



# Brother Lustig

Brothers Grimm

German

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*Intermediate*

*23 min read*

There was one on a time a great war, and when it came to an end, many soldiers were discharged. Then Brother Lustig also received his dismissal, and besides that, nothing but a small loaf of contract-bread, and four kreuzers in money, with which he departed. St. Peter had, however, placed himself in his way in the shape of a poor beggar, and when Brother Lustig came up, he begged alms of him. Brother Lustig replied, "Beggarman, what am I to give you? I have been a soldier, and have received my dismissal, and have nothing but this little loaf of contract-bread, and four kreuzers of money; when that is gone, I shall have to beg as well as you. Still I will give you something."

Thereupon he divided the loaf into four parts, and gave the apostle one of them, and a kreuzer likewise. St. Peter thanked him, went onwards, and threw himself again in the soldier's way as a beggar, but in another shape; and when he came up begged a gift of him as before. Brother Lustig spoke as he had done before, and again gave him a quarter of the loaf and one kreuzer.

St. Peter thanked him, and went onwards, but for the third time placed himself in another shape as a beggar on the road, and spoke to Brother Lustig. Brother Lustig gave him also the third quarter of bread and the third kreuzer. St. Peter thanked him, and Brother Lustig went onwards, and had but a quarter of the loaf, and one kreuzer.

With that he went into an inn, ate the bread, and ordered one kreuzer worth of beer. When he had had it, he journeyed onwards, and then St. Peter, who had assumed the appearance of a discharged soldier, met and spoke to him thus: "day, comrade, canst thou not give me a bit of bread, and a kreuzer to get a drink?" "am I to procure it?" answered Brother Lustig; "have been discharged, and I got nothing but a loaf of ammunition-bread and four kreuzers in money. I met three beggars on the road, and I gave each of them a quarter of my bread, and one kreuzer. The last quarter I ate in the inn, and had a drink with the last kreuzer. Now my pockets are empty, and if thou also hast nothing we can go a-begging together."

"answered St. Peter, "need not quite do that. I know a little about medicine, and I will soon earn as much as I require by that."

"Indeed," said Brother Lustig, "I know nothing of that, so I must go and beg alone."

"Just come with me," said St. Peter, "and if I earn anything, thou shalt have half of it."

"All right," said Brother Lustig, so they went away together.

Then they came to a peasant's house inside which they heard loud lamentations and cries; so they went in, and there the husband was lying sick unto death, and very near his end, and his wife was crying and weeping quite loudly. "Stop that howling and crying," said St. Peter, "I will make the man well again," and he took a salve out of his pocket, and healed the sick man in a moment, so that he could get up, and was in perfect health.

In great delight the man and his wife said, "How can we reward you? What shall we give you?"

But St. Peter would take nothing, and the more the peasant folks offered him, the more he refused.

Brother Lustig, however, nudged St. Peter, and said, "Take something; sure enough we are in need of it." At length the woman brought a lamb and said to St. Peter that he really must take that, but he would not. Then

Brother Lustig gave him a poke in the side, and said, "Do take it, you stupid fool; we are in great want of it!"

Then St. Peter said at last, "Well, I will take the lamb, but I won't carry it; if thou wilt insist on having it, thou must carry it."

"That is nothing," said Brother Lustig, "I will easily carry it," and took it on his shoulder. Then they departed and came to a wood, but Brother Lustig had begun to feel the lamb heavy, and he was hungry, so he said to St. Peter, "Look, that's a good place, we might cook the lamb there, and eat it."

"As you like," answered St. Peter, "but I can't have anything to do with the cooking; if thou wilt cook, there is a kettle for thee, and in the meantime I will walk about a little until it is ready. Thou must, however, not begin to eat until I have come back, I will come at the right time."

"Well, go, then," said Brother Lustig, "I understand cookery, I will manage it."

Then St. Peter went away, and Brother Lustig killed the lamb, lighted a fire, threw the meat into the kettle, and boiled it. The lamb was, however, quite ready, and the apostle Peter had not come back, so Brother Lustig took it out of the kettle, cut it up, and found the heart. "That is said to be the best part," said he, and tasted it, but at last he ate it all up.

At length St. Peter returned and said, "Thou mayst eat the whole of the lamb thyself, I will only have the heart, give me that." Then Brother Lustig took a knife and fork, and pretended to look anxiously about amongst the lamb's flesh, but not to be able to find the heart, and at last he said abruptly, "There is none here."

"But where can it be?" said the apostle. "I don't know," replied Brother Lustig, "but look, what fools we both are, to seek for the lamb's heart, and neither of us to remember that a lamb has no heart!"

