

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to bring you this book, *The Heart of Goodness*, Book 4 in the ***Discovering the Real Me*** book series. Since being good is very important, we want to show you the heart of goodness through these stories.

Like Book 3 before it, this book is full of fairy tales. Some of these fairy tales you may already know, because they have been told all around the world for many years. Others may be brand new to you. We think you will enjoy them, as well as the activities your parent has planned for you to go along with the stories.

Fairy tales teach us that there are *consequences* of good and bad actions. Do you know what consequences are? They are the things that happen because of our good or bad actions. Our good or bad actions come from what we have in our hearts.

In these fairy tales, people who have kind hearts do good things and enjoy the happy consequences: a grateful shoemaker and his wife become successful; a devoted little match girl joins her loving grandmother forever; loyal and faithful friends save each other from evil and stay together always; and a loving boy becomes a prince.

Likewise, those who have bad hearts that make them do bad things have unhappy consequences come to them: a mean fox is caught by hunters; a selfish wife becomes poor; nasty brothers are banished from a kingdom; selfish girls get soot thrown all over them and are danced away with by their own shoes!

Of course, real life isn't quite like a fairy tale. We know that fairy tales are "just pretend". At the same time, they teach us important lessons about life. They teach us that doing good things out of a good heart will bring us happiness and fortune. And in that, at least, even the most fantastic fairy tale is true!

Enjoy entering the world of fantasy and going on adventures with some of the interesting people and creatures you will meet there. When you come back to real life, please bring back with you the most important lesson of this book: a heart of goodness is a treasure for life.

Chapter 1: The Elves and the Shoemaker
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Gratitude

In a village lived a shoemaker and his wife and children. The shop was on the first floor of a humble, red brick building, and the family lived upstairs.

The shoemaker made shoes out of leather. He'd buy the leather in town; then with his cutting and sewing tools, he made shoes and sold them.

The shoemaker made shoes very well. He was also known for his honesty. The villagers knew that this man would never cheat them, and that the shoes he made would be the best in the village.

However, no customers had come into the shop for several weeks. The poor man had no money left. All he had was enough leather to make one more pair of shoes. You would think that he would be sad, but he wasn't.

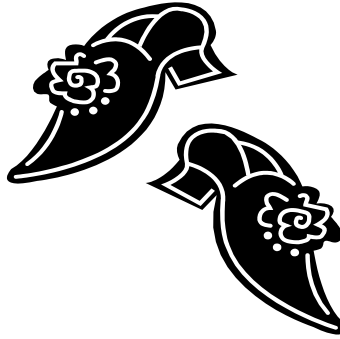
He gathered his family and explained, "Tonight I'll cut the leather and prepare it to be sewn into shoes tomorrow. Then I'll sell them, and we'll have enough money to buy our food for dinner tomorrow night. We'll be all right, don't worry!"

The wife added, "Let's give thanks for what we have, even if it doesn't seem like much. Everything will turn out fine. We'll find a way. We are lucky indeed!"

And so the family went cheerfully upstairs to bed for the night.

The next morning, the shoemaker went downstairs. There was a pair of shoes all sewn together and expertly made! Neither the shoemaker nor his family could figure out who had made these shoes in the middle of the night!

"We are so fortunate!" they cried. "Someone is helping us, but we don't know who it is! How wonderful!"



That day a customer came and bought the shoes! She paid the shoemaker enough so that he could buy leather to make *two* more pairs of shoes! That night, the shoemaker cut the leather and prepared to make the shoes the next day. The family went upstairs to bed, very happy at their good fortune and full from the delicious dinner they had eaten.

The next day, they had breakfast and went downstairs to another surprise! This time there were two pairs of shoes, perfectly made from the leather the shoemaker had cut out the night before! He and his family were curious and grateful.

“Who could be doing this good deed?” they marveled.

The good fortune of the family continued. Every morning the shoemaker found new shoes, always very well made from the leather he cut out the night before. Their business was doing well again, and they had plenty of money.

One evening the wife said to her husband, “Let’s stay up and see who is so kind and good to us!”

The husband agreed, and they hid in a corner of the room and waited. Around midnight, two little men dressed in rags appeared! Quietly and quickly they started sewing, cutting, and gluing until the shoes were finished! Then they vanished! Gone!

The husband and wife were so surprised!

“So that’s who it is!” exclaimed the wife, “Little elves! But they are dressed in rags. I’ll make them some new clothes, I will!”

The husband added, “What wonderful little men! I’ll make them some shoes! Let’s get to work!”



The next night, the elves’ new outfits were laid out on the wooden workbench, with a little note thanking them for their kindness. When the elves appeared at midnight, they found no leather with which to make shoes.

“Look over here!” said one elf. “New clothes and shoes for us!”

They were so excited, they dressed up and danced merrily around the room! Finally, they danced out the door and then came no more to visit the home. Even though the elves were gone, all was well with the shoemaker and his family. They always had enough business and plenty to eat!

Moral: Be grateful for what you have, and it will increase.

Questions

1. Do you think the shoemaker and his family were a nice family? Why do you say so?

2. Do you think they deserved some help from the elves? Why?

3. How did they feel about the help they received?

4. Why did the shoemaker's wife make the elves clothes?

5. Do you think the elves would have helped a family that had an ungrateful attitude?

Reflection Exercise

Sometimes when things are going badly for us, it is good to think of the things we have to be grateful for. Next time things are going badly for you, think of the good things that you have. See if it helps you get out of the bad spot to be grateful for what you have, even if it is not much—like the shoemaker's family!

Chapter 2: The Fisherman and His Wife
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Greed

A fisherman and his wife lived in a small shack by the ocean. They were very poor and unhappy, especially the wife, who was always complaining. “Why can’t we have a nice house like our neighbors? What bad luck! We are so unfortunate!” She was miserable indeed.

One day, the husband was fishing when he felt a tremendous tug on his line. He reeled in a huge silver fish!

“Wow! This will feed us for days!”

Much to his surprise, the fish replied, “Please don’t eat me! I’m really a prince, and a magic spell has been cast on me. Let me go!”

The astonished fisherman quickly threw him back, exclaiming, “I don’t want to hurt a talking fish! Go on!”



When he talked with his wife at home about what had happened, she scolded him angrily.

“Why didn’t you ask the magical fish for something in return for your mercy? You just let him go?”

The fisherman went back the next day and called out to the fish, “Come back and grant my wife’s wish or she’ll make me sleep in the barn with the animals!”

The fish really was once a prince, and he had good manners. Knowing that it is noble to return a favor, he appeared and spoke to the man:

“Go home. Your wife’s wish is already granted.”

He went home and as was promised, a new cottage stood in place of the little shack. This house was charming, and the fisherman was very pleased with their good fortune.

“I am so grateful that the fish did this for us! We are so lucky!” he told his wife.

She was happy, too, for a few days, but then she started complaining again.

“You know, husband, this cottage isn’t big enough for my taste. Go back and ask the fish for a castle,” she ordered.

The fisherman didn’t want to. He liked their new home, and he was afraid the magic fish would cast a spell on him if he asked for more. However, he was more afraid of his wife’s anger than he was of the fish, so he went on out to the sea and called out to the fish.

Again the fish prince was willing to grant the wife’s wish, and the fisherman returned home to a castle! He crossed the drawbridge and was greeted by his wife.



“Are you satisfied now, dear wife?” he asked timidly.

The wife was happy for one day; then she told her husband over dinner the next evening, “I’m not satisfied. Tomorrow, I want you to ask the fish to make me into a queen to rule over the region!”

The poor fisherman was trembling in his boots! “Surely this will bring bad luck to us,” he thought, as he walked reluctantly down the path that led to the sea. As he went along, he noticed that the sky grew dark and stormy, and the sea was turbulent.

“A bad sign, a bad sign,” he moaned.

The request was made and granted again. He returned home to find soldiers guarding the castle and his wife wearing a gold crown as Queen. How he secretly wished they could be living in their poor little shack again!

Well, the greedy wife still wasn't satisfied.

“I want to be Empress and rule over all the kingdoms!” she declared.

Do you think this wish was granted, too? Yes, it was! The husband obediently followed orders, and the fish agreed to make her Empress.

“What more could she possibly want?” worried the fisherman.

In the middle of the night, she was pacing back and forth.

Suddenly she exclaimed, “I’ll be lord of the universe! I’ll make the sun rise and set when I want it to! Why not? No one will be more powerful than me!”

And so the husband set out once again to make the new request. As he came to the sea, though it was early morning, the sky grew dark as night, all purple and black. Thunder boomed, and lightning flashed. A violent storm created huge waves that sprayed the frightened fisherman as he spoke to the fish.

“My wife now wants to be lord of the universe, oh prince!”

The fish replied, “Your wife will never be satisfied, even if I grant that request. She is too greedy. Go back to your shack now and help her appreciate what she has.”

And so they lived the rest of their years in the poor little shack by the sea.

Moral: Greed is never satisfied.

Questions

1. What happened in the beginning of the story that surprised the fisherman?

2. Why did the wife get mad at her husband when he told her about the talking fish?

3. Why did she keep asking her husband to go back to the fish?

4. What happened at the end of the story?

5. How was this wife different from the wife in "The Shoemaker and the Elves?"

Reflection Exercise

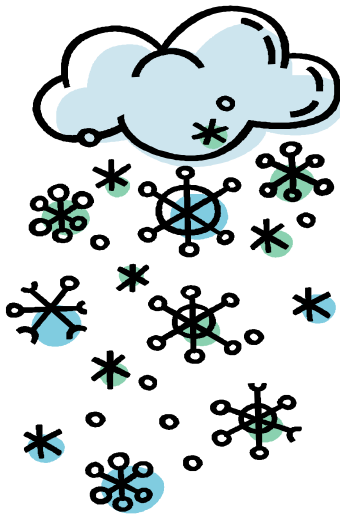
The fisherman's wife wasn't grateful for what she had. She was very greedy. Gratitude is the opposite of greed. It's important to remember to be grateful for what we have. What in your life are you grateful for?

Chapter 3: The Little Match Girl **(Adapted from Hans Christian Anderson)** *Compassion*

It was December, and it was very cold in the village where a little match girl lived. The girl was an orphan. She had been raised by her grandmother, but her beloved grandmother had died, and now she was all alone. To survive, she sold matches. With the money she earned, she could buy food, but she still had no place to sleep.

You would think that the villagers would feel sorry for the girl, and that someone would invite her to stay with them. Yet no one seemed to notice her. Everyone was too busy with their own lives to take care of this poor little girl. This was a village without compassion.

And so it was on this cold December night: the little girl was out in the cold, dressed in rags, walking barefoot in the snow, looking for customers.



