The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats

Once upon a time there lived an old goat, and she had seven kids, and she loved them as every mother loves her children.

One day she had to go into the forest to gather food, and so she called all her kids together and said: "My dear children, I must go into the forest, so beware of the wolf while I am away! For if he gets in here, he will eat you all up, skin and hair. This villain often disguises himself, pretending he is not a wolf, but you will know him at once by his rough voice and his black paws."

The kids answered: "Dear mother, we will certainly be on our guard, and you may go without worrying about us."

Then the old goat bleated and set off quite calmly on her way. Scarcely any time had passed after she left when someone knocked on the door of their little house and cried: "Open up, my dear little ones, your mother has come and brought each of you a little present."

But the kids, by the rough voice, understood that the wolf had come to them, and they cried out to him: "We will not open up, you are not our mother! Hers is a soft, gentle voice, and yours is rough! You are the wolf!"

Then the wolf ran to the grocer, bought from him a large piece of chalk, ate it—and his voice became quite thin.

He came back to the same door, knocked on it and cried: "Open up, my dear children, your mother has come and brought each of you a present."

But he leaned his black paws on the windowsill, the children saw this and cried out: "We will not open up, our mother does not have black paws like yours! You are the wolf!"

Then the wolf ran to the baker and said: "I have hurt my leg, smear it with dough for me." And when the baker did as he wished, the wolf ran to the miller and said: "Sprinkle my paws with white flour."

The miller thought: "Surely the wolf is up to some trickery,"—and began to make excuses, but the wolf said: "If you do not do it, I will eat you."

Then the miller got scared and whitened his paw with flour. Such is the way of people!

So the villain went for the third time to the same door, knocked and said: "Open up, children, your dear mother has come back and brought each of you a little present from the forest."

The kids cried out: "First show us what your paw is like, so that we may know whether you are truly our dear mother!"

Then he showed them his paw at the window, and when they saw that it was white, they believed his words and opened the door. And who should come in but the wolf!

The kids were terrified—and scurried about to hide. One jumped under the table, another dived into the bed, a third climbed into the stove, a fourth ran into the kitchen, a fifth hid in the cupboard, the sixth—under the washtub, the seventh—in the case for the clock weights. Yet the wolf found them all and was none too gentle with them: one after another he swallowed them down his gullet, and only the youngest he could not find at all in the clock case.

Having eaten his fill, he calmly left the house, stretched out on a large meadow under a tree and began to fall asleep.

Soon after that the old goat returned home from the forest. Oh, what she saw there! The front door flung wide open: chairs and benches overturned, the washtub smashed to splinters, the blanket and pillows thrown out of the bed.

She began to look for her children, but nowhere could she find them. She began to call them by name, but no one answered.

At last, when she came to the youngest, a thin little voice cried out to her: "Dear mother, I have hidden in the clock case."

She at once got her child out of there and heard the tale of how the wolf had come and devoured all the other kids. You can imagine how she wept for her poor little ones!

At last the old goat, in her great sorrow, went out of the house, and the little kid ran after her. As soon as they came out onto the meadow, the goat saw that the wolf was lying stretched out by the tree and snoring so loudly that the branches above him swayed with his snoring.

The goat went around and examined him from all sides, and saw that something was stirring in his swollen belly. "Oh, Lord," she thought, "can it be my poor children? He has supped on them, and they, it seems, are still alive."

Then she sent the kid home for scissors, needle and thread.

Then she cut open the monster's belly and had barely cut it when one kid already poked out his little head; and as she cut further, all six kids leaped out one after another from the wolf's belly, and all were alive and sound, because the monster in its greed had swallowed them whole.

What joy that was! And they began to nuzzle their mother, and dance around her, like a tailor at a wedding.

And the old goat said: "Now go and gather me as many cobblestones as you can, and we will pile them into this cursed beast's belly while he sleeps." The seven little kids hastily hauled cobblestones and stuffed them into the wolf's belly, as many as would fit. And the old goat sewed up his cut all the faster, so that he noticed nothing and did not even stir.

When at last the wolf had slept his fill, he got to his feet, and as the stony load roused in him a mighty thirst, he thought to make his way to the spring and drink. But as soon as he had taken a few steps, the stones in his belly began to knock and clink against one another. Then he cried out:

What is that rumbling, what is that grumbling,
What has weighed down my belly so?
I thought it was six little kids,
Now I hear—there the stones rattle!

And when he came to the spring and bent down to the water, about to drink, the heavy stones dragged him down, he fell into the water and perished an evil death.

And the seven little kids, seeing this, ran to their mother crying: "The wolf is dead! The wolf has drowned!"

And together with their mother they danced merrily around the spring.