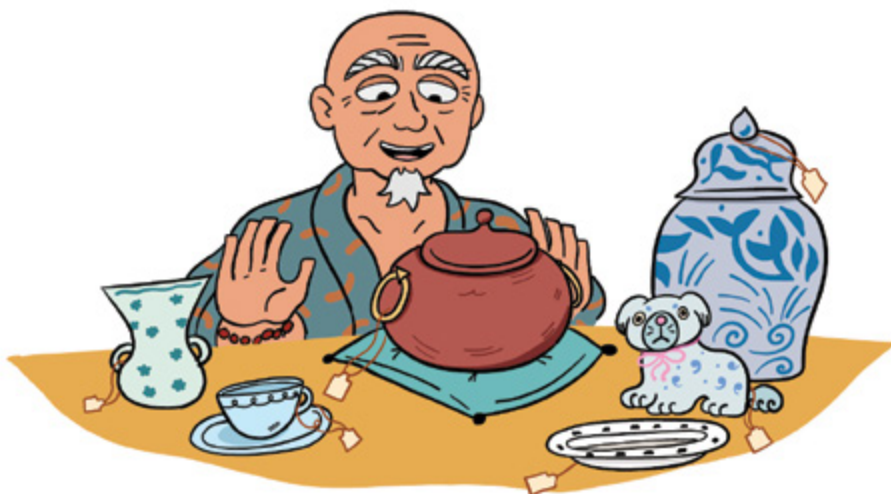
The Kettle of Good Fortune

Adapted from “The Kettle of Good Fortune” from Buddha’s crystal and other fairy stories by Yei Ozaki

Long ago, in the city called Tatebayashi, in the Province of Kodzuke of Japan, lived a respected **scholar** and his sons. The scholar had a passion for collecting and studying ancient manuscripts and historical artifacts. Every day, the scholar would go on a walk and explore the local shops, hunting for rare and antique items.

One day, as he stood in front of an old shop wondering whether it would be worthwhile to look inside, the owner came out and called, “Sir, I have something to show you if you can spare a minute of your precious time.” The man brought out a strange-looking kettle and set it in front of the scholar. As soon as the scholar saw it, he knew it was a treasure. It was very, very old and, therefore, valuable, and besides that, its shape was perfect.

“I’ll never find another kettle like this,” he said to himself. Overjoyed at his fortune, he bought it, carried it home, and put it in the cabinet.





The scholar was so busy that he soon forgot all about his new kettle. Days passed. Then came a quiet afternoon; he was too tired to go on a walk, so he sat down on the mats with a weary sigh. Suddenly, he smiled because he remembered the kettle. So, he went to the cabinet, took out the kettle, and set it on its box. What a beautiful kettle, indeed!

The scholar sat and dusted his kettle with great care and pride until he began to grow sleepy. His head bobbed and nodded until he was fast asleep.

Then something incredible happened. The kettle, which had sat on the box until now, suddenly began to move. It shook, then sprouted a furry head, four feet, and a bushy tail! The kettle jumped down from the top of the box and began to walk around the room.

The scholar continued to sleep while the walking tea kettle pattered around the room, and whacked, as if in anger, its long tail against the screens and mats.

The scholar's sons, who were in the next room, heard the unusual noises. They peeped in from the *fusuma*. To their surprise, they saw a tea kettle walking around on the legs of a tanuki, or raccoon-dog, with a head in front and a tail behind. Then they all cried out, "Oh, look, look! How dreadful! The tea kettle is **bewitched**! What shall we do?"

"We must be either dreaming or out of our senses," said one son, "to see what we are seeing. A tea kettle can't move around on its own feet!"

"Look, look! The creature is coming this way!" exclaimed another son. "Careful brothers, I don't like the look of this thing." Then the young men entered their father's room.

"Father, wake up, please! Something strange has happened!"

The scholar opened his eyes and mumbled, "What is the matter? How noisy you all are!"

"This is not the time to ask questions," said the boldest of his sons. "Look there! Feet have grown out of the kettle, and it is walking around the room. Look!"



“What do you say?” said the **bewildered** old man. “Feet have grown from the kettle? Where? Where?” Then the old man rubbed his eyes and looked about him for the walking tea kettle, when, lo and behold! There it was quietly sitting on the box. So, the scholar did not believe what his sons had told him. “What foolish boys you are,” he said.

The young men, looking at the kettle and hardly able to believe their own eyes, exclaimed in a breath, “Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. This is most **bizarre!** It was certainly walking just now, but-”

“But—” said the scholar, “there is nothing to be said. Besides, in what world do feet come out of kettles? You have been dishonest, and my nice afternoon nap is spoiled. Fools that you are! Go away!”

The young men returned to their room, grumbling as they went. They were sure that they had seen the kettle walking around on the legs of a tanuki, and they hoped to convince their father that what they saw was real.

That evening, as the young men **ruminated** over the strange incident, the scholar filled his precious kettle with water and put it on the fire to boil.

Without warning, the kettle jumped off the hibachi and screamed, “It burns me! It burns me!”

The old scholar, terrified, cried out, “How dreadful! My tea kettle is bewitched into a tanuki! Who will come and help me?”

Hearing his cry, his sons all rushed in. When the sons had caught the kettle, however, its hairy feet and head and tail vanished. All that remained was an ordinary iron kettle. The young men knocked the kettle with their knuckles, but the only reply was “kan, kan,” the sound of metal.



Their father apologized for having doubted their word earlier in the day, and they left him alone once more with his kettle.

The scholar sat, deep in thought, puzzled by the odd event. The incident had greatly upset him, and when anything was on his mind, he always talked aloud.

“What have I done? What sort of thing have I bought? There I was congratulating myself on the treasure I had found, when it is clearly under some spell and will continue to cause trouble. What shall I do with this kettle?”

He sat and rubbed his bald head as he thought of a solution. There was silence in the room, except for the charcoal in the grill, which suddenly crackled and sent bright spots flying. At last, the scholar popped out of his seat and exclaimed, “I have it! I’ll sell the kettle as soon as possible. Once I’ve sold it, it won’t bother me anymore.”

The next morning, a kuzuya came to the scholar's home. As soon as the scholar saw him approach the house, he brought out the bothersome kettle.

The kuzuya was an honest man, and after looking at the beautiful, antique iron kettle, said, "Why Sir, this is a kettle in excellent condition, and of some value, why in the world do you want to sell it? It would be a shame to part with it."

"Yes, that is true," said the scholar. "I don't want to part with it, but the other day I bought a better-shaped kettle. Two would get in the way, so I'll sell this one."

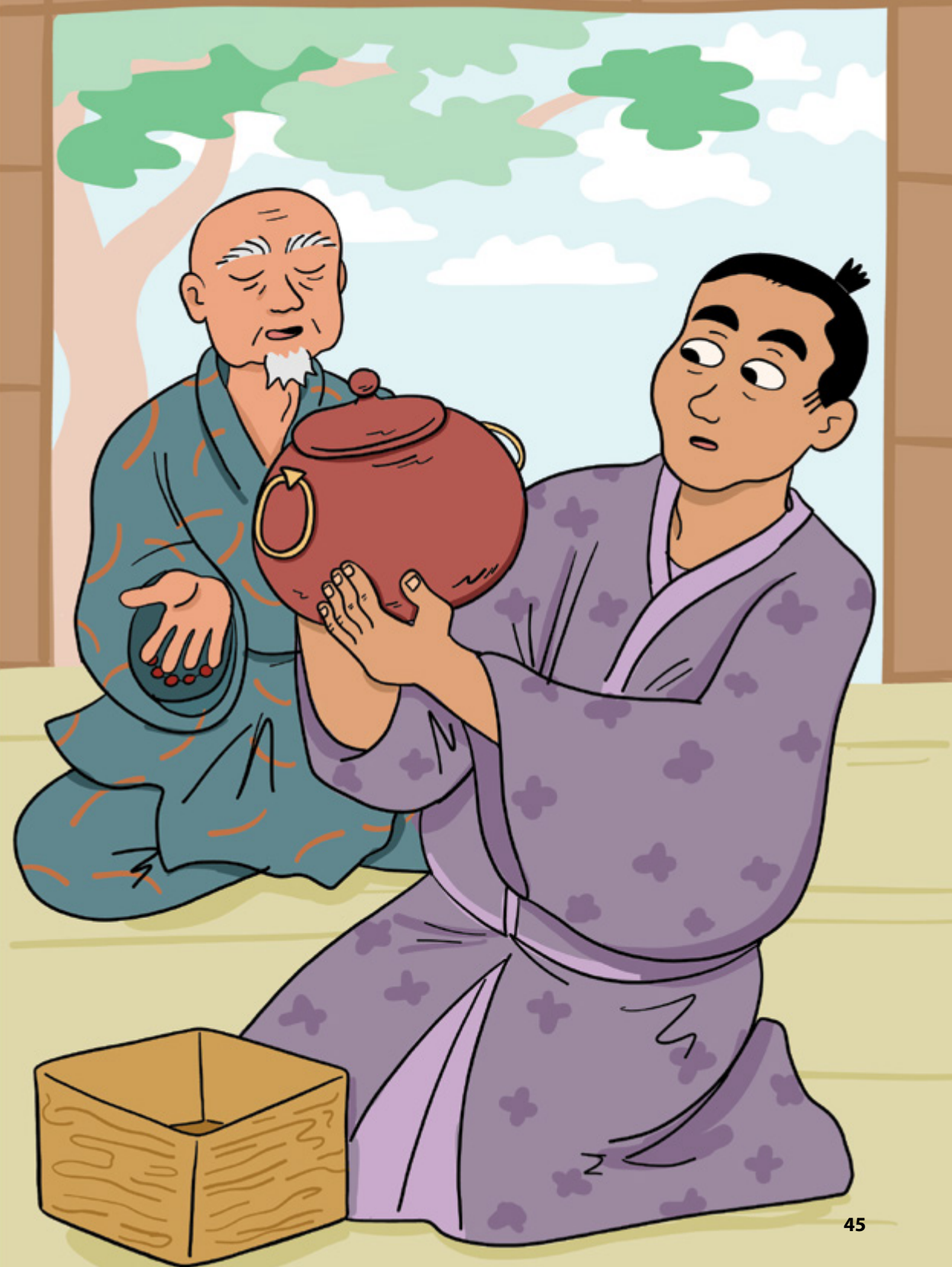
"Is that so?" the kuzuya replied. "In that case, I'd be honored to buy this one from you." He took a pouch from his belt, put down four hundred mon, and carried the kettle to his house in the city.