“Matches, matches! Please buy some matches!” she’d cry out on the dimly lit street corner. From where she was standing, she could see into a window of a nearby home. She peered through the glass and saw a happy family with

children her age, sitting around the dinner table. A fire was burning in the fireplace, and it looked so cozy and warm! The smells of roasted meat traveled outside the window, making her stomach growl with hunger. She wished with all her heart she was with that family! Her feet were blue with cold and numb by now.

The girl reached inside her little sack of matches, pulled one out and struck it against the wall. She held her hands around the flame and imagined she was sitting next to a warm stove inside a pretty house.

“Oh, that feels so good,” she said thankfully.

Of course, the match burned out, and there she was again in the cold. People brushed past her, and no one seemed to notice her at all. She reached in her sack and pulled out another match. Her fingers trembled with cold as she lit it. This time, she saw herself sitting at a table full of delicious warm food! But, alas, the match went out, and the dream vanished. But the girl was thankful again. The vision gave her hope.

“Something good will happen, I know it!” she told herself.

Another match was struck. This time, she was beside a beautifully decorated tree with lots of presents around it! The lights on the tree were so bright, it seemed like the sun was shining, even though it was dark and snowing. The lights seemed to travel up into the sky, and now they were stars decorating outer space. All of a sudden, one of the stars shot across the sky, and the match burned out.



She was partly covered with snow and very, very cold. Again, people were passing by her, talking and ignoring her. They didn't even seem to see her. But she was thinking about something else—something her grandmother had told her about shooting stars. She remembered sitting in her grandmother's lap and listening to these words:

“When you see a shooting star, it means that someone is dying and going to be with their loved ones in a beautiful place—more beautiful than anything you've ever seen!”

Even though the girl was almost covered with snow and numb all over, she was smiling. Just thinking about her beloved grandmother gave her hope. She pulled out another match, and then her grandmother appeared, glowing with a white light, beckoning to her!

“Please don't leave me, Grandma,” she cried. “Everything else—the warm stove, the table full of food, the tree and the presents—all disappeared! Please, don't disappear, too! I love you!”

She hastily pulled out all the matches and burned them one by one, trying to hold onto the image of her grandmother. Finally, as the girl struck the very last match, the grandmother embraced her and lifted her up away from the cold, hunger, and the selfish villagers.

The next morning, the villagers found the little match girl frozen in the snow. They mourned over her death. They scolded themselves for the lack of compassion and love in their village. Their frozen hearts melted and from that day on, they changed their selfish ways and started taking care of each other. The lesson of the little match girl's courage and hope remained and was never forgotten.

Moral: Be kind to the less fortunate.

Questions

1. Was the little match girl sad in the beginning of the story? Why?

2. Why didn't anyone help her?

3. How did the matches help her?

4. What made her feel hopeful even though she was in a scary, difficult situation?

5. Why did the author write this story? What did he want people to feel and do after reading it?

Reflection Exercise

The little girl in the story was brave and kept her hope alive. The thought of her grandmother, who loved her, gave her hope. What could give you hope when you feel afraid?

Chapter 4: The Queen of Bees
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Respect for life

Once upon a time there were three knights who were brothers. In those days, knights protected the people in the villages. To prove their bravery, knights would go around looking for people to help or for noble deeds that needed doing.

One fine spring morning, the three knight brothers set out to find someone who needed their help or a noble deed that needed doing. The two older brothers, Sam and Peter, didn't want Felix, the youngest knight, to go with them. They often made fun of their younger brother and called him "Blockhead". But Felix wanted to prove himself too, so he begged them to take him with them. Finally, his brothers agreed to allow him to come, which was most fortunate for them, as we shall see.



The three travelers stopped at noon to eat their lunch. They tied their horses to a tree and spread a blanket on the ground to sit on. Near the blanket was a large anthill.

Felix looked at the hard-working ants with admiration. “These creatures are so hard-working!” he exclaimed.

Sam came over, and as soon as he saw the anthill, he lifted his leg to crush it with his boot.

Felix cried out, “Don’t! Leave them alone! You’ll kill them.”

Sam laughed and walked away.

The brothers traveled on through the woods, and at one spot, Felix almost hit his head on a beehive hanging on a tree limb! He stopped to marvel at the bees. They were gathering pollen in the tiny sacks attached to their legs and bringing it to the hive to be transformed into honey.



Peter saw the hive, too, and picked up a rock to throw at it.

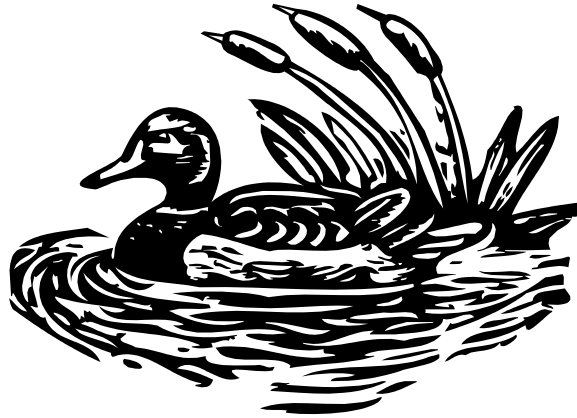
“Let’s get the honey inside after I break it!” he shouted.

Felix defended the bees, “Stop! They aren’t hurting you.”

Peter responded with a sneer, “You’re a fool, ‘Blockhead’! We could use a little snack of honey!” But he threw the rock on the ground.

Further on down the road was a pond with ducks swimming in it. The older brothers got excited, thinking to kill the ducks so they could roast them for dinner. Once again, Felix prevented them from harming the creatures.

“We already have plenty of food. Please, don’t kill the ducks. They might have ducklings hiding in the reeds! It’s spring, remember?”



The older brothers were about to shoot the ducks with arrows, when Felix looked off into the distance and saw a castle.

He distracted his brothers by shouting, “Let’s go to that castle over there. Someone may need our help!”

So they mounted their horses and galloped off to the castle, forgetting about the roasted duck dinner.

“Look at all the statues of knights and horses in front of the castle,” remarked Felix, as they approached the door.

"That is unusual," agreed the older brothers. They knocked on the large wooden door and a little man appeared, who didn’t speak. He motioned for them to enter; then treated them to dinner. They slept there that evening.

The next morning the mute little man showed the eldest son a stone tablet. The words on the tablet explained that the castle was under a curse, and that three unusual tasks had to be done to lift the curse.

The first task was to gather one thousand pearls in the forest. The pearls were scattered when the three Princesses who lived in the castle dropped and broke their necklaces while playing near the woods. If even one pearl was still missing by sunset, the knight who attempted to gather the pearls would be turned into stone.

First, the oldest brother tried and failed. He was turned to stone. Next the second oldest brother tried and failed. He too was turned to stone.

On the third day, it was Felix's turn. He was nervous but determined to try. By noon, he had only gathered one hundred pearls.

He moaned, "Oh no! Nine hundred to go! I don't want to turn into stone like my brothers. What can I possibly do?"

As he was looking for more pearls on the ground, he saw the Ant Queen, followed by thousands of ants.

"What are they doing here?" Felix wondered.

The ants quickly gathered all the nine hundred pearls and left them in a pile for Felix to carry back to the palace.

The second task was to retrieve a key that opened the bedroom where the three Princesses, who were under the castle's spell, were sleeping soundly. But the key was at the bottom of a murky pond near the castle, the one the brothers had passed on the way there. Felix galloped his horse over to the pond and sat on the bank, watching the ducks and wondering what to do. All of a sudden, he saw the two ducks he had rescued from his brothers! They dove down to the bottom of the pond and swam over to the young knight, carrying the heavy iron key in their bills.



The third task was a little more complicated. The three Princesses had been put to sleep by the curse. The only way to rescue them and all the knights and horses that had been turned to stone was to fulfill this final task.

Before they had fallen asleep each Princess had eaten something sweet. One sucked on a cube of sugar, another swallowed some syrup, and the third ate a spoonful of honey. It was impossible to tell which one had eaten the honey, but that was the task. If Felix could figure it out, then the curse would be broken.

Just then, the Queen Bee, whose hive was saved by Felix, appeared and flew around Felix's head, then hovered over the three Princesses. The Queen Bee touched each pair of lips; then she rested on the lips of the youngest Princess, the one who had eaten the spoonful of honey.

This broke the curse! The Princesses awakened, the older brothers were alive again, the statues of knights and horses also came back to life, and the little man disappeared.

After this, you may well imagine that Felix was no longer called "Blockhead" by his older brothers. They were very grateful they had such a wise and kind younger brother. From then on, Peter and Sam were always very careful to not disturb anthills or bees' nests, and they fed the ducks in the pond!

Moral: Kindness is rewarded.

Questions

1. The three brothers in the story were knights. What did the story say knights do?

2. Felix helped rescue some creatures on the journey. What were they?

3. What were the three tasks that had to be completed in order for the curse to be broken?

4. What special help did Felix get when he tried to complete the tasks, and why?

5. What lesson did Felix teach his brothers?

Reflection Exercise

Felix showed respect for living creatures by not letting his brothers destroy their homes or kill them. What are some ways you can show respect for life?

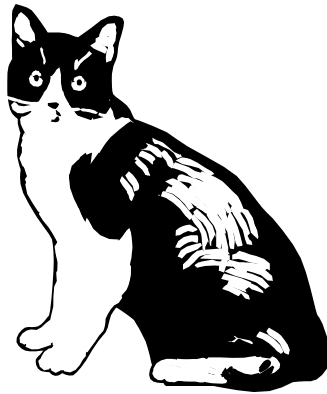
Chapter 5: The Fox and the Cat
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Respect for others

A cat met Mr. Fox in the woods.

The cat thought, “He is so smart and has been so many places. All the animals respect him.”

So she spoke to him in a friendly and respectful way: “Hello, my dear Mr. Fox. How are you? How are you getting by in these hard times?”

The fox, who thought he was very important, looked the cat over from the tip of her nose to the tip of her tail. He sniffed.



Then he said, “Oh, you fool, you hungry mouse-hunter, what are you thinking? Have you the nerve to ask how *I* am doing? What do you know? How many tricks do you understand?”

“Just one,” answered the cat, looking down at the ground.

“What kind of trick is it?” asked the fox.

“When the dogs are chasing me, I can jump into a tree and save myself.”

“Is that all?” said the fox. “I know a hundred tricks. I have a whole bagful of tricks! I feel sorry for you. Come with me, and I will teach you a thing or two!”

Just then a hunter came by with four dogs. The cat jumped up a tree and hid among the branches and leaves. The fox was trapped.

“Use some of your tricks, Mr. Fox, use some of your tricks!” the cat shouted to him, but the dogs caught him.

“Oh, Mr. Fox,” cried the cat. “All your smart tricks couldn’t save you, but my poor simple one saved me.”

Moral: Respect others.

