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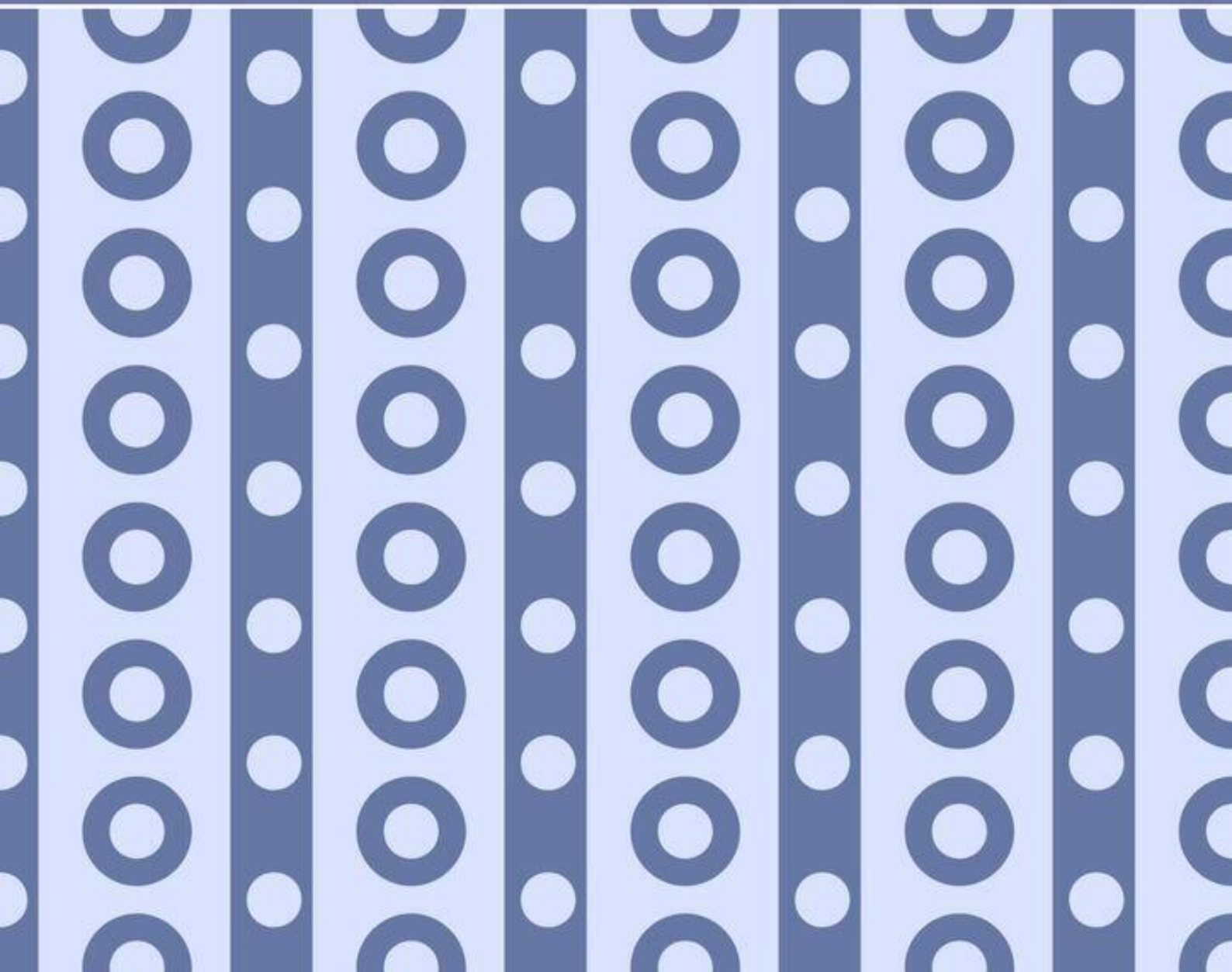
Viktor Nikitin

The World of Fairy Tales



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The World of Fairy Tales

«Издательские решения»

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The World of Fairy Tales / Viktor Nikitin — «Издательские решения»,

This collection brings together fairy tales from different countries and traditions, including Irish, Indian, and European folklore. Princes and princesses, poor villagers and kings, witches and dragons, magicians and talking animals all appear in these remarkable stories. Courage, kindness, cleverness, and good fortune often prove more powerful than wealth or strength. Magic, humor, unexpected transformations, and surprising endings make these tales enjoyable for both children and adults.

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INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales have been told for centuries, long before they were written down in books. They passed from one generation to another, changing slightly with every telling, yet preserving the same essential themes: courage and fear, kindness and greed, loyalty and betrayal, good fortune and bad luck.

The stories in this collection come from different countries and traditions. Some are Irish, others belong to the folklore of distant lands. Their heroes and heroines may be poor peasants, princes and princesses, widows, soldiers, animals, witches, giants, magicians, or even tiny creatures with magical powers. Their worlds are full of strange transformations, enchanted objects, dangerous journeys, impossible tasks, and unexpected rewards.

