



The Giant Who Had No Heart in His Body

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Intermediate
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Once on a time there was a King who had seven sons, and he loved them so much that he could never bear to be without them all at once, but one must always be with him. Now, when they were grown up, six were to set off to woo, but as for the youngest, his father kept him at home, and the others were to bring back a princess for him to the palace. So the King gave the six the finest clothes you ever set eyes on, so fine that the light gleamed from them a long way off, and each had his horse, which cost many, many hundred pounds, and so they set off. Now, when they had been to many palaces, and seen many princesses, at last they came to a King who had six daughters; such lovely king's daughters they had never seen, and so they fell to wooing them, each one, and when they had got them for sweethearts, they set off home again, but they quite forgot that they were to bring back with them a sweetheart for Boots, their brother, who stayed at home, for they were over head and ears in love with their own sweethearts.

But when they had gone a good bit on their way, they passed close by a steep hill-side, like a wall, where the Giant's house was, and there the Giant came out, and set his eyes upon them, and turned them all into stone, princes and princesses and all. Now the King waited and waited for his six sons, but the more he waited, the

longer they stayed away; so he fell into great trouble, and said he should never know what it was to be glad again.

“And if I had not you left,” he said to Boots, “I would live no longer, so full of sorrow am I for the loss of your brothers.”

“Well, but now I’ve been thinking to ask your leave to set out and find them again; that’s what I’m thinking of,” said Boots.

“Nay, nay!” said his father; “that leave you shall never get, for then you would stay away too.”

But Boots had set his heart upon it; go he would; and he begged and prayed so long that the King was forced to let him go. Now, you must know the King had no other horse to give Boots but an old broken-down jade, for his six other sons and their train had carried off all his horses; but Boots did not care a pin for that, he sprang up on his sorry old steed.

“Farewell, father,” said he; “I’ll come back, never fear, and like enough I shall bring my six brothers back with me;” and with that he rode off.

So, when he had ridden a while, he came to a Raven, which lay in the road and flapped its wings, and was not able to get out of the way, it was so starved.

“Oh, dear friend,” said the Raven, “give me a little food, and I’ll help you again at your utmost need.”

“I haven’t much food,” said the Prince, “and I don’t see how you’ll ever be able to help me much; but still I can spare you a little. I see you want it.”

So he gave the raven some of the food he had brought with him.

Now, when he had gone a bit further, he came to a brook, and in the brook lay a great Salmon, which had got upon a dry place and dashed itself about, and could not get into the water again.

“Oh, dear friend,” said the Salmon to the Prince; “shove me out into the water again, and I’ll help you again at your utmost need.”

“Well!” said the Prince, “the help you’ll give me will not be great, I daresay, but it’s a pity you should lie there and choke;” and with that he shot the fish out into the stream again.

After that he went a long, long way, and there met him a Wolf which was so famished that it lay and crawled along the road on its belly.

“Dear friend, do let me have your horse,” said the Wolf; “I’m so hungry the wind whistles through my ribs; I’ve had nothing to eat these two years.”

“No,” said Boots, “this will never do; first I came to a raven, and I was forced to give him my food; next I came to a salmon, and him I had to help into the water again; and now you will have my horse. It can’t be done, that it can’t, for then I should have nothing to ride on.”

“Nay, dear friend, but you can help me,” said Graylegs the wolf; “you can ride upon my back, and I’ll help you again in your utmost need.”

“Well! the help I shall get from you will not be great, I’ll be bound,” said the Prince; “but you may take my horse, since you are in such need.”

So when the Wolf had eaten the horse, Boots took the bit and put it into the Wolf’s jaw, and laid the saddle on his back; and now the Wolf was so strong, after what he had got inside, that he set off with the Prince like nothing. So fast he had never ridden before.

“When we have gone a bit farther,” said Graylegs, “I’ll show you the Giant’s house.”

So after a while they came to it.

