



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Child of Maria

Brothers Grimm

At the edge of a large forest, a woodcutter and his wife lived. They had only one child, a three-year-old girl. But they were so terribly poor that they did not have enough for their daily bread and did not know what to feed their child.

One morning, the woodcutter, with his head full of worries, went into the forest to chop wood. While he was busy chopping, a big beautiful woman suddenly stood before him. She had a crown of shining stars on her head. She said, "I am Maria, the mother of the baby Jesus. You are poor and worried. Bring me your child. I will take her with me. I will be her mother and take good care of her."

The woodcutter listened to her words. He brought the child and gave her to Maria. She took her to Heaven, where the child was very well taken care of. She ate delicious sugar bread and drank sweet milk. Her clothes were made of gold. The angels were her playmates.



When the girl turned fourteen, Maria called her and said, "Dear child, I have to travel for a long time. I give you the keys to the thirteen doors of Heaven. Keep the keys with you. You may open twelve doors and see everything inside. But the thirteenth door, where the little key fits, you may not enter. Be careful not to open it because misfortune will come your way."

The girl promised to be obedient. When Maria went on her journey, she went to see all the dwellings of Heaven. Every day, she opened a door until she had opened twelve.

In each dwelling lived a saint surrounded by radiant light. The girl greatly enjoyed all the splendor and glory. And the angels who accompanied her also enjoyed all the beauty.

Now only the forbidden door was left. She felt a great desire to know what was hidden behind it. She said to the angels, "I will not open the door completely, and I will certainly not go inside. But just turning the key and looking through a crack, that's okay, right?" "No, no," said the angels, "that would be a sin. Maria has forbidden it. If you do it, misfortune will come your way."

The girl did not speak any further about it. But deep in her heart, curiosity

gnawed at her and did not leave her alone. One day, when all the angels were out, she thought, "I am all alone now. I could take a quick look inside. After all, no one will know if I do it."

She searched for the key and put it in the lock. She turned the key, and the door sprang open. Inside, she saw the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They sat in the glow of the fire.

She stood there for a while and looked at everything with horror and amazement. Then her finger briefly touched the glow of the fire. The finger immediately turned completely into gold. She immediately felt a great fear. She slammed the door shut and ran away.

But no matter what she did, her fear did not leave her anymore. Her heart beat violently and did not calm down. The gold remained on her finger and did not come off. No matter how hard she washed and scrubbed, it did not help.

Not long after, Maria returned from her journey. She called the girl to her and asked for the keys to Heaven. When she returned the ring with the keys, Maria looked deeply into her eyes and asked, "Did you really not open the thirteenth door?"

"No," she replied. Maria placed her hand on the girl's heart and felt it racing. She understood that she had broken the commandment by opening the forbidden door. Then she spoke again, "Did you really not do it?" "No," the girl said for the second time. That was when Maria saw the girl's finger, which had turned to gold from touching the Heavenly fire. She understood that the girl had sinned and spoke for the third time: "Did you not do it?" "No," the girl said for the third time. Maria said, "I know you didn't obey me. You also lied to me. You are no longer worthy of being in Heaven."

The girl fell into a deep sleep. When she woke up, she was lying on the ground in the middle of a wilderness. She wanted to scream, but she couldn't make a sound. She could no longer speak. She tried to run away, but no matter which way she went, there was a hedge of thorns that she could not pass through.

She was now locked up alone in the wilderness. An old hollow tree served as her sleeping place. When it rained and stormed, she found shelter in the tree. But it was a miserable existence. When she thought about how wonderful it had been in Heaven and how much fun she had playing with the Angels, she wept bitter tears. Roots and blueberries were her only food. She searched for as much as she could find. In the fall, she collected fallen nuts and leaves and brought them to the hollow tree. She ate the nuts in the winter. When snow and ice came, she crawled into the leaves like an animal. That way she could endure the cold.

It didn't take long before her clothes were torn, and she had nothing else to

wear. As soon as the sun got warmer, she could sit outside the tree again. Her long hair covered her like a cloak. So she sat there, year after year, feeling all the misery and sadness of the world.

One day, when the trees were green again, the King hunted in the forest. He chased a deer. The animal had fled into the thorn bushes to an open forest clearing. The King got off his horse. He hacked a hole in the hedge with his sword and made his way through.

When he finally made it through, he saw a beautiful girl sitting at the foot of a tree. She was surrounded by her golden-blond hair up to her feet. The King looked at her in amazement. Then he asked, "Who are you? Why are you here in this wilderness?"

She did not answer because she could not open her mouth. The King said, "Do you want to come with me to my castle?" The girl nodded her head briefly. The King picked her up, put her on his horse, and rode home with her.

When they arrived at the castle, he had her put on beautiful clothes and gave her everything in abundance. Although she could not speak, she was so beautiful and lovely that he fell in love with her deeply. It didn't take long before he married her.

After about a year, the Queen gave birth to a son. The next night, when she was alone in bed, Maria appeared again and said, "Do you want to tell the truth and admit that you opened the forbidden door? Then I will open your mouth and give you back your speech. If you continue to deny your sin, I will take your newborn child with me." The girl could speak again briefly but did not want to admit her sin. So Maria took the newborn child from her arms and disappeared.

The next morning, when the child was gone, people whispered that the Queen was a cannibal and had eaten her own child. She heard everything but couldn't defend herself. The King didn't believe the rumors, as he loved the Queen very much.



A year later, the Queen had another son. Maria came to her again at night and said, "Will you admit that you opened the forbidden door? If you keep denying it, I will take this new son as well." Once again, the Queen was able to speak and said, "No, I did not open the forbidden door." Maria took the child from her arms and took him to Heaven.

The next morning, when the child was missing, people shamelessly accused the Queen of eating her own children. The King's council wanted her to be condemned, but the King loved her too much to believe it. He ordered the

council to stop talking about it, warning that anyone who continued would be punished.

The following year, the Queen had a beautiful daughter. For the third time, Maria appeared to her at night and said, "Follow me." She took the Queen's hand and led her to Heaven, where she showed her the Queen's oldest children. They smiled and played with the world globe. When the Queen looked at them with joy, Maria said, "Is your heart not softened now? If you admit that you opened the forbidden door, I will give you back both of your sons." For the third time, the Queen spoke and said, "No, I did not open the door." Maria brought the Queen back to Earth and took her third child.

The next morning, when this was revealed, everyone shouted, "The Queen is a cannibal. She must be condemned." The King could no longer stop his council.

Justice had to be served, but the Queen could not defend herself. She was sentenced to the stake.

Wood was collected and piled up. When she was tied to the pole and the fire began to burn on all sides, her icy pride melted. She felt remorse in her heart and thought, "If only I could confess that I opened the door before I die."



Suddenly, she regained her voice and cried out, "Yes, Maria, I did it." Immediately, rain poured down from the sky and extinguished the flames. A bright light shone above her, and Maria descended. The Queen's two sons walked beside her, and she held her newborn daughter in her arms.

Maria kindly said to the Queen, "Whoever repents of their sins and confesses them will always be forgiven." Maria returned the three children to her, loosened her tongue, and gave her all the happiness for the rest of her life.



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