



Ririro

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The Giant Who Had No Heart in His Body

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Once upon a time, there was a king who had seven sons, and he loved them so much that he could never bear to miss them all at once. One of them always had to be with him. Now, when they were grown up, six of them would go out to court, but as for the youngest son, his father kept him at home, and the others had to bring a princess for him to the palace.

So the king gave the six sons the most beautiful clothes, so beautiful that the light shone from afar, and each of them got a horse that cost many, many hundreds of dollars. So they set out. When they had been to many palaces and had seen many princesses, they finally came to a king who had six daughters. They had never seen such lovely princesses, and so they courted them, one by one. When they had obtained them as their lovers, they went back home, but they completely forgot to bring a lover for Boots, their youngest brother who had stayed at home. They were head over heels in love with their own lovely princesses.

But when they had gone a little way, they came close to a steep hill, as steep as a wall. Here was the house of the Giant, and there came the Giant out. He looked at them and turned them all around and turned them all into stone, all the princes and princesses. Now the king waited and waited for his six sons, but the more he waited, the longer they stayed away. This became a great problem for the king, and he said he would never know what it was to be happy again. "And if I had sent you too," he said to Boots, "I would've died from grief."

"Well, but I have thought about asking your permission to go and look for them. That is my plan," said Boots.

"No, no!" said his father, "you will never get that permission, for then you too will never come back."

But Boots had set his mind on it, he would go. He begged and prayed so long that the king was forced to let him go. Now you must know that the king had no other horse to give Boots than an old lame horse. His six other sons had taken all his good horses. This did not matter to Boots, he jumped on the old horse.

"Goodbye, father," he said. "I'll come back, never be afraid, and as promised, I'll bring my six brothers back with me." And after those words, he rode away.

After he had ridden for a while, he came to a Raven that lay on the road, flapping its wings, and unable to move aside. It was so hungry.

"Oh, dear friend," said the Raven, "give me some food, and I'll help you if you need it."

"I don't have much food," said the prince, "and I don't see how you'll ever be able to help me, but I'll give you a little help. I see you need it." So he gave the Raven some of the food he had brought.

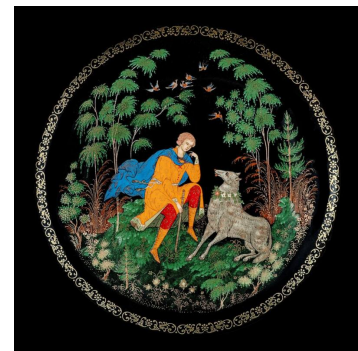
Then he traveled a little further and came to a stream, and in the stream was a big salmon. It had ended up in a dry place and was thrashing around because it couldn't get back into the water.

"Oh, dear friend," said the salmon to the prince. "Put me back in the water, and I'll help you if you need it."

"I don't see how you can ever help me," said the Prince. "The help you'll give me won't be great, I think, but it's a shame you'll die there." And with those words, he pushed the fish back into the water.

Then he walked along a long road and met a Wolf who was so hungry that he lay on his belly and crawled along the road.

"Oh, dear friend, please give me your horse," said the Wolf. "I'm so hungry that the wind whistles through my ribs. I haven't had anything to eat for the past two years."



"No," said Boots, "that can't be. First, I came across a Raven, and I was forced to give him my food. Then I came across a Salmon, and I had to help him back into the water. Now you want my horse. That really can't be because then I wouldn't have anything to ride on."

"Oh dear friend, I can help you," said the Wolf. "You can ride on my back, and I will also help you further if you need it."

"Well, the help I will get from you will not be great," said the Prince. "But go ahead, you can take my horse since you are in such need."

So when the Wolf had eaten the horse, Boots took the bit and put it in the Wolf's jaw and placed the saddle on his back. After eating the horse, the Wolf was so strong again that it seemed as if he had nothing on his back when he went on the road with the Prince. The Prince had never ridden so fast.

