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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Three Dogs and the Mountain Troll

Once upon a time there was a king who went forth into the world and fetched back a beautiful queen. And after they had been married a while they had a little daughter. Then there was great rejoicing in the city and throughout the country, for the people wished their king all that was good, since he was kind and just. While the child lay in its cradle, a strange-looking old woman entered the room, and no one knew who she was nor whence she came. The old woman spoke a verse over the child, and said that she must not be allowed out under the open sky until she were full fifteen years of age, since otherwise the mountain troll would fetch her. When the king heard this he took her words to heart, and posted guards to watch over the little princess so that she would not get out under the open sky.

Some time afterward the royal pair had another little daughter, and again the whole kingdom rejoiced. But the wise old woman once more put in an appearance, and warned the king not to let the princess out under the open sky until she were full fifteen years of age. And then, after a time, the royal pair had a third daughter. This time, too, the old woman appeared, and repeated what she had already twice said. Then the king was

much grieved; for he loved his children above everything in the world. Therefore he gave strict orders that the three princesses were always to be kept beneath the roof of the castle, and that none were to dare transgress against this command.

Now a long time passed, and the king's daughters grew up and became the most beautiful maidens of whom one has ever heard tell. Then war broke out and the king, their father, had to leave them. One day, while he was away at war, the three princesses were sitting in the window and looking out, watching the sun shine on the little flowers in the garden. And they felt a great desire to play with the lovely flowers, and begged their guards to let them go into the garden for a little while. But this their guards would not allow, for they feared the king's anger. Yet the king's daughters pleaded so very sweetly that they could not deny their pleas and they let them have their way. But the princesses did not have long to walk about, for no sooner were they beneath the open sky, than a cloud came suddenly down, and bore them off, and all attempts to regain possession of them were fruitless; though search was made in every direction.

Then the whole kingdom mourned and grieved, and one may imagine that the king was anything but happy when he returned home and learned all that had happened. Yet what is done cannot be undone, and in the end they had to resign themselves to it. And since the king knew of no other way to help himself, he had proclaimed throughout the kingdom that whoever would

deliver his three daughters out of the power of the mountain troll should have one of them for his bride, and with her half of the kingdom. When this became known in foreign lands, many youths set forth with horses and followers to seek the princesses. At the king's court were two princes who also went forth to see whether fortune would be kind to them. They armed themselves in the best possible way with coats of mail and costly weapons, and bragged and boasted that they would not return without having done what they set out to do.

And now we will let the king's sons ride out over the world on their quest, while we turn to other people. Far, far out in the wild wood there lived a poor widow, who had an only son who drove his mother's pigs to pasture every day. And as he crossed the fields, he whittled himself a flute, and amused himself playing it. And he played so sweetly that he warmed the cockles of the hearts of all those who heard him.

Now it chanced that the young swine-herd once sat in the wood blowing his flute, while his three pigs were digging under the pine-roots. And an old, old man came along, with a beard so long and so broad that it hung far below his girdle. The old man had a large, powerful dog with him. When the youth saw the great dog, he thought to himself: "If a fellow had a dog like that to keep him company here in the wilderness, he might consider himself lucky." And when the old man noticed this, he began: "That is why I have come, for I want to exchange my dog for one of your pigs." The youth was

at once willing, and closed the bargain. He received the great dog, and gave up the gray pig in place of it. Then the old man went his way. But as he left he said: "You have reason to be satisfied with our exchange, for that dog is not like other dogs. His name is 'Take Hold!' and whatever you tell him to take hold of he will seize, even though it were the grimmest of trolls." Thereupon they parted, and the youth thought that fortune had indeed favored him.

In the evening he called his dog and drove his pigs home. But when his old mother heard that he had given away the gray pig for a dog, she was angry beyond measure, and gave her son a good drubbing. The youth told her to calm herself; but all in vain, the longer it lasted the more furious she became. Then, since he did not know what else to do, he called out to his dog: "Take hold!" At once the dog ran up, seized the old mother and held her so tightly that she could not move. But otherwise he did her no harm. And now she had to promise her son to make the best of the matter, and then they were friends once more.