The scholar felt as if a mountain of anxiety had rolled off his back. He slept peacefully that night.

The kuzuya was very happy over his bargain, which was a splendid one, for he knew that he could sell the kettle for ten times what he had paid for it. The more he looked at the kettle the more delighted he felt. "My, what an excellent deal this was!" he said to himself. "And it was an honest one too, since I told the old scholar that he was parting with something special." He slept well and dreamed of Mount Fuji and a hawk, two symbols that **foreshadowed** a prosperous future.

In the middle of the night, the kuzuya was startled awake by someone screeching, "*Kuzuya San! Kuzuya San!*"

He sat up quickly and looked around. To his amazement, he found that the kettle was standing on four legs, with the head and tail of a tanuki.



Bewildered by the sight, he stared and stared at the strange kettle. “*Ya! Ya!* Are you the kettle I brought home a few hours ago?”

Without any fear or embarrassment, the extraordinary kettle stepped towards him, “Are you surprised, Mr. Kuzuya?” asked the kettle-tanuki, or tanuki-kettle, with a twinkle in his eye.

“Shouldn’t I be surprised? I thought you were a metal kettle all this time, and now here you are, walking around my room with a head, a tail, and hairy feet! Who would not be surprised? What kind of creature are you?”

The kettle smiled and said, “My name is Bunbuku Chagama, the Tea Kettle of Good Fortune, and I am a transformed tanuki.”

“Oh,” said the kuzuya, “then you are not a true tea kettle after all?”

“No,” answered the animal, “I am not a true kettle, but I shall be of more service to you than a real kettle.”

“What do you mean?” asked the kuzuya.

“As you can see, I am not an ordinary tea kettle,” said the strange tanuki, “so if the one who owns me treats me kindly and with respect, he will certainly be fortunate; but if anyone should use me as that disrespectful old man did, he will lose all and gain nothing. Do you know what the old man did to me? He actually poured cold water into me, and then set me on the charcoal fire, and even after I had put out my beautiful tail, he called others to catch me and strike my sides! Why, how can I, a respectable tanuki, put up with such treatment?” And the tanuki puffed out his sides with great **indignation**.

“You are most reasonable,” said the man. “But would you be happy if you were always placed in your box and put into a cupboard? What is your idea of comfort and happiness? Please tell me.”

“Ah!” said the tanuki, “you are certainly a wise man. Of course, if I am shut up in a box, I cannot breathe freely. I am a living creature, you know, and I sometimes wish to go out and have some nice food to eat.”

“Why, certainly,” said the man. “That is understandable.”



“When I was living in that cupboard,” continued the tanuki, “I could hardly stand my hunger, and I sometimes crept out to look for food. Once, the old man fell asleep while polishing me and I got up to look around for something to eat. I was seen by the young men and scarcely escaped being beaten. They knocked my sides with their knuckles to find out what I was made of! Imagine that! Now you have treated me well, and I can’t help but think that there is some mysterious connection between us, since I have come to you in this way. Can I trust you? May I ask you to feed me from now on?”

“Why, certainly,” said his attentive friend. “When someone places their trust in me, I aim to honor it. So if you will be content with what I can give you, I will see that you have enough rice every day.”

“If you will be so kind, I would be forever grateful to you. In return, I’ll show you my tricks, and perhaps you can do something with them. I certainly wouldn’t want to get something for nothing,” said the tanuki.

“Why, this sounds fascinating! What can you do?” asked the kuzuya.

“Anything and everything,” replied the accomplished tanuki-kettle. “I can perform acrobatics and dance the tightrope.”

“That is wonderful!” exclaimed the astonished man. “Then I will give up my rag collecting business, open a show, and ask you to perform as a dancer and an acrobat!”

“That is a good plan, a very good plan,” said the tanuki. “If I put in full effort, people from all over will come to the show, and you will make far more than if you remained a humble kuzuya.”

“If you are as good as your word, Mr. Bunbuku, I shall provide a royal feast for you every day.”



With the agreement finalized, the kuzuya decided to open the show at once.

The very next day, the kuzuya built a proper hall for the performance. He hired samisen players and drummers and hung a large picture of the performing tanuki in front of the building. Finally, he dressed himself in a kamishimo, a style of dress worn by performers.

Then, he stood in front of the building and called to all that passed by, waving his fan toward the sign board.

“Sa! Sa! Come see the incredible Tanuki Performer, the greatest discovery of recent times. This is a kettle with the head and legs and tail of a tanuki. He can dance on a rope and do other wonderful tricks. Come and see! You will be amused! Come in, come in! Don’t worry about the fee until after the show. You may pay me after you have seen what I have to show you.”

When the audience came into the hall, there was another speaker to welcome them. He said:

“Ladies and Gentlemen, prepare for the unique talents and tricks of the incredible performer, Mr. Bunbuku Chagama—a genius! First, he’ll dazzle you with a tightrope dance, followed by a series of never-before-seen tricks!”

Then the speaker clapped two pieces of wood together. *Chon, chon, chon!* Bunbuku Chagama appeared on stage, made a low bow to the visitors, and began his dance on the rope.

All the people were breathless with astonishment at the sight of the strange performer, and his still stranger **antics**. They had never seen anything like it before. Exclamations filled the air.

“How amusing! How marvelous! Have you ever seen such a unique creature before? A tanuki with the body of a kettle dancing on the tightrope! Oh! Oh! Oh!”

The reputation of this show spread like lightning around the city, attracting people from all corners. The rush was so intense that government officials feared that the hall would break down. In less than twenty days, the kuzuya had made a fortune.

But the kuzuya was far from being a greedy man, and he began to think that it would be too hard on the tanuki to keep him working so **strenuously** for much longer.

So one day, as they were sitting together drinking a cup of tea, after a good day’s performance, he said to the tanuki-kettle:

“Listen to me, Mr. Bunbuku. In your honorable shadow, I have made such my fortune, and I am very grateful to you. Now I have

enough to retire on, and I think that you must be tired of these endless performances. What do you think of giving up the business and taking a rest?”

“I’m grateful for your thoughtfulness,” answered the tanuki-kettle. “And I agree. I could use some rest.”

The kuzuya immediately closed the show, much to the disappointment of the whole neighborhood.

The kuzuya and Mr. Bunbuku Chagama now took a week’s rest together, enjoying themselves grandly and feasting on the best rice and fish that they could find. Then, with tears in his eyes, the tanuki-kettle said, “Dear friend, I am nearing the end of my time as a tanuki-kettle. My last wish before becoming an ordinary tea kettle is to be donated to the Morinji Temple, to be revered as a sacred treasure.”

“Oh, Mr. Bunbuku,” replied the kuzuya, “I will miss you dearly. But of course I will respect your wish.”

So the kuzuya brought the tea kettle to the temple and presented it as a sacred treasure. With this gift, he also donated half of his wealth and promised to come as often as possible to see his faithful friend, Bunbuku Chagama.

The kettle was kept safe on a gold stand, and honored as a valuable **relic**. It sits there, in the temple of Morinji, to this day.