"Oh," said St. Peter, "that is something quite new! Every animal has a heart, why is a lamb to have none?"

"No, be assured, my brother," said Brother Lustig, "that a lamb has no heart; just consider it seriously, and then you will see that it really has none."

"Well, it is all right," said St. Peter, "if there is no heart, then I want none of the lamb; thou mayst eat it alone."

"What I can't eat now, I will carry away in my knapsack," said Brother Lustig, and he ate half the lamb, and put

the rest in his knapsack.

They went farther, and then St. Peter caused a great stream of water to flow right across their path, and they were obliged to pass through it. Said St. Peter, "Do thou go first."

"No," answered Brother Lustig, "thou must go first," and he thought, "if the water is too deep I will stay behind."

Then St. Peter strode through it, and the water just reached to his knee. So Brother Lustig began to go through also, but the water grew deeper and reached to his throat. Then he cried, "Brother, help me!"

St. Peter said, "Then wilt thou confess that thou hast eaten the lamb's heart?" "No," said he, "I have not eaten it."

Then the water grew deeper still, and rose to his mouth. "Help me, brother," cried the soldier. St. Peter said, "Then wilt thou confess that thou hast eaten the lamb's heart?"

"No," he replied, "I have not eaten it."

St. Peter, however, would not let him be drowned, but made the water sink and helped him through it.

Then they journeyed onwards, and came to a kingdom where they heard that the King's daughter lay sick unto death. "Hollo, brother!" said the soldier to St. Peter, "this is a chance for us; if we can heal her we shall be provided for, for life!"

But St. Peter was not half quick enough for him, "Come, lift your legs, my dear brother," said he, "that we may get there in time."

But St. Peter walked slower and slower, though Brother Lustig did all he could to drive and push him on, and at last they heard that the princess was dead. "Now we are done for!" said Brother Lustig; "that comes of thy sleepy way of walking!"

"Just be quiet," answered St. Peter, "I can do more than cure sick people; I can bring dead ones to life again."

"Well, if thou canst do that," said Brother Lustig, "it's all right, but thou shouldst earn at least half the kingdom for us by that." Then they went to the royal palace, where every one was in great grief, but St. Peter told the

King that he would restore his daughter to life.

He was taken to her, and said, "Bring me a kettle and some water," and when that was brought, he bade every one go out, and allowed no one to remain with him but Brother Lustig. Then he cut off all the dead girl's limbs, and threw them in the water, lighted a fire beneath the kettle, and boiled them. And when the flesh had fallen away from the bones, he took out the beautiful white bones, and laid them on a table, and arranged them together in their natural order. When he had done that, he stepped forward and said three times, "In the name of the holy Trinity, dead woman, arise."

And at the third time, the princess arose, living, healthy and beautiful. Then the King was in the greatest joy, and said to St. Peter, "Ask for thy reward; even if it were half my kingdom, I would give it thee."

But St. Peter said, "I want nothing for it." "Oh, thou tomfool!" thought Brother Lustig to himself, and nudged his comrade's side, and said, "Don't be so stupid! If thou hast no need of anything, I have."

St. Peter, however, would have nothing, but as the King saw that the other would very much like to have something, he ordered his treasurer to fill Brother Lustig's knapsack with gold.

Then they went on their way, and when they came to a forest, St. Peter said to Brother Lustig, "Now, we will divide the gold." "Yes," he replied, "we will."

So St. Peter divided the gold, and divided it into three heaps. Brother Lustig thought to himself, "What craze has he got in his head now? He is making three shares, and there are only two of us!" But St. Peter said, "I have divided it exactly; there is one share for me, one for thee, and one for him who ate the lamb's heart."

"Oh, I ate that!" replied Brother Lustig, and hastily swept up the gold. "You may trust what I say."

"But how can that be true," said St. Peter, "when a lamb has no heart?"

"Eh, what, brother, what can you be thinking of? Lambs have hearts like other animals, why should they only have none?"

“Well, so be it,” said St. Peter, “keep the gold to yourself, but I will stay with you no longer; I will go my way alone.”

“As you like, dear brother,” answered Brother Lustig. “Farewell.”

Then St. Peter went a different road, but Brother Lustig thought, “It is a good thing that he has taken himself off, he is a strange saint, after all.”

Then he had money enough, but did not know how to manage it, squandered it, gave it away, and when some time had gone by, once more had nothing. Then he arrived in a certain country where he heard that the King’s daughter was dead. “Oh, ho!” thought he, “that may be a good thing for me; I will bring her to life again, and see that I am paid as I ought to be.”

So he went to the King, and offered to raise the dead girl to life again. Now the King had heard that a discharged soldier was travelling about and bringing dead persons to life again, and thought that Brother Lustig was the man; but as he had no confidence in him, he consulted his councillors first, who said that he might give it a trial as his daughter was dead.

