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The seven ravens

Brothers Grimm

There was once a man who had seven sons, and last he also had one daughter. Although the little girl was very pretty, she was so weak and small that they thought she would not live. The parents quickly wanted to christen her.

So the father sent one of his sons in haste to the spring to get some water, but the other six ran with him. Each wanted to be first at drawing the water, and so they were in such a hurry that all let their pitchers fall into the well, and they stood very foolishly looking at one another, and didn't know what to do. They didn't dare to go home. In the meantime the father was growing impatient, and could not tell what made the young men stay out so long. 'Surely,' he said, 'they are playing games and forgot about their task'; and when he had waited a bit more and they still did not come, he flew into a rage and wished them all turned into ravens. As soon as he had spoken these words, he heard a croaking over his head, and looked up and saw seven ravens as black as coal flying round and round. He was very sorry that his wish was fulfilled, but he didn't know how he could undo the spell, and comforted himself as well as he could for the loss of his seven sons with his dear little daughter, who soon became stronger and every day more beautiful.



For a long time she didn't know that she ever had any brothers; because her father and mother never spoke about them to her: but one day by chance she heard the people around her speak about them. 'Yes,' they said, 'she is beautiful

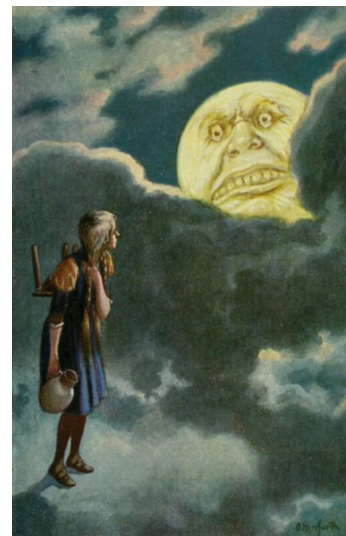
indeed, but it's a pity that her brothers were turned into ravens because of her.' She was very shocked and saddened by this news, and went to her father and mother, and asked if she had any brothers, and what had become of them. So they told her the truth, but said it wasn't her fault. But the little girl was sad about it every day, and decided that it was her job to bring her brothers back. She had no rest and finally one day she went away, and set out into the wide world to find her brothers, wherever they might be, and free them, whatever it might cost her.

She took nothing with her except for a little ring which her father and mother had given her, a loaf of bread in case she would be hungry, a little pitcher of water in case she would be thirsty, and a little stool to rest on when she would be tired. She went on and on, and traveled until she came to the world's end; then she came to the sun, but the sun looked much too hot and fiery;



So she ran away quickly to the moon, but the moon was cold and chilly, and said, 'I smell flesh and blood!'

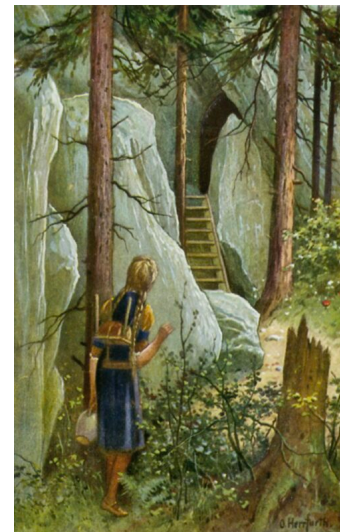
So she ran away in a hurry and came to the stars, and the stars were friendly and kind to her, and each star sat on his own little stool; but the morning star rose up and gave her a little piece of wood, and said, 'If you don't have this little piece of wood, you can't unlock the castle that stands on the glass-mountain, and there your brothers live.'



The little girl took the piece of wood, rolled it up in a little cloth, and went on again until she came to the glass-mountain, and found the door shut. Then she looked for the little piece of wood; but when she unwrapped the cloth it wasn't there, and she saw she had lost the gift of the good stars. What could she do? She wanted to save her brothers, but had no key of the castle of the glass-mountain; so this faithful little sister took a knife out of her pocket and cut off her little finger, that was just the size of the piece of wood she had lost, and put it in the door and opened it.



As she went in, a little dwarf came up to her, and said, 'What are you looking for?' 'I'm looking for my brothers, the seven ravens,' she answered. Then the dwarf said, 'My masters are not at home; but you can wait for them, please come in'. The little dwarf was getting their dinner ready, and he brought their food on seven little plates, and their drink in seven little glasses, and set them on the table, and out of each little plate their sister ate a small piece, and out of each little glass she drank a small drop; then she dropped the ring that she had brought with her into the last glass.



All of a sudden she heard a fluttering and croaking in the air, and the dwarf said, 'Here come my masters.' When they came in, they wanted to eat and drink, and looked for their little plates and glasses. Then said one after the other: 'Who has eaten from my little plate? And who has been drinking out of my little glass?'

When the seventh came to the bottom of his glass, and found the ring, he looked at it, and knew that it was his father's and mother's, and said: 'Oh, I think it's our little sister! If she would be here, we can finally be freed!' When the little girl heard this (she stood behind the door and listened), she ran forward, and in an instant all the ravens took their right form again; and all hugged and kissed each other, and merrily went home. And her little pinky? It grew back!



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