Chapter 6

Baba Yaga

by Arthur Ransome

Adapted from “Baba Yaga” from Old Peter’s Russian Tales (1919)

“Tell us about Baba Yaga,” begged Maroosia.

“Yes,” said Vanya, “please, grandfather, and about the little hut on hen’s legs.”

“Tell us the story of the Magic Doll,” begged Maroosia.

“I will someday,” said old Peter.

“Does Baba Yaga really have **iron** teeth?” asked Vanya.

“Iron, like the poker and tongs,” said old Peter.

“What for?” said Maroosia.

“To eat up little children,” said old Peter, “when she can get them. Sometimes they outsmart her or run away. She is bony all over, and her eyes flash, and she drives about in a **mortar**, beating it with a **pestle**, and sweeping up her tracks with a broom so that you cannot tell which way she has gone.”



“And her hut?” said Vanya. He had often heard about it before, but he wanted to hear about it again.

“She lives in a little hut that stands on hen’s legs. Sometimes it faces the forest, sometimes it faces the path, and sometimes it walks around. But in some of the stories she lives in another kind of hut, with a railing of tall sticks, and a skull on each stick. And all night long fire glows in the skulls and fades as the dawn rises.”

“Now tell us one of the Baba Yaga stories,” said Maroosia.

“Please,” said Vanya.

“I will tell you how one little girl got away from her, and then, if ever she catches you, you will know exactly what to do.”

And with that, old Peter began his tale.

Baba Yaga and the Little Girl with the Kind Heart

Once upon a time, there was a widowed old man who lived alone in a hut with his young daughter. Very merry they were together, and they used to smile at each other over a table piled with bread and jam. Everything proceeded well until the old man remarried, but after that, everything changed. There was no more bread and jam on the table, and no more sitting with her father at tea—or having tea at all. The stepmother blamed everything that went wrong on the young girl, claiming it was all her fault. Because the old man believed his new wife, he was harsh with his daughter and had no more kind words for her. Day after day, the stepmother would hand her a crust of bread and tell her to eat it somewhere else.

And the poor little girl used to go to the shed in the yard and eat the crust all alone. Ah me! She often wept for the old days, and she often wept at the thought of the days that were to come.

Mostly she wept because she was all alone, until one day she found a little friend in the shed. She was hunched up in a corner of the shed, eating her crust and crying bitterly, when she heard a little noise. It was like this: scratch—scratch, the sounds of a little gray mouse who lived in a hole.

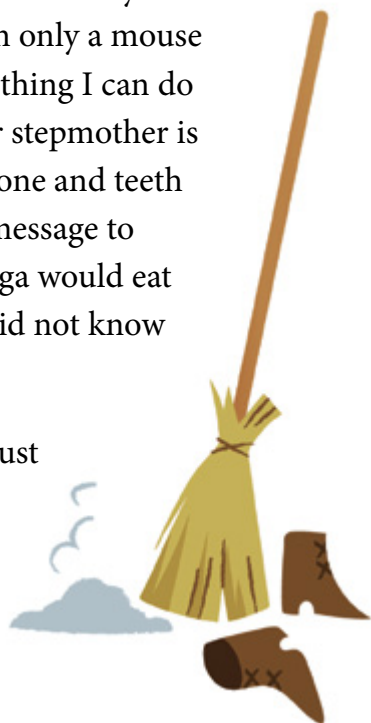
Out he came, with his little pointed nose and his long whiskers, his little round ears and his bright eyes. Out came his little humpy body and his long tail. And then he sat up on his hind legs, curled his tail twice around himself, and looked at the little girl.



The little girl, who had a kind heart, forgot all her own sorrows, taking a scrap of her crust and throwing it to the mouse. The little mouse nibbled and nibbled, and there, it was gone, and he was looking for another. She gave him another bit, and another and another, until there was no crust left for the little girl. Well, she didn't mind that, because, you see, she was so happy seeing the little mouse nibbling and nibbling.

When the crust was done the little mouse looked up at her with his little bright eyes and squeaked a tiny "Thank you." He continued, "You are a kind little girl, and I am only a mouse who has eaten all your food. But there is one thing I can do for you, which is to tell you to take care. Your stepmother is a sister to Baba Yaga, the witch with legs of bone and teeth of iron. So if ever she sends you to deliver a message to your aunt, you come and tell me, for Baba Yaga would eat you soon enough with her iron teeth if you did not know what to do."

"Oh, thank you," said the little girl; and just then she heard the stepmother calling to her to come in and clean up the tea things, and tidy the house, and brush out the floor, and clean everybody's boots.



So off she had to go.

When she went in she had a good look at her stepmother, and sure enough, she had teeth of iron, and she was as bony as a fish with all the flesh picked off, and the little girl thought of Baba Yaga and shivered, though she did not feel so bad when she remembered the little mouse out there in the shed in the yard.



The very next morning it happened. The old man went off to pay a visit to some friends of his in the next village, just as I go off sometimes to see old Fedor. And as soon as the old man was out of sight the wicked stepmother called the little girl.

“You are to go see your dear little aunt in the forest,” she demanded, “and ask her for a needle and thread to mend a shirt.”

“But I already have a needle and thread,” said the little girl.

“Hold your tongue,” snapped the stepmother, **gnashing** her teeth, which made a noise like clattering tongs. “Hold your tongue,” she repeated. “Didn’t I tell you you are to see your dear little aunt to ask for a needle and thread to mend a shirt?”

“How—how shall I find her?” the girl stammered, nearly ready to cry, for she knew that her aunt was Baba Yaga, the witch with legs of bone and teeth of iron.

“You must go along the road into the forest till you come to a fallen tree; then you must turn to your left, and then walk straight ahead and you will find her,” growled the stepmother. “Now, be off with you, lazy one. Here is some food for you to eat along the way.” She shoved a





The little girl wanted to go into the shed to tell the little mouse she was going to Baba Yaga and to ask what she should do. But when she looked back, the stepmother loomed in the doorway, watching her, so she had to go straight on.

She walked along the road through the forest until she came to the fallen tree. Then she turned to the left and walked straight ahead. She was just setting out when she heard a little noise under the fallen tree. “Scratch—scratch,” it sounded, and out jumped the little mouse on the road in front of her.

“Oh little mouse, little mouse,” sighed the little girl, “my stepmother has sent me to her sister, that Baba Yaga, the witch with legs of bone and teeth of iron, and I do not know what to do.”

“It will not be difficult,” said the little mouse, “because of your kind heart. Take all the things you find on the road, and do with them what you like. Then you will escape from Baba Yaga, and all will be well.”

“Are you hungry, little mouse?” asked the little girl.

“I could nibble, I think,” replied the mouse.

The little girl unfastened the towel, and there was nothing in it but stones—not at all something she could eat, but still all the stepmother had given her.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” said the little girl. “There’s nothing for you to eat.”

“Isn’t there?” said the little mouse, and stones transformed into bread and jam right before the little girl’s eyes. The girl sat down on the fallen tree, and the little mouse sat beside her, and they ate bread and jam until their hunger subsided.

“Keep the towel,” advised the little mouse; “I think it will be useful. And remember what I said about the things you find on the way. And now I must bid you farewell,” said he.

“Goodbye,” said the little girl, resuming her journey.

As she traveled, the girl found a nice, new handkerchief lying in the road. She picked it up and took it with her. Then she found a little bottle of oil, which she picked up and took with her. Then she found some scraps of meat, which she also collected.

“Perhaps I’d better take them too,” she said, recalling the mouse’s advice.

She discovered a blue ribbon, then a little loaf of good bread; she gathered them both and took them with her.

“I dare say somebody will like these items,” she said.

Eventually she came to the hut of Baba Yaga, the witch with legs of bone and teeth of iron. The hut was surrounded by a high fence with big gates, and when she pushed them open they squeaked miserably, as if it hurt them to move. Upon hearing their croaking and squeaking, the little girl felt sorry for them.

“How lucky,” she said, “that I picked up the bottle of oil!” as she poured the oil into the gates’ hinges.

Inside the railing was Baba Yaga’s hut, which stood on hen’s legs and periodically walked about the yard. Baba Yaga’s maid also stood in the yard, weeping profusely because of the tasks Baba Yaga had assigned her. She was crying bitterly and wiping her eyes on her **petticoat**.



“How lucky,” said the little girl, “that I picked up a handkerchief!” And she gave the handkerchief to Baba Yaga’s maid, who wiped her eyes on it and smiled through her tears.

Close by the hut was a huge, very thin dog gnawing a dry crust of bread.

“How lucky,” said the little girl, “that I picked up a loaf of bread!” And she gave the loaf to the dog, who gobbled it up and licked his lips.

The little girl took a deep breath and approached the door. She gave three brave, solid knocks.

