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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Seven Families of Pipple-Popple

Edward Lear

Once upon a time, in a land called Gramble-Blamble, there were seven families who lived on the edges of the large Pipple-Popple lake (one of the families even lived in the lake). They also lived on the outskirts of Tosh, which they could clearly see except when it was completely dark. You may have heard of these places, but you don't need to consult your geography books to learn all about them.

Now, the seven families who lived on the borders of the large Pipple-Popple lake experienced the following events in the following chapters.

The Seven Families

Once there was a family of two old parrots and seven young parrots.

There was a family of two old storks and seven young storks.

There was a family of two old geese and seven young geese.

There was a family of two old owls and seven young owls.

There was a family of two old guinea pigs and seven young guinea pigs.

There was a family of two old cats and seven young cats.

And there was a family of two old fish and seven young fish.

The Habits of the Seven Families

The parrots lived in the Soffsky-Poffsky trees, which were beautiful to look at and covered with blue leaves. They ate fruit, artichokes, and striped beetles. The storks walked in and out of the Pipple-Popple lake and ate frogs for breakfast and buttered toast with their tea. But because of the extreme length of their legs, they could not sit down and thus constantly walked around. The geese, with webs on their feet, caught large quantities of flies, which they ate for dinner. The owls carefully cared for mice, which they caught and turned into pudding. The guinea pigs waddled through the gardens and ate lettuce and Cheshire cheese. The cats still sat in the sun and ate biscuit cake. The fish lived in the lake and mainly ate boiled winkles.

And all these seven families lived happily together and had the greatest fun.

The Children of the Seven Families Are Sent Away

One day, all seven fathers and seven mothers of the seven families agreed to send their children out to see the world. So they called them all together and gave each of them eight shillings. They also gave them some good advice, some chocolate drops, and a small green pocketbook to record their expenses. They then begged them not to fight and all the parents sent their children away with a farewell order:

"And," said the old parrots, "if you find a cherry, don't argue over who should have it."

"And," said the old storks, "if you find a frog, divide it carefully into seven pieces, but don't argue over it."

And the old geese said to the seven young geese, "Whatever you do, make sure you don't touch a plum-pudding fly."

And the old owls said, "If you find a mouse, tear it into seven pieces and eat it happily, but without fighting."

And the old guinea pigs said, "Be careful when you eat your lettuce, should you find it, don't eat too greedily, but slowly."

And the old cats said, "Especially be careful not to meddle with a Clangle-Wangle if you see one."

And the old fish said, "Avoid eating a blue boss-woss, especially, as they are unsuitable for fish and they hurt your toes."

So all the children of each family thanked their parents. And after they had all made forty-nine polite bows together, they went out into the wide world.

The History of the Seven Young Parrots

The seven young parrots had not gone far when they saw a tree with a single cherry on it. The oldest parrot immediately plucked the cherry. But the other six, who were extremely hungry, also tried to get the cherry. This led to all seven of them starting to fight, startling themselves.

There was then a loud shuffling, rumbling, and banging noise. There was spitting, roaring, screaming, squealing, and chirping. Then came snarling and clawing. They bit and struck each other. They bumped into each other, threw each other away, pushed each other, and eventually tore each other into small pieces. And there was nothing left to tell of this painful fight except the cherry and seven little green feathers.

And that was the cruel and noisy end of the seven young parrots.

The History of the Seven Young Storks

When the seven young storks set out, they walked or flew in a straight line for fourteen weeks, and then another six weeks in a curved line. Then they ran as fast as they could for a hundred and eight miles. After that, they stood still and made a chattering-clattering-rattling-rustling noise with their beaks. Around the same time, they saw a large frog, green-spotted with a heavenly blue stripe under each ear.

Because they were hungry, they flew straight to the frog and wanted to divide it into seven pieces. But they began to argue about which of its legs should be removed first. One said this, and another said that, and while they all argued, the frog hopped away. And when they saw that he was gone, they resumed their chattering-clattering-rattling-rustling with their beaks. The rustling-rattling-clattering-fluttering-chattering became more violent than ever. After fighting for a week, they pecked each other into small pieces, so that eventually, there was nothing left of them except their beaks. And that was the end of the seven young storks.

The History of the Seven Young Geese

When the seven young geese started traveling, they went over a plain with only one lean tree. So four of them went to the top and looked around. The other three waddled up and down and repeated their lessons in poetry, their last six lessons in arithmetic, geography, and cooking.

Soon they saw, far away, an object with the most interesting and heavy appearance ever. It had a perfectly round body that looked exactly like a boiled plum pudding, with two small wings and a beak. Three feathers grew out of its head, and it had only one leg. So after a while, all seven young geese said to each other, "This creature must undoubtedly be a plum pudding flea!"

They then sang carelessly out loud:

"Plum-pudding Flea, Plum-pudding Flea, Wherever you be, oh! come to our tree. And listen, oh oh! Listen, oh oh! Listen to us!"

And hardly had they sung this verse when the Plum-pudding Flea began to hop and jump at the most terrible speed on its one leg, and came straight to the tree. There it stood, empty and voluminous, looking around.