Yet beneath all this magic, the stories often deal with very human things. A poor man dreams of a better life. A young girl tries to escape from danger. A brother searches for his lost sister. Someone who appears foolish turns out to be wiser than everyone else. Again and again, courage,

* * * THE SEVEN GOLDEN PEAHENS

(From the Servian Folk Lore)

Long, long ago there lived a king who had three sons. In the garden of his palace grew a wonderful apple tree. It was a magical tree, because it produced only golden apples. The king was extremely proud of it and valued the tree almost as much as he valued his own daughter.

But there was a mystery that he could not solve. Every time the golden apples became ripe, someone came into the garden during the night and took them away. The king placed guards around the tree, but no guard ever saw the thief.

One day the eldest prince asked his father to let him guard the tree himself. He promised that he would stay awake all night and would not allow even the smallest bird to come near the apples.

When darkness fell, the prince took his sword and went into the garden. He stood beside the golden apple tree and waited.

Soon he heard a strange sound in the air. It seemed as if enormous wings were beating somewhere above him. The sound was so unusual and so pleasant that it made him sleepy. The prince tried to keep his eyes open, but his eyelids became heavier and heavier. Before long he fell into a deep sleep.

When he woke up, it was morning. He immediately looked at the tree and saw that all the golden apples had disappeared.

He returned to the palace and admitted to his father that he had slept through the whole night. The king was very angry.

Then the second prince asked for permission to guard the tree. He promised that he would not close his eyes for even a moment.

But exactly the same thing happened to him.

When night came, the mysterious sound of wings filled the garden. The prince fought against sleep, but soon he fell asleep just like his elder brother.

In the morning all the golden apples were gone again.

Finally it was the turn of the youngest prince. He was more thoughtful than his brothers. After hearing their stories, he understood that the strange sound of the wings was probably what made them fall asleep.

So, before going into the garden, he put pieces of cotton into his ears.

That night he stood beside the golden apple tree and waited.

After some time a bright light appeared in the sky. Seven golden peahens flew into the garden. They shone so brightly that the garden became almost as light as day.

Six of the birds landed on the apple tree and began shaking its branches. Golden apples fell to the ground.

Then something even more wonderful happened. The seventh peahen suddenly changed into a beautiful young woman.

She was extraordinarily beautiful. Her golden hair shone like a cloud of light, her eyes were as blue as the clear sky, and her dress was made of golden cloth.

The girl began collecting the apples that her six sisters had knocked from the tree. The young prince stood silently for some time, completely amazed by her beauty.

At last he took the cotton out of his ears and went toward her.

The girl was frightened when she saw him, but after a while she began to speak to him. She explained that she and the other six peahens were daughters of a powerful king who lived very far away.

Every night they flew over seven mountains and seven seas to this garden because they loved the golden apples.

During the day the seven sisters lived as princesses in a magnificent palace that their father had built for them. But at night they had the magical power to change into golden peahens and fly wherever they wished.

When dawn began to appear, the girl changed back into a golden peahen and flew away with her sisters.

Before leaving, however, she gave the prince three golden apples.

The next morning the prince took the apples to his father. The king was delighted to see them, but what he wanted most of all was to know who had been stealing the apples every night.

The prince did not tell him the whole truth. Instead, he asked permission to guard the tree again the following night.

The next night the same thing happened. Seven golden peahens flew into the garden. Six landed on the tree, while the youngest sister changed into the beautiful princess.

The prince and the girl talked throughout the night. At dawn she changed back into a peahen and flew away with her sisters, leaving him three more golden apples.

Now the king insisted that his son tell him the truth.

The prince finally explained that the golden apples were being taken by seven golden peahens, who were really the daughters of a distant king.

But his brothers only laughed at him. They did not believe his story. They thought he had invented it or perhaps had simply dreamed it.

Then the prince showed them the three golden apples.

Even this did not convince them completely.

They suggested that he should cut off a lock of the princess's golden hair the next night. If he brought them a real lock of her hair, they would finally believe him.

The prince did not want to do it, because he cared deeply for the princess. But his brothers insisted for so long that at last he agreed and took a pair of sharp scissors with him.

That night the seven peahens came again. The youngest changed into the beautiful princess, and she and the prince talked together until dawn.

Just before she was about to leave, the prince secretly cut off a small lock of her golden hair.

The princess immediately cried out sadly.

She told him that if he had only been patient, everything would have ended happily. But now he had broken their trust, and she would have to disappear forever.

He would see her again only if he traveled across seven seas and seven mountains to find her.

After saying this, she changed into a golden peahen and flew away with her sisters.

The prince was heartbroken. He had fallen so deeply in love with the beautiful princess that he could no longer imagine his life without her.

The next morning his father and brothers saw the golden lock of hair and were finally forced to admit that the prince had been telling the truth.

But the prince no longer cared about proving anything. He saddled his horse and set off to find the girl he loved.

He traveled across mountains and plains and asked everyone he met whether they had seen seven golden peahens.

For a long time nobody could help him.

At last, after traveling across seven mountains and seven seas, he reached a great palace standing beside a large lake.

A sorceress queen lived there with her daughter.

The prince asked the queen whether she knew anything about the seven golden peahens.

"Yes," she answered. "I know them. Every morning they come to the lake to bathe."

When the queen saw the handsome young prince, however, she decided to take advantage of the situation.

She offered him her own daughter in marriage and invited him to remain at the palace. She promised that after her death he would inherit all her wealth and the palace itself.

But the prince refused.

He loved only the golden princess and did not want to marry anyone else.