The following day the youth went to the wood again, with his dog and the two pigs. After a time he sat down and played his flute as usual, and the dog danced to his playing with such skill, that it was nothing short of a miracle. And as he was sitting there, the old man with the gray beard came out of the wood again, and with him another dog, no smaller than the first. When the youth saw the handsome beast he thought to himself: "If a fellow had that dog to keep him company here

where it is so lonely, he need have no fear." When the old man noticed this, he began: "That is why I have come, for I want to exchange my dog for one of your pigs." The youth did not lose any time, but agreed to close the bargain. He received the great dog, and gave up one of his pigs in place of it. Then the old man went his way. Yet before he left he added: "You have reason to be well satisfied with your purchase, for this dog is not like the other dogs. His name is 'Tear!' and if you give him something to tear, he will tear it to pieces, even though it were the grimmest of trolls." Then they parted. But the youth was happy in the idea that he



had made a capital exchange; although he knew that his old mother would not be content with it. And when evening came, and the youth went home, his old mother was no less angry than she had been before. But this time she did not venture to beat her son, because she was afraid of the great dogs. Yet, as is usual,

when women have scolded long enough, they stop of their own accord—and that is what happened in this case. The youth and his mother made peace with each other; though the mother thought to herself that the damage done could not well be repaired.

On the third day the youth went into the wood again with his pig and two dogs. He felt very happy, seated

himself on a tree-stump and played his flute as usual. And the dogs danced to his playing with such skill that it was a pleasure to watch them. As the youth was sitting there in peace and quiet, the old gray-beard once more came out of the wood. This time he had a third dog with him, who was as large as both the others together. When the youth saw the handsome animal he could not help but think: "If a fellow had this dog to keep him company in the wilderness, he would have no cause for complaint." The old man at once began: "That is why I have come, in order to sell my dog, for I can see you would like to have him." The youth was at once willing and agreed to close the bargain. So he received the great dog and gave up his last pig in place of it. Then the old man went his way. Yet before he went he said: "You will be satisfied with your exchange, for this dog is not like other dogs. His name is 'Hark!' and his hearing is so keen that he hears everything that happens, though it be happening many miles away. He even hears the grass and the trees grow." Then they parted in the friendliest spirit. But the youth was happy in the thought that now he need fear nothing in the world. And then, when evening came on, and the swine-herd went home, his mother was very sad to think that her son had sold all they possessed. But the youth told her to be of good courage, since he would see to it that they did not suffer want. And when he spoke to her in such a cheerful manner, she grew content again, and decided that he had spoken in wise and manly fashion. Then

when day dawned the youth went hunting with his dogs, and came back at evening with as much game as he could possibly carry. And he continued to go hunting in this way for a time until his old mother's store-room was well provided with meat and all sorts of good things. Then he bade his mother a fond farewell, called his dogs, and said he was going to wander out into the world and try his fortune.

And he fared forth over mountains and tangled ways, and came into the heart of a sombre forest. There he met the gray-beard of whom I have already told you. And when he met him the youth was much pleased, and said: "Good-day, grandfather, and thanks for the last time!" And the old man replied: "Good-day to you, and whither away?" The youth answered: "I am wandering out into the world to see what fortune has in store for me." Then the old man said: "Keep right on going till you come to the royal castle, and there your fortune will take a turn." And with that they parted. The youth followed the old man's advice and for a time wandered on straight ahead. When he came to a tavern he played his flute and let his dogs dance, and was never at a lack for bed and board, and whatever else he might want. After he had wandered long and far, he at length came to a great city, whose streets were filled with people. The youth wondered what it all meant, and at last reached the spot where, to the sound of bell, the king's proclamation was being cried—that whoever should deliver the three princesses out of the power of the troll, would receive one of them, and half the kingdom

as well. Now he understood what the old man had meant. He called his dogs, and went to the king's castle. But there all had been grief and mourning since the day the king's daughters had disappeared. And of them all the king and queen were the most sorrowful. Then the youth went to the keeper of the door, and asked him whether he might play and show his dogs before the king. The courtiers were willing, for they hoped it might make him feel more cheerful. So he was admitted and allowed to show his tricks. And when the king had heard him play, and had seen the skillful dancing of his dogs, he grew quite merry, and none had seen him as happy during all the seven long years that had passed since he had lost his daughters.