Then Brother Lustig ordered water to be brought to him in a kettle, bade every one go out, cut the limbs off, threw them in the water and lighted a fire beneath, just as he had seen St. Peter do. The water began to boil, the flesh fell off, and then he took the bones out and laid them on the table, but he did not know the order in which to lay them, and placed them all wrong and in confusion.

Then he stood before them and said, “In the name of the most holy Trinity, dead maiden, I bid thee arise,” and he said this thrice, but the bones did not stir. So he said it thrice more, but also in vain: “Confounded girl that you are, get up!” cried he, “Get up, or it shall be worse for you!”

When he had said that, St. Peter suddenly appeared in his former shape as a discharged soldier; he entered by the window and said, “Godless man, what art thou doing? How can the dead maiden arise, when thou hast thrown about her bones in such confusion?”

“Dear brother, I have done everything to the best of my ability,” he answered. “This once, I will help thee out of thy difficulty, but one thing I tell thee, and that is that if ever thou undertakest anything of the kind again, it

will be the worse for thee, and also that thou must neither demand nor accept the smallest thing from the King for this!”

Thereupon St. Peter laid the bones in their right order, said to the maiden three times, “In the name of the most holy Trinity, dead maiden, arise,” and the King’s daughter arose, healthy and beautiful as before. Then St. Peter went away again by the window, and Brother Lustig was rejoiced to find that all had passed off so well, but was very much vexed to think that after all he was not to take anything for it.

“I should just like to know,” thought he, “what fancy that fellow has got in his head, for what he gives with one hand he takes away with the other — there is no sense whatever in it!”

Then the King offered Brother Lustig whatsoever he wished to have, but he did not dare to take anything; however, by hints and cunning, he contrived to make the King order his knapsack to be filled with gold for him, and with that he departed. When he got out, St. Peter was standing by the door, and said, “Just look what a man thou art; did I not forbid thee to take anything, and there thou hast thy knapsack full of gold!”

“How can I help that,” answered Brother Lustig, “if people will put it in for me?”

“Well, I tell thee this, that if ever thou settest about anything of this kind again thou shalt suffer for it!”

“Eh, brother, have no fear now I have money, why should I trouble myself with washing bones?”

“Faith,” said St. Peter, “the gold will last a long time! In order that after this thou mayst never tread in forbidden paths, I will bestow on thy knapsack this property, namely, that whatsoever thou wishest to have inside it, shall be there. Farewell, thou wilt now never see me more.”

“Good-bye,” said Brother Lustig, and thought to himself, “I am very glad that thou hast taken thyself off, thou strange fellow; I shall certainly not follow thee.” But of the magical power which had been bestowed on his knapsack, he thought no more.

Brother Lustig travelled about with his money, and squandered and wasted what he had as before. When at last he had no more than four kreuzers, he passed by an inn and thought, “The money must go,” and ordered three kreuzers’ worth of wine and one kreuzer’s worth of bread for himself. As he was sitting there drinking, the smell of roast goose made its way to his nose. Brother Lustig looked about and peeped, and saw that the

host had two geese standing in the oven.

Then he remembered that his comrade had said that whatsoever he wished to have in his knapsack should be there, so he said, "Oh, ho! I must try that with the geese."

So he went out, and when he was outside the door, he said, "I wish those two roasted geese out of the oven and in my knapsack," and when he had said that, he unbuckled it and looked in, and there they were inside it. "Ah, that's right!" said he, "now I am a made man!" and went away to a meadow and took out the roast meat.

When he was in the midst of his meal, two journeymen came up and looked at the second goose, which was not yet touched, with hungry eyes. Brother Lustig thought to himself, "One is enough for me," and called the two men up and said, "Take the goose, and eat it to my health." They thanked him, and went with it to the inn, ordered themselves a half bottle of wine and a loaf, took out the goose which had been given them, and began to eat.

The hostess saw them and said to her husband, "Those two are eating a goose; just look and see if it is not one of ours, out of the oven." The landlord ran thither, and behold the oven was empty!

"What!" cried he, "you thievish crew, you want to eat goose as cheap as that? Pay for it this moment; or I will wash you well with green hazel-sap." The two said, "We are no thieves, a discharged soldier gave us the goose, outside there in the meadow."

"You shall not throw dust in my eyes that way! the soldier was here — but he went out by the door, like an honest fellow. I looked after him myself; you are the thieves and shall pay!"

But as they could not pay, he took a stick, and cudgelled them out of the house. Brother Lustig went his way and came to a place where there was a magnificent castle, and not far from it a wretched inn. He went to the inn and asked for a night's lodging, but the landlord turned him away, and said, "There is no more room here, the house is full of noble guests."