The queen then pretended that she wanted to help him. She offered to send a servant with him to show him the way to the lake.

Secretly, however, she gave the servant a small pair of bellows and ordered him to blow gently on the back of the prince's neck when they reached the lake.

In return, she promised to reward him.

When they reached the lake, the prince sat down on a stone and waited for the golden peahens.

The servant secretly came up behind him and blew on his neck.

The prince immediately fell asleep.

Soon the seven golden peahens arrived.

Six began to bathe in the lake, while the youngest changed into the golden princess.

She went to the sleeping prince. She called his name, touched him gently, and tried again and again to wake him.

But he did not move.

Before leaving, she told the servant to give the prince a message.

She said that she would come to the lake two more times, but after that she would never return.

When the prince woke up and learned that the princess had been beside him but that he had not seen her, he was filled with despair.

Nevertheless, he decided not to lose his next chance.

The following day he returned to the lake.

Again the queen gave the servant the bellows.

This time the prince did not sit down. He was afraid of falling asleep.

But the servant managed to approach him secretly and blow on his neck again.

Once more the prince fell asleep.

The seven peahens arrived, and the princess again tried to wake him. But she could not.

Before flying away, she told the servant to give him another message.

She said that she would come one more time, and then never again.

Then she added a strange sentence: if he wanted to see her again, he must "cut the head off the body of the nail."

When the prince woke up and heard the message, he thought carefully about its meaning.

At last he understood.

The mysterious words meant that he had to discover the truth about the servant who was deceiving him. The prince realized that the servant was the reason he kept falling asleep.

The next day he took his sword.

When they had traveled far enough from the palace, the prince dealt with the servant and continued alone toward the lake.

This time he remained awake and waited patiently.

At last the seven golden peahens arrived.

The youngest changed into the beautiful princess.

When she saw that the prince was finally awake, she was overjoyed.

She told him that now they would never be separated again.

The princess then used her magic to turn the prince into a golden peacock. The seven birds flew together toward their father's distant kingdom.

When they reached the palace, the prince changed back into a man, and the seven golden peahens became seven beautiful princesses.

The young man married the youngest sister, the princess he loved, and for some time they lived very happily together.

Seven months passed.

One day the princess told her husband that she and her sisters had to go and visit their father for three days.

The prince could not go with them.

Before leaving, she gave him permission to use everything in the palace. But she gave him one strict warning.

He could enter any room he wanted except the third underground cellar.

The prince promised to obey her.

On the first day he hardly thought about the forbidden cellar.

On the second day he became curious and found the door leading downstairs.

The door was locked with many bolts and chains.

On the third day his curiosity became so strong that he could think about nothing else.

At last he opened the door and went inside.

There he found a huge chest held together by nine iron bands. There were several holes in the lid.

Suddenly he heard a weak voice coming from inside.

“Brother, for the sake of mercy, give me some water. My mouth is terribly dry.”

The prince did not stop to ask who was inside.

He brought a cup of water and poured it through one of the holes.

Immediately three of the iron bands broke apart.

The voice asked for water again.

The prince brought another cup and poured it through the hole.

Three more iron bands broke.

Then the voice asked for water a third time.

The prince brought another cup.

With a terrible crash, like a clap of thunder, the last three iron bands broke.

The lid flew open, and an enormous green dragon burst out of the chest.

It rose into the air and flew away from the palace.

The prince rushed after it, but at that very moment his wife and her six sisters were returning home.

The dragon seized the youngest princess in its claws and carried her away.

The prince followed them for as long as he could. Then he continued his journey on foot.

After some time he came to a stream and saw a little fish lying helplessly on the bank. It was struggling to breathe.

The fish asked him to return it to the water.

The prince put it back into the stream.

In gratitude, the fish gave him one of its scales and told him that whenever he needed help, he only had to rub the scale and call for it.

Later, in the forest, the prince found a fox whose paw was caught in a trap.

He freed the fox.

The grateful fox gave him three hairs from its tail and promised to come whenever the prince called for help.

Farther on he found a wolf with a heavy stone pressing down on its paw.

The prince freed the wolf as well.

The wolf gave him three hairs from its tail and promised to help him whenever he was in danger.

At last the prince came out of the forest and saw a huge castle standing on a mountain.

A green dragon rode out of its gates on a magnificent coal-black horse.

The prince immediately understood that he had found the creature that had carried away his wife.

When the dragon had gone, the prince entered the castle.

In one of the rooms he found his wife sitting alone and crying.

As soon as she saw him, she ran to him and embraced him.

They quickly decided to escape.

The prince found another horse in the stable, placed the princess in front of him, and rode down the mountain as fast as he could.

But that evening the dragon returned.

When he discovered that the princess had disappeared, he understood immediately what had happened.

He asked his black horse whether they should leave at once to chase the fugitives or first eat and rest.

The horse answered that they should eat first, because they would easily catch the prince later.

So the dragon ate his dinner and then began the pursuit.

Before long he caught up with the prince.

He took the princess away from him and placed her in front of him on his own horse.

But the dragon told the prince that he would spare his life this time.

He remembered that the prince had once shown him mercy by giving him water and freeing him from the chest.

However, he warned the prince never to return to his castle. If he came back again, the dragon would kill him.