When the dance was over, the king asked the youth what he asked as a reward for having given him such a pleasure. The youth answered: "My lord king, I did not come to you to win gold and gear. But I have another request to make: that you allow me to set out and search for your three daughters, carried away by a mountain troll." When the king heard this his thoughts once more grew gloomy, and he replied: "You need not even think of delivering my daughters. It is no child's play, and your betters have already attempted it in vain. Yet should it really come to pass that you deliver one of the princesses, you may be sure that I will not break my word." So he took leave of the king and set forth. And he decided to take no rest until he had found what he sought.

Now he passed through many broad kingdoms without meeting with any special adventures. And wherever he went his dogs followed him. "Hark!" ran along and listened for anything worth hearing to be heard around them; "Take Hold!" carried his master's knapsack and "Tear!" who was the strongest, carried his master when the latter was weary. One day "Hark!" came running up hastily, and told his master that he had gone to a high mountain, and had heard the king's daughter, who sat within it and spun, and that the troll was not at home. This greatly pleased the youth, and he hurried toward the mountain together with his three dogs. When they got there "Hark!" said: "There is no time to lose. The troll is only ten miles away, and I can already hear the golden horse-shoes of his steed ringing on the stones." The youth now ordered his dogs to break down the door into the mountain, and they did. And as he stepped into the mountain he saw a lovely maiden, sitting in the mountain-hall, winding a golden thread on a golden spindle. The youth went up and greeted the lovely girl. Then the king's daughter was much surprised and said: "Who are you that dare to venture into the giant's hall? During all the seven long years I have been sitting here in the mountain I have never yet seen a human being." And she added: "For heaven's sake hasten away before the troll returns home, or else your life will be forfeit!" But the youth was unafraid, and said that he would await the giant's return without fear. While they were talking together, the giant came riding along on his colt shod with gold. When he saw the gate

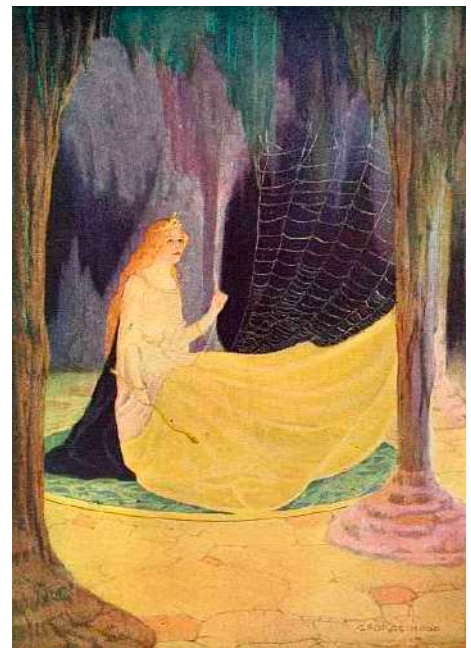
standing open he grew furiously angry and shouted till the whole mountain shook: "Who has broken my mountain door?" The youth boldly answered: "I did, and now I shall break you as well! 'Take Hold!' seize him! 'Tear!' and 'Hark!' tear him into a thousand pieces." No sooner had he spoken than the dogs rushed up, fell upon the giant and tore him into countless pieces. Then the princess was happy beyond measure and said: "Now I am freed!" And she fell upon the youth's neck and gave him a kiss. But he did not wish to stay there any longer, saddled the giant's colt, loaded it with all the gold and gear he found in the mountain, and hastily went away with the king's beautiful daughter.

They passed on together a long distance. Then, one day, "Hark!" who always ran ahead scouting, came quickly back to his master, and told him he had been near a high mountain, and had heard the king's second daughter sitting within it winding golden yarn, and that the troll himself was not at home. This was very welcome news for the youth, and he hurried toward the mountain with his faithful dogs. Now when they drew near "Hark!" said: "There is no time to lose. The giant is only eight miles away, and I can already hear the golden horse-shoes of his steed ringing on the stones." The youth at once ordered his dogs to break down the door into the mountain, no matter which way. And when he stepped into the interior of the mountain he saw a lovely maiden sitting in the mountain hall, winding golden yarn on a golden windle. The youth went up and greeted the lovely girl. The king's daughter was

much surprised and said: "Who are you that dare to venture into the giant's hall? During all the seven years I have been sitting here in the mountain I have never yet seen a human being." And she added: "For heaven's sake, hasten away, for if the troll comes your life will be forfeit!" But the youth told her why he had come, and said that he would await the troll's return quite undisturbed.

