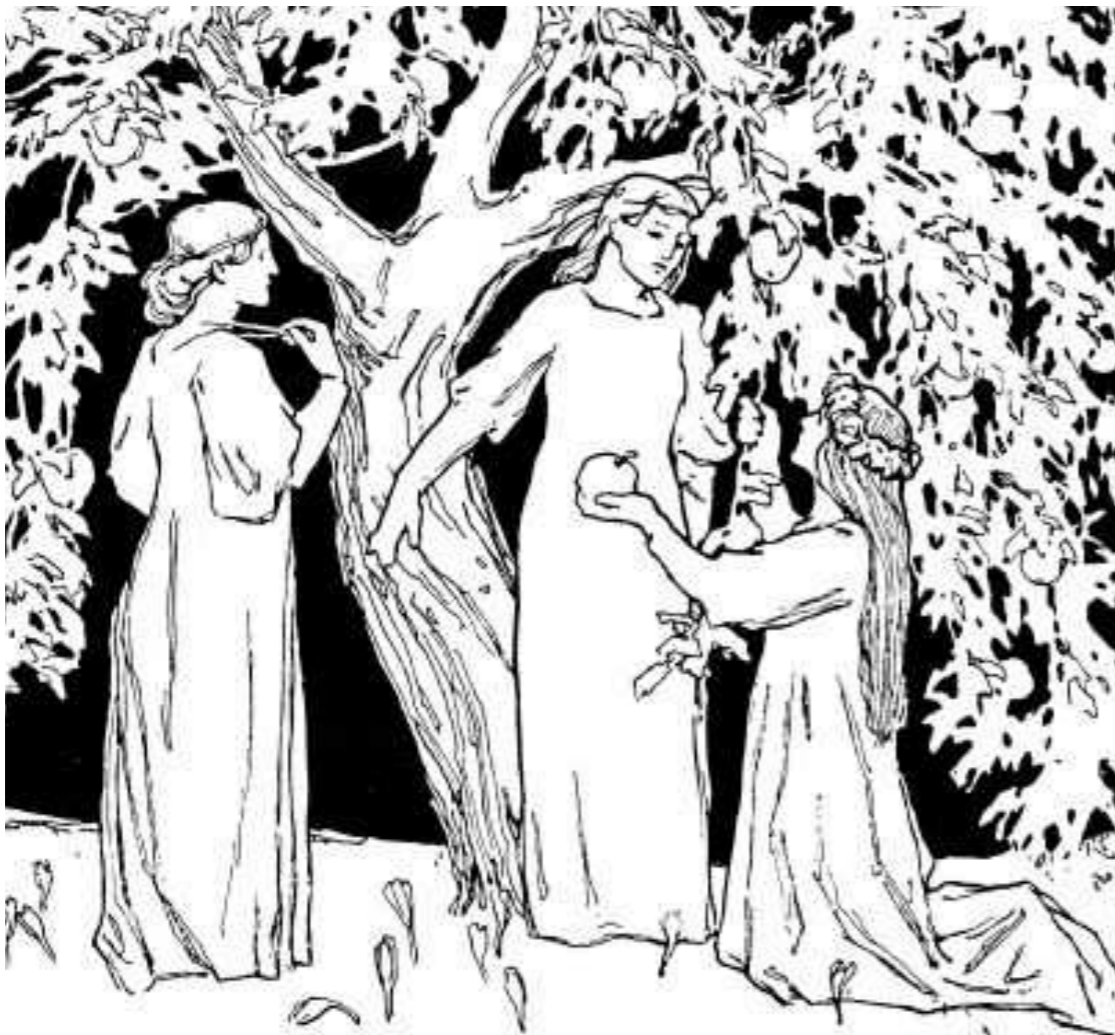
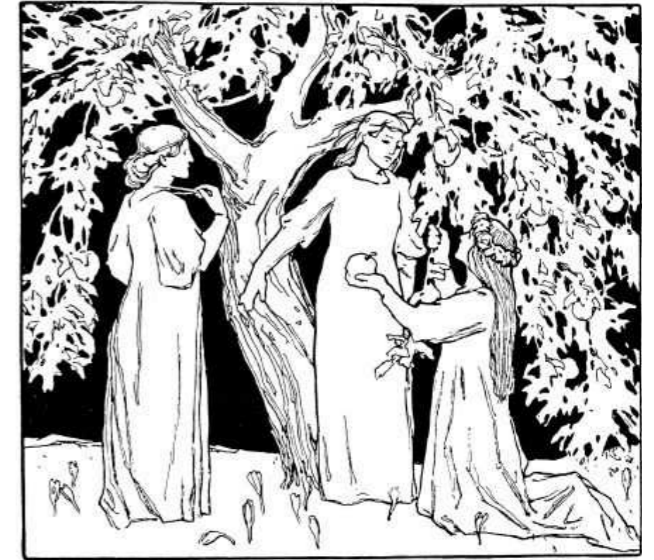