The prince waited until the dragon disappeared from sight.

Then, despite the warning, he returned to the castle.

The next day, when the dragon went away, the prince entered the castle again.

He hid behind a curtain and asked the princess to discover where the dragon had obtained his extraordinary black horse.

The prince understood that the only way they could escape was to find a horse just as fast.

When the dragon returned, the princess pretended to be especially affectionate.

She praised his horse and asked whether there was another horse like it in the world.

The dragon replied that there was only one.

It was the horse's own brother, and it belonged to an old one-eyed woman.

The woman had twelve beautiful horses, but the horse they needed was the thinnest and ugliest of them all. It stood in the farthest stall and looked like a useless old nag.

In reality, however, it was just as magnificent and fast as the dragon's black horse.

There was only one way to obtain it.

A person had to work for the old woman for three days and obey all her orders. After completing the three days of service, he could ask for any reward he wanted.

The prince went to the old woman and asked to work for her.

She agreed.

His task was to take a black mare out to pasture every day and bring her home in the evening.

But the old woman warned him that if he lost the mare even once, she would cut off his head.

On the first day the old woman secretly ordered the mare to turn into a fish and hide in the stream.

The prince sat on her back for a long time, but eventually he fell asleep.

When he woke up, he was sitting on a log, holding an empty bridle in his hands.

Then he remembered the little fish he had saved.

He rubbed the fish scale and called for it.

The fish appeared and told him that the mare had changed into a fish and was hiding among the other fish.

The fish advised him to strike the bridle against the ground and order the mare to come out.

The prince followed the advice.

The mare was forced to return to her true form, and he brought her safely home.

On the second day the old woman ordered the mare to turn into a fox.

The same thing happened again.

The prince fell asleep, and the mare disappeared.

But the fox he had saved earlier came to his help. It showed him where the mare was hiding, and he brought her safely back.

On the third day the old woman ordered the mare to hide among the wolves.

Again the prince fell asleep.

Then he remembered the wolf he had rescued in the forest.

He called for it, and the wolf came to help him. It showed him where the mare was hiding.

For the third time the prince found her and completed his task.

The old woman was furious, because she had hoped that he would fail.

But she had to keep her promise.

“What reward do you want?” she asked.

The prince said that he wanted the most miserable-looking horse in the farthest stall.

The old woman tried to persuade him to choose one of her beautiful horses.

She offered him the finest and strongest animals in the stable.

But the prince refused.

He wanted the ugly horse.

Finally the old woman gave it to him.

When he had traveled far enough away from her home, the prince stopped and began to wash and carefully comb the horse.

Then something magical happened.

The miserable-looking animal was transformed into a magnificent white horse, shining like silver.

The prince rode back toward the dragon’s castle.

The princess saw him from a high tower and ran out to meet him.

He lifted her onto the white horse, and together they rode away.

When the dragon returned and discovered that the princess had escaped, he immediately understood what had happened.

He jumped onto his black horse and began chasing them.

But this time he realized that the prince was riding the brother of his own horse.

The chase was long and incredibly fast.

The black horse slowly began to catch them because the white horse was carrying two people and could not use all its speed.

The prince urged his horse to go faster.

But the horse calmly told him not to worry.

When the black horse came close, it spoke to its brother and asked him to slow down.

But the white horse answered that his brother did not have to serve such a terrible creature.

He told the black horse to throw the dragon from its back.

The black horse suddenly rose onto its hind legs and kicked violently.

The dragon lost his balance, fell from the horse, struck his head against a stone, and died.

The two horses then met peacefully.

The prince put the princess on the black horse and mounted the white horse himself.

Together they returned to the palace of the princess’s father.

Her six sisters welcomed them with great joy.

From that day on, the prince and his golden princess were never separated again. They lived for many years in happiness, together with her six sisters and their families.

* * * MISHOSHA, THE MAGICIAN OF THE LAKE

(From Tales of the American Indians)

Once upon a time, on the shore of a large and lonely lake, there lived an Indian with his wife and their two little sons.

Every day the man went into the forest to hunt. As soon as he disappeared from sight, his wife sent the boys down to the lake to play. She did not do this because she was worried about them. She had a lover who came to visit her whenever her husband was away. She was afraid that the boys might see the strange man and later tell their father about him.

One day the husband returned from hunting much earlier than usual. When he heard voices inside his home, he quietly came to the door and looked in. There he saw a stranger sitting beside his wife and talking to her.

The Indian was filled with anger and pain. He threw the animals he had killed near the entrance, left his bow and arrows there, and silently walked back into the forest. He was so shocked and furious that he decided never to return.

His wife did not notice anything at first. Some time later she came outside and saw the game, the bow, and the arrows lying beside the door. She immediately understood that her husband had seen everything.

She was terrified. She thought that he would certainly come back one day and punish her severely.

She begged her lover to take her away with him. He agreed, and together they secretly left the home. They did not even think about the two boys who were still playing beside the lake.

After some time the brothers became tired and wondered why their mother had not called them home as she usually did. They were hungry, so they went back to the house looking for food.

But the house was empty and silent.

They called their mother, but nobody answered. The only sign that their father had recently been there was the game he had left beside the door.

The elder brother, Panigwun, cut several pieces of meat from it and cooked them over the fire. When night came, the two boys sat together in a corner of the house and cried.