“Come in,” croaked Baba Yaga.

The little girl went in, and there was Baba Yaga, the witch with legs of bone and teeth of iron, sitting and weaving at a loom. In a corner of the hut crouched a thin black cat who was intently watching a mouse-hole.

“Good day to you, auntie,” said the little girl, trying not to tremble.

“Good day to you, niece,” said Baba Yaga.

“My stepmother has sent me to you to ask for a needle and thread to mend a shirt.”

“Very well,” said Baba Yaga, smiling, and revealing her iron teeth. “You sit here at the loom and continue weaving, while I retrieve the needle and thread for you.”

The little girl sat down at the loom and began to weave.

Baba Yaga called to her maid, “Go, make the bath hot and scrub my niece until she is completely clean. I’ll make a dainty meal of her.”

The maid came in for the jug, with which she would fill the bath with water. The little girl begged her, “Please, be not too quick in making the fire, and carry the water in a **sieve**.” The maid smiled kindly but said nothing, because she was afraid of Baba Yaga. But she took a very long time preparing the child’s bath.

Baba Yaga came to the window and inquired, “Are you weaving, little niece? Are you weaving, my pretty?”

“Yes, I am weaving, auntie,” responded the little girl.



When Baba Yaga went away from the window, the little girl spoke to the thin black cat who was watching the mouse-hole.

“What are you doing, thin black cat?”

“Watching for a mouse,” said the thin black cat. “I haven’t had any dinner for three days.”

“How lucky, then,” said the little girl, “that I picked up the scraps of meat!” And she gave them to the thin black cat.

The thin black cat gobbled up the meat and said to the little girl, “Little girl, you must want to get out of this.”

“Dear kitty,” said the little girl, “I do want to get out of this, for Baba Yaga is going to eat me with her iron teeth.”

“Well,” said the cat, “I will help you, because you have shown me such kindness.”

Just then Baba Yaga came to the window.

“Are you weaving, little niece?” she asked. “Are you weaving, my pretty?”

“I am weaving, auntie,” said the little girl, working away, while the loom went clickety-clack, clickety-clack.

Baba Yaga went away.

The thin black cat whispered, “You have a comb in your hair, and you have a towel. Take them and run for it while Baba Yaga is in the bathhouse. When Baba Yaga chases after you, you must listen, and when she is close to you, throw away the towel, and it will turn into a big, wide river. It will take her a little time to get over that. But when she does, you must listen, and as soon as she is close to you, throw away the comb, which will sprout up into such a forest that she will never be able to pass through it at all.”

“But she’ll hear the loom stop,” said the little girl.

“I’ll see to that,” said the thin black cat, walking over and taking the little girl’s place at the loom.

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack; the loom never stopped for a moment.

The little girl checked to confirm that Baba Yaga was in the bathhouse, and then she jumped down from the little hut on hen’s legs and ran to the gates as fast as her legs could flicker.

The big dog leaped up to tear her to pieces, but just as he was going to spring on her, he realized who she was.

“Why, this is the little girl who gave me the loaf of bread,” he said. “A good journey to you, little girl,” he offered before lying down again with his head between his paws.



When she came to the gates they opened silently, without making any noise at all, because of the oil she had poured into their hinges. But she had not faced all her challenges, because outside the gates, a little birch tree **flailed** its branches so that she could not go by.

“How lucky,” said the little girl, “that I picked up the ribbon!” And she tied up the birch tree with the pretty blue ribbon. And the birch tree was so pleased with the ribbon that it stood still, admiring itself, and let the little girl go by.

How she did run!

Meanwhile, the thin black cat sat at the loom. Clickety clack, clickety clack, sang the loom. It sounded as if it were weaving successfully, but you never saw such a tangle as the tangle made by the thin black cat!

Then, Baba Yaga came to the window.

“Are you weaving, little niece?” she asked. “Are you weaving, my pretty?”

“I am weaving, auntie,” sang the thin black cat, tangling and knotting the threads, while the loom went clickety-clack, clickety-clack.

“That’s not the voice of my little dinner,” said Baba Yaga, and she jumped into the hut, gnashing her iron teeth. She discovered that there was no little girl, only the thin black cat, sitting at the loom, creating a tangled mess of the threads.

“Rah!” shrieked Baba Yaga. “Why didn’t you tear the little girl’s eyes out?”

“In all the years I have served you,” said the cat, “you have only given me one little bone and consigned me to hunt for the rest of my food, but the kind little girl gave me scraps of meat.”

Seething with rage, Baba Yaga stormed out of the hut, stomping all the way to the gates.

“Why didn’t you squeak when she opened you?” she demanded of the gates.

“Why didn’t you tear her to pieces?” she demanded of the dog.

“Why didn’t you flail your branches, and not let her go by?” she demanded of the birch tree.

“Why did you take so long to get the bath ready?” Baba Yaga demanded of the maid. “If you had been quicker, she never would have gotten away!”



Baba Yaga rushed about the yard, stomping and scolding at the top of her voice.

“Ah!” said the gates, “in all the years we have served you, you never even eased us with water, but the kind little girl poured good oil into our hinges.”

“Ah!” said the dog, “in all the years I’ve served you, you never threw me anything but burnt crusts, but the kind little girl gave me a good loaf.”

“Ah!” said the little birch tree, “in all the years I’ve served you, you never decorated me, even with thread; but the kind little girl tied me up with a lovely blue ribbon.”

“Ah!” said the maid, “In all the years I’ve served you, you have never given me even a rag, but the kind little girl gave me a pretty handkerchief.”

Baba Yaga gnashed at them with her iron teeth. Then she jumped into the mortar, which she drove along with the pestle as she swept up her tracks with a broom, flying off in pursuit of the little girl.

The little girl ran and ran, only pausing briefly to put her ear to the ground and listened. Bang, bang, bangety bang! She could hear Baba Yaga beating the mortar with the pestle; she was getting quite close. Suddenly there she was, beating with the pestle and sweeping with the broom, coming along the road.

As quickly as she could, the little girl took out the towel and threw it on the ground, then watched as it grew bigger and bigger, and wetter and wetter, until there was a deep, broad river rushing between Baba Yaga and the little girl.



Taking advantage of the diversion, the little girl turned and ran on. How she ran!

Baba Yaga came flying up in the mortar, but it could not float in the river with Baba Yaga inside, because she was too heavy. She drove it into the rushing water but only got wet for her trouble. Tongs and pokers tumbling down a chimney are nothing compared to the noise she made as she gnashed her iron teeth. She turned back toward home and went flying back to the little hut on hen's legs. Then she assembled all her cattle and drove them to the river.

“Drink, drink!” she screamed at them, and the cattle drank up all the river to the last drop. And Baba Yaga, sitting in the mortar, drove it with the pestle and swept up her tracks with the broom, and flew over the dry bed of the river, then on in pursuit of the little girl.

The little girl put her ear to the ground and listened. Bang, bang, bangety bang! Once again she could hear Baba Yaga beating the mortar with the pestle. Nearer and nearer came the noise, until suddenly there was Baba Yaga, beating with the pestle and sweeping with the broom, coming along the road close behind.

The little girl threw down the comb, watching as it grew bigger and bigger and its teeth sprouted up into a thick forest, thicker than this forest where we live—so thick that not even Baba Yaga could force her way through the tall trees and dense underbrush. And Baba Yaga, gnashing her teeth and screaming with rage and disappointment, turned around and drove away home to her little hut on hen's legs.

The little girl ran on home. When she arrived, she was afraid to go in and see her stepmother, so she ran into the shed.

Scratch, scratch! Out came the little mouse.

“So you got away all right, my dear,” said the little mouse. “Now run in. Don't be afraid. Your father is back, and you must tell him all about it.”

The little girl proceeded to the house.

“Where have you been?” said her father; “and why are you so out of breath?”

The stepmother turned yellow when she saw the girl, and her eyes glowed, and her teeth ground together so hard they almost cracked.

But the little girl was not afraid any longer, and she went to her father and climbed on his knee, and told him everything that had transpired just as it had happened. And when the old man learned that the stepmother had sent his little daughter to be eaten by Baba Yaga, he was so angry that he drove her out of the hut, and went back to living alone with the little girl. Much better it was for both of them.

“And the little mouse?” said Ivan.

“The little mouse,” said old Peter, “came and lived in the hut, and every day it used to sit up on the table and eat crumbs, and warm its paws on the little girl’s glass of tea.”



The Fisherman and the Jinni

Adapted from “The Fisherman and the Jinni” from The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night by Richard Burton

“The Fisherman and the Jinni,” Part 1

Once upon a time, there was an old fisherman who lived by the sea. He had a wife and three daughters, but not even enough money saved for a day’s food. Every day, he would go to the shore and cast his net into the water four times, hoping to catch fish to sell.