While they were still talking together, the giant came riding on his steed shod with gold, and drew up outside the mountain. When he noticed that the great door was open, he grew furiously angry, and shouted till the mountain trembled to its very roots. He said: "Who has broken my mountain door?" The youth boldly answered: "I have, and now I shall break you as well! 'Take Hold,' seize him! 'Tear!' and 'Hark!' tear him into a thousand pieces!" The dogs at once rushed up, threw themselves upon the giant, and tore him into as many pieces as leaves fall in the autumn. Then the king's daughter was happy beyond measure and cried: "Now I am freed!" and she fell upon the youth's neck and gave him a kiss. But he led the princess to her sister, and one can imagine-how glad they were to see each other again. Then the youth packed up all the treasures he found in the mountain hall, loaded them on the giant's steed, and went his way with the king's two daughters. And they wandered along for a long time. Then, one day, "Hark!" who always ran ahead scouting, came hastily to his master and told him that he had been near a high mountain, and had heard the king's third daughter

sitting within and weaving a web of gold, and that the troll was not at home. This was very welcome news for the youth, and he hastened toward the mountain, followed by his three dogs. When he drew near "Hark!" said: "There is no time to lose, for the giant is only five miles away. I can already hear the golden horse-shoes of his steed ringing on the stones." Then the youth at once ordered his dogs to break down the door into the mountain, by hook or by crook. And when he stepped into the mountain, he saw a girl sitting in the mountain hall, weaving a web of gold. But this maiden was lovely beyond all measure, with a loveliness exceeding all the youth had ever thought to find on earth. He now went up and greeted the lovely maiden. Then the king's daughter was much surprised and said: "Who are you that dare to venture into the giant's hall? During all the seven long years I have been sitting here in the mountain I have never yet seen a human being." And she added: "For heaven's sake, hasten away before the troll comes, or else your life will be forfeit!" But the youth was full of confidence, and said he would gladly venture his life for the king's lovely daughter.



While they were still talking the giant came riding along on his colt shod with gold, and drew up at the

foot of the mountain. When he went in he saw that uninvited guests had arrived, and was much frightened; for well he knew of the fate that had befallen his brothers. He therefore thought it advisable to fall back upon cunning and treachery, for he had not dared to venture on open battle. For that reason he made many fine speeches, and was very friendly and smooth with the youth. Then he told the king's daughter to prepare a meal in order to show his guest all hospitality.

And since the troll knew so well how to talk, the youth allowed himself to be beguiled by his smooth words, and forgot to be on his guard. He sat down to the table with the giant; but the king's daughter wept secretly, and the dogs were very restless; though no one paid them any attention.

When the giant and his guest had finished their meal, the youth said: "Now that I have satisfied my hunger, give me something to quench my thirst!" The giant replied: "On the mountain-top is a spring in which bubbles the clearest wine; but I have no one to fetch it." The youth answered: "If that be all that is lacking, one of my dogs can go up." Then the giant laughed in his false heart, for nothing suited him better than to have the youth send away his dogs. The youth ordered "Take Hold!" to go to the spring, and the giant handed him a great tankard. The dog went; yet it was easy to see that he did not go willingly; and the time passed and passed and he did not return.

After a while the giant said: "I wonder why your dog stays away so long? Perhaps you would let another of

your dogs go and help him; for the way is long and the tankard is heavy." The youth did not suspect any trickery and agreed. He told "Tear!" to go and see why "Take Hold!" had not yet come. The dog wagged his tail, and did not want to leave his master. But the youth did not notice it and drove him off himself. Then the giant laughed heartily, and the king's daughter wept, yet the youth paid no attention; but was merry and at his ease, played with his sword, and dreamed of no danger. Thus a long time passed; but nothing was heard of the wine nor of the dogs. Then the giant said: "I can see that your dogs do not do as you bid them, otherwise we should not have to sit here and thirst. I think it would be well if you let 'Hark!' go up and see why they do not come back." The youth agreed, and told his third dog to hurry to the spring. But "Hark!" did not want to, and instead crept whining to his master's feet. Then the youth grew angry and drove him off by force. And when he reached the top of the mountain he shared the fate of the others, a high wall rose round about him, and he was made a prisoner by the giant's magic power. Now that all three dogs were gone, the giant rose, and suddenly looked altogether different. He took down a long sword from the wall, and said: "Now I will do what my brothers did not do, and you must die at once, for you are in my power!" Then the youth was frightened, and he regretted he had allowed his dogs to leave him. He said: "I do not ask for my life, since in any event the time will come when I must die. But I would like to repeat the Lord's prayer, and play a psalm on my flute,