Now they understood that their parents had abandoned them.

From that day on, the two brothers lived completely alone. Panigwun knew how to use a bow and arrows. Every day he took his father's weapons and went into the forest to hunt. He was usually able to bring home something to eat.

His younger brother was very different. He did not want to hunt and spent most of his time playing. He was also a very mischievous boy.

One day Panigwun was making a fire when his younger brother took his bow and arrows and went down to the lake. He began shooting arrows into the water just for fun. He enjoyed watching the arrows fall into the lake and float on the surface.

Panigwun saw him and shouted, telling him not to waste the arrows.

But the boy ran farther along the shore and continued shooting.

Panigwun followed him and took the bow away. Several arrows were already floating far from the shore. Panigwun did not want to lose them, so he entered the water and began collecting them.

The last arrow was especially far away. By the time Panigwun reached it, the water was up to his shoulders.

His little brother stood on the shore and laughed.

At that moment a canoe appeared around a bend in the lake.

An old man with long white hair was sitting in it. He had no paddle, yet the canoe moved by itself, as if some invisible force were carrying it across the water.

This was Mishosha, the magician of the lake. His canoe was magical.

When the canoe came close to Panigwun, Mishosha leaned over, lifted the boy out of the water, and put him into the canoe.

Then he struck the side of the canoe with his hand and shouted:

"CHEMANN POLL!"

The canoe immediately turned and rushed toward a large island in the middle of the lake.

The younger brother saw Panigwun being carried away. He ran into the water and cried desperately:

"Take me with you! Take me too!"

But the canoe continued to move away.

The boy went as far into the water as he dared and cried for his brother for a long time. There was no answer.

At last the canoe disappeared from sight. The boy returned to the shore, threw himself on the ground, and began to cry bitterly.

Once again he was completely alone.

Meanwhile, Panigwun arrived on Mishosha's island. He begged the magician to take him back to his brother or at least to bring the younger boy to the island.

But Mishosha said nothing.

When the canoe reached the shore, the magician stepped out and ordered Panigwun to follow him.

They went through bushes and between rocks until they reached a small settlement. In front of one of the homes two young girls were preparing food.

They said nothing, but they looked at Panigwun with pity.

Mishosha spoke roughly to the older girl.

"I have brought you a young man. When you are both old enough, he will be your husband. Take him to one of the empty homes. And do not speak to him on the way, or you will regret it."

The girl was frightened. She quickly took Panigwun away.

She was so afraid that she even tripped over a root and fell. Mishosha laughed cruelly.

The girl got up and led Panigwun toward several empty homes. She stopped and told him to choose one.

Panigwun chose the first one because it looked comfortable.

But the girl suddenly grabbed his arm in terror and pulled him away.

He chose another home, but she did exactly the same thing.

"Since you will not let me choose," Panigwun said angrily, "you choose one yourself."

The girl pointed to a small home standing a little apart from the others.

"I will choose that one if you explain why," Panigwun said. "Otherwise I will take one of the larger homes."

The girl looked around carefully to make sure nobody was nearby. Then she whispered quickly:

"Those homes are cursed. Everyone who lived there was taken away by Mishosha in his canoe, and none of them ever returned. No one has ever lived in the small home. Take that one."

As soon as she finished speaking, she disappeared into the bushes.

Panigwun entered the little home, lay down on the ground, and began to cry. He was thinking about his younger brother.

"Poor brother," he said to himself. "What will you do now? How will you live without me? You do not even have any arrows, because I took them with me."

He cried for a long time until night came.

Suddenly he felt someone gently touch his shoulder.

The young girl was standing beside him again. She put a finger to her lips and told him to be silent.

"Mishosha is asleep," she whispered. "If we speak quietly, he will not hear us. Take his magical canoe and go back to your brother. Strike the side of the canoe and say, "CHEMANN POLL." It will carry you wherever you want to go.

"But come back quickly. If Mishosha wakes up and discovers that you are gone, he will understand that I helped you, and he will punish me."

Panigwun wanted to thank her, but she had already disappeared.

The boy went down to the lake, climbed into the magical canoe, struck its side, and said the magic words.

The canoe immediately rushed across the dark lake and stopped at the same shore where Panigwun had entered the water that morning.

He quickly went to the house and looked inside.

In the weak light of the stars, he saw his little brother sleeping beside the door. The boy was holding the bow tightly in his arms.

Panigwun wanted to wake him, but then he remembered the girl's warning. He was afraid that his brother would not let him leave again if he discovered that Panigwun was alive.

So he quietly placed a bundle of arrows and some food beside his sleeping brother. The food had been sent to his home by Mishosha.

Panigwun stood there for a little while, looking at his brother, and then returned to the canoe.

But while he was away, the weather suddenly changed.

Dark clouds covered the sky. A strong wind began to blow, and a terrible storm broke out over the lake.

When Panigwun returned to the island, he had barely entered his home when lightning flashed and thunder shook the earth.

After some time he heard footsteps.

With the next flash of lightning, Mishosha appeared in the doorway.

But the magician looked completely different now. His face was twisted with fear, and his whole body was shaking.

He rushed toward Panigwun.

"Are you awake?" he asked. "I could not sleep either. I came to see whether you were comfortable. Let us talk. I am not afraid. I am not afraid at all!"