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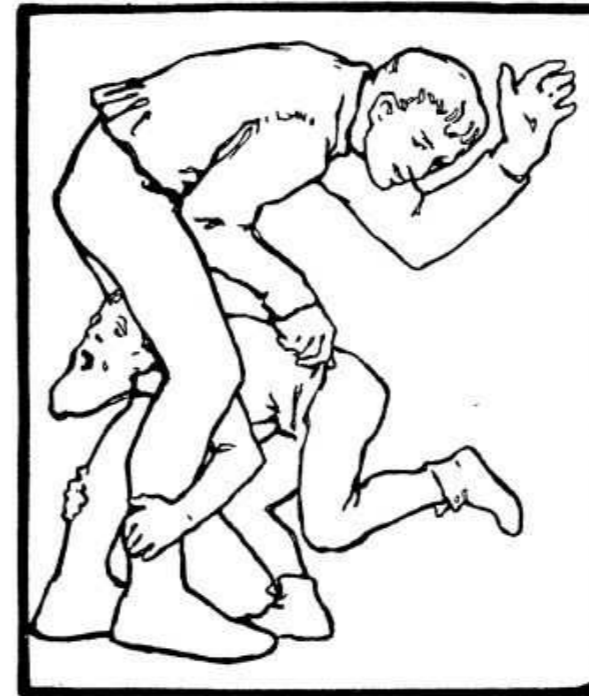
The Gnome



Once upon a time there was a rich king with three daughters, who took a walk in the garden every day. There was one tree in the garden that the king loved so much that if someone was to take an apple from it, that person would disappear a hundred thousand meters under the ground. 'Our father loves us too much for that to happen', said the youngest of the sisters and took an apple from the tree. 'Ah come on sisters, take a bite. This is the best apple I've ever eaten!' Her sisters also took a bite and just like that all three of them disappeared to the middle of the earth.



The king was very sad and made an announcement, whoever would bring his daughters back could marry one of them. Since the girls were beautiful and sweet, many men went out to search for them.



In the meantime three brothers went to look for the girls and after eight days they arrived at a big castle with a lot of rooms. In one of the rooms there was a big feast on the table. And after waiting for half a day, the food was still warm and nobody had showed up to eat.

Because the castle was very pleasant, they decided that one brother would stay there and the other two would go looking for the king's daughters. Faith decided that the eldest brother would stay behind and that afternoon a small man came up to him and asked for a piece of bread. When the brother gave

the bread to him, the little man dropped the bread and asked: 'Would you be so kind as to grab that for me?' When the eldest brother bent over, the man quickly took a stick and hit him on the head.

A day later the same happened to the second brother. On the third day the youngest stayed at the castle. When the little man asked him to grab the bread, he answered: 'Can't you do it yourself? If it's below you to pick up a piece of bread, then you're not worth it!' The little man got angry and wanted to attack him, but the youngest brother was no pushover and grabbed the man. The little man got so scared that he said: 'Please let me go, I will tell you where the princesses are.'

When the youngest brother heard this, he let go and the little man told him that he was a gnome and that there are thousands more. Then he pointed to a deep well and said: 'The king's daughters are in there. I would advise you to rescue them alone, because your brothers can't be trusted. They want to marry the princesses, but don't want to put in the work.'

After the gnome had told him that, he disappeared. In the evening the youngest brother told his brothers about what had happened and the next morning they went to the well together. When they raffled who would go first, faith decided that the eldest brother should go. He went down in a basket and they agreed that when he yelled, he would be pulled up. The eldest brother was barely in the well and he was already screaming so they pulled him up. With the second brother the same happened.

Only the youngest brother went all the way down. At the bottom he pulled his sword and defeated the dragons that were guarding the princesses. The king's daughters were incredibly grateful. One kissed him, the other gave him a golden necklace and the third spoke passionate words of gratitude. The youngest brother called his brothers and one by one they pulled the girls up. When it was his turn to be pulled up, he remembered the words of the gnome, that his brothers can't be trusted and he put a heavy stone in the basket. The basket was halfway when the brothers cut the rope.

Thinking they would never see their youngest brother again, they took the princesses and presented themselves as their saviours at the castle. In the meantime the youngest brother was sitting in the well being sad, until he suddenly noticed a flute on the wall. At wit's end he blew the whistle and hundreds of little men appeared. 'What can we do for you?', they asked.

He answered that we would like to see daylight again. The little men grabbed him and swung him out of the well. The youngest brother immediately went to the castle and confidently walked into the room where the king was with his daughters. When they saw him they all fainted! Which made the king think he had hurt them and he wanted to put him in jail. But when the princesses woke up, they begged their father to realize the boy.

When the king had heard the entire story, he decided that the youngest brother would marry the youngest princess. And the two older brothers? Nobody has ever heard from them ever again.