"When we get further," said Wolf, "I'll show you the house of the Giant." After a while, they arrived there. "Look, here's the house of the Giant," said the Wolf.

"And look, here are your six brothers, who the Giant has turned to stone. Look, here are their six brides, and over there is the door, and through that door, you must go in."

"No, I dare not go in," said the Prince. "That will cost me my life."

"No, no!" said the Wolf. "If you go inside, you will find a Princess, and she will tell you what to do to end the Giant. Just pay close attention and do what she asks."

Boots gathered all his courage and went inside, but to be honest, he was very afraid. When he entered, the Giant was gone, but in one of the rooms, the Princess sat exactly as the Wolf had said. Boots had never seen such a lovely Princess before.

"Oh! Heavens, help, where did you come from?" said the Princess when she saw him. "This will surely be your death. No one can put an end to the Giant who lives here because he has no heart in his body."

"We'll see!" said Boots. "Now that I'm here, I might as well try to put an end to him. And I'll try to save my brothers, who are standing outside turned to stone. I'll also try to save you. I'll do what I can."

"Well, if you must, then do what you must," said the Princess. "Let's see if we can come up with a plan. Crawl under that bed over there, and pay attention and listen to what he and I talk about. But, I beg you, be as still as a mouse." So he crawled under the bed, and he had hardly hidden when the Giant came in.

"Ha!" roared the Giant, "I smell the delicious scent of human blood in this house."

"Yes, I know the smell," said the Princess. "A magpie flew in and dropped a man's leg down the chimney. I rushed to get it out, but the smell doesn't go away that easily."

So the Giant said no more about it, and when evening fell, they went to bed. After they had been lying there for a while, the Princess said, "There is one thing I would so like to ask you, if only I dared."

"What is it?" asked the Giant.

"It's where you keep your heart, because you don't carry it with you," said the Princess.

"Ah! That's something you really shouldn't ask about. But if you really must know, it's under the doorstep," said the Giant.

"Hoho," said Boots to himself under the bed, "then we'll have a quick look if we can find it."

The next morning, the Giant got up very early and went to the forest. He had barely left the house when Boots and the Princess went to work searching for his heart under the doorstep. But the more they dug and searched, the more they couldn't find the heart.

"He's foiled us again this time," said the Princess, "but we'll try again." So she picked the most beautiful flowers she could find and scattered them over the doorstep, which they had put back in place. When it was time for the Giant to come home again, Boots crawled back under the bed. He had just managed to get under it when the Giant came in.

"Sniff, sniff," went the Giant's nose. "I smell the scent of human blood, and my eyes and limbs want to search for it," he growled.

"I know that scent is there," said the Princess, "because a magpie flew in with a man's bone in his beak and dropped it down the chimney. I did my best to get him out of the house, but I dare say it still smells here."

The Giant was silent and said no more about it. Later on, he asked who had scattered flowers on the doorstep. "Oh, me, of course," said the Princess. "And what, in heaven's name, is the meaning of all this?" said the Giant.

"Ah!" said the Princess, "I'm so fond of you that I had to scatter the flowers. I know your heart lies beneath it."

"You never said that to me before," said the Giant. "And besides, my heart doesn't lie there at all."

So when they went to bed again that evening, the Princess asked the Giant again where his heart was, because she said she would so like to know.

"Well," said the Giant, "if you really must know, it's over there in the cupboard against the wall."

"Aha," thought Boots and the Princess, "then we'll find it quickly."

The next morning, the Giant got up early and strode into the forest. As soon as he was gone, Boots and the Princess went into the cupboard to look for his heart, but the more they looked, the less they found it. "Well," said the Princess, "we'll just have to try again."

So she decorated the cupboard with flowers and garlands, and when it was time for the Giant to come home, Boots crawled back under the bed. Then the Giant came back.

"Sniff, sniff," went the Giant's nose. "I smell the scent of human blood, and my eyes and limbs want to search for it," he growled.