Another thunderclap sounded.

Mishosha fell to the floor and grabbed Panigwun's legs.

"I have never done you any harm!" he cried. "Tell me that I have never hurt you! It is the Lord of the Storm. He is stronger than I am. He is looking for me!"

Lightning filled the room.

"Hide me, Panigwun! What I did today was only a joke. Tomorrow I will take you to your brother. I always intended to do it. Just hide me until the storm is over!"

Panigwun covered the magician with a blanket.

Mishosha curled up underneath it and trembled with fear. Whenever lightning flashed brightly, he groaned loudly.

At last the storm began to weaken. The thunder moved farther away, and the lightning became less frequent.

Mishosha's fear disappeared.

He came out from under the blanket and stood at the door.

"The storm is over," he said in his normal voice. "I wanted to tell you about a dream I had, but it is late now. I will tell you another time."

"Will you take me to my brother tomorrow?" Panigwun asked.

Mishosha laughed cruelly.

"No promises. Tomorrow we may decide that all this was only a dream. And remember this: do not touch my canoe. And do not think that you can do anything secretly on this island without my knowing."

With these words he left.

The next morning Mishosha announced:

"Today we are going to an island to collect seagull eggs."

"But first you will take me to my brother, won't you?" Panigwun asked.

"Another time. We must leave early."

They got into the canoe and sailed away.

Soon Mishosha's island disappeared from sight. Another island appeared in the distance. It was bare and rocky, and thousands of screaming seagulls covered it.

Mishosha put Panigwun ashore.

"Go and collect the eggs. I will wait here."

But as soon as the boy stepped onto the island, Mishosha pushed the canoe away.

"Seagulls!" he shouted. "I have wanted to sacrifice this boy to you for a long time. Take him as a gift! Let him become food for you and your young!"

He struck the side of the canoe.

"CHEMANN POLL!"

The canoe disappeared.

Thousands of seagulls rose into the air and surrounded Panigwun. Their cries were deafening.

But the boy quickly recovered from his surprise. He took out his knife and called upon his guardian spirit.

With one blow he killed the nearest bird and hung it from his belt.

"Man is the master of birds!" he cried. "You are my servants. Lift me on your wings and carry me back to Mishosha's island!"

The birds came down around him.

Panigwun stood on their wings, and the whole flock rose into the sky and carried him back.

On the way he saw Mishosha's canoe far below.

When the magician returned to his island, Panigwun was already waiting for him.

"You left too quickly," the boy said calmly. "I did not have time to collect the eggs."

Mishosha was amazed.

"I am so forgetful," he muttered. "I forgot that I had left you there. But I would have remembered soon and come back."

Inside, however, he thought:

"This boy has a very powerful guardian spirit. But tomorrow he will not escape me."

The next day Mishosha took Panigwun to another island. He said that there were precious stones scattered there.

There really were diamonds, emeralds, and rubies lying on the ground.

"Take as many as you want," Mishosha said.

Panigwun already understood what the magician intended, but he obeyed.

As soon as the boy stepped onto the island, Mishosha sailed away and shouted:

"King of the fish! I have wanted to sacrifice this boy to you for a long time. Here is a young man for you!"

A huge pike rose from the water. It opened its enormous mouth and swam toward Panigwun.

But the boy was not afraid.

"Man is the master of fish!" he shouted. "You are my servant. Swim to me and carry me back to Mishosha's island!"

The giant fish came close to the shore.

Panigwun climbed onto its back, and the fish rushed across the water so quickly that it passed Mishosha's canoe.

When Mishosha returned, Panigwun was already standing on the shore.

"You are here!" the magician cried.

"I decided to save you the trouble of coming back for me," the boy answered mockingly.

Mishosha understood that his usual tricks would not defeat Panigwun.

The next day he took the boy to another island. There was a single tall pine tree growing there, and at the very top was an eagle's nest.

"Climb the tree and bring me the eagle's eggs," Mishosha ordered.

Panigwun began to climb.

But as soon as he reached the first branches, the tree suddenly began to grow. It became taller and taller.

The boy climbed with it and soon found himself very high above the ground.

From below came Mishosha's voice:

"Come, eagles! I have brought you a sacrifice! You are the kings of birds, and you must accept it!"

The magician struck the side of the canoe and sailed away.

Two enormous eagles flew toward Panigwun. They circled around him, beating their huge wings.

The boy called upon his guardian spirit and again took out his knife.

"Eagles are the kings of birds, but man is the king of eagles! You are my servants. Take me on your wings and carry me to Mishosha's island!"

The eagles joined their wings together.

Panigwun stepped onto them, and the birds carried him through the sky.

They flew so quickly that they reached the island before Mishosha's canoe arrived.

When the magician saw the boy alive again, he became pale.

"This boy is too strong for me," he thought. "His guardian spirit is very powerful. But my magic will defeat him in the end."

The next day Mishosha invited Panigwun to go hunting with him.

"This time I will stay beside you. I certainly will not forget you."

They traveled far from the island and, by evening, reached a deep forest. There they made a camp for the night.

After supper they took off their moccasins and trousers and placed them near the fire. Then they wrapped themselves in blankets and went to sleep.

When Mishosha was sure that Panigwun was asleep, he quietly got up. He took one of the boy's moccasins and one trouser leg and threw them into the fire.