As a result, the seven young geese became frightened and began to tremble. So one of them stretched out its long neck and touched him with the tip of its beak. But barely had he done so, when the Plum Pudding Flea hopped and hopped, more and more, higher and higher; then he opened his mouth and, to the great surprise and indignation of the seven geese, began to bark very loudly, angrily, and terribly. They couldn't stand the sound at all; and gradually, they all

suddenly fell dead.

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That was the story of the seven young geese.

The History of the Seven Young Owls

When the seven young owls left, they occasionally sat on the branches of old trees but never went far away at once. And one night, when it was completely dark, they thought they heard a mouse; but because the gas lamps weren't on, they couldn't see it. So they called out, "Is that a mouse?"

To which a mouse replied, "Squeaky-peaky-weakly! Yes, it is!"

And immediately, all the young owls threw themselves from the tree, intending to land on the ground. But they didn't notice that there was a big pit beneath them, into which they fell on top of each other. They all drowned in less than half a minute.

That was the end of the seven young owls.

The History of the Seven Young Guinea Pigs

The seven young guinea pigs entered a garden full of gooseberry bushes and tiggory trees, under which they fell asleep. When they woke up, they saw a large lettuce growing out of the ground while they slept. The lettuce had a huge number of green leaves. And they all exclaimed:

"Lettuce! Oh, lettuce Let's eat, let's eat, Oh, lettuce leaves, Oh, let's leave this tree and eat Lettuce, let's eat, lettuce leaves!"

And immediately, the seven young guinea pigs rushed with such extreme force against the lettuce plant and struck their heads so lively against the stem that they got a concussion. The concussion also gave them inflammation of the nose that got worse and worse and worse and worse. Until all seven of them died from it.

That was the end of the seven young guinea pigs.

The History of the Seven Young Cats

The seven young cats went on a journey with great pleasure and ferocity. But when they reached the top of a high hill, they saw a Clangle-Wangle in the distance, and despite the warning they had received, they ran straight towards it.

Now, the Clangle-Wangle is a very dangerous and deceptive creature, and it's not often seen. They live both in water and on land. They use their long tail as a sail when on water. Their speed is extremely fast, but their domestic habits are

without luxury. Their general demeanor is thoughtful, and they are transparent. On summer evenings, they can sometimes be seen near Lake Pipple-Popple, standing on their heads and singing folk songs. They live entirely on vegetables, except when they eat veal, mutton, pork, beef, fish, or saltpeter.

As soon as the Clangle-Wangle saw the seven young cats, he ran straight ahead for four months. And although the cats kept chasing him, they could never catch up. They never recovered from this effort and all died gradually from exhaustion.

This was the end of the seven young cats.

The History of the Seven Young Fish

The seven young fish swam across Lake Pipple-Popple, up the river, and out to the ocean. On the fifteenth day of their journey, to their great misfortune, they saw a bright blue Boss-Woss. They immediately chased after him, but the Boss-Woss dove straight down, spiraling, circling, and square-ing into the soft mud where he lived.

The seven young fish, swimming with great and uncontrolled speed, also dove into the mud completely against their will. And since they weren't used to it, they all suffocated very quickly. And that was the end of the seven young fish.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT:

After it became known that the seven young parrots, and the seven young storks, and the seven young geese, and the seven young owls, and the seven young guinea pigs, and the seven young cats, and the seven young fish, were all dead, the Frog and the Plum-pudding Flea, and the Mouse, and the Clangle-Wangle, and the blue Boss-Woss, gathered together to rejoice in their great fortune.

They gathered the seven feathers of the seven young parrots, and the seven beaks of the seven young storks, and the lettuce and the cherries. After arranging everything in a circular setup, they danced with a horn-flute around all these memorials until they were quite tired. Then they had a tea party, a garden party, a ball, and a concert. After that, they returned to their own homes, filled with joy, respect, sympathy, satisfaction, and also disgust.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PARENTS OF THE FORTY-NINE CHILDREN:

When the two old parrots, and the two old storks, and the two old geese, and the two old owls, and the two old guinea pigs, and the two old cats, and the two old fish read in the newspapers about the disastrous extinction of all their families, they each refused any further sustenance. They went to various shops and bought large quantities of cayenne pepper, cognac, vinegar, and blue sealing wax. They also bought seven enormous glass bottles with airtight stoppers. After

doing this, they had a light supper of brown bread and Jerusalem artichokes. Then they affectionately and formally bid farewell to their entire circle of acquaintances, which was very numerous, distinguished, and also ridiculous.

Next, they filled the bottles with the ingredients, and each pair jumped into a separate bottle. Of course, they all died immediately from being thoroughly soaked within a few minutes. They had already made their will (with the help of the most prominent lawyers in the district), in which they left strict orders that the caps of the seven bottles be carefully sealed with the blue sealing wax they had purchased. And that they themselves, in the bottles, should be offered to the main museum of the city of Tosh and receive a parchment label. They were to be placed on a marble table with gilded silver legs, and viewed and worshipped daily. In this way, they would be a perpetual attraction for the public who were, in fact, crazy.

And if you ever go to Gramble-Blamble and visit that museum in the city of Tosh, look for them. They are on the ninety-eighth table in the four hundred and twenty-seventh room of the right-hand corridor of the central square of that beautiful building. Because if you don't, you'll certainly never see them!

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