Very early one morning, while the moon was still in the sky, the fisherman went to the shore. He put down his basket, rolled up his sleeves, and jumped into the water. He threw his net into the waves and waited for it to sink to the bottom. Then, with all his strength, he pulled the net to bring it up. But it was too heavy! No matter how hard he tried, he could not bring the net to shore.

Picturing a mountain of fish inside his net, the fisherman secured it to a stake on the shore and dove back into the water. He searched, diving and pulling again and again, until he finally dragged the heavy net out.

The fisherman was disappointed to discover that there were no fish inside. Instead, he found a lifeless donkey. Even worse, the donkey was so heavy it had torn the fisherman’s net. **Disheartened**, he said to himself, “This is an unusual way to earn my daily bread.”



Still feeling frustrated, the fisherman recited a little verse:

“Those who dive in dangerous waters,

Shouldn’t work so hard!

Have you not seen the fisherman who battles the waves

And then sells his catch

To a man who lives in ease and comfort?

One casts the line, the other eats the fish!”

Nevertheless, the fisherman decided to try again. He untangled the dead donkey, mended the net, and threw it back into the water. But when he tried to pull the net back, it was heavy. “A big fish!” he hoped. So once again, he dove to bring the net onto the shore. But this time, he had caught only a big bottle full of sand and mud. Discouraged, he exclaimed:

“Troubles of the world, please stop and rest,

Forgive me if you think it’s best.

I came to find my daily bread,

But it seems, today, I won’t be fed.

No skills or luck have come my way,

No share in life’s grand display.

While fools reach for the stars in delight,

The wise and careful are lost in night.”

But, still determined, the fisherman threw away the bottle and returned the net to the sea for the third time. He waited until the net sank, then pulled it up, just to find stones and bones and broken pieces of glass inside. He wept for his repeated bad luck and said:

“You cannot grasp your daily bread,

Nor can you predict what lies ahead.

Fate determines joys and the food we find,

Some days are **fruitful**, some leave us behind.

Life can make the worthiest souls feel small,
When the not-so-good always seem to have it all.
So, when life loses its shine and nothing seems right,
The falcon will fall as the mallard takes flight.
No surprise to see those of great soul and mind,
Struggle when Fortune, Fate, and Life are unkind.
One bird may soar across an endless sky, high and far,
While others must find contentment exactly where they are.”

Then the old fisherman looked up to the sky and said, “I only cast my net four times each day. This is the third time, and I haven’t received anything yet. So please, let me receive my daily bread.” He threw his net into the water. But when he tried to pull it in, it was stuck yet again. He cried out in frustration, reciting another poem:

“Oh this world, must it be so,
Filled with sadness, grief, sorrow?
Mornings start so bright and clear,
But by nightfall, joy disappears.
Yet there was a time, they’d all agree,
‘Who’s happiest of all?’ They’d point at me.”

For the fourth time, the fisherman dove into the water to untangle the net, and brought it to shore. This time, he had caught a copper bottle with a lead cap, stamped with the seal of King Solomon's ring. The fisherman was overjoyed and thought, "If I sell this in the copper market, it's worth at least two bushels of wheat!" He shook the bottle and felt its weight, saying, "I'd like to know what's inside. I'll open it and see, then I can sell it in the market."

The fisherman carefully loosened the cap from the bottle and laid it on the ground. He shook the bottle to pour out its contents, but to his surprise, there was nothing inside.

Suddenly, a puff of thick smoke emerged from the bottle. The astonished fisherman watched the smoke trail along the ground until it reached the sky, where it condensed and transformed into an enormous Ifrit! This Ifrit towered so high that his head reached the clouds. His head was like a dome, his hands like pitchforks, his legs as long as ship masts, and his gaping mouth resembled a vast cave. His teeth were like massive stones, his nostrils were **ewers**, and his eyes shone like two torches, flashing a fierce and menacing glare.

As the Fisherman laid eyes upon the **formidable** Ifrit, his muscles quivered, his teeth chattered, his mouth became dry, and he was overcome with confusion about what to do.

The Ifrit looked at him and begged, "Oh King Solomon, slay me not. Never again will I disobey your orders."

The fisherman, trembling, replied, "But King Solomon died eighteen hundred years ago. What is your story? Why were you trapped in this bottle?"



The Ifrit replied, “I am one of the jinn who rebelled against King Solomon. As punishment, he sealed me in this bottle, and it was thrown into the ocean.

For two hundred long years, I was trapped, with a silent prayer in my heart, promising that I would grant limitless riches to whoever freed me.

As four more centuries passed by and no one came to my rescue, I said that whoever sets me free would have all the treasures of the earth.

After another four centuries, I thought ‘if someone saves me in the next hundred years, I will make them my King and grant them three wishes each day,’

Alas, those years went by, and many more after that, and no one released me. So I raged and roared and spat and snorted and vowed to kill whoever released me. And now, since you have set me free, I offer you the privilege of selecting the manner in which you shall meet your end.”

The fisherman, terrified, pleaded, “It’s my bad luck that I did not find you sooner! But **spare** me, and you will be spared. There are consequences for evil actions.”

The Ifrit replied, “There is no helping it, you must die. So, tell me. Which manner of death do you choose?”

The fisherman, trying to save his own life, said, “Forgive me for releasing you. Let my release be a reward for my generosity. Do not take me away from my wife and daughters. Spare my life, please.”

And the Ifrit replied, “I wouldn’t kill you if it wasn’t for your act of freeing me.”

The fisherman said, “Oh Chief of the Ifrits, I was kind to you, and you repay me with **spite**. Truly, the old saying does not lie when it says:

Those who help the undeserving

Will meet the same end

As he who treats a hyena tenderly.”

As the Ifrit heard these words, he roared, “Enough of your talk! I must kill you now.” But the cunning fisherman saw an opportunity to save himself. He decided to use his intelligence to trick the Ifrit, who had only acted out of frustration and rage.

He began by asking the Ifrit, “Have you really made up your mind to kill me?” When the Ifrit confirmed this, the fisherman asked him another question. “Can you promise to give me a true answer if I ask you something?” The Ifrit, surprised by the question, **reluctantly** agreed.

The fisherman then asked, “How did you manage to fit inside this bottle? It was not even big enough for your hand or foot. I don’t see how it could have contained all of you!”

The Ifrit, taken aback, responded, “What? Don’t you believe that I was all there?”

The fisherman firmly declared, “I will never believe it until I see you inside the bottle with my own eyes.”

Hearing that, the Ifrit shook and transformed into a cloud of vapor, which swirled itself into the bottle little by little until it disappeared inside. “Fisherman, I am inside! Do you believe me now?”

The fisherman grabbed the cap and quickly sealed the bottle, trapping the Ifrit inside. With determination, he declared, “Now it is your turn to tell me how you wish to die! I shall cast you into the sea, and I will build myself a house right here. I will warn whoever approaches against fishing here, and say, ‘In these waters lives an Ifrit who, as a final favor, grants the one who saves him the choice of the manner of their death!’”

Hearing this, the Ifrit panicked, realizing that he had been deceived and outwitted. “Please, set me free. I was only joking with you.”

But the fisherman responded, “No! You lie. You are the meanest of all the Ifrits!”

With the bottle in hand, the fisherman headed toward the sea. The desperate Ifrit pleaded, “No! Please don’t throw me into the sea! Open the bottle and I will bring you wealth!”

But the fisherman stood firm and laughed, “You’re lying, you cursed creature! Haven’t you heard the story of the Wazir of King Yunan and the Sage Duban? This is no different!”

The Ifrit, intrigued, asked, “And who was the Wazir of King Yunan and who was the Sage Duban; and what was the story about them?” And so, the fisherman began to tell



The Tale of the Wazir and the Sage Duban

You see, Ifrit, long ago there lived a King called Yunan who reigned over a city in Persia. He was a powerful and wealthy ruler, who had armies and guards and allies of all nations of men; but he was sick with **leprosy**. Doctors had treated King Yunan with potions and powders, but nothing brought him relief.

A famous healer named Duban heard about King's woes and the illness no doctor could cure. Duban had studied the works of scholars from all over the world and was an expert in medicine, the properties of plants and herbs, and philosophy.

Duban spent the entire night crafting a cure. As the dawn broke, he put on his finest clothes and went to see the King.

Duban bowed low in respect and said, "O King, I have heard of the illness that causes your suffering and the failure of other doctors to provide a cure. I, however, can heal you without the need for potions or powders."

Now when King Yunan heard his words, he exclaimed, "How is this possible? If you can heal me, I will reward you generously with riches for you and your family. Whatever you desire shall be granted, and you shall be my trusted companion and friend." The King then presented Duban with a robe of honor and eagerly asked, "Can you truly cure me without the need for medicine?"

Duban confidently replied, "Yes! I will heal you without any pain or discomfort."



