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The Story of the Silver Box

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Hans and Nella were orphans who lived in a small hut on the edge of a forest. One evening, while they were having supper, there was a knock on the door. Hans opened it and found an old man seeking food and shelter.

"We are poor, but you are welcome," said Hans. "We will share our porridge with you and provide a place to sleep. However, we only have one bed, and my sister sleeps in it, so you will have to sleep on the floor."

"He can have my bed," said Nella. "I am young and can sleep on the floor better than he can."

"You are kind to the elderly," said the old man. "May Heaven bless you." After finishing his supper, he went to bed without saying much.

"He's a peculiar person," remarked Hans. "He barely spoke. Perhaps he's traveled a long way and is tired," suggested Nella.

The next morning, Hans and Nella woke up to find the old man had disappeared. As Nella made her bed, she bumped into something with her feet. When she looked under the bed, she discovered a silver box.

"What should we do with it?" wondered Nella. "The old man will notice it's gone and may come back. We should keep it safe for him."

"We'll bury it," suggested Hans. "If he returns, we can dig it up and return it to him."

So they took the silver box to the garden and buried it a short distance from their house.

The following morning, when they looked out the window, they saw a tree with large leafy branches growing right above the spot where they had buried the box.

Hans went outside to examine the tree and noticed a door on one side. He opened it and found himself facing a long, dark tunnel. He walked for a while until he glimpsed a distant light. It appeared to be miles away, so Hans hurried toward it. When he arrived, he realized it was sunlight reflecting off a mountain of gold.



"Oh, if only I had a basket, I could gather enough gold to secure a comfortable life for Nella and myself," thought Hans. "I'll fill my pockets," he said, as he noticed small pieces of gold scattered around. Hans filled his pockets and began heading back, where he met Nella.

"I went to the garden to find you," she said. "When I saw the door in the tree, I was certain you were inside. I feared something had happened to you when I realized how dark it was."

Hans told Nella about the golden mountain he had discovered, and she expressed her desire to see it. "Oh!" she exclaimed when she laid eyes on it. "If only we had a barrel, we could be rich!"

"But we couldn't carry a barrel of gold," replied Hans. "Put some in your apron. We'll have enough to buy a horse and cart, and then I can find work in the village. That would be better than being rich because wealthy people are always burdened by their wealth."

"You're right," agreed Nella, as she collected some gold in her apron. "I'll take only a little." They returned through the dark tunnel. However, instead of their modest hut, they found a charming white cottage with green blinds. Upon entering, they discovered it was furnished perfectly for two people.

"Do you think this is meant for us?" asked Nella.

"Of course," replied Hans. "Look, there's my cap on the peg, and there's your shawl on the chair."

"But who could have given it to us?"

"Perhaps the fairies," Hans suggested. "Now, I must go to town to buy a horse and cart." Nella accompanied him to the door. "Listen," she said, "the tree is speaking."

"It's just the wind," said Hans. Nevertheless, they listened, and it seemed as if

the tree whispered, "Bless you, my children; you were kind to an old man."

"Look!" exclaimed Nella. "The tree resembles a man extending his arms. Let's approach it."

"The door has vanished," said Hans, as they drew closer to the tree.

"I'm glad it's gone," said Nella. "I prefer it as a beautiful tree."

"Me too," agreed Hans, and the tree seemed to envelop them with its long branches, embracing them lovingly.

"I believe it's the old man returned to protect his box," said Nella. "And I'm certain he will watch over us as well."

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