

## The Goose-Girl at the Well

Long ago, an old woman stumbled into the forest to pick grass and fruit. She carried the heavy bag on her back. She kindly greeted everyone she met on the way: 'Good morning, friend! You may be surprised by what I am carrying, but everyone has their burden to carry! Most people would rather not run into her. An old witch,' she was called.

One day, a handsome young man was walking through the forest. He saw the woman filling a large basket with grass. Next to it were two more large baskets of apples and pears. "How are you going to carry all that?" the young curious man asked. "Rich folk's children don't have to do that but with the peasant folk the saying goes, don't look behind you, you will only see how crooked your back is!



"Will you help me?" the old woman asked. "I am the son of a rich count," replied the young man, "I don't have to do it, but I will help you." Once the bag was on his back, it felt like it was filled with rocks. 'How heavy this is,' he began to complain. 'You're young and well-muscled,' the woman said, 'I'll add the apples and pears. When he tried to remove the heavy load from his back, the woman snarled: "Shame on you for grumbling about something you have to carry, which I do every day as an old woman!" It was as if the bag had attached itself to his back. It became even heavier when the woman sat on his back. "Now stop whining," she growled, "you will be generously rewarded for your help."

Near the little woman's remote house, geese were walking everywhere. They were being looked after by a very old goose-keeper. "Go inside, my daughter," she said to the goose keeper.

Then she gave the boy a box with an emerald. "You must have enough money, but this gift will make you happy."



The young count left for the big city. There he was invited by the royal couple. He gave the box to the queen, who immediately fainted. Later she told him about her three daughters. The youngest was enchantingly beautiful, with hair like rays of sunshine. When she cried, her tears turned into pearls. One day, the king wanted to know who loved him the most. The eldest daughter said she loved him like the sweetest sugar. The second daughter loved him like her most beautiful dress. The youngest did not answer because she could not find a comparison. The king insisted, whereupon she said: "I do not like food without salt, therefore I love you like salt." The king became so angry that he sent her into the forest. Shortly afterwards, he regretted this enormously. He sent out a search party to look for his daughter in vain. That was three years ago. In the box was a pearl, exactly like a tear from her daughter.

The young man promised to go in search of the princess. One evening, he saw the old gooseherd by a spring. The moonlight was crisp and clear. He could see everything clearly. She removed a kind of mask from her face and changed into a breathtakingly beautiful young woman. Her hair broke forth like sunbeams.



The old woman did not seem surprised when there was a knock at the door. It was the king and queen. "You have travelled a long way," she said kindly. It would not have been necessary if you had not sent your daughter away three years ago. She thought that the royal couple had now been punished long enough and called in the beautiful Princess.

The king asked what he could give his daughter. But she needed nothing. For three years she had cried pearls of sorrow. Now she was rich enough. The old woman gave her the house and then suddenly disappeared into thin air. The house turned into a splendid palace.

Whether the young count and the princess married is unknown, but it is very likely. Nobody knows who the old woman was. It is thought that she may have given the newborn princess tears of pearls. Nowadays such things do not happen anymore. If it did there would be no poor people now. The narrator of this story has become very old and doesn't remember it all. It all happened a long time ago.