The King marveled at this and said, “Oh doctor, when will this healing take place? How many days will it take? Please, hurry, my dear friend!”

Duban responded, “I hear and obey. The cure will begin tomorrow.” He then left the palace and rented a house in the city to store his books, scrolls, medicines, plants, and herbs.

Duban diligently selected the best herbs and ingredients for his cure. Then, he carefully crafted a hollow mallet. On the following day, with everything ready, Duban approached the King on the parade ground, where he was surrounded by many wazirs and nobles. Duban stepped forward, handed the King the mallet, and said, “Take this club and hold it as I do. Now, ride out onto the field and play the game of **polo**. Lean forward, hit the ball as hard as you can until your palm and your body begin to sweat. At that moment, the medicine will enter your body. Once you have finished playing, return to your palace, bathe yourself, and then rest. You will find yourself healed!”

King Yunan took the mallet from Duban and held it tightly. He got on his horse and drove the ball ahead of him, galloping after it until he caught up. With all his strength, he struck the ball, gripping the handle firmly. He didn’t stop hitting the ball until his skin started to sweat, absorbing the medicine from the wood. Duban then told the King to take a steam bath immediately. King Yunan returned to the palace and took a long and thorough bath, put on his clothes, and returned to his chamber, where he fell asleep.

King Yunan’s condition improved, and Duban went back home and also went to sleep. When the morning came, he went to the palace and asked to see the King again. The King allowed him to enter, and Duban showed respect by bowing and kissing the ground.



The King stood up eagerly and embraced him tightly. “You have performed a miracle!” he exclaimed. “When I woke up this morning, I discovered that my body was completely free of leprosy.” The king rolled up his sleeves. “Look at my arms!” he urged. “My skin is as pure and flawless as silver! Come now, let me reward you with splendid clothes. We will share a delicious meal and spend the day together, dear friend.”

Later that afternoon, the King entered his grand audience hall and sat on his majestic throne. His ministers and advisors, along with the respected Sage Duban, gathered around the room. “Come, Sage Duban,” insisted the King. “Honor me with your presence and join me in this feast!” Trays and trays of delicious food poured into the hall. The two friends spent the rest of the day together, sharing stories and hearty laughter between bites.

As the sun began to set, the King gave Duban a reward of two thousand gold pieces and presented him with many other valuable gifts. The King even sent Duban home on his own elegant steed. Once the Sage had left, King Yunan exclaimed, “This man healed me without any potions or medicines. His expertise is truly remarkable!” exclaimed the King. “I am determined to honor him, reward him, and consider him my companion and dear friend for the rest of my life.”

The next morning, King Yunan requested the presence of the Sage Duban, who respectfully entered the grand hall and kissed the ground before the King. The King rose to greet him, inviting him to sit by his side, and they shared another meal together. They continued their pleasant conversation until nightfall. At the end of the evening, the King warmly wished the Sage a long life, and in addition to more robes, the King bestowed other gifts upon him, including another thousand gold pieces. The Sage returned to his own house, overwhelmed with gratitude toward the King.



The following morning, the King gathered his ministers and advisors in the grand hall as usual. Among his ministers, however, there was one particular Wazir who was known for his greed, envy, and **malicious** intentions. Having observed the King's close relationship with the Sage and the generous gifts bestowed upon him, this wicked Wazir was consumed by jealousy.

The Wazir approached the King, bowing before him and placing his hands on the ground. "O wise and benevolent King, whom I have served since my youth, I have important advice to offer. If I were to keep it to myself, I would be dishonest and unworthy. If you allow me, I will share it with you now," said the Wazir.

The King, annoyed, asked, "What is this advice you speak of?"

The Wazir replied, "O glorious and mighty ruler, the wise have always said that those who do not consider the consequences will not have fortune on their side. Recently, I have observed you offering favors and rewards upon your enemy, someone whose intention is to destroy you. You have shown too much generosity, granting him honor and calling him a friend. I fear he will do you harm."

The King, now paying more attention, asked, "What are you talking about? Whom do you accuse?"

The Wazir responded, "I accuse the Sage Duban!"



“The Fisherman and the Jinni,” Part 2

“Enough!” the King exclaimed, “Shame on you! This man is a true friend and an extraordinary healer. There is simply no one like him in the entire world. Yet, you speak ill of him. I am inclined to believe that you make such statements out of jealousy, as the tales of King Sindibad have suggested. You want me to turn against him, and if I were to do so, I would surely regret it, just as King Sindibad regretted the loss of his falcon.”

Intrigued, the Wazir asked, “Please, O King, tell me the story of King Sindibad.” So the King began the story of

King Sindibad and his Falcon

You see, Wazir, there once was a king named Sindibad who had a great passion for hunting. He had raised a falcon that he cherished dearly and carried her with him everywhere he went. To ensure the falcon’s comfort, he even had a golden cup attached to her neck, from which she could drink.

One day, as the king sat in his palace, the falconer approached him and said, “O King of the age, this is indeed a day fit for **hawking**.” The king agreed and set off with his falcon.

The journey was **arduous**, as the day was hot, and they couldn’t find water anywhere. Just when they were about to lose hope, they stumbled upon a peculiar tree. It seemed as though it was dripping melted butter from its branches. Thirsty, the king removed the cup from the falcon’s neck and filled it with the unusual liquid. He offered it to the falcon, but she knocked it over.



The King filled it a second time, thinking the falcon was thirsty, but the bird again struck at the cup with her talons and overturned it.

Growing frustrated, the king attempted to give the cup to his horse, but the falcon's wings once again interfered, causing the cup to spill. The King said, "What has gotten into you, you **wretched** flying thing? You keep me from drinking, you keep the horse from drinking, and you deprive yourself also." The king, overcome by anger, threw the cup, which ricocheted off a rock and struck the falcon, injuring one of her wings.

Suddenly, to the King's surprise, the falcon lifted her head and said by signs, "Look at that which hangs on the tree!" The king then lifted up his eyes and saw a brood of vipers, whose poison drops he mistook for water. The king realized he had made a **grave** mistake in injuring the falcon's wing. He was filled with deep regret.

He continued his journey back to the camp, carrying the injured falcon on his lap. The king entered his tent and sat down in sorrow, the falcon on his fist. The bird, weakened and weary, slowly closed her eyes. "My dear falcon," he wailed, his voice filled with regret. "I have committed a grave sin. You, who saved my life, now lie injured and fading." Tears rolled down the king's cheeks as he bowed his head in mourning. The falcon's sacrifice had been great, and now he bore the heavy burden of guilt for the life he had taken.



The Wazir, after hearing King Yunan's words, responded, "O King, my concern is for your safety. Soon, you will see that my advice is right. If you listen to it, you shall be saved. But if you ignore it, you shall meet your destruction. The very person whom you treat as a close friend will be the one who brings about your downfall. Can't you see how he healed you by applying something to the outside of your body, held in your hand? Don't be so certain that he won't harm you with something in a similar manner!"

In response, King Yunan said, "You speak the truth, O Wazir. It is quite possible that this Sage has come as a spy, seeking to kill me. After all, if he cured me by something held in my hand, he could just as easily kill me with something given to me to smell. Wazir, what do you suggest we should do with him?"

The minister replied, "Summon him. When he arrives, imprison him. This way, you will rid yourself of him and his wickedness, and deceive him before he has a chance to deceive you."

King Yunan agreed, saying, "Once again, you speak the truth, O Wazir." He sent someone to call the Sage, who arrived in a joyful mood, unaware of the fate that awaited him.

"Do you know why I have summoned you?" asked the King.

"No, but I am humbled to be at your service," responded the Sage.

"I have summoned you to imprison you, to ensure your actions do not harm me."

The Sage Duban, surprised by this unexpected turn, asked, "O King, why do you want to imprison me? What wrong have I done to you?"



The King answered, “There are rumors that you may be a spy sent to harm me. So, I will keep you in **confinement** for the rest of your days.” He then ordered his guards to take the Sage and lock him away.

The Sage begged, “Please, my King, let me go. Spare me, and you will be spared. There are consequences for evil actions.”

He repeated these very words to the King, just as I have said to you, O Ifrit, but you did not let me go, determined to kill me. Similarly . . .

King Yunan responded, “I cannot feel secure without keeping you confined. You, who cured me of my leprosy with something held in my hand could surely kill me with something held to my nose.”

The Sage said, “So, this is how you repay me? You punish me for the good I have done?”

The King replied, “There is no other choice. You must be imprisoned for my safety.”

The Sage was filled with deep regret. His intentions had been pure and free from any **malice** or harm. “I showed kindness, yet I am met with ruin,” he cried, his voice filled with **anguish**. “They were cruel, yet they escaped unscathed.” Through his tears, the Sage could not understand why he was being treated so cruelly. He pleaded desperately, hoping that the King would show mercy. “Is this how you pay me back for my kindness? Is this the prize for my hard work? Like the deceptive crocodile, you offer false mercy, pretending to be kind, while hiding your true motives.

