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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Old Three Heads

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Lucy. She was always opening doors and looking into rooms that did not belong to her, and it made her appear very rude.

One day Lucy was sent to the woods to gather berries, but instead of filling her basket as she should have done she walked about, looking behind rocks and trees, thinking that she might find an opening in some of them.

"Better look out for Old Three Heads," said a squirrel, as he ran past her.

"I wonder what he means," she said. "I must keep on looking, for somewhere around here Old Three Heads must live, or the squirrel would not have said 'look out,' and I want to see what he is like."

"Better look out for Old Three Heads," called a bird from the limb of a tree.

"Better look out for Old Three Heads," called a rabbit as he ran into his hole.

"I wish some one would tell me where Old Three Heads lives," said Lucy, "instead of just saying look out for him." Just then she came to a path which led through thick bushes.

"I will see where this leads," she said. "Perhaps it leads to Old Three Heads' house."

Lucy walked along the path and soon she saw a castle standing among the trees. Most little girls would have hesitated about going into a strange house, but Lucy's curiosity was so great she thought only of seeing the inside of the castle. She walked up the steps and opened the door. The hall was long and dark, but she was not afraid. So she closed the door and walked along.

There were many doors on each side of the hall, and Lucy opened one and looked in. In one corner of the room was a horse with three heads. "What a strange place to keep a horse!" thought Lucy.

"Better look out for Old Three Heads," said the horse, shaking all three heads and looking sad.

"How did you get three heads?" asked Lucy.

"I looked in the window one day when Old Three Heads was eating his dinner, and he saw me. You better look out," he warned her again.

Lucy thought of the other doors and decided to keep on, for she was very anxious to see what was behind all of them.

She opened another door and a three-headed cat ran toward her. "You have only one head!" said the cat, in a tone of surprise. "You better look out for Old Three Heads."

"I am not afraid," said Lucy, as she left the room and opened another door. In this room was a three-headed dog. He looked at her and said, "Better look out for Old Three Heads; you will find him if you keep on opening doors."

"I want to see him," answered Lucy. "Where is he?"

"You better run while you can," said the dog, "but you will find him if you keep on, and then you will wish you had taken my advice."

But Lucy only laughed and went to another door. In that room she saw a three-headed cow.

"What a strange place!" she said. "I never saw animals living in a house before. Why are the animals kept in the house?" she asked the cow.

"We belong to Old Three Heads," replied the cow, "and every creature that comes in this castle has three heads. You better look out for Old Three Heads," she warned her.

"Why did you come in, if you knew you had to wear three heads?" asked Lucy.

"We wanted to see what was in here, just as you did," replied the cow. "The cat found the door open and she walked in to look about; the dog saw her enter and he followed. Old Three Heads saw them. You better look out," she warned Lucy again.

But Lucy was more curious than ever, and she kept on with her questions.

"How did you and the horse get three heads?" she asked. "You did not walk in the door, did you?"

"Not at first," answered the cow. "The horse put his head in the window one day when it was open and Old Three Heads saw him."

"And you," asked Lucy again, for the cow stopped and hung her three heads, "what did you do?"

"I saw some green corn on the window-sill," the cow confessed, very slowly, "and I put my head in the window to get it and Old Three Heads saw me."

"What happens when he sees you?" she asked.

"Wait and see," replied the cow. "But I have warned you; you'd better look out for Old Three Heads and run while you can."

As that was all the information she could get from the cow, Lucy told her she would find out for herself how they all got their three heads, and she went to the next door and opened it.

The room was dark, and at first Lucy could not see anything, but some one said, "Who-who," and as the sound came from a corner of the room Lucy went in and looked about.

As her eyes became accustomed to the darkness she saw perched on the back of a chair an owl with three heads.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Lucy. "How did so wise a bird as you happen to be caught by Old Three Heads?" she asked.

"Who-who are you?" stuttered the owl. "You-you better look out for Old Three Heads," he warned Lucy.

"Tell me how it happened that you have three heads," asked Lucy, ignoring the warning as she had before.

"Who-who are you?" stuttered the owl again.

"I am a girl," said Lucy. "Can't you see?"

"Bet-bet-better look out," warned the owl again.

"Oh dear!" said Lucy. "You are worse than the others. I am going to find Old Three Heads and find out, if I can, how all of you got three heads."

"Who-who," said the owl as she went out of the room.

Lucy opened another door, and there on the throne in this room sat a giant with three heads. She had found Old Three Heads at last.

For the first time since she entered the castle Lucy was frightened when she saw the curious-looking creature; but there was no chance to escape; it was too late.

The giant looked at her a second, and then he called out to his attendants, who all had three heads but were much smaller men: "Bring the intruder before me."

"Bring two heads," he said, when Lucy stood before him. When the heads were brought one had black hair and one red.

"I do not want those heads," said Lucy; "they do not match my hair. Can't I have two golden-haired heads?"

"Those are all I have," said the giant, "and you will have to wear them. On with them," he said, and the attendants fastened the heads on Lucy's shoulders, one on each side of her own head.

"I wish I could see myself," said Lucy, still curious.



"Take her to her room," said the giant, and Lucy was taken to one of the rooms that opened out of the long hall.