Questions

1. Did the cat show respect for Mr. Fox? In what way?

2. Did Mr. Fox show respect for the cat?

3. How did Mr. Fox show a lack of respect for the cat?

4. If Mr. Fox respected the cat how might the story end differently?

5. Why is it a good thing to show respect for everyone, no matter how few abilities someone might have?

Reflection Exercise

Do you sometimes show disrespect to your family members or friends? In what ways? (Give two or three examples.) After reading about the cat and Mr. Fox, how would you change the way you treat others?

Chapter 6: The Loyal Tin Soldier
(Adapted from Hans Christian Anderson)
Loyalty

There once was a factory near a small village. This factory made toys out of tin, which is a light metal.

The factory was going out of business, and as the workmen were making the last box of toy soldiers, they ran out of tin. That is why the very last soldier had only one leg! He was put in the box with all the two-legged soldiers and sent off to the store.

One day, a family with twins, one boy and one girl, visited the store on the twins' birthday. The boy saw the box of toy soldiers and decided right away. "I'll take that, please!" he said.

The girl took her time and found a delicate ballerina doll that stood with her right leg stretched out behind her. It looked like she had only one leg, just like the soldier in the box.

The parents bought the birthday presents and went home to celebrate with cake and ice cream. The twins loved their gifts. They played with the soldiers and the ballerina every day, from morning until bedtime.



In this house, something magical happened every night after the family went to sleep. The toys came alive! They talked with one another about this and that and stayed awake all night!

The tin soldier, who was always propped up on the windowsill, wanted to find a friend. He decided to introduce himself to the ballerina. When he looked at her, he thought, “She looks just like me! She has only one leg!” From where he was standing, he couldn’t see her right leg, which was stretched out behind her.

The ballerina enjoyed her new friendship with the soldier. Eventually, they promised each other that they would always be loyal friends, and if anything ever happened to the other, they would try their best to help.

In that same room was another toy, a jack-in-the-box that popped out of his box when the crank was turned. This toy was bossy and mischievous. He thought he was the boss over all the other toys. No wonder the others didn't like him! He was powerful and had the ability to spring himself out of his box.

One evening that’s exactly what he did! In fact he knocked the tin soldier right out of the window and into the gutter below.



The ballerina was horrified, but what could she do? This was misfortune indeed, and now the one-legged tin soldier was in great danger! He had landed on a small cardboard box that was floating in the gutter water.

The soldier slowly drifted away from the boy who loved him and his loyal friend, the ballerina. Was there no one to save him? Would he ever see his friend again?

Soon the familiar house was out of sight. All of a sudden, everything went dark! The gutter emptied into a tunnel, and the water started to move more rapidly. It was pitch black inside! Even though he could see nothing at all, the soldier was brave. Suddenly, the cardboard boat fell through the air into a river below. The soldier fell into the water and started to sink. He thought of his dear friend, the ballerina, and he wondered if he would ever see her again.

He didn't sink to the bottom because nearby was a large hungry fish, looking for dinner! The fish swallowed the soldier. He was in a very dark place once again, inside the fish, and did it ever smell!

"What is going to happen next?" he wondered.

Luckily, the fish was caught in a fisherman's net, and the fisherman took the fish to the market, where a cook came along and bought it for dinner. In the kitchen, she cut open the fish, and there was the brave tin soldier! It just so happened that the cook who had bought the fish worked for the family who had bought him a year ago!

The tin soldier had been through so many hardships and dangers! Now he was back in the house where the boy lived, and soon he would see his loyal friend, the ballerina! He was thrilled!

Unfortunately for the soldier, this cook was new to the household and did not know that this was the boy's toy. All she saw was a rusty, faded one-legged tin soldier, so she threw the toy into the fire!

As he was flying through the air, the soldier bravely saluted the ballerina, who was still standing on one leg near the window. There she was, his dear friend! She saw him, and her heart almost broke into pieces as she watched him courageously meet his fate.

"Oh, if only I could do something! He has always been such a good loyal friend!" she cried.

All of a sudden, a gust of wind blew the ballerina off the windowsill and into the fire, too! An hour later, when the fire was out, the twins came near and stirred the ashes with a stick.

"What is this?" exclaimed the girl as she grabbed something shiny from the ashes. In her hand, she held a heart-shaped piece of tin.

"It's beautiful," said the boy. "It somehow reminds me of our lost toys, the ballerina and the one-legged soldier. Maybe because it's made of tin."

"Or maybe because we loved those toys!" said the girl. "That's why it's in the shape of a heart!"

The twins carried the pretty tin heart to their room and put it in a wooden box so they would never lose it.



Moral: Be loyal to those you love.

Questions

1. Do you like the little tin soldier and the ballerina? Why or why not?

2. Do you like the jack-in-the-box? Why or why not?

3. Do you think the little tin soldier was brave and loyal?

4. Why do you think the ballerina and the tin soldier melted into one heart in the fire?

5. Do you have any friends you would be that loyal to?

Reflection Exercise

Imagine you had to stay away from your friends and family for a whole year. What would you do to stay loyal to them in your heart?

Chapter 7: Faithful Francis and Loyal Linda
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Loyalty

Once there was a hunter who found a small child crying from up high in a tree. A hawk had snatched the child from his mother while she slept and placed him on a high tree branch.

The hunter got the child down and thought to himself, “I will take the poor child home and bring him up as a brother to my little daughter, Linda.”

He named the child Francis and took him home. The two children grew up together as brother and sister. Francis and Linda loved each other so much that if they could not be together, they were sad.

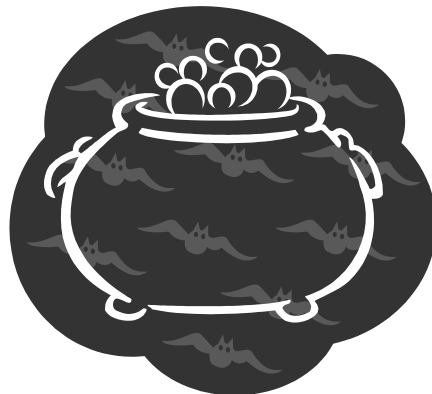
The hunter had an old cook who was something like a witch. One evening this old cook began to fetch water in a pail from the brook, not once but many times.

Linda asked, “Why are you fetching so much water?”

The old cook replied, “If you promise not to tell anyone, I will tell you why.”

Linda promised not to tell anyone.

The cook said, “Tomorrow morning, when the hunter is in the forest, I will heat the water in a kettle until it is boiling. Then I will throw Francis in, and boil him in it.”



Early the next morning, the hunter went into the forest.

Linda woke up Francis and said, "If you will never leave me, I will never leave you."

Francis said "I will never leave you. Not now, not ever."

Then Linda said, "Last night, our old cook carried so many pails of water into the house that I asked her why. She said that if I promised not to tell anyone, she would tell me why. I promised, and she said that early tomorrow morning when father was out hunting, she would heat the kettle full of water, throw you into it, and boil you. I broke my promise to her because I have to save your life. Let us get up quickly, before she does, and run away together."

The two children dressed quickly and sneaked out of the house into the forest. The cook got up and heated the water. When the water in the kettle was boiling, the cook went to get Francis and throw him into it. She searched for the children, but they were nowhere to be seen.

Then she was terribly upset. She said to herself, "What shall I tell the hunter when he sees that his children are gone? I must find them."

The cook sent three servants to look for the children. The children however, could see the three servants coming. They were frightened.

Linda said to Francis, "If you will never leave me, I will never leave you."

Francis said, "I will never leave you. Not now, not ever."



Then Linda said, "Let us climb up in this tree and hide among the leaves."

So they helped each other climb up a tree and hid among the leaves, holding hands to give each other courage and holding their breath too, so as not to make any sound.

When the three servants came into the forest, they could not see any children.

So they said, "Let's go home and tell the cook."

When they told her they had only seen trees in the forest, the cook said, "You fools! You should have cut down some of the trees. Maybe one of them held the children! Go back and find them!"

The three servants went out to look for the children again.

When the children saw them coming again, they were scared, but Linda said, "If you will never leave me, I will never leave you."

Francis said, "I will never leave you. Not now, not ever."

Linda said, "I see a little church ahead in the woods. Let us go hide in there."

The children ran to the little church and helped each other find hiding places behind the altar. The servants came into the church, but they could not see the little children, hidden as they were.

The servants went home and told the cook they had seen nothing but a little church, and the children were not in it.

The cook scolded them. She said, "You fools! Why didn't you tear the church apart? For sure, the children were hiding there, and you missed them! I'll go with you myself this time!"

The cook scolded them. She said, "You fools! Why didn't you tear the church apart? For sure, the children were hiding there, and you missed them! I'll go with you myself this time!"



The children saw from far off that the three servants were coming, and that the cook was following after them.

Although the sight made them shake in their shoes, Linda said, "If you will never leave me, I will never leave you."

Francis said, "I will never leave you. Not now, not ever."

Linda saw a small fishpond and said, "Let us go into the water and hide in the weeds there."

Linda and Francis helped each other into the water and hid among the weeds. When the cook came, they ducked their heads underwater and held their breath. They squeezed each other's hands to give each other courage.

Luckily for them, while the cook was looking into the water, she fell in. She could not swim, and she drowned. Her screams were so loud that the three servants ran away in fear instead of saving her.

Linda and Francis ran home, hand in hand. The hunter was just coming home, and they told him all about the bad cook who was a witch. He hugged them and carried them home.

"My brave children!" he said. "By being loyal to each other, you have been saved!"

Moral: Being loyal to each other helps people get out of tight spots!

Questions

1. What do Linda and Francis say to each other every time they promise not to leave each other?

2. How does Linda show her loyalty to her good friend, Francis?

3. How does Francis show his loyalty to his good friend, Linda?

4. Do you think Francis or Linda could have gotten away from the witch without each other's help?

Reflection Exercise

Being faithful and loyal to someone means that you don't leave them, even when they are sick, in trouble, or in danger.

If someone asked your family members and friends if you were loyal to them, what would they say?

Chapter 8: Tom Thumb
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Family Loyalty

Once there was a very wise old man. He was traveling through a deep forest at sunset. He knocked on the door of a small cottage to ask for food and lodging. The farmer and his wife welcomed him.

The wise old man saw that, in spite of their pleasant cottage, both the farmer and his wife were very sad.

“Why are you sad?” he asked them.

“Ah!” said the woman. “We are unhappy because we have no child. I would be the happiest woman in the world if I had a son. Why, even if he were no bigger than my husband’s thumb, we would love him dearly.”

The wise old man was on his way to call on the queen of the fairies. When he came to her castle the next day, he told the fairy queen the wish of the farmer’s wife.

The queen of the fairies said, “The good woman shall have her wish. I will give her a son no larger than her husband’s thumb.”

Before long, the good farmer’s wife gave birth to a son. He was, indeed, just the size of his father’s thumb.

“He is as we wished him to be,” said the farmer’s wife, “He shall be our dear son, and we shall call him Tom Thumb.”