Then, using his magic, he caused terrible cold and deep snow to cover the land.

In the morning Panigwun discovered that he had only one moccasin and one trouser leg left.

Mishosha pretended to be surprised.

"Are you looking for your missing clothes? They probably burned. This is the month when fire attracts things to itself."

Panigwun understood exactly what the magician had done, but he said nothing.

He sat down, covered his head with his hood, and called upon his guardian spirit.

Then he took a burned piece of wood and covered his bare foot and leg with black soot, up to the knee, exactly where the missing moccasin and trouser leg should have been.

"I am ready," he said.

Outside, the cold was terrible.

Snow and freezing wind struck their faces. Mishosha walked ahead and sometimes looked back, expecting to see the boy freezing to death.

But Panigwun's guardian spirit protected him.

The black soot on his leg was as warm as if he were really wearing a moccasin and trousers.

At last Mishosha understood that this attempt had failed too, and he led the boy back.

When they returned to the island, the young girl who had helped Panigwun could not hide her happiness. She was delighted to see that he was alive.

Mishosha noticed her joy and became even more suspicious.

Now he not only hated Panigwun; he was also beginning to fear him.

The next morning Panigwun went to Mishosha himself.

"Grandfather," he said, looking directly into the magician's eyes, "I have obeyed all your orders. Now it is time for you to keep your promise and take me to my brother."

Mishosha did not dare to refuse.

They sailed toward the shore, and Panigwun got out first.

He quietly approached the house and looked inside.

His younger brother was sitting there, repairing the feathers of one of their father's arrows.

The sound of a breaking branch made him look up.

He saw Panigwun's face and jumped to his feet with a cry of joy. The arrows fell to the floor.

While Mishosha was still far away, Panigwun quickly told his brother what to do.

Then they met the magician.

"There is my brother," Panigwun said. "Now we will take him with us."

Mishosha hated the two boys, but he could not openly object.

They walked toward the canoe.

Panigwun and his younger brother reached it before Mishosha. They jumped inside, struck the side of the canoe, and shouted:

"CHEMANN POLL!"

The canoe immediately rushed toward the island, leaving Mishosha standing on the shore.

Panigwun was very pleased with their victory.

When they reached the island, the young girl came to meet them.

"What have you done?" she asked in fear. "Where is Mishosha?"

Panigwun told her how they had tricked the magician and escaped.

But the girl was not happy.

"Do you think you can escape from him so easily? The canoe cannot be safely tied down. Mishosha has such power over it that he can make it return to him whenever he wants, no matter where it is."

Panigwun sat beside the canoe and placed his hand on it.

"Then I will hold it. Let Mishosha call it as much as he wants. The canoe will not leave me."

The girl brought the brothers food.

All evening and all night Panigwun sat beside the canoe. His younger brother stayed with him.

But gradually the younger brother fell asleep. Then Panigwun also became tired and fell asleep.

His hand became weak, and he released the canoe.

In the morning, when he woke up, Mishosha was standing before him.

Panigwun immediately understood what had happened, but he was not frightened.

"Ah, Grandfather!" he said. "You are here? I completely forgot that we had left you on the shore. But today I was just going to remember it and come back for you."

Mishosha said nothing. He ordered the younger brother to be taken into the house.

Now Panigwun thought:

"I have nothing more to fear from him. It is my turn now. Let us see what I can do."

One day he said to Mishosha:

"Grandfather, I enjoyed our last hunting trip so much that I would like to go hunting with you again."

Mishosha became suspicious, but he could not refuse.

They went hunting.

This time Panigwun chose the place himself and led the magician far from the shore, across open land and through thick forests.

When night came, they built a shelter from branches, made a fire, and ate their supper.

This time Panigwun had prepared himself carefully. He did not take off his moccasins or trousers.

When Mishosha fell asleep, the boy got up, took the magician's moccasins and trousers, and threw them into the fire.

Then he asked his guardian spirit to bring heavy snow and freezing cold.

In the morning Mishosha woke up in terrible cold.

He searched for his clothes, but they were nowhere to be found.

Panigwun innocently asked:

"Are you looking for your moccasins and trousers, Grandfather? You know that this is the month when fire attracts things. I am afraid they were attracted to the fire too and burned."

Mishosha understood immediately.

Panigwun had done exactly what the magician had once done to him.

Mishosha could hardly stand.

Panigwun opened the door.

"Well, Grandfather, it is time to go."

They went outside.

The cold was terrible. The wind cut their skin, and icy snow struck their faces.

Panigwun walked confidently ahead, while Mishosha followed behind, shaking with cold.

Twice the magician fell into the snow. Each time he got up and continued walking.

At last he could not move any farther.

The cold entered his body. His legs became stiff and motionless. His arms stretched out and seemed to become branches. His long gray hair also became branches moving in the wind.

Panigwun continued walking.

Then he noticed that nobody was following him.

He turned around.

Mishosha was gone.

In his place stood a tall gray tree, an old sycamore whose branches creaked and groaned in the wind.

That was the end of Mishosha, the magician of the lake.

Panigwun returned to the island, where his younger brother and the two girls were waiting for him.

They were all happy that the evil magician was dead.

The brothers stayed on the island with the two girls. In time Panigwun and his brother married them, and soon the sound of children could be heard around their homes.