The King asked, “What is the story of the crocodile?”

The Sage replied, "In my current state, it is impossible for me to tell the tale. I beg you, spare me, as you hope to be spared." And he wept bitterly.

One of the King's favorite ministers stood up and said, "O King! I urge you to reconsider. We have never seen this doctor commit any wrongdoing against you. He has only healed you from a disease that no other doctor or scholar could cure."

The King responded, "You do not know the reason behind my decision to imprison this doctor. If I spare him, I am dooming myself to certain death. I fear that he may be a spy whose sole purpose was to bring about my destruction. So, there is no other way. He must be imprisoned for the rest of his days."

In response, the Sage cried out, "Spare me, and you will be spared. There are consequences for evil actions." But it was in vain.

When the doctor, O Ifrit, knew for sure that the King intended to imprison him, he said, "O King, if I am to be imprisoned for the rest of my life, grant me a little time so I can go to my house and tell my family and neighbors what to do with my books. Among them, I have one, the rarest of rarities, and I would like to offer it to you as a gift. Keep it as a treasure."

The King asked, “What is in this book?”

And the Sage answered, “It contains valuable secrets. If, immediately after you **shackle** me, you open three leaves and read three lines from the page on your left, the book will speak and answer any questions you ask.”

The King marveled at this and said, “O doctor, are you truly telling me that my shackling of you will enable your book to speak?”

The doctor replied, “Yes, O King!”

The King remarked, “How peculiar!” He then sent the doctor, under close guard, to his house to get his books in order.

The following day, the doctor brought an old, worn-out book to the King’s audience hall. He sat down and said, “O King, take this book but do not open it until after I’ve been shackled.” The King took the book and signaled the guard, who rose and shackled the doctor. The Sage Duban said, “Now, open the book, O King!”

The King opened the book but found that the pages were stuck together. To unstick them, he moistened his finger with his mouth before turning over the first leaf, then the second, and the third, each leaf requiring great effort. After unsticking six leaves, he inspected them and found nothing written. He said, “O Doctor, there is no writing here!”



Duban replied, "Keep turning over more pages." The King turned three more pages in the same manner. Unknown to him, the book was poisoned, and the venom soon entered his body. The king turned to stone.

The Sage Duban spent the rest of his days locked away in a dungeon, repeating these words:

"Harsh rule was long in place

Yet vanished in a breath

If they had ruled with justice

They'd avoid untimely death

But a reign without mercy

Comes to a merciless close

And now they bear the pain

Of reaping what they sow."

"Listen carefully, **deceitful** Ifrit," said the fisherman, "had the King spared the Sage, he would have been spared. And as for you, if you had been willing to spare me, you would have been shown mercy, and I would have spared your life. However, as you sought to end mine, I shall cast you back into the sea, leaving you trapped in this bottle for eternity."



“Set me free this time,” pleaded the Ifrit. “And I promise to never do you harm. Instead, I will make you rich!”

The fisherman, having reflected upon his own stories, decided this time to trust the Ifrit’s pledge. He opened the bottle. Smoke poured out and the Ifrit, free again, quickly kicked the bottle away into the sea.

“No good can come of this!” thought the fisherman, **cowering** in fear.

But the Ifrit laughed and told the fisherman to cast his net into the water for a fifth time. This time, when the fisherman drew back his net, he found four fish inside: one of them blue, one yellow, one red, and one white.

“Take them to the Sultan of your city,” said the Ifrit. “He will give you enough to make you rich.”

And then, the Ifrit stomped the ground with one foot. The ground below him opened up and he jumped down, disappearing into the dark.

The fisherman, marveling at all that had just happened, decided to make the journey to the Sultan’s palace and present the four fish to him . . .

And many more stories followed after that, and after that, and after that, as they do when such stories are told.



Chapter 8

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Adapted from the story by Washington Irving

Not far from the eastern shore of the Hudson River is a little valley known as Sleepy Hollow. A drowsy, dreamy atmosphere hangs over the valley, as if it were under the sway of some bewitching power. The valley **abounds** with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions. But the dominant spirit that haunts the region is the sight of a ghostly figure on horseback without a head. It is said to be the spirit of a Hessian soldier, whose head was carried away by a cannonball during the Revolutionary War. The ghost is said to ride out nightly to the scene of the battle in search of his head, and to return to the churchyard before daybreak.

In this out-of-the-way place there lived a teacher by the name of Ichabod Crane. His name was well-suited to him. He was tall and very lanky, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, and hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves. He had huge ears, large green eyes, and a long nose. To see him striding along on a windy day, with his clothes fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for a scarecrow.

From his schoolhouse, his pupils could be heard reciting their lessons. They were occasionally interrupted by the voice of the master.



According to custom, Ichabod Crane was boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers whose children he taught. He lived with each family a week at a time. His arrival at a home caused great excitement, for the ladies thought his taste and accomplishments superior to those of the rough, country farmers. He had read many books. He was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's *The Wonders of the Invisible World*. He himself was a firm believer in witches. Ichabod would sit in the schoolhouse after the students had departed, reading old Mather's book until dusk. Then, as he made his way back to where he was staying, every sound of nature encouraged his overexcited imagination.



He loved to pass long winter evenings sitting by the fire, hearing the stories of the farmers' wives. He listened with interest to their tales of ghosts and goblins—and of the headless horseman. But the cost of the pleasure in all this was the terror of his walk home. What fearful shapes and shadows jumped across his path! How often did he **dread** to look over his shoulder,



for fear of catching a glimpse of some ghostly being close behind him!

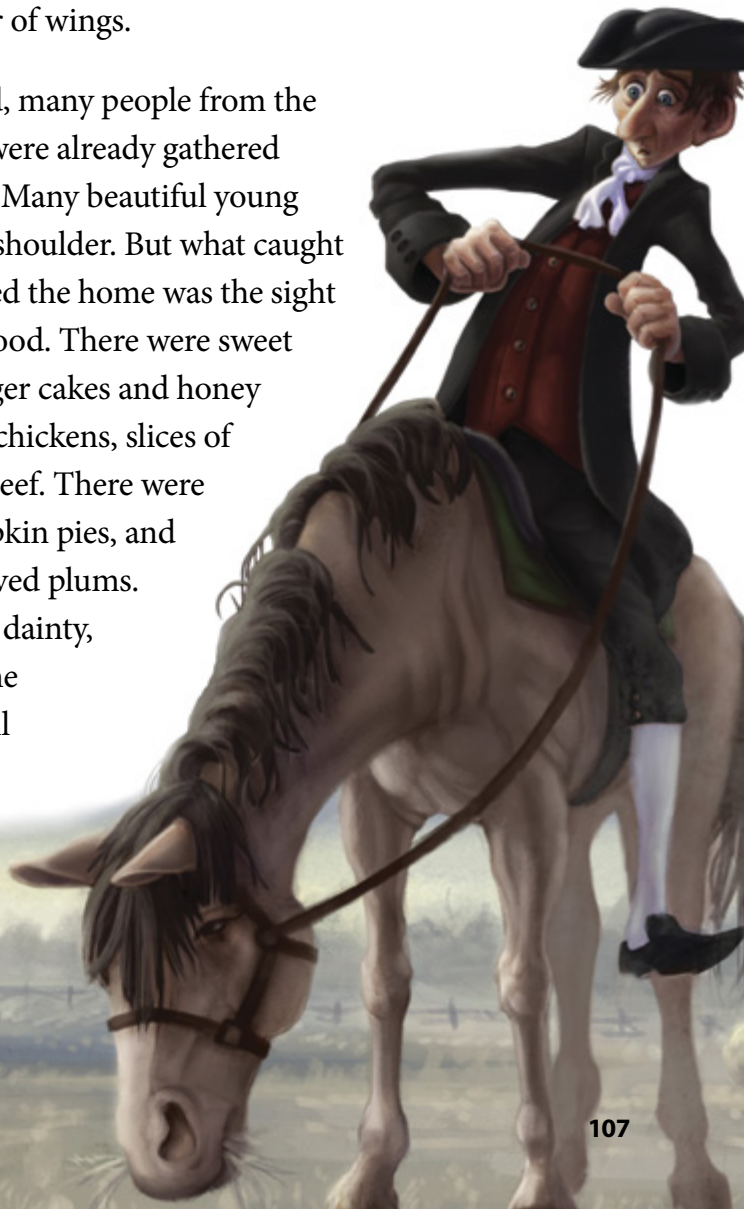
Katrina Van Tassel, the only child of a rich farmer, found favor in Ichabod's eyes—not merely for her beauty but for her vast inheritance.