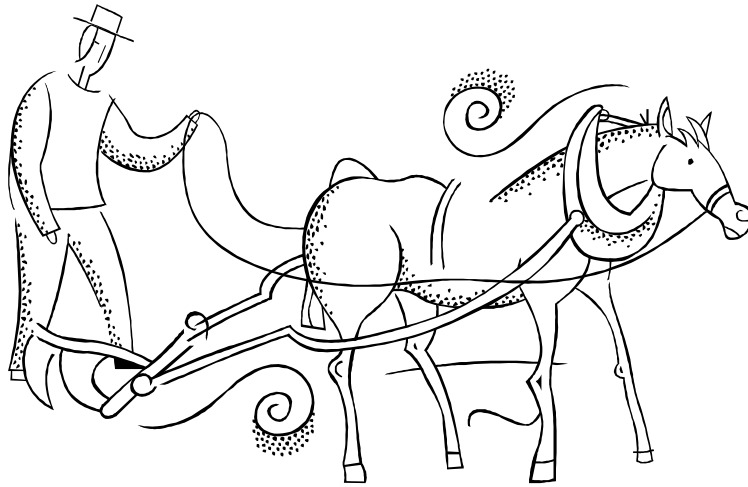
Tom Thumb grew up to be clever and wise, although he never grew bigger than his father’s thumb.

One day Tom was in the field helping his father.

“Let me ride the horse home,” said Tom.

“You ride the horse!” said the father. “How could you hold the reins?”

“I could stand in the horse’s ear and tell it the way.”



The father agreed to let him try, and they began their walk back to the cottage.

Two strangers approached them and were astonished to see the tiny Tom Thumb in the horse's ear.

One stranger whispered to the other, "The little fellow would make our fortune if we exhibited him in a circus. Let's buy him."

They went to the farmer and said, "Sell us the little man. We will treat him well."

"No," replied the farmer. "All the money in the world cannot buy him from me."

The strangers whispered with each other again. Tom Thumb could hear they were plotting to steal him.

He whispered to his father, "Father, go ahead and sell me. They are planning to take me by force otherwise. I promise I will return soon."

So the father gave Tom to the strangers in exchange for a large sum of money. His heart grieved him as he watched them carry away his little Tom Thumb.

Now, Tom was very clever, and being so small, he was able to escape from his captors. He had many adventures as he made his way home. He was eaten up while resting in some hay and ended up in a cow's stomach!

Luckily, that very cow was sold to his father and mother, and when they heard his voice calling from inside the cow, they pulled him out.

His father said, "We have been so worried!"

His mother said, "We would not sell you for all the riches in the world!"

The farmer and his wife embraced and kissed their dear Tom Thumb, and they all lived happily ever after.



Moral: Be loyal to those you love.

Questions

1. Why were the farmer and his wife sad at the beginning of the story?

2. Which is more important and precious according to the story—money or your loved ones?

3. What family virtue is expressed in Tom Thumb's family?

4. Do you think even a very small person can be clever and wise like Tom?

Reflection Exercise

Remember when Tom's father thought he could not ride the horse? Tom came up with a very smart idea how he could ride the horse. Have you ever had a good suggestion, like Tom had, that your parents let you try?

Chapter 9: The Nightingale
(Adapted from Hans Christian Anderson)
Beauty of the heart

In China, a long time ago, there lived an Emperor. Travelers from other lands often came to visit his palace and its lovely gardens. The scenery and wildlife were famous for their beauty. Visiting poets went back to their countries and wrote books about the place. Many people outside of China read these poems. The most common subject of their poetry was the Nightingale that sang in the gardens. No other bird could sing so sweetly!

One day, the Emperor was reading a book of poetry about the natural beauty of his kingdom. He noticed that many poems were about a Nightingale he had never seen!

“Where is this famous Nightingale? I demand to see it!” he ordered. “Bring it to me at once!”

The head servant ran around the palace, asking everyone if they knew where to find the Nightingale. No one knew! Finally, a girl who worked in the kitchen said that she thought she had once heard the bird singing in the treetops near her grandparents’ home, not far from the palace.

They all rushed out the door, through the flower gardens, and down the road, for the Emperor was in a big hurry! He wanted to hear the Nightingale sing tonight, and it was already dinnertime!



When they found the grey bird, they were surprised that she was so plain.
But the music coming from her throat was like the song of an angel.

The head servant quickly made his request.

“Dear Nightingale, our Emperor wishes to hear you sing! Please come with us now!”

The bird went along, and that night she delighted the Emperor with her songs. He was so moved by the sweetness of her songs, tears of joy fell down his cheeks.

“You make me so happy, dear Nightingale. Please stay at the palace forever! I will grant you any request!”

The bird agreed to stay and added, “Your tears of joy are like jewels to me! To serve my Emperor is the only reward I need!” So she stayed at the palace and entertained both night and day.

One day the Emperor received a package in the mail labeled “Nightingale”. Of course, he thought it was a new book of poems, but when he opened the package, he was surprised! Inside was a man-made nightingale from the Emperor of Japan. Unlike the real Nightingale, this one was gold-plated and decorated with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls! It had a music box inside, so that one could turn a little crank and the man-made nightingale would sing. Of course, it could only sing a few songs, but everyone was fascinated by its beauty.

So it was that the new nightingale replaced the real one. The Nightingale left the palace and returned to her home in the treetops near the village. The Emperor forgot about his true friend, the Nightingale.

Years passed, and the Emperor was sick and dying. The palace was a gloomy place, filled with tears and grief. The Emperor was much loved by his people, and they didn’t want him to die. There was no music to cheer

everyone up, for the real Nightingale was gone a long time ago, and the mechanical one had stopped forever. The Emperor's staff sadly prepared to select a new Emperor.



The Emperor lay in his bed and thought about his life. He remembered the real Nightingale, who had entertained him with her beautiful songs. How he missed her and longed to see her again! She wasn't beautiful on the outside, but her heart was so generous! She'd sing to him day and night, whenever he asked, even if she was tired.

"Alas," he sighed, "I didn't appreciate her enough, and now she's gone. I wish she was here to comfort me as I get ready to leave this world."

All of a sudden, he heard the perfect notes of his old friend, the Nightingale! There she was, in his window, singing joyfully!

The Emperor told her how sorry he was that he forgot about her, and she forgave him right away. She sang more beautifully than ever that night, and once more tears fell down his cheeks. Her singing healed him, and the Emperor felt better in the morning. The Nightingale stayed by his side, singing his favorite song over and over again.

That morning, when the head servant opened the door to the Emperor's bedroom, he was shocked to see the Emperor sitting up in bed and smiling, listening to the Nightingale! Her songs were so powerful that Death ran away from the palace. The Emperor lived on, ruling his empire with the same kindness and generosity he found in his friend, the Nightingale!

Moral: True beauty comes from the inside, not the outside.

Questions

1. In the story, why was the Chinese Empire famous?

2. How did the Emperor first find out about the Nightingale?

3. What special gift did the Emperor receive from the Emperor of Japan?

4. Why do you think the Nightingale left the palace?

5. Which do you like better—the real Nightingale or the mechanical one?
Why?

6. What was the real Nightingale like inside? What kind of heart did she have?

Reflection Exercise

Imagine you had a friend who was very strong and good-looking but very mean. Now imagine you had a friend who was plain and simple-looking but very sweet and generous inside. Which would you choose for your best friend?

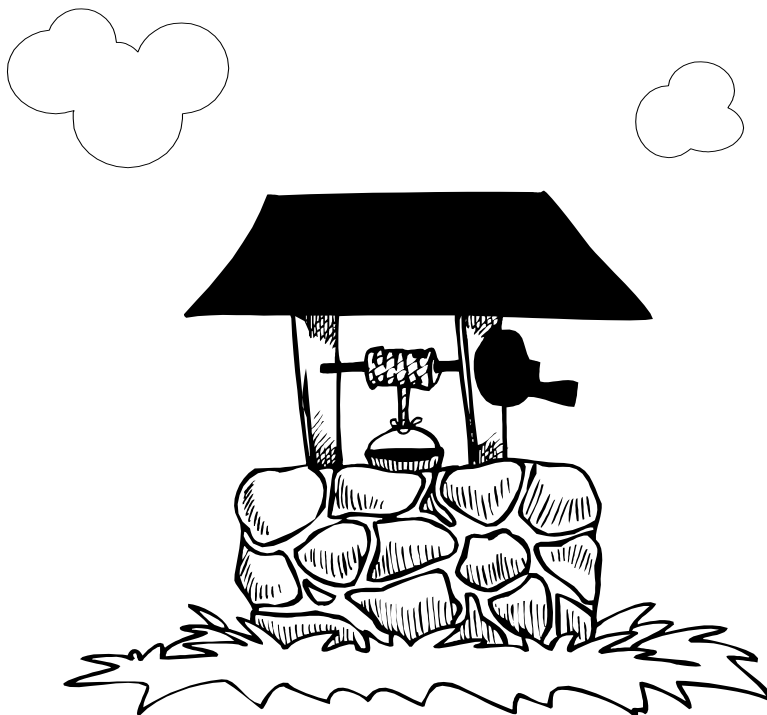
Chapter 10: Mother Holly
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Hard Work

There was once a widow who had two daughters. One daughter, Greta, was hard-working, but the other daughter, Meta, was lazy. Greta was a stepdaughter, so the widow loved her less. The widow made Greta do all the housework, which suited lazy Meta just fine. Every day Greta had to sit by the well and knit and sew until her fingers were sore.

One day, Greta's knitting needles accidentally fell into the well. She began to cry, and then she ran to her stepmother to tell her what had happened.

Her stepmother scolded her strongly: “Since you have let the knitting needles fall in, you must get them out!”

So Greta went back to the well and jumped in to get the knitting needles.



Jumping in made her faint. When she awoke, she was in a lovely meadow where the sun was shining, and thousands of flowers were blooming. She began to walk along a path in the meadow until she came to a baker's oven full of bread.

The bread called out, "Oh, take me out! Take me out, or I will burn! I have been baking a long time!"

So Greta took out the bread.

After that, she went on until she came to a tree full of apples.



The tree called out to her, "Oh, shake me! Shake me! My apples are all ripe!"

So Greta shook the tree until all the apples fell to the ground. After she had put them all in a pile, she went on her way.

At last she came to a little house.

There was an old woman in the house who called out to her, "I am Mother Holly. Stay with me. If you do all the work in the house very nicely, I will give you a reward."

Since the old woman spoke so kindly to her, Greta agreed to stay and do the housework. Mother Holly was very satisfied with Greta's hard work. She had a pleasant life now, with never an angry word from Mother Holly.

After some time, though, Greta began to feel homesick. Even though she was much better off staying with Mother Holly than going back to her mean stepmother and lazy stepsister, she missed them.