The magical canoe remained with them.

It often carried the brothers and their families from one shore of the lake to another.

And whenever they struck the side of the canoe and spoke the magic words,

"CHEMANN POLL!"

the canoe immediately rushed forward across the lake.

* * * HAAMDAANEE AND THE WISE GAZELLE

(From Zanzibar Tales)

Once upon a time there lived a man named Haamdaanee. He was extremely poor. He had no proper clothes, only a few old rags to cover his body, and he survived on whatever food people were kind enough to give him.

One day, while searching through a pile of dust and rubbish for a few grains of millet, Haamdaanee found a small coin. To a rich man it would have been almost worthless, but to Haamdaanee it seemed like a fortune.

He carefully tied the coin into a corner of his ragged clothes so that he would not lose it. For a long time he could not decide what to do with it. He wanted to buy some food, but he knew that if he spent the money on food, it would soon be gone.

One day, while Haamdaanee was again searching for something to eat in a pile of dust, a merchant passed by. He had a cage containing several gazelles that he wanted to sell.

Haamdaanee called to him:

"Merchant, how much do you want for your gazelles?"

"They have different prices," the merchant replied. "The large and beautiful ones are expensive. But this one is very small and weak. I will sell her for almost nothing."

Several men who were passing by heard the conversation and began laughing at Haamdaanee.

"Have you become rich, Haamdaanee?" they mocked him. "Are you going to spend your great fortune now?"

They told the merchant:

"Do not waste your time with this man. He is so poor that he has to search through rubbish heaps to find something to eat."

But Haamdaanee ignored their laughter. He untied the corner of his ragged clothing, took out his only coin, and gave it to the merchant.

"Take this," he said, "and give me one of the gazelles."

Everyone was surprised to discover that the beggar actually had a coin.

"You are foolish, Haamdaanee," they told him. "You somehow found a coin, and instead of buying yourself good food, you are spending it on an animal. Now you will have to feed her too!"

But Haamdaanee paid no attention to them. He took the little gazelle, while the merchant was delighted to receive the money. He was happy to get rid of the weak animal because he thought she would probably die soon anyway.

Haamdaanee carried the gazelle back to his miserable hut. He made a small bed for her in one corner and tried to take care of her.

But he himself had almost nothing to eat. If there was barely enough food for one person, there was certainly not enough for two.

Still, Haamdaanee did not regret buying the gazelle. She became his only companion, and he grew to love her as if she were his own daughter.

One morning Haamdaanee was preparing to go back to the rubbish heap to look for millet when the gazelle suddenly spoke to him.

"Master," she said, "why don't you open the door and let me go into the forest by myself? I can find food there and return in the evening. Then you will only have to feed one person instead of two."

Haamdaanee was so surprised that for a moment he could hardly speak.

"How can this be?" he exclaimed. "You can talk! But you are only a little animal that I bought for one coin!"

"That is true," the gazelle replied. "But I am not an ordinary gazelle. I am very wise. Let me go into the forest every day. Perhaps I will find a way to change your fortune. And I will always return because you bought me and you are my master."

The gazelle spoke so gently and convincingly that Haamdaanee opened the door.

The animal immediately ran out of the hut and disappeared into the forest.

Haamdaanee soon became sad. He thought:

"Why did I let her go? I will probably never see my little gazelle again. She was so beautiful and kind."

But that evening, when he returned home, the gazelle was already there.

"Master," she said, "today I found plenty to eat in the forest, but I did not see or hear anything that could improve your fortune. Do not be discouraged. Tomorrow I will go again. Who knows what may happen?"

The next morning Haamdaanee let her out again.

From then on he did this every day. The gazelle went into the forest in the morning, spent the whole day there, and returned home in the evening.

One day there was very little food in the forest. The gazelle went much farther than usual, hoping to find something to eat. At last she began digging in the earth with her sharp little hooves, trying to reach the roots of plants.

Suddenly her hoof struck something hard.

She dug deeper and discovered an enormous diamond.

The gazelle was delighted. She wrapped the precious stone in leaves, picked it up in her mouth, and started back toward Haamdaanee.

But on the way she began to think.

"What will my master do with such a huge diamond? No one will believe that a poor man like him found it in the forest. If he shows it to people, they will think that he stole it. They may beat him or take him before a judge. No, I must think of something better."

The wise gazelle thought for a long time. Finally she decided to make a long journey.

She travelled for three days and three nights until she reached a great city where a powerful king lived.

The king had a daughter who was famous for her extraordinary beauty. People had heard of the beautiful princess even in distant lands.

The gazelle entered the city, passed through the streets, and went straight to the royal palace. She climbed the steps and entered the great hall where the king sat surrounded by his advisers.

The gazelle bowed respectfully three times, touching her head to the ground before the king.

The king was astonished.

"What kind of animal is this?" he asked. "Where has it come from?"

Nobody knew the answer.

Then the gazelle herself spoke:

"Great King, I am the messenger of my master, Prince Daaraaee. I have come from a distant land. I have travelled for three days and three nights through the forest."

"What message has your master sent me?" asked the king.

"He asks for your beautiful daughter as his wife. He has also sent you a small present. It is only a modest gift, hardly worth sending, but I could not carry anything larger."

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