“See, here is the Giant’s house,” said the Wolf; “and see, here are your six brothers, whom the Giant has turned into stone; and see, here are their six brides, and away yonder is the door, and in that door you must go.”

“Nay, but I daren’t go in,” said the Prince; “he’ll take my life.”

“No! no!” said the Wolf; “when you get in you’ll find a Princess, and she’ll tell you what to do to make an end of the Giant. Only mind and do as she bids you.”

Well! Boots went in, but, truth to say, he was very much afraid. When he came in the Giant was away, but in one of the rooms sat the Princess, just as the Wolf had said, and so lovely a princess Boots had never yet set eyes on.

“Oh! heaven help you! whence have you come?” said the Princess, as she saw him; “it will surely be your death. No one can make an end of the Giant who lives here, for he has no heart in his body.”

“Well! well!” said Boots; “but now that I am here, I may as well try what I can do with him; and I will see if I can’t free my brothers, who are standing turned to stone out of doors; and you, too, I will try to save, that I will.”

“Well, if you must, you must,” said the Princess; “and so let us see if we can’t hit on a plan. Just creep under the bed yonder, and mind and listen to what he and I talk about. But, pray, do lie as still as a mouse.”

So he crept under the bed, and he had scarce got well underneath it, before the Giant came.

“Ha!” roared the Giant, “what a smell of Christian blood there is in the house!”

“Yes, I know there is,” said the Princess, “for there came a magpie flying with a man’s bone, and let it fall down the chimney. I made all the haste I could to get it out, but all one can do, the smell doesn’t go off so soon.”

So the Giant said no more about it, and when night came, they went to bed. After they had lain a while, the Princess said:

“There is one thing I’d be so glad to ask you about, if I only dared.”

“What thing is that?” asked the Giant.

“Only where it is you keep your heart, since you don’t carry it about you,” said the Princess.

“Ah! that’s a thing you’ve no business to ask about; but if you must know, it lies under the door-sill,” said the Giant.

“Ho! ho!” said Boots to himself under the bed, “then we’ll soon see if we can’t find it.”

Next morning the Giant got up cruelly early, and strode off to the wood; but he was hardly out of the house before Boots and the Princess set to work to look under the door-sill for his heart; but the more they dug, and the more they hunted, the more they couldn’t find it.

“He has baulked us this time,” said the Princess, “but we’ll try him once more.”

So she picked all the prettiest flowers she could find, and strewed them over the door-sill, which they had laid in its right place again; and when the time came for the Giant to come home again, Boots crept under the bed. Just as he was well under, back came the Giant.

Snuff—snuff, went the Giant’s nose. “My eyes and limbs, what a smell of Christian blood there is in here,” said he.

“I know there is,” said the Princess, “for there came a magpie flying with a man’s bone in his bill, and let it fall down the chimney. I made as much haste as I could to get it out, but I daresay it’s that you smell.”

So the Giant held his peace, and said no more about it. A little while after, he asked who it was that had strewed flowers about the door-sill.

“Oh, I, of course,” said the Princess.

“And, pray, what’s the meaning of all this?” said the Giant.

“Ah!” said the Princess, “I’m so fond of you that I couldn’t help strewing them, when I knew that your heart lay under there.”

“You don’t say so,” said the Giant; “but after all it doesn’t lie there at all.”

So when they went to bed again in the evening, the Princess asked the Giant again where his heart was, for she said she would so like to know.

“Well,” said the Giant, “if you must know, it lies away yonder in the cupboard against the wall.”

“So, so!” thought Boots and the Princess; “then we’ll soon try to find it.”

Next morning the Giant was away early, and strode off to the wood, and so soon as he was gone Boots and the Princess were in the cupboard hunting for his heart, but the more they sought for it, the less they found it.

“Well,” said the Princess, “we’ll just try him once more.”

So she decked out the cupboard with flowers and garlands, and when the time came for the Giant to come home, Boots crept under the bed again.

Then back came the Giant.

Snuff—snuff! “My eyes and limbs, what a smell of Christian blood there is in here!”