Finally, one day she said to the old woman, “You have been very kind to me, but I want to go back home.”

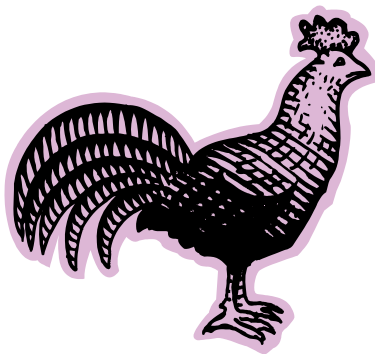
Mother Holly replied, “I am pleased that you want to return home, and since you have worked so hard for me, I will take you home myself.”

Mother Holly took the girl’s hand and led her to a big door. She opened the door, and as the girl passed through the doorway, a shower of golden rain fell and stuck to her so that she was completely covered with it.

“You can keep the gold as a reward for your hard work,” said Mother Holly. “And here are the knitting needles that fell into the well.”

Then the door closed behind Greta, and she found herself not far from her stepmother’s house.

As she went into the yard, the rooster crowed, “Cock-a-doodle-doo! Your golden girl has returned to you!”



She went in to her stepmother and stepsister and told them all that had happened to her. They liked the gold very much! The stepmother wanted her lazy daughter, Meta, to have the same good luck, so she told her to go to the well and drop the knitting needles in. Then the lazy girl jumped in after them.

Meta came to the same meadow and walked along the same path.

When she got to the oven, the bread called again, “Oh, take me out! Take me out, or I will burn! I have been baking a long time!”

But Meta answered, “I don’t want to get dirty,” and she continued walking.

Soon she came to the apple tree, which called out, “Oh shake me! Shake me! My apples are all ripe!”

But Meta answered, “I don’t want apples to fall on my head!”

When Meta came to Mother Holly’s house, she offered to work for her right away. Mother Holly said yes.

The first day, the lazy girl forced herself to work hard and obey Mother Holly. She was thinking about all the gold she would get. But on the second day, she began to be lazy. On the third day, she was so lazy she would not even get out of bed in the morning! Mother Holly soon got tired of this and told the girl to go home.

Meta thought that now the golden rain would come. Mother Holly led her to the big door, but as the lazy girl passed through, a big bucket of soot was emptied on her.

“That is the reward for your work,” said Mother Holly, and she shut the door.

Meta went home, all covered in soot.

The rooster crowed, “Cock-a-doodle-doo! Your sooty girl has come back to you.” And the soot stuck to her for the rest of her life.

Moral: We get what we earn.

Questions:

1. What good things did Greta do as she walked through the meadow?

2. How did Greta act at Mother Holly's house?

3. What did Greta receive as a reward for her hard work?

4. What did Meta do when asked to do kind things in the meadow?

5. How did Meta act at Mother Holly's house?

6. What was Meta's reward for her work?

Reflection Exercise

Greta was kind and hard-working. Meta was selfish and lazy. Which are you most like? What kind of reward do you think you should get? How should you behave if you want to have a pleasant life with good rewards?

Chapter 11: The Red Shoes
(Adapted from Hans Christian Anderson)
Unselfishness

A girl and her grandmother walked down the road towards home, which was an unpainted wooden shack with no kitchen or indoor plumbing. They were poor. They barely had enough money to put food on the table.

However, today they had visited the cobbler's shop, because they had a little money left over to purchase some strips of leather. The grandmother wanted to sew some shoes for the girl, for she had none.

The grandmother sewed the shoes and put them on Karen's feet. The shoes were flimsy and ugly, which was why the girl didn't appreciate her grandmother's efforts.

"I don't like these!" she said. "Can't we buy the ones I saw in the window?"

"Karen, you will have to wear them. I wish I could afford to buy you the shoes you want, but please be grateful at least to have something to put on your feet," replied Grandmother patiently.

A few days later, they were on the road into town again, when a wealthy woman passed by in her horse-drawn carriage. She saw the little girl dressed in rags, wearing the simple shoes her Grandmother had made for her. The woman asked the coachman to stop the carriage.

She spoke kindly to the old woman, "Your granddaughter seems very nice. I don't have any family anymore, and I would like a young companion to brighten up my home. Both of you can come live with me, and I'll give her fine new clothes and tutors for her education."



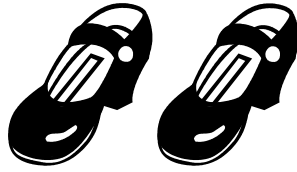
The grandmother was surprised and thankful, and she accepted the generous offer. The next day, the coach stopped by their little shack and picked them up. There wasn't much luggage, for they had very few belongings. They were both excited and nervous as the coach pulled up in front of a large, beautiful mansion surrounded by colorful gardens.

Karen's new life was very different from the way things had been before. She was very fortunate to have this new home, for her elderly grandmother died shortly after they moved.

One evening, the generous lady took Karen to visit the palace, and she saw the Princess for the first time. The Princess was dressed in a lacy white gown and wore a pair of shiny red shoes. Karen loved those shoes and wished they were hers.

The next day the generous lady took Karen shopping. They were preparing for a special occasion, a church ceremony called confirmation. All the young boys and girls were to wear all white clothes for the ceremony. The kind lady was looking for a pair of white shoes for Karen, when all of a sudden Karen saw shiny red shoes in the window.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "They look just like the ones the Princess wore! I want them!"



Karen knew that the kind lady was getting older and could not see well. She couldn't see that these shoes were the wrong color for the ceremony. Karen decided to lie, because she felt she couldn't live without those shoes! And so it was that the red shoes went home with Karen that day.

It was the day of the confirmation ceremony. Karen was all dressed in white, except for the shiny red shoes on her feet!

As she walked up the aisle to take her seat, the ladies were all looking at her feet, exclaiming, "She's wearing red shoes! How could she?"

Heads turned and faces frowned as Karen happily sat down. Throughout the ceremony, Karen kept looking at her shoes with delight, completely forgetting that she should be paying attention to the words the priest was saying. Afterwards, she was scolded by the kind lady, who found out that Karen had lied about the shoes. Karen didn't care. She wore her red shoes to church every Sunday.

These red shoes got Karen into trouble in other places as well. Uniforms were required at school, but Karen refused to wear the school shoes. Instead, she'd put on her shiny red shoes, which she couldn't stop gazing at. As the teachers presented the lessons, Karen would gaze at her shoes and dream of dancing.

One Sunday, something very strange happened. Karen and the kind lady had just climbed down from the carriage and were walking towards the church. A crippled soldier, who propped himself up with a crutch, called out to them to come over so he could polish their shoes.

As he polished Karen's red shoes, he spoke, "What beautiful dancing shoes!"

The kind old lady gave him a coin, and they went inside. When they came out of the church an hour later, the soldier was still there.

They passed by him and he cried out again, "What beautiful dancing shoes!" Then he added, "Stick fast and dance away!" while striking the soles of the red shoes with his crutch.

Karen felt the shoes tremble. Then it was as if the shoes had become alive! She danced around the church and down the road! The coachman ran after her and tackled the girl, whose feet were still dancing. Finally, the magic shoes were pulled off her feet and she fell asleep, exhausted.

A few days later, Karen received an invitation to a ball. She had been frightened by the red shoes, but when she thought about dancing at the ball, she couldn't resist putting them on again.

The kind lady was very ill, and she needed someone to be with her. However, Karen selfishly decided to leave this generous lady all alone and go to the ball, wearing the red shoes. When the music started, Karen's feet moved, and away she went. But the shoes did whatever they wanted, ignoring Karen's commands.



"Go to the right," she'd say, and the shoes would travel to the left.

“Go forward,” she'd command, but the shoes would go backwards. Finally, as everyone watched in horror, the red shoes took Karen out the door and into the forest! She shouted for help, but there was no one around, only the full moon in the starlit sky. As she looked up at the moon helplessly, she saw the soldier's face and heard his mocking voice:

“What pretty dancing shoes! You will dance on and on and on, until you say you are sorry for your selfishness!”

Frightened, Karen desperately tried to loosen the shoes from her feet, but they were stuck. It was as if the shoes had become part of her feet! Through the dark forest she danced, cutting herself on sharp thorns and branches, crying and begging for help. She danced through the night.

By morning, Karen was back in the village square, crying and dancing while villagers stopped and stared at her.

She begged, “Have mercy! I'm sorry I lied about the shoes to the kind lady. I'm sorry I didn't listen to the priest or my teachers! I'm sorry I left the kind lady, who was so good to me, all alone when she was ill. Please forgive me!”

The villagers felt sorry for her, so they tied her to a tree with a very thick rope. Then the mayor, the priest, the schoolteachers, the shopkeepers, and the older children formed a line. On the count of three, they pulled and tugged the shoes until they came off her feet. Karen thanked them all and promised to be good. She returned home to the kind lady and nursed her back to health.

The shoes, no longer under a magic spell, were given to a poor family. Karen never forgot the lesson she learned from the red shoes!

Moral: Don't be selfish.

Questions

1. Why didn't Karen like the shoes her Grandmother had made for her?

2. Why did Karen and her grandmother move from their little shack?

3. The new red shoes caused problems when Karen wore them to church and to school. Why?

4. What happened after the soldier tapped Karen's red shoes?

5. What happened when Karen went to the ball?

6. What lesson did Karen learn from the red shoes?

Reflection Exercise

In the story, Karen made some bad choices. Can you think of what she could have done to make better choices? Did you ever want something as badly as Karen wanted the red shoes, but it turned out to be bad for you?

Chapter 12: The Frog Prince
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Integrity—word and deed

There once was a royal family who met with great misfortune. The King and Queen had two children, a boy and a girl. One day, the boy was chasing frogs in the palace gardens when a wicked witch appeared. The witch liked to play tricks on people, so she put a curse on the boy and turned him into a frog!



The King and Queen looked everywhere that day for their son. The last place he was seen was in the garden, so they desperately searched around the rose bushes, under hedges, and up in the trees. All they found were butterflies, bees, and frogs croaking on lily pads in the pond.

The Princess was now an only child. She didn't really miss her brother, because she was only a baby when he was turned into a frog.

Six years passed, and one day she was playing near the pond with her favorite toy, a golden ball. As she tossed it, it fell and sank to the bottom of the pond.

She screamed, “My ball! Oh, no! How will I ever get it back?”

She sat down and wept. “I’d give anything and everything I have if only I could get my golden ball back again.”

Suddenly, she heard a little voice coming from a frog: “Dear Princess, I can help you!”

She screamed at the frog, “You ugly talking frog. What could you possibly do?”

The frog responded, “I heard you say that you’d give anything and everything you have if you could get your golden ball back from the pond. I don’t want your valuable jewelry, fine clothes, or your expensive toys. I just want your friendship. If you take me to live with you in the palace and play with me every day, then I’ll get your ball.”

