Brother and Sister

The brother took his sister by the hand and said: "Since our mother passed away, we have not had an hour of joy; our stepmother beats us every day, and when we come to her, she drives us away with kicks. She feeds us only with stale crusts left from the table, and even the little dog under the table lives far better: at least occasionally, she throws it a tasty morsel. God forbid our mother should know about this! Let us go wander together across the wide world."

And so they went, walking all day through meadows, fields, and over stones; and when it rained, the little sister would say: "Both the sky and our hearts are weeping together!"

In the evening they arrived at a great forest and were so exhausted by their sorrow, hunger, and long journey that they crept into a hollow tree and fell asleep.

The next morning, when they woke, the sun already stood high in the sky and warmly heated the hollow. Then the brother said: "Sister, I am thirsty, and if I knew of a spring nearby, I would run there at once and drink; it seems to me I heard babbling water close by." He rose, took his sister by the hand, and they went to search for the spring.

But their wicked stepmother was a witch and had seen how the children had left home, and herself, invisible as all witches are, had secretly followed them and enchanted all the springs in the forest.

Thus they found a spring that sparkled brightly, leaping over stones, and the brother was just about to drink from it; however, the sister heard how the spring murmured amid its splashing: "Whoever drinks water from me shall turn into a tiger! Whoever drinks water from me shall turn into a tiger!"

Then the sister exclaimed: "I beg you, brother, do not drink, or you will turn into a fierce beast and tear me apart."

The brother did not drink, although unbearable thirst tormented him, and said: "I will wait until the next spring."

When they came to the second spring, the sister again heard amidst its murmuring: "Whoever drinks water from me shall turn into a wolf; whoever drinks water from me shall turn into a wolf."

And the sister cried out to her brother: "Brother, I beg you, do not drink, or you will turn into a wolf and eat me."

The brother did not drink and said: "I will wait until the next spring, but there I shall certainly drink, no matter what you say: my thirst is too unbearable."

So they came to the third spring, and the sister heard how it murmured amid its splashing: "Whoever drinks from me shall turn into a wild goat; whoever drinks from me shall turn into a wild goat."

The sister said: "Oh, brother, I beg you, do not drink, or you will turn into a wild goat and run away from me."

But the brother had already rushed to the spring, bent down to it, and taken a sip of water, and scarcely had the first drop touched his lips when he instantly turned into a wild goat right there by the spring.

The sister wept over her enchanted brother, and the little goat wept too, sitting beside her sad and dejected. Finally the sister said: "Do not grieve, dear little goat, I shall never leave you."

Then she untied her gilded garter and tied it around the goat's neck; afterwards she gathered rushes and wove from them a soft cord. To this cord she tied the goat and led him onward, walking deeper and deeper into the forest. And after a very, very long journey, they finally came to a little house, and the sister peeped inside; the house was empty, and she thought: "Here we can stay and settle."

So she gathered leaves and moss to make a soft bed for the goat, and each morning she went out from the house and gathered roots, berries, and nuts for herself, while for the goat she brought tender grass, which he ate from her hands contentedly and played beside her.

In the evening, when tired, the little sister would pray, lay her head upon the goat's back as upon a little pillow, and thus fall asleep. And if only the brother still had his former human form, they would have lived excellently.

Thus they lived for some time all alone in the wilderness.

However, it happened that the king of that country organized a great hunt in that forest.

Everywhere sounded the horns, barking of dogs, and merry cries of hunters echoed far through the forest, and the little goat heard all this and greatly wished to be there. "Ah," said he to his sister, "let me go see the hunt. I cannot sit still here!"—and he begged her until she let him go. "Only remember," said she to him,

"return to me in the evening, for I must lock myself in against these wicked hunters; and so that I may recognize you, knock and say: 'Little sister, let me in,'—and if you do not say this, I shall not open my door to you."

So the little goat jumped out of the house, and felt so good, so cheerful in the fresh air! The king and his servants noticed the beautiful animal and began to chase him, yet could not catch him, and when they already thought he was almost in their hands, he leaped over a bush and disappeared.

As soon as it grew dark, he ran back to the little house, knocked, and said: "Little sister, let me in." Then the little door was opened to him, he jumped into the house, and rested all night on his small bed.

The next morning the hunt continued again, and when the little goat heard the sound of horns and the hunters' shouts, he became restless again and said: "Little sister, unlock for me, let me out." The little sister unlocked the door and said: "Only be sure to come back in the evening and do not forget your words."

When the king and his huntsmen again saw the little goat with the golden collar, they all rushed after him in pursuit; but he proved extraordinarily swift and agile.

All day they chased him; finally toward evening they surrounded him, and one of the huntsmen slightly wounded his leg, so that he limped and could no longer run so fast.

Then one of the huntsmen secretly followed him right up to the little house and heard how the goat said: "Little sister, let me in,"—and saw how the door opened before him and closed again.

The huntsman remembered all this perfectly, went to the king, and told him what he had seen and heard. Then the king said: "Tomorrow we shall hunt once more."

Meanwhile the little sister was terribly frightened when she saw that her goat was wounded. She washed the blood from his wound, applied healing herbs to it, and said: "Go to your little bed, dear goat, so that you may recover quickly."

The wound, however, was so slight that by morning the goat no longer felt it.