"I know that scent is there," said the Princess, "because a magpie flew in with a

man's bone in his beak and dropped it down the chimney. I did my best to get him out of the house, but I dare say it still smells here."

When the Giant heard that, he said no more about it. But presently he saw how the cupboard was all decorated with flowers and garlands. So he asked who had done it. Who could it be but the Princess? "Tell me, what is the meaning of all this foolishness?" said the Giant.

"Oh, I love you so much, I couldn't help it, I had to do it when I knew your heart was there," said the Princess.

"How can you be so stupid as to believe such a thing?" said the Giant. "Oh, but how can I help believing it when you say it?" said the Princess.

"You are a silly goose," said the Giant, "where my heart is, you will never come."

"Well," said the Princess, "in spite of that, it would be so nice to know where it really is." Then the poor Giant couldn't stand it any longer, he had to tell.

"Far, far away in a lake there is an island. On that island there is a church, and in that church there is a well. In that well swims a duck, and in that duck is an egg. In that egg lies my heart, my dearest," said the Giant.

Early in the morning, while it was still a gray dawn, the Giant strode back to the forest. "Now I must also set out," said Boots. "If only I knew how to find the way." He said goodbye to the Princess, and when he came out of the Giant's door, the Wolf was waiting for him. So Boots told him everything that had happened in the house and said that he now wanted to ride to the well in the church, if only he knew the way.

So the Wolf ordered him to jump on his back, he would quickly find the way. The wind whistled behind them as they went over hedges and fields, over hills and through valleys. After many days of travel, they finally reached the lake. Then the Prince didn't know how to get across it, but the Wolf told him not to be afraid, but to persevere. He jumped into the lake with the Prince on his back and swam to the island. Then they came to the church, but the church keys hung very high on the top of the tower, and the Prince didn't know how to get them down.

"You have to call the Raven," said the Wolf. So the Prince called the Raven, who flew to them in an instant. He picked up the keys and the Prince entered the church. When he arrived at the well, the duck was there, swimming back and forth, just as the Giant had said. So the Prince stood up and lured the duck until it came to him. He grabbed the duck in his hand, but just as he lifted it out of the water, the duck dropped the egg into the well. Boots was at a loss as to how to get the egg out of the well again.

"Well, now you certainly have to call on the Salmon," said the Wolf. The prince called the Salmon, and the Salmon came and retrieved the egg from the bottom of the well. The Wolf said that the Prince should now squeeze the egg, and as soon as he did, the Giant screamed.

"Squeeze it again," said the Wolf. When the Prince did so, the Giant screamed even more piteously and begged to be spared. He said he would do whatever the Prince wanted if only he didn't squeeze his heart in two.

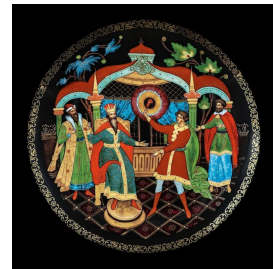
"Tell him to bring your six brothers and their brides, whom he turned to stone, back to life, and then you will spare his life," said the Wolf. And yes, the Giant was willing to do that. He turned the six brothers back into princes and their brides back into princesses.

"Now squeeze the egg in two," said the Wolf. So Boots squeezed the egg to pieces and the Giant burst into a thousand pieces.

Now that he had put an end to the Giant, Boots rode back on the back of the Wolf to the Giant's house. There his six brothers stood, alive and cheerful, with their brides. Then Boots went with his bride and his brothers and their brides through the hills, back to their father's house. And you can imagine how incredibly happy the old King was when he saw all seven of his sons return, each with a bride.

"But the most beautiful bride of all is ultimately Boots' bride," said the King. "He may sit at the head of the table, with her at his side."

And he had the message brought to the people that there would be a great wedding feast. The joy was immense. And because they had not had a party for so long, they are still celebrating to this day!



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