The Princess disliked the magical frog, but she desperately wanted her toy, so she promised to do all that he asked. The frog plunged to the bottom of the pond and returned, holding the muddy ball in his mouth. He spit it out at the Princess’s feet. She grabbed the ball and ran to the palace.

The frog called out, “Princess, you promised to take me with you! Come back!”

Without even turning around to thank the frog, the Princess ran even faster away from the pond.

It was suppertime the next day, and as the Princess opened her mouth to take a bite, she heard a strange noise, like someone walking in wet shoes: splish, splosh, splish, splosh. She put down her fork and almost jumped out of her chair when she saw what was at the foot of the table. It was the frog! She had forgotten all about her promise.

Angrily, she chased the slimy creature out of the room, screaming, “Go away and never come back!”

Meanwhile, the King appeared and inquired, “What’s the matter? You look like you’ve seen a ghost!”



The Princess explained everything.

Her father scolded her, “You should always keep your promises. The frog did a good deed, and you told him you’d be his friend. Now do it!”

He made the Princess go after the frog to invite him in, and she did, for she was afraid to disobey a King. She was quite grumpy as the frog sat right next to her and helped himself to dinner.

“I’m so very hungry,” he said, as a long, thin tongue shot out of his wide mouth. His tongue wrapped itself around a morsel of cheese from her plate, and then he slipped the food down his throat.

“Ahhh...” he sighed, “That was ever so yummy!”

“Disgusting!” she said out loud. After dinner, the frog asked her to lift him up and then go upstairs so they could play in her room. She didn’t dare disobey her father, so she grabbed the slimy wet frog and carried him out of the dining room.

“He’s so ugly,” she thought. “Why did I ever promise such a thing?”

The frog stayed with her for three days and nights. The Princess grumbled and complained the whole time. On the morning of the fourth day, she was surprised to see a young boy in her room, a boy who looked a lot like her! He was playing with her golden ball.

“Who are you?” she demanded.

The boy approached her and smiled. “I am your brother!”

He explained all about what happened to him: “A witch cast a spell on me, and the only way it could be broken was if you, my sister, took me back to the palace, let me eat off of your plate, stay with you, and play with your toys for three days!”

The spell was broken, and the brother had come back to his sister and parents. The girl grew to love her brother. She nicknamed him, “The Frog Prince.” Every time she called his name, she remembered how different things would have been if she hadn't kept her promises.

Moral: Always do what you say you will do.

Questions

1. What happened to the girl's brother in the beginning of the story?

2. What did the frog do for the Princess in the beginning of the story?

3. What did the Princess promise she would do after he got the ball for her?

4. Why didn't she keep her promise to the frog?

5. What did the King tell his daughter about promises?

6. What did the girl learn by the end of the story?

Reflection Exercise

The girl kept her promise to the frog, even though she didn't want to. Can you think of some promises you've made and kept? Was it easy or difficult to do what you said you would do?

Chapter 13: The Water of Life
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
A pure heart

Once upon a time, there was a king who ruled a far away country. The king had three sons.

This king got very sick—so sick, everyone thought he was going to die. The three sons were very sad. They walked together through the gardens, shaking their heads. The gardener asked what was wrong.

The sons explained that their father, the king, was very sick, and that it seemed as if he was going to die.

"Ah!" said the old gardener. "He needs the Water of Life. If he could have a glass of the Water of Life, he would get well again."

The oldest son said, "I will go find some!"

He went to his father and asked leave to go and search for the Water of Life.

"No," said the king. "Such a journey would be too dangerous. I would rather die than have you in peril."

The older son begged and begged, so finally the king gave him permission to go.

As he made preparations for his journey, the older son thought, "If I save my father's life with this water, he will make me the next king!"

He set out on his journey, and came to a deep valley. There were many rocks and woods in this valley. As he came out of a woods, he saw a large rock ahead of him. On top of it was a dwarf—a very ugly, old dwarf, wearing a red cloak.



"Where are you going in such a rush, Prince?" the dwarf asked the oldest son.

The prince sneered. "What do you care, you ugly old thing?"

The prince rode on, but the dwarf was so angered by how mean the prince had been, he cast a spell on him.

As the prince rode, the rocks closed in on him so he could barely squeeze his horse by between them. He tried to back his horse up in order to turn around, but he saw that the path had closed up behind him with big, scary rocks too. Then he heard someone laughing so hard it rang in the prince's ears. He tried to get off his horse and walk, but the rocks moved in so close, he couldn't take a step. He was stuck there.

When his older brother did not return, the second son said, "Father, I will go in search of my brother and of the Water of Life."

The king was too weak to say no to his second son's begging to be allowed to go.

The second prince set off on his journey, thinking, "My brother must have died along the way. If I find the water, my father will make me the next king!"

He followed the same road his brother had gone along, and met with the same dwarf, who stopped him at the exact same place and asked him the same thing he had asked his older brother:

"Where are you going in such a rush, Prince?"

"Don't be so nosy!" said the prince rudely, and he rode on. The angry dwarf cast the same spell upon him as he put on his elder brother. Now two of them were trapped in stone!



It is important not to be too proud and not to think you are better than others. You might wind up in a tight place!

When the second prince did not return, the youngest prince got very upset.

"I will go," he promised himself. "I will go and find my brothers and bring back the Water of Life to our father. He has been a wonderful king. The people love him, and so do I. He must live."

The king was barely alive—far too weak to say no to what the prince asked him. So the youngest prince set out on the journey, and in the exact same spot as the two who went before him, he was met by the dwarf, who said:

"Where are you going in such a rush, Prince?"

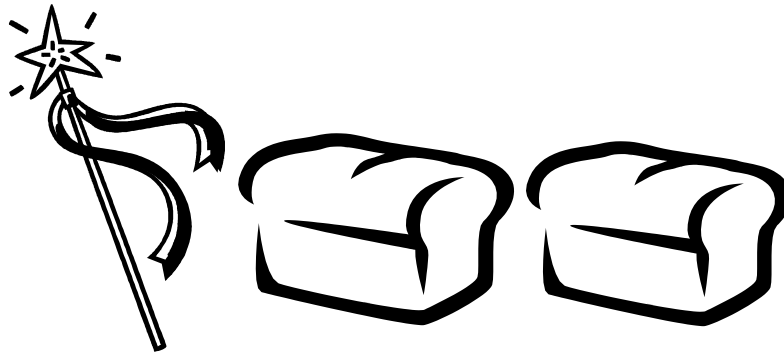
"Good afternoon," said the youngest prince. "My father, the king, is sick, and I am going in search of the Water of Life. I will gladly follow any wisdom and advice you might have to give me about this quest!"

"Do you know where the Water of Life is?" asked the dwarf, impressed by the young prince's politeness.

"No," sighed the prince. "I have no idea."

"Well," said the dwarf. "Since you are polite and wise enough to ask for the advice of your elders, I will help you find the Water of Life. It is from a well in an enchanted castle.

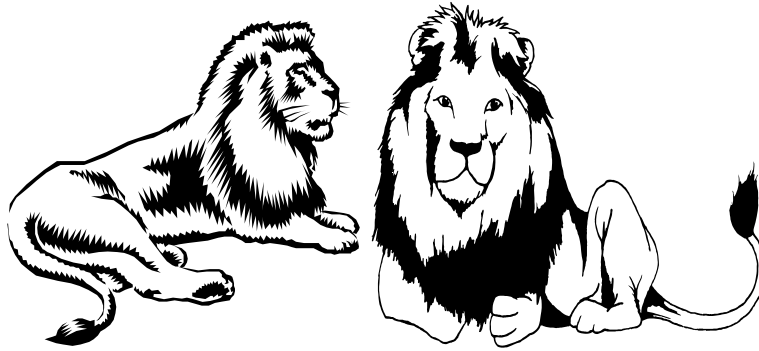
The dwarf handed the prince an iron wand and two loaves of bread.



"Here is an iron wand," he said. "Strike the iron door of the castle with the iron wand three times. The door will open, and you will be met by two fierce lions. Give them these two loaves of bread. They will let you pass then. Go to the well and take some Water of Life before the clock strikes twelve. If you are late, the door will shut, and you will be trapped forever."

The prince was very grateful for the wise advice and for the things the dwarf gave him. They politely took their leave of one another, and the prince set out on a long journey over land and sea to the enchanted castle.

On the third stroke of the iron wand, the iron door indeed flew open, and there were the two lions! They did look fierce! The prince gave them the loaves of bread, and they settled down tamely to eat them.



The prince walked down a beautiful hall. On a large round table in the center of the hall, there was a sword and a loaf of bread. He picked them up, because they had a sign on them that said, "For he who seeks the Water of Life."

Then he saw a beautiful princess. She greeted him joyfully and said that she would marry the man who set the castle free of its enchantment—the whole kingdom would be his and hers. She showed him the garden where the well with the Water of Life was.

The prince was so tired that the lovely gardens with their flowers and sweet smells, their silence and soft breezes, made him feel that he needed to rest. He lay down on a bench and, before he knew it, he was fast asleep. He didn't wake up until the first stroke of twelve.

His heart in his mouth, he leaped up and grabbed a cup that was near the well. He filled it with the Water of Life and raced to the iron door. He ran through it just as the last stroke of twelve sounded. He was so close to being shut up in the door, the heel of his boot snapped off as the door closed on it.

He was safe and full of joy. He would save his father now!

On the way home, he passed by the wise dwarf, who looked at the sword and the bread the prince had picked up from the table in the great hall.

"Oh!" said the dwarf. "This is a magical sword. With one sweep of it, you can defeat a whole army. As to the bread, it never runs out but always renews itself. You will never go hungry with that bread."

"Ah! I am grateful for these gifts, but mostly I am grateful I have the Water of Life for my father. Still, I do not like to go home without my brothers. Kind sir, have you seen two men who are a lot like me only older? They came this way. They were my brothers, looking as I was for the Water of Life."

"Humph," said the dwarf. "You say they were a lot like you? They were not. They were rude and proud and thought themselves too good even to be polite to an old dwarf like me, let alone to ask for my wisdom and advice. In fact, I have kept them imprisoned by rocks since they came this way!"

The prince begged and begged the dwarf, and the prince was so kind and good, the dwarf took the spell away from his brothers.

"Be careful about them," he warned the youngest prince. "They have evil hearts."

The youngest prince was happy to see his brothers, though, for he loved them, and he told them all that had befallen him.

On the way home, they rode through a kingdom where there had been war and bad weather. Everyone was starving. The youngest prince, moved to pity, gave the king of the land the magic bread. All the kingdom ate it and were fed as it renewed itself. The prince also loaned the king the magical sword to defeat the enemy army with. The youngest prince now had a whole kingdom that liked him.

His brothers were getting jealous that the youngest prince was so fortunate. They wanted to give their father the Water of Life themselves. So one night they stayed awake until the youngest prince was asleep, and they filled his

cup with plain water and took the Water of Life themselves.