And when he heard the merry sounds of hunting horns drifting from the forest, he said: "I cannot stay at home, I must be there; they will not catch me so easily."

The sister began to weep and said to him: "Now they will kill you, and I shall remain here in the forest, alone and abandoned by all: I shall not let you go today."—"Then I shall die here before your eyes from grief!" answered the goat. "When I hear the sound of the hunting horn, my soul longs to be there!"

Then the sister saw that he could not be held back, and with great reluctance unlocked the door for him, and the goat, cheerful and lively, dashed off into the forest.

The king, as soon as he saw him, said to his huntsmen: "Now pursue him along his trail all day until nightfall, but let no one do him any harm."

And when the sun set, he said to the huntsman who had followed the goat the previous day: "Come, show me the forest house."

Arriving before the little door, he knocked and cried: "Little sister, let me in."

Then the door opened, the king entered the house, and saw there a maiden of unprecedented beauty. She was frightened, seeing that it was not her goat who had entered, but a man with a golden crown upon his head. But the king looked kindly at her, extended his hand to her, and said: "Will you not come with me to the castle and become my beloved wife?"—"Oh, yes!" said the maiden. "But the goat must remain with me—I shall not leave him here."—"Let him stay with you," said the king, "as long as you live, let him lack for nothing."

Meanwhile the goat arrived, and the sister again tied him to the cord, took the cord in her hands, and went together with the goat out of the forest house.

The king took the beauty up onto his horse and carried her to his magnificent castle, where a wedding was celebrated most lavishly, and the little sister became queen and lived for a long time with her husband in complete prosperity; and the goat was cared for and guarded, and he frolicked freely in the castle garden.

As for the wicked stepmother, because of whom the children had gone out into the world, she already thought that the little sister had probably been torn apart by wild beasts in the forest, and the brother, turned into a wild goat, had been shot by hunters.

But when

she heard that they were so happy and living well, envy and hostility spoke again in her heart and gave her no peace, and she began to think only of how to make them both unhappy once more.

The witch's own daughter, wicked as mortal sin, and moreover one-eyed, began to reproach her mother and said: "I ought to be queen, not that girl."—"Sit and be silent," said the old witch, soothing her, "the time will come, and then I shall make use of it."

After a certain time the queen gave birth to a fine little boy, and the king happened at that very time to be out hunting...

So the old witch took on the appearance of the queen's maid, entered the room where the lying-in woman lay, and said: "Please, the bath is ready for you; it will do you good and give you new strength; please come quickly, before the water cools."

Her daughter was there close at hand; together they carried the weakened queen into the bathhouse and lowered her into the tub; then they locked the door tight and ran away from there. And in the bathhouse they kindled such a hellish fire that the beautiful young queen was bound to suffocate there.

When this was done, the old witch took her own daughter, put a cap on her head, and laid her in the bed in the queen's place. She gave her the queen's form and appearance, only since she was crooked in one eye, she remained so; and so that the king might not notice it, the witch's daughter had to lie on the side toward which her eye turned.

In the evening, when the king returned and heard that a son had been born to him, he rejoiced with all his heart and wished to approach the bed and look upon his dear wife.

Then the old witch hastened to cry out: "For God's sake, lower the curtains; the queen must not yet look upon the light, and moreover she needs rest."

The king stepped away from the bed and did not know that lying upon it was not his wife, but another, a substitute queen.

At the very stroke of midnight, when all was asleep, the nurse, who sat in the nursery by the cradle and was the only one awake in the whole house, saw the door open and the true queen enter the nursery.

She took the child from the cradle, laid him on her arm, and gave him to drink. Then she straightened his little pillow, laid him back in the cradle, and covered him with the blanket. She did not forget the little goat either; she went to the corner where he lay and stroked his back.

Then in deep silence she went out through the door again, and the next morning the nurse asked the guards whether anyone had come to the castle during the night—and received the answer: "No, we saw no one."

Thus she came many nights in a row and never once uttered a single word; the nurse saw her every night, but dared not tell anyone about it.

After some time had passed, the queen during her nocturnal visit spoke and said:

What of my little child? What of my little goat?
Twice more I shall come, then rest I shall seek.

The nurse answered her nothing; but when she vanished, the nurse went to the king and told him everything.

The king said: "My God, what could this mean? Next night I will spend by my son's cradle."

And indeed, in the evening he came to the nursery, and exactly at midnight the queen appeared again and said:

What of my little child? What of my little goat?
Once more I shall come, then rest I shall seek.

And then she tended the child just as in her previous visits, and afterward vanished. The king did not dare speak to her, but he stayed awake the following night as well. And again she repeated:

What of my little child? What of my little goat?
This last time I come—now to rest I go.

Then the king could restrain himself no longer; he rushed to her and said: "You are none other than my dear wife." And she answered: "Yes, I am your dear wife,"—and at that very instant, by God's grace, life returned to her, and she stood before the king fresh, rosy, and healthy.

Then she told the king about the villainy that the evil witch and her daughter had committed against her. The king ordered both to be led to judgment, and there sentence was pronounced upon them. The daughter was sentenced to be taken into the forest, where wild beasts tore her apart; and the witch was led to the stake, where she burned. And when only ash remained of the witch, the wild goat ceased to be an enchanted creature and became a youth again; and the brother and sister lived together inseparably and happily until their death.