“I know there is,” said the Princess; “for a little while since there came a magpie flying with a man’s bone in his bill, and let it fall down the chimney. I made all the haste I could to get it out of the house again; but after all my pains, I daresay it’s that you smell.”

When the Giant heard that, he said no more about it; but a little while after, he saw how the cupboard was all decked about with flowers and garlands; so he asked who it was that had done that? Who could it be but the Princess?

“And, pray, what’s the meaning of all this tomfoolery?” asked the Giant.

“Oh, I’m so fond of you, I couldn’t help doing it when I knew that your heart lay there,” said the Princess.

“How can you be so silly as to believe any such thing?” said the Giant.

“Oh yes; how can I help believing it, when you say it?” said the Princess.

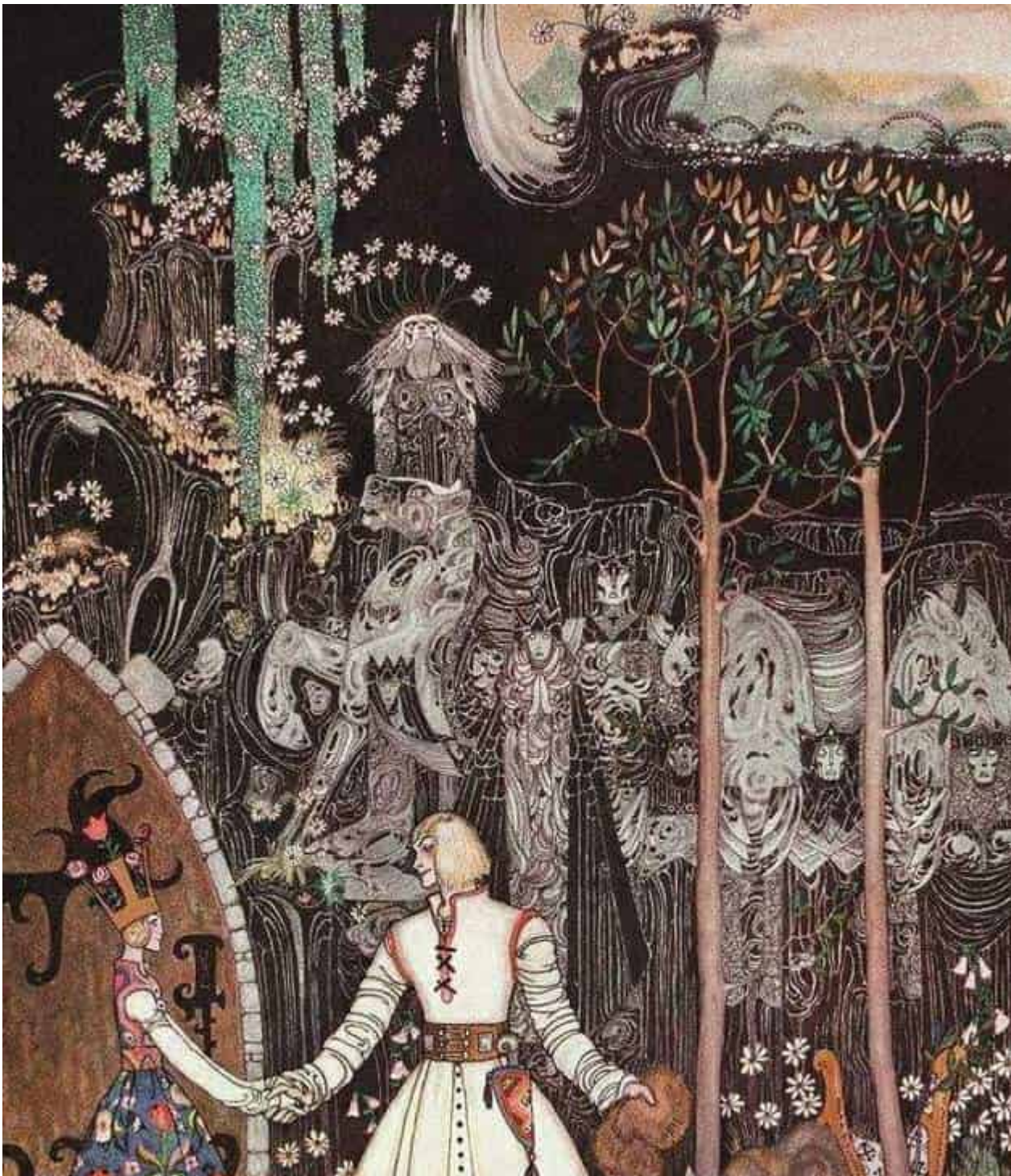
“You’re a goose,” said the Giant; “where my heart is, you will never come.”