When the youngest son gave this plain water to the king, he did not get better. Indeed, he got worse.

"What a fool!" the older princes said to their younger brother. "Here, Father, drink this instead."

They gave the Water of Life to their father. He got better that very day.

The king was very angry with his youngest son for bringing him plain water and saying it was the Water of Life. He was considering banishing him from the kingdom.

Then one day an ambassador from the king of a neighboring kingdom came with jewels and gold for the youngest son as presents to thank him for saving their kingdom from war and starvation. The king began to believe that his youngest son was good after all.

The princess at the enchanted castle could not wait until her wonderful prince came back to marry her. She had the road leading up the palace coated with real gold. She said that her true love would ride up the gold road one day.

The time came when the eldest brother thought that he should go to the princess, and claim to be the one who had set her free. That way, he would be the king of her kingdom. As he rode up to the palace, though, he loved gold so much he could not bear to ride on the golden road. He rode alongside of the road.

When they saw him, everyone in the palace said, "He is not riding on the gold road. He cannot be the one."

The second prince decided to try his luck, but he too loved gold too much to set foot on it. He too rode along the side of the gold road instead of on it.

Once again, the people in the palace said, "He cannot be the one. He cannot be her true love."



The youngest prince went to see his true love, the princess. He was so anxious to see her, he did not even look at the road. He kept staring at the castle, hoping to catch a glimpse of her.

When he arrived, everyone in the palace understood that he was the true love of the princess. She welcomed him with joy and began to call him "King."

The older brothers were so jealous, they decided they could not stand to stay in the same place with him any longer. They left their father and went away to sea, never to be heard from again.

The old king was glad that he had his youngest son to take over being the king—and a lovely princess with a kingdom of her own, too!

The king called his court together and asked everyone in the kingdom to come and celebrate the wedding of his youngest son and the fair princess.

It was a most glorious wedding. The halls rang with song and laughter and joy that such a brave, honest, true prince was going to be the future king. All the friends the prince had made in the other kingdoms came—and so did the dwarf!

Questions

1. Why did the two older brothers want to save their father?

2. Why did the youngest son want to save his father?

3. How did the two older brothers treat the wise old dwarf?

4. What do you think the way they treated the dwarf says about their hearts?

5. How did the youngest brother treat the wise old dwarf?

6. What do you think that says about his heart?

7. The dwarf said the older brothers had evil hearts. Do you agree?

8. Were the older brothers glad that their brother had the Water of Life and glad that he could feed and help another kingdom?

9. Do you think the youngest brother deserved to have the princess and his own kingdoms?

Reflection Exercise

The youngest prince was kind to everyone he met. He was not only a prince, he was a "prince of heart too." He had a pure and good heart. Try to be a prince or princess of heart to everyone you meet today!

Chapter 14: The Six Swans
(Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)
Devotion

A king, accompanied by his royal servants, was riding in the forest when a mother bear and her cub startled the group. As the bears crossed the path in front of them, the King's frightened steed galloped away with him, deep into the woods.

When the horse finally stopped running, the King looked around and saw that he was lost. He rode a distance until he saw a clearing in the woods.

There was a small cottage. An old woman was in the yard picking berries. The King approached her and asked if she could help him out of the forest.

The woman responded in a threatening voice, "You will die trying to get out of this forest alone. I will help you on one condition. You are to take my daughter and her younger brother with you. Once you are home, you will marry my daughter, make her Queen, and adopt my son."

The King hesitated. He was a widower with six sons and one daughter. He didn't really want to marry again, but what could he do? The King knew he would surely die if he tried to find his way out of the woods by himself. He agreed, so the young woman and her brother helped him get back to the castle.

The King knew that the old woman and her daughter had a plan to make the younger brother the heir to the throne, because he had heard them talking when he was in the woods. As soon as he arrived home, he secretly escorted his children away from the castle to an abandoned house hidden in the forest. He was afraid that the new Queen would do something to get rid of his children, so he hid them. He kept his promise, married the young woman, and adopted her brother. The Queen, not wanting to appear suspicious,

didn't ask the King about his children. She didn't really know how many children he had, but she knew he had hidden them.



This house was so well-hidden that even the King couldn't find it. So he consulted with his advisor, who brought him a magic ball of yarn. Whenever the King wanted to go to his children, he cast the ball of yarn on the ground. Then it unwound, traveling on its own, all the way to the hidden house. All the King had to do was follow it.

The Queen became curious when the King left every afternoon and didn't tell her where he was going. Finally, she forced the King's advisor to tell her everything. Then she set to work making shirts for the children, sewing a charm inside each one. Then the Queen found the ball of yarn, thanks to the advisor who betrayed his King. She followed the trail of yarn to the hidden house.

The children saw someone coming through the woods and, thinking it was their father, ran to greet the visitor. The wicked Queen surprised them and threw the charmed shirts over their heads. Then, something extraordinary happened. Their mouths turned into beaks, feathers grew out of their skin, their necks lengthened, and their arms turned into wings! They had become swans! The wicked Queen laughed, chased them into the air, and they sadly flew away.



“Now my brother will be the only heir to the throne,” she proclaimed, as she hurried back to the castle and carefully returned the yarn. The next day, the King followed the magic yarn to the hidden house. When he arrived, it was very quiet. He saw the white feathers that covered the ground.

“What happened? Where are my children?” the King cried. He searched everywhere but couldn’t find them. The King didn’t suspect that the Queen had anything to do with the disappearance of his children. He believed they had wandered far off into the dense forest and were lost. For days, the King mourned his lost children. He sent soldiers out to look for them, but it was as if they had vanished.

The Queen didn’t know that there was one child who had been hiding in the house when she turned the boys into swans. It was the youngest one, the little sister. After the Queen left, the girl ran after her brothers, trying to keep up with them. They were flying very fast, so eventually she lost sight of them.

Finally, she collapsed by a pond, exhausted and crying. Soon she was fast asleep. She thought she was dreaming when she heard splashing noises. She sat up, and there were her six brothers, kneeling beside her.

“What a miracle! You are human again!” she exclaimed.

The brothers explained, "There is a curse put on us by the wicked Queen. We become humans for only fifteen minutes at sunrise. Then we turn back into swans." The brothers were sad.

"What can be done?" cried the sister, "Isn't there a way to break the curse?"

The oldest brother said, "There is a way. But it is so very difficult, too hard for you. You'd have to not speak or laugh for six long years. During that time, six magic shirts have to be sewn from aster flowers. If you speak one word, all is lost."

The fifteen minutes was up. They changed into swans and flew away.

The little sister was courageous and loyal. She thought of her father. When she pictured him alone and broken-hearted, she decided she would break the curse.

That night she slept in a tree, and the next morning she started collecting asters to sew into shirts. Suddenly some men appeared on horseback.

Surprised to see a young girl in the woods, they demanded to know her name. She would not speak a word or the curse would be broken. They tried to speak with her in different languages, but still she didn't speak.

"She is a mute. Let's take her home," said the leader. They brought her to their home, which was very far away from where she lived.

The girl remained there, and everyone thought she was odd. She neither spoke nor laughed. All she wanted to do was to collect aster flowers and sew. No one understood her, and she was very lonely. Every night she dreamed of being together again with her brothers and her father. When she awoke, she would feel hopeful again. Then she'd try even harder to prepare the shirts for the day when she would be able to free her brothers.



At last the day arrived when the girl sewed the final stitch in the sixth shirt. The people around her had been plotting to lock her up. She hadn't been able to explain anything, because all would be lost if she spoke even one word. She wanted to tell them what had happened and that she was innocent of any wrong, but she couldn't. She was now in danger.

That morning, she grabbed the shirts and carried them tightly in her arms as she climbed the hill near the town. The people had formed a crowd, and they were coming after her. Six years had passed since she had come to their village. She had kept silent all that time. As she stood on the hill with her shirts, she heard wings and saw six swans flying overhead. They swooped down and picked her up, carrying her to safety away from the angry mob.

The swans flew back home and entered the window to the King's chamber. The sister then covered the swans with the magic shirts. The King shouted with joy as the birds transformed into his lost sons.

Because of the sister's loyalty and courage, the curse was broken and the sons were restored back to the King. The wicked Queen, who no longer had any magic power, was locked up. Her magical ability was destroyed by a much higher power—the love of a sister for her family.

Questions

1. How did the King find his way out of the forest? What did he have to do?

2. Why did the king hide his children from the new Queen?

3. Why did the Queen want to get rid of the King's children?

4. What did the little sister have to do to break the curse?

5. Do you think she must have loved her family very much to be able to do all she did?

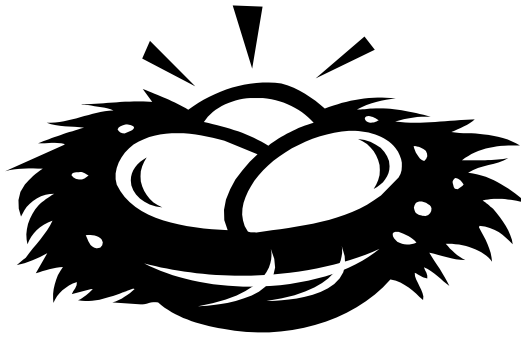
Reflection Exercise

What are some ways that you show devotion to your family? What are some ways they show devotion to you?

Chapter 15: The Ugly Duckling
(Adapted From Hans Christian Anderson)
Self-Respect

The pond in the springtime was buzzing with activity. On a warm rock, a lazy turtle was basking in the sun, while frogs chased water spiders for breakfast. The gentle breeze rustled new green leaves, and birds sang as they awaited the birth of their babies. Thick clumps of reeds lined the pond.

Hidden in the reeds was a soft, grass-lined nest, and sitting on the nest was a mother duck. Nearby was a farm, and in the yard were many other animals. The farmer fed his animals well, so the mother duck never lacked food, which she really needed now, because she was busy sitting on her eggs.



The day had arrived at last! One of the twelve eggs cracked, and piece by piece fell away until a cute baby duckling burst out of its shell. The Mother Duck started feeding her new duckling right away. One by one, the shells cracked open, until finally there was only one egg left—the biggest one. The Mother Duck faithfully sat on this last egg, while her ducklings begged for food. It took a long time, but finally the egg cracked, and out popped a very ugly-looking bird.

“Oh well, let’s get going, now that the eggs are all hatched,” said the mother duck. “It’s time for your first swimming lesson.”

The twelve ducklings followed their Mother everywhere. In the morning, they’d waddle over to the feeding trough near the barn and help themselves to breakfast. The other animals admired the fluffy, yellow ducklings as they marched through the yard. But the unusually large, gray duckling was teased constantly. Mother Duck tried to protect him, but it was no use. The other ducklings and the hens would peck him on his back. The girl who brought the grain to the feeding trough and collected the eggs would chase him around the yard with her broom.