When she was alone she looked around the room and saw a mirror hanging on the wall. She ran and looked into it. The new heads looked very cross.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Lucy.

"I do not like red hair or light hair," said the dark-haired head.

"And I do not like dark hair or light hair," said the head with red hair.

"I cannot help that," said Lucy. "I did not want either of you."

"I will not stay here," said the dark-haired head.

"Neither will I," said the head with the red hair.

And they began to pull away. Lucy bent first to one side and then to the other, with the pulling of the quarrelsome heads.

"Do keep quiet," she said at last. "I am sorry I said anything about the color of your hair. If you will be good I'll try to get you something nice to eat."

This plan quieted the heads, and Lucy went to the door. It was not locked, and she opened it and went out. First she went to the room where the horse was.

"Horse, can you tell me where I can get something to eat?" she asked.

"Yes," said the horse. "Go to the fireplace and call up the chimney."

"I want my dinner," Lucy called.

Down came a table with food upon it and a chair standing beside it. Lucy seated herself and began to eat.

Then the trouble began; every time she raised the fork to her mouth the dark head or the head with red hair would stretch out their necks and take the food from the fork before Lucy could get a chance.

The new heads quarreled because each thought the other was getting more than its share.

Lucy put her fork and knife on the table in despair. "You are a pair of greedy heads," she said. "I have not had a bite."

"It is all your fault," said one; "you should not have got us."

Lucy went into the room where the cat was and asked her if she would tell her where she could get something to drink.

"Rap three times on the wall," said the cat.

Lucy tried this and a cup appeared filled with water.

Lucy tried to put it up to her lips, but the head with the red hair reached it and drank all the water.

Lucy rapped again, and another cup appeared, and this time the head with dark hair reached it and drank every drop of water before Lucy could stop it.

She tried several times, but each time the greedy heads drank it before she could get her lips to the cup.

She went into the room where the dog was kept.

"Where can I find a comfortable chair and a book?" she asked.

"Tap on the floor three times," the dog said.

Lucy did as he said, and a chair appeared, and beside it a table filled with books. Lucy opened one of the books and looked at the pictures.

"I cannot see them," said the head with the red hair. Lucy moved the book to one side.

"I should think you would remember that you have three heads," said the head with the dark hair. "How do you expect me to see if you keep the book over that side?"

Lucy moved the book to the other side, and then the head with the red hair began to fuss again.

"Oh dear!" said Lucy. "You are the most selfish heads I ever saw. I will go to the cow and see if she can help me," she said.

"Where can I find a bed?" she asked the cow. "These heads have just tired me out."

"I will get you one," said the cow. "Moo, moo!" she called up and from the floor came a bed.

Lucy lay down upon it. "I do not want to go to sleep," said the head with dark hair. "I do," said Lucy. "I am tired and I am going to sleep; you can stay awake if you wish to."

"I do not feel tired," said the head with red hair; "I feel like singing," and it began to sing so loudly that Lucy had to get up.

"I'll go to the owl and see if he can help me," she said, as she went out of the room.

She went into the room where the owl was and opened the window. The owl hid its three heads.

"You are such a wise bird," she said to the owl, "I wish you would tell me what to do with these new heads; they quarrel all the time."

"Who-who!" said the owl.

"I cannot understand how any one could ever think you were wise," said Lucy; "all you can say is who-who. I wish I could be rid of these troublesome heads."

"Why don't you, then?" said the head with red hair. "We come off if you pull hard."

"I never thought of that," said Lucy, pulling at the head with red hair.

Off it came and flew through the window.

Then she tried the other and it came off and followed the other through the window.

"Would you like to be rid of your extra heads?" Lucy asked the owl.

"Who-who," answered the owl.

"You silly bird!" said Lucy, pulling at his extra heads. Off they came and followed Lucy's heads.

"Let's go to the cow," said Lucy, "and take off her heads."

The owl tried to follow her, but bumped against the wall and fell to the floor.

"Oh, I forgot that you could not see in the daytime," said Lucy. "I'll put you on my shoulder," she said, picking him up from the floor.

"Would you like to get rid of your extra heads?" Lucy asked the cow.

"Of course I would," she said. "How did you get rid of yours?"

"I will show you," said Lucy, pulling at the cow's extra heads. Off they came and out the window they flew.

"Well, I never should have thought of that," said the cow.

"Let us go to the cat and the dog and the horse," said Lucy, "and help them to get rid of their troubles." Each of them said they had never thought to try pulling the extra heads off, and they were very grateful to Lucy for helping them.

The heads all flew out of the window and that was the last that was ever seen of them.

"I think we should get out of this place as soon as we can," said Lucy. "Old Three Heads might get us again." They hurried out of the house and soon were in the woods a long way from the castle.

"Did Old Three Heads get you?" asked the animals they met in the woods.

Lucy told them he did. "But he will not bother you," she said, "if you keep away from his house, and I warn you that three heads are a nuisance, and you may not be so fortunate as we have been in escaping from them."

"Did you have to feed them all?" asked a squirrel.

"Yes," answered Lucy, "or at least I tried to, but they quarreled so that I had to go without."

"I will never go near Old Three Heads," said the squirrel. "I have all I can do to take care of one head."

"I have had my lesson," said Lucy. "I shall never look into rooms again when the door is closed, for one head is all I care to have."