“It surprises me that they should come to you and not go to that splendid castle,” said Brother Lustig. “Ah, indeed,” replied the host, “but it is no slight matter to sleep there for a night; no one who has tried it so far, has ever come out of it alive.”

“If others have tried it,” said Brother Lustig, “I will try it too.”

“Leave it alone,” said the host, “it will cost you your neck.” “It won’t kill me at once,” said Brother Lustig, “just give me the key, and some good food and wine.”

So the host gave him the key, and food and wine, and with this Brother Lustig went into the castle, enjoyed his supper, and at length, as he was sleepy, he lay down on the ground, for there was no bed. He soon fell asleep, but during the night was disturbed by a great noise, and when he awoke, he saw nine ugly devils in the room, who had made a circle, and were dancing around him. Brother Lustig said, “Well, dance as long as you like, but none of you must come too close.”

But the devils pressed continually nearer to him, and almost stepped on his face with their hideous feet. “Stop, you devils’ ghosts,” said he, but they behaved still worse. Then Brother Lustig grew angry, and cried, “Hola! but I will soon make it quiet,” and got the leg of a chair and struck out into the midst of them with it. But nine devils against one soldier were still too many, and when he struck those in front of him, the others seized him behind by the hair, and tore it unmercifully.

“Devils’ crew,” cried he, “it is getting too bad, but wait. Into my knapsack, all nine of you!” In an instant they were in it, and then he buckled it up and threw it into a corner. After this all was suddenly quiet, and Brother Lustig lay down again, and slept till it was bright day. Then came the inn-keeper, and the nobleman to whom the castle belonged, to see how he had fared; but when they perceived that he was merry and well they were astonished, and asked, “Have the spirits done you no harm, then?”

“The reason why they have not,” answered Brother Lustig, “is because I have got the whole nine of them in my knapsack! You may once more inhabit your castle quite tranquilly, none of them will ever haunt it again.” The nobleman thanked him, made him rich presents, and begged him to remain in his service, and he would provide for him as long as he lived.

“No,” replied Brother Lustig, “I am used to wandering about, I will travel farther.” Then he went away, and entered into a smithy, laid the knapsack, which contained the nine devils on the anvil, and asked the smith and his apprentices to strike it. So they smote with their great hammers with all their strength, and the devils uttered howls which were quite pitiable. When he opened the knapsack after this, eight of them were dead, but one which had been lying in a fold of it, was still alive, slipped out, and went back again to hell.

Thereupon Brother Lustig travelled a long time about the world, and those who know them can tell many a story about him, but at last he grew old, and thought of his end, so he went to a hermit who was known to be a pious man, and said to him, “I am tired of wandering about, and want now to behave in such a manner that I shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

The hermit replied, “There are two roads, one is broad and pleasant, and leads to hell, the other is narrow and rough, and leads to heaven.” “I should be a fool,” thought Brother Lustig, “if I were to take the narrow, rough road.”

So he set out and took the broad and pleasant road, and at length came to a great black door, which was the door of Hell. Brother Lustig knocked, and the door-keeper peeped out to see who was there. But when he saw Brother Lustig, he was terrified, for he was the very same ninth devil who had been shut up in the knapsack, and had escaped from it with a black eye.

So he pushed the bolt in again as quickly as he could, ran to the devil’s lieutenant, and said, “There is a fellow outside with a knapsack, who wants to come in, but as you value your lives don’t allow him to enter, or he will wish the whole of hell into his knapsack. He once gave me a frightful hammering when I was inside it.”

So they called out to Brother Lustig that he was to go away again, for he should not get in there! “If they won’t have me here,” thought he, “I will see if I can find a place for myself in Heaven, for I must be somewhere.” So he turned about and went onwards until he came to the door of Heaven, where he knocked.

St. Peter was sitting hard by as door-keeper. Brother Lustig recognised him at once, and thought, “Here I find an old friend, I shall get on better.”

But St. Peter said, "I really believe that thou wantest to come into Heaven."

"Let me in, brother; I must get in somewhere; if they would have taken me into Hell, I should not have come here."

"No," said St. Peter, "thou shalt not enter."

"Then if thou wilt not let me in, take thy knapsack back, for I will have nothing at all from thee."

"Give it here, then," said St. Peter.

Then Brother Lustig gave him the knapsack into Heaven through the bars, and St. Peter took it, and hung it up beside his seat.

Then said Brother Lustig, "And now I wish myself inside my knapsack," and in a second he was in it, and in Heaven, and St. Peter was forced to let him stay there.

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