“Why don’t you get lost, you ugly thing? You’re not fluffy and yellow like the others. You don’t belong here,” she’d yell as she ran after him.

Several months later, the Ugly Duckling decided to fly away with a flock of geese. He was sad to leave his home, but the teasing was too much for him. The geese brought him to a swamp far away from his farm. Here there was no farm at all, so he had to find his own food.

One day, as the Ugly Duckling was bobbing for food in the swamp, he heard some scary, loud sounds. The geese started to fly away, honking with fear.

“Hunter, hunter, let’s flee!” they cried. One of the geese was shot and fell through the air.



“This is dangerous,” thought the Ugly Duckling. “I must find a safer place.” He went and hid quietly in the reeds. When the sun set, he waddled over to a little cottage about a mile from the swamp. It had started raining hard, with thunder and lightning. Every time the thunder boomed, the Ugly Duckling jumped. He was scared of the hunters and the storm, and he was a long way from home.

The cottage door was open a crack, so he went inside to protect himself from the storm. By the fire, was an old woman in her rocking chair. A cat sat on her lap, and a hen was sleeping in a little bed nearby.

The hen and the cat greeted him, and the old woman spoke, “What is this? I hope it’s a female so we can have some duck eggs.”

The Ugly Duckling stayed with the old woman for two weeks. The old woman loved the cat, for she was soft, and she always purred as she sat in her mistress’s lap. The old woman loved the hen, for they had grown old together, like sisters. But the old woman came to dislike the Ugly Duckling because he didn’t produce any eggs, and he could not please her in any way. The hen and the cat started to chase and tease the Duckling, and he decided to leave.

“I’m useless. No one likes me.” He sobbed as he waddled out the door back to the swamp where he lived all alone for several months.

One morning, as he started to look for food, he heard some new sounds.

“What’s this?” he wondered, as a whole flock of large, snowy white birds with long curved necks settled on the water.

“They are so graceful and amazing!” exclaimed the Duckling, for he had never seen anything so beautiful in his life. He wanted to hide. He thought he was so ugly, he was afraid they would tease him. He started to plunge his head under the water so they wouldn’t see him. But, as he looked at the

water something startled him. He stared and stared at his reflection. It had been almost a year since he had entered the world in the nest of the mother duck. All that time, he had never bothered to look at his reflection in the water. All the animals had told him he was ugly, so he hadn't even wanted to see himself.

Suddenly, the swans swam over to him, honking a friendly greeting.

The Ugly Duckling continued to stare at his reflection, saying over and over again, "I'm a Swan! I'm not a Duck. I'm snowy white and beautiful. I have a long graceful neck. Somehow my egg ended up in mother duck's nest.

That's why I didn't look like the other ducklings."

The handsome swan was reunited with his family that day. They flew back to the farm where he was born, and as soon as they arrived the children and farm animals and birds gathered around them.

"Look at that one," they said as they pointed in his direction, "He is more beautiful than all the others. He walks like a king!"

They were talking about the Ugly Duckling who had turned into a beautiful swan.



Questions

1. Why was the Ugly Duckling different from the other ducklings?

2. Why did he leave his home on the farm and later the old woman's house?

3. How did he realize he was a swan?

4. Do you think it is right to tease others, even if they are different from you?

5. Do you ever wish you could be someone different from who you are?

Reflection Exercise

What do you think you will grow up to be like? Do you think maybe you will turn out to be a swan, even if you feel like an Ugly Duckling right now?

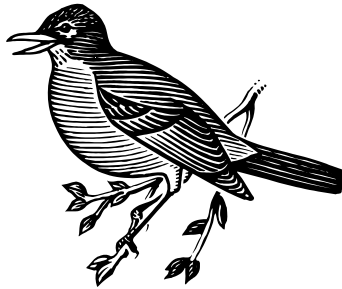
Chapter 16: The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage (Adapted from the Brothers Grimm)

Fairness

Once upon a time, a mouse, a bird, and a sausage became friends and set up a little house together. Everything went well for them. They were very happy and comfortable together.

Each had a chore to do, so none of them had to work too hard. The bird would fly into the forest every day and gather twigs to burn for a fire. The mouse brought water into the house, and the sausage did all the cooking.

Were they content with what they had? They were very content. Then one day the bird met another bird and began to chat. The first bird told the second bird all about his household and how happy they were sharing the work so no one had to do too much.



"Oh, ho!" said the second bird (he was a little jealous). "It sounds to me like you do all the work! When the mouse is done getting the water, he goes to sleep. When the sausage cooks, all he had to do is throw himself into the soup or roll on the vegetables and meat and they are all flavored and salted. You, on the other hand, must fly to and fro, to and fro, gathering twigs!"

The bird had never thought of things this way before, but now that he did, he thought maybe he was doing most of the work. (That wasn't true.)

He went home and made trouble. He told the others he was not going to bring twigs anymore and that they would have to do their share of work from now on. So, even though everyone had been perfectly happy the way things were, and even though the sausage and the mouse had already been doing their share of the work, they agreed to change things around for the sake of the bird. It was decided that the bird would get water each day, the mouse would cook, and the sausage would bring twigs for the fire.

This did not work out well at all! On the way to the forest to gather twigs, the sausage was eaten by a dog! Trying to cook, the mouse fell into the boiling pot and was skinned alive! The bird, unused to fetching water, was pulled down into the well by the heavy pail and drowned.

Moral: Do your fair share without complaint.

Questions

1. Was the bird really doing more work than the others?

2. Should he have listened to the other bird?

3. The mouse and the sausage tried hard to please the bird when he became unhappy. Do you think they were good friends to the bird?

4. Do you think much happiness is lost when people listen to bad words about their friends?

5. Do you do chores at home to help out?

Reflection Exercise

Think about the things you say about the chores and the work you do. Do you complain a lot? Think about how much your parents do and figure out how you can help with a cheerful heart.

Chapter 17: It's Perfectly True
(Adapted from Hans Christian Anderson)
Truthfulness

It was a Sunday morning, and the barnyard hens were roosting and cackling away.

“I heard that Harriet Hen flew so awkwardly off the fence that she fell into the pig sty,” said one hen.

“That’s nothing,” said another. “I heard that Ronald Rooster forgot to wake up at sunrise and no one got up on time!”

“Quiet down,” grunted mother pig to the cackling hens. “What’s all the noise about? Can’t you be quiet?”

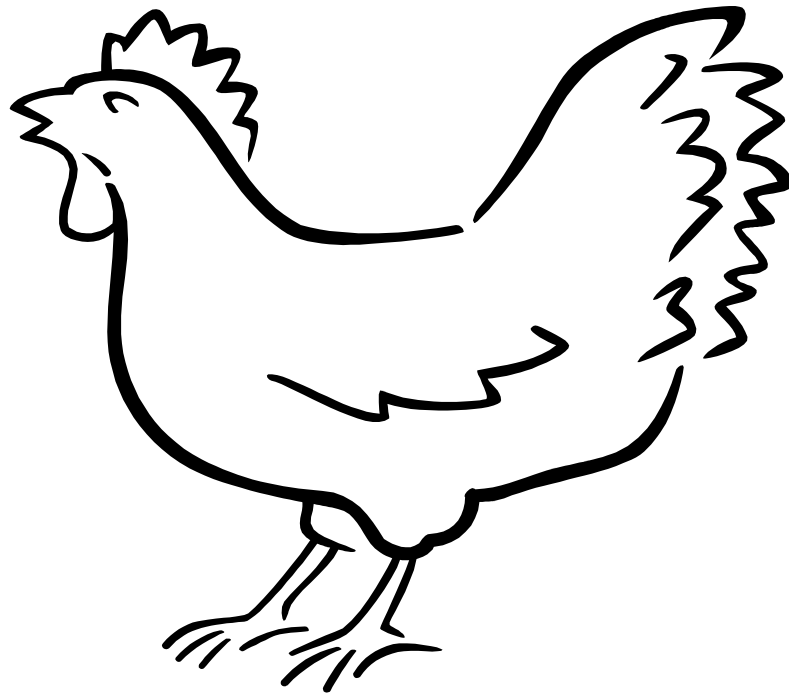
The horse neighed in agreement, “Those hens are always talking about someone. Big gossipers they are, indeed!”



The hens were quite excited now, because they had just heard some fresh news of a terrible tragedy in a chicken coop down the road.

One of the hens spoke, “I heard it from a reliable source, so it’s perfectly true.” They all gasped and wondered how such a thing could happen.

This story began the day before. Since then, it had traveled from farm to farm. It all started on that sunny, Saturday morning. A hen was preening herself, when she accidentally pulled out one of her feathers.



“Ouch!” she cried, “Well, at least now it looks like I lost some weight. I look more beautiful than usual.” This hen was well-known for her wit, and she was just having some fun. But another hen took her words seriously.

“She’s plucking out her feathers so she can lose weight and look more beautiful. How vain!” she thought to herself. Then she turned to her

neighbor and whispered, “I know a hen who’s plucking out all her feathers so she can look beautiful. Isn’t that strange?”

The listener gasped and asked, “Is it really true?”

Her informer responded, “It’s perfectly true.”

An owl was listening to the conversation. “These hens are odd. Plucking out all your feathers so you can look beautiful is crazy.” Then she flew off to a nearby farm where she spread the word. “Did you hear, did you hear?” she called to the rooster.

The rooster was shocked to hear the tale. He made an announcement to the hens at that farm, “It’s a terrible tale, but I must say it, for it’s perfectly true. Three hens on a nearby farm have plucked out all their feathers so they could look more beautiful. But they caught a cold and died!”

All through the day and night, the story was spread far and wide, from farm to farm. When the hens from the first farm were eating breakfast the next morning, the rooster approached them.

He squawked, “I just heard the morning news. Five hens have died because they plucked out all their feathers to look more beautiful. Then they pecked each other to death because they were jealous of one another. Can you believe it? It’s perfectly true!”

The hen, who had plucked out one feather the day before, was listening.

“How awful,” she said, not realizing that it was her words that had started this rumor. “We should warn hens everywhere so they won’t pluck out their feathers and die!” She flew off, calling out to all the animals to be careful.

“Let’s learn the lesson from this tragic tale,” she proclaimed as she told the story over and over again.

“Is it really true?” they’d ask.

And she would say, “It’s perfectly true!”

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the hen pluck out a feather in the beginning of the story?

2. Every time someone told the story, they added a little bit that wasn't true until the whole story became a big lie. Do you think little lies can add up to big ones?

3. When people talk about others behind their backs, do you think all they say is true, or is it like in this story?

4. What did the pig and the horse say about the hens in the beginning of this story? Do you agree with what they said?

Reflection Exercise

When people gossip, it means that they talk about other people, often in a mean or exaggerated way, behind their backs. Do you think that gossip can be harmful? Why or why not?