“Well,” said the Princess; “but for all that, ’twould be such a pleasure to know where it really lies.”

Then the poor Giant could hold out no longer, but was forced to say:

“Far, far away in a lake lies an island; on that island stands a church; in that church is a well; in that well swims a duck; in that duck there is an egg, and in that egg there lies my heart,—you darling!”

In the morning early, while it was still grey dawn, the Giant strode off to the wood.



“He took a long, long farewell of the Princess, and when he got out of the Giant’s door, there stood the Wolf waiting for him.” Illustration by Kay Nielsen. Published in *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe (1922). George H. Doran Company.

“Yes! now I must set off too,” said Boots; “if I only knew how to find the way.” He took a long, long farewell of the Princess, and when he got out of the Giant’s door, there stood the Wolf waiting for him. So Boots told him all that had happened inside the house, and said now he wished to ride to the well in the church, if he only knew the way. So the Wolf bade him jump on his back, he’d soon find the way; and away they went, till the wind whistled after them, over hedge and field, over hill and dale. After they had travelled many, many days, they came at last to the lake. Then the Prince did not know how to get over it, but the Wolf bade him only not be afraid, but stick on, and so he jumped into the lake with the Prince on his back, and swam over to the island. So they came to the church; but the church keys hung high, high up on the top of the tower, and at first the Prince did not know how to get them down.

“You must call on the raven,” said the Wolf.

So the Prince called on the raven, and in a trice the raven came, and flew up and fetched the keys, and so the Prince got into the church. But when he came to the well, there lay the duck, and swam about backwards and forwards, just as the Giant had said. So the Prince stood and coaxed it, till it came to him, and he grasped it in his hand; but just as he lifted it up from the water the duck dropped the egg into the well, and then Boots was beside himself to know how to get it out again.

“Well, now you must call on the salmon to be sure,” said the Wolf; and the king’s son called on the salmon, and the salmon came and fetched up the egg from the bottom of the well.

Then the Wolf told him to squeeze the egg, and as soon as ever he squeezed it the Giant screamed out.

“Squeeze it again,” said the Wolf; and when the Prince did so, the Giant screamed still more piteously, and begged and prayed so prettily to be spared, saying he would do all that the Prince wished if he would only not squeeze his heart in two.

“Tell him, if he will restore to life again your six brothers and their brides, whom he has turned to stone, you will spare his life,” said the Wolf. Yes, the Giant was ready to do that, and he turned the six brothers into king’s sons again, and their brides into king’s daughters.

“Now, squeeze the egg in two,” said the Wolf. So Boots squeezed the egg to pieces, and the Giant burst at once.

Now, when he had made an end of the Giant, Boots rode back again on the Wolf to the Giant’s house, and there stood all his six brothers alive and merry, with their brides. Then Boots went into the hill-side after his bride, and so they all set off home again to their father’s house. And you may fancy how glad the old king was when he saw all his seven sons come back, each with his bride—“But the loveliest bride of all is the bride of Boots, after all,” said the king, “and he shall sit uppermost at the table, with her by his side.”

So he sent out, and called a great wedding-feast, and the mirth was both loud and long, and if they have not done feasting, why, they are still at it.

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