The Hunter and His Wife

Once upon a time there was a hunter, and he had two dogs. Once he was wandering with them through meadows and forests, looking for game, wandered for a long time — saw nothing, and as evening came on, he stumbled upon such a wonder: a stump was burning, and a snake was sitting in the fire. And the snake says to him:

— Take me, little man, out of the fire, out of the flames; I will make you happy: you will know everything that is in the world, and how beasts speak, and what birds sing!

— Glad to help you, but how? — asks the hunter of the snake.

— Just put the end of a stick into the fire, and I will climb out along it.

The hunter did so. The snake crawled out:

— Thank you, little man! You will now understand what every creature says; only don't tell anyone about it, or if you tell — you will die!

Again the hunter went to look for game, walked and walked, and dark night overtook him.

“Home is far,” he thought, “I'll stay here to spend the night.”

He made a fire and lay down beside it together with the dogs and hears that the dogs started a conversation between themselves and call each other brother.

— Well, brother, — says one, — you spend the night with the master, and I will run home, I will guard the yard. Who knows: thieves may come!

— Go, brother, with God! — answers the other.

Early in the morning the dog returned from home and says to the one that spent the night in the forest:

— Hello, brother!

— Hello!

— Did your night go well?

— Nothing, thank God! And you, brother, how did you sleep at home?

— Oh, badly! I ran home, and the mistress says: “What the devil brought you without the master!” — and threw me a burnt crust of bread. I sniffed, sniffed, but did not eat; then she grabbed a poker and started treating me, counted all my ribs! And at night, brother, thieves came to the yard, wanted to get to the barns and cages, so I raised such a barking, attacked them so fiercely, that there was no thinking of other people's goods, only to get away safe and sound themselves! So I was busy all night!

The hunter hears that one dog is telling the other, and keeps it in mind: “Wait, wife! When I come home — I'll give you what for!”

So he came into the hut:
— Hello, mistress!
— Hello, master!
— Did the dog come home yesterday?
— She came.
— Well, did you feed her?
— Fed her, dear! Gave her a whole jug of milk and crumbled bread.
— You're lying, old witch! You gave her a burnt crust and beat her with a poker.
The wife confessed and began pestering her husband, tell me and tell me how you learned everything.
— I can't, — answers the husband, — I'm not allowed to tell.
— Tell me, dear!
— Honestly, I can't!
— Tell me, darling!
— If I tell, I'll die.
— Never mind, just tell me, friend!
What can you do with a woman? Die if you must, but confess!
— Well, give me a white shirt, — says the husband.
He put on the white shirt, lay down in the front corner under the icons, fully prepared to die, and is about to tell the mistress the whole true truth.
At that moment chickens ran into the hut, and after them a rooster, and he began pecking now this one, now that one, and says to himself:
— Just wait, I'll deal with you! After all, I'm not such a fool as our master, who can't handle one wife! I have thirty of you and more, and if I want to — I'll get to all of you!
When the hunter heard these words, he did not want to be a fool, jumped up from the bench and began to teach his wife with a whip. She calmed down: enough pestering and asking!