Her father was a thriving farmer, and his barn was filled with the fruits of his labor. Sleek porkers grunted in their pens. Regiments of turkeys went gobbling through the farmyard. The teacher's mouth watered as he pictured every pig roasted with an apple in its mouth and every turkey wearing a necklace of savory sausages. As he cast his eyes upon the trees **laden** with fruit, and considered the obvious wealth that surrounded him, he became determined to win the affections of the farmer's daughter.

However, he was not the only **suitor**. The most formidable of all was a local hero known as Brom Bones. He was a **burly** young fellow, famous for his horsemanship and always ready for a fight or some fun. Whenever a crazy prank occurred in the neighborhood, people whispered that Brom Bones must be at the bottom of it.

When Brom Bones began **wooing** Katrina, most other suitors gave up the chase. But Ichabod Crane continued to hope he might convince Katrina to marry him. He was therefore delighted when he received an invitation to attend a party at Van Tassel's home. When the day arrived, he dismissed his pupils an hour early. He brushed his old black suit and fussed over his appearance. He borrowed a horse so that he could arrive gallantly mounted. The horse was gaunt and old. His mane was knotted with burrs and he was blind in one eye. Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. His elbows stuck out like a grasshopper's, and as he rode his arms flapped like a pair of wings.

By the time he arrived, many people from the surrounding countryside were already gathered in the home of Van Tassel. Many beautiful young women stood shoulder to shoulder. But what caught our hero's gaze as he entered the home was the sight of a table piled high with food. There were sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes. There were roasted chickens, slices of glazed ham, and smoked beef. There were apple and peach and pumpkin pies, and delectable dishes of preserved plums. As Ichabod sampled every dainty, he chuckled to think that he might one day be lord of all this **splendor**.



Ichabod danced proudly with Katrina, his loosely hung frame clattering about the room, while Brom Bones sat brooding by himself in the corner. When the party began to break up, Ichabod stayed behind to have a little talk with Katrina. He was fully convinced that he was now on the high road to success. However, Ichabod's talk did not go well, for he soon sadly departed. He went straight to the stable and, with several hearty kicks, galloped off into the night.

It was the bewitching time of night, and, as Ichabod made his way home, all the ghost stories that he had heard over the years now came to mind. The night grew darker. The stars seemed to sink deeper in the sky. Ichabod had never felt so lonely. A splash beside the bridge caught his ear. In the darkness, he caught sight of something huge, misshapen, black, and towering. The hair upon his head rose.

"Who's there?" he stammered.

He received no reply.

The shadowy object put itself in motion and bounded into the middle of the road. It appeared to be a large horseman, mounted on a black horse. Ichabod quickened his pace, in hopes of leaving the mysterious horseman behind. The stranger quickened to an equal pace. The reason for the silence of Ichabod's companion soon became clear.



For upon seeing his fellow traveler, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck to notice that he was headless. The figure carried his head before him on his saddle. In terror, Ichabod rained kicks upon his horse. The spirit followed close behind. Away the two dashed, stones flying.

Ichabod cast a fearful look behind to see if he had escaped the other horseman. Instead, he saw the horseman rising up in his stirrups, preparing to hurl his head at Ichabod. Ichabod tried to dodge the horrible missile, but he was too late. It hit his own head with a tremendous crash. He tumbled into the dust, as the rider passed by like a whirlwind.





The next morning Ichabod's old horse was found grazing near the home where Ichabod had been staying. The pupils assembled at the schoolhouse, but no schoolmaster arrived. By the riverbank they found the hat of poor Ichabod and, close beside it, a shattered pumpkin.

There was much gossip and **speculation** about the disappearance of Ichabod Crane. Some said he had been carried off by the headless horseman. Others said that he had simply left in humiliation because he did not convince Katrina to be his wife. Shortly after Ichabod's disappearance, Brom Bones triumphantly married Katrina. Whenever the story of Ichabod was told, Bones looked exceedingly knowing. The old country wives, however, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away. It is said that one may still hear his voice humming a tune among the **solitude** of Sleepy Hollow.

About the Author

Washington Irving, the author of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," was one of the first American writers to attract attention in Europe. He is perhaps best known as a writer of short stories. However, he wrote an extensive biography of George Washington, and he served as a U.S. ambassador to Spain.



Glossary

A

abounds, v. exists in large quantities

anguish, n. severe pain or suffering

antics, n. silly or amusing actions

arduous, adj. difficult, tiring, or requiring a lot of effort

ascent, n. the act of moving upward

B

benefit, n. advantage, help, or positive effect

bewildered, adj. very confused

bewitched, adj. under, or as if under, a magical spell; enchanted or charmed

bizarre, adj. very strange or hard to understand

burly, adj. strong and heavy

C

ceased, v. came to an end

confinement, n. imprisonment

counterproposal, n. a response to a proposal that offers a different suggestion

covertly, adv. secretly

cowering, *v.* crouching down quickly due to fear or in order to protect oneself

D

deceitful, *adj.* dishonest

deceived, *adj.* tricked or lied to

diligent, *adj.* hardworking and dedicated

disheartened, *adj.* sad and low spirited

dismissive, *adj.* acting as though someone or something is unimportant

disparage, *v.* think or say something disrespectful about someone or something

dread, *v.* look ahead to the future with great fear

E

eucalyptus, *n.* a type of fast-growing tree

ewers, *n.* large, wide-mouthed jugs

exclusive, *adj.* available to only a few people; private

F

flailed, *v.* swung or waved wildly

flattering, *adj.* making someone look or feel good, often through compliments or praise

flighty, *adj.* unreliable or unpredictable in behavior

flustered, *adj.* nervous or confused because of being hurried or pressured

foreshadowed, *v.* hinted that something would happen in the future

formidable, *adj.* extremely powerful; worthy of respect

fruitful, *adj.* producing successful results

G

gnashing, *v.* grinding or clenching teeth together

grave, *adj.* serious, worrisome; *n.* burying place for the dead

H

hawking, *v.* hunting with trained birds of prey

I

idle, *adj.* inactive or not working

immerse, *v.* submerge or plunge in a liquid

indignation, *n.* a strong feeling of anger or annoyance due to unfairness

iron, *n.* a strong, hard, silvery-gray metal; a handheld tool with a flat base that is heated and used to smooth fabrics

J

jostled, *v.* bumped against

L

laden, *adj.* heavily loaded; carrying large amounts

leisure, *n.* free time or time spent not working

leprosy, *n.* a disease that damages the skin, nerves, and eyes

M

makeshift, *adj.* temporary, often less effective

malice, *n.* an intent to cause harm to another

malicious, *adj.* characterized by a desire to cause harm

mean-spirited, *adj.* unkind; wishing to harm or cause trouble for others

mite, *n.* tiny insect

mocked, *v.* teased or made fun in a hurtful way

mortar, *n.* a mixing bowl typically used for crushing substances; a wet substance that hardens as it dries to hold bricks or stones together

mused, *v.* thought carefully about something

O

oblivious, *adj.* not aware

observant, *adj.* quick to notice things, especially when there are few clues

P

persisted, *v.* continued to do something despite challenges

pestle, *n.* a tool with a rounded end used for crushing things in a mortar

petticoat, *n.* a loose undergarment worn under a skirt or dress

philosophical, *adj.* understanding deep truths about life

polo, *n.* a game played on horseback that involves two teams, a ball, and long mallets

prescription, *n.* instruction for medical treatment

R

relic, *n.* an old object, often of historical or cultural importance

reluctantly, *adv.* unwillingly; hesitantly

ruminated, *v.* thought deeply about something for a long time

S

scholar, *n.* a person who studies or researches a specific topic or subject area

scrabbled, *v.* climbed in a hurry but with difficulty, often scratching and clawing

seldom, *adv.* rarely or not often

Senegambia, *n.* a historical region of West Africa that includes modern-day Senegal, The Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau, as well as parts of Mauritania, Mali, and Guinea

shackle, *v.* chain someone's hands or ankles together to restrict their movement

sieve, *n.* a tool with small holes for separating big and small pieces

skeptical, *adj.* doubtful or not easily convinced

social butterfly, *n.* someone who enjoys gatherings and meeting many people

solitude, *n.* state of being alone

spar, *v.* fight

spare, *v.* to hold back harm or punishment from another; ***n.*** item kept in case another is broken or lost; ***adj.*** extra or more than is needed

speculation, *n.* idea formed without evidence

spite, *n.* a desire to upset or hurt someone on purpose

splendor, *n.* magnificence; awe-inspiring sight

strenuously, *adv.* in a way that requires a lot of effort or strength

suitor, *n.* one interested in dating or marrying another

V

vain, *adj.* useless; failing to produce a result

W

wily, *adj.* clever

wooing, *v.* trying to get someone's attention or affection

wretched, *adj.* no-good; lousy

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