for such is the custom in my country." The giant granted his prayer, but said that he would not wait long. So the youth kneeled and began to blow his flute till it sounded over hill and dale. And that very moment the magic wall was broken and the dogs were freed. They came rushing on like the storm-wind, and fell upon the mountain troll. The youth at once rose and said: "'Take Hold!', seize him! 'Tear!' and 'Hark!' tear him into a thousand pieces!" Then the dogs flung themselves on the giant and tore him into countless pieces. Then the youth took all the treasures that lay in the mountain, hitched the giant's horses to a gilded wagon, and drove off as fast as he could.

Now when the king's daughters met again there was great joy, as may well be imagined, and all thanked the youth for delivering them out of the power of the mountain trolls. But the youth fell deeply in love with the youngest princess, and they promised to be true to each other. So the king's daughters passed on their way with music and merriment of every kind, and the youth served them with all the honor and courtesy due maidens of gentle birth. And while they were underway the princesses toyed with the youth's hair, and each tied her golden ring in his locks for remembrance.

One day while they were still underway, they met two wanderers, who were traveling the same road. The clothes of the two strangers were torn and their feet were sore, and their whole appearance showed that they had a long journey behind them. The youth stopped his wagon, and asked them who they were and

whence they came. The strangers answered that they were two princes, and had gone forth to search for the three maidens in the mountain. But fortune had not favored them; and now they had to return home more like journeymen than kings' sons. When the youth heard this he felt sorry for the two wanderers, and asked whether they would like to ride with him in his handsome wagon. The princes thanked him profusely for his offer. They drove on together, and came to the kingdom over which the father of the princesses reigned.

Now when the princes learned that the youth had delivered the king's three daughters, a great jealousy took possession of them, and they thought of how badly they had fared in their own venture. And they took counsel together as to how they might get the better of the youth, and win power and glory for themselves. But they hid their evil plot till a favorable opportunity offered for carrying it out. Then they suddenly threw themselves on their comrade, seized him by the throat and strangled him. And then they threatened to kill the princesses if they did not swear to keep silence. And since the king's daughters were in the power of the princes, they did not dare say no. But they felt very sorry for the youth who had given up his life for them, and the youngest princess mourned with all her heart, and all her happiness was at an end.

After this great wrong the princes drove to the royal castle, and one may well imagine how happy the king was to get back his three daughters. In the meantime

the poor youth lay like dead off in a gorge in the forest. Yet he was not quite dead, and his faithful dogs lay about him, kept him warm, and licked his wounds. And they did not stop until their master came back to life again. When he was once more well and strong he set out, and after many difficulties came to the royal castle in which the princesses dwelt.

When he came in the whole court was full of joy and merriment, and from the king's hall came the sound of dancing and string music. That surprised him greatly, and he asked what it all meant. The serving-man answered: "You must come from far away, since you do not know that the king has regained his daughters who were in the power of the mountain troll. This is the oldest princess's wedding-day."

The youth then asked after the youngest princess, and when she was to marry. But the serving-man said that she did not want a husband, and wept the live-long day, though no one knew why. Then the youth felt happy once more; for now he knew that she loved him, and had kept faith with him.

The youth now went to the keeper of the door, and bade him tell the king that a guest had arrived who would add to the merriment of the wedding festivities by showing his dogs. This was to the king's liking, and he ordered that the stranger receive the best possible treatment. And when the youth stepped into the hall, the whole wedding company were astounded by his skill and his manly bearing, and all agreed that so handsome a youth was rarely seen. But no sooner had the king's

three daughters recognized him, than they jumped up from the table, and flung themselves on his neck. And then the princes thought it best to make themselves scarce. But the king's daughters told how the youth had freed them, and the rest of their adventures; and to make quite certain they looked for their rings among his locks.

Now when the king heard of the trickery and treachery the two strange princes had used, he grew very angry and had them driven ignominiously forth from the castle. But he received the brave youth with great honor, as he had deserved, and he was married to the king's youngest daughter that selfsame day.

After the king's death the youth was chosen king of all the land, and a gallant king he was. And there he lives with his beautiful queen, and is reigning there happily to this very day. And that is all I have to do with it.