



Pepper-Corn

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Italian

Advanced
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Once upon a time there was an old man and an old woman who had no children; and one day the old woman went into the fields and picked a basket of beans. When she had finished, she looked into the basket and said: "I wish all the beans were little children." Scarcely had she uttered these words when a whole crowd of little children sprang out of the basket and danced about her. Such a family seemed too large for the old woman, so she said: "I wish you would all become beans again." Immediately the children climbed back into the basket and became beans again, all except one little boy, whom the old woman took home with her.

He was so small that everybody called him little Pepper-Corn, and so good and charming that everybody loved him.

One day the old woman was cooking her soup and little Pepper-Corn climbed up on the kettle and looked in to see what was cooking, but he slipped and fell into the boiling broth and was scalded to death. The old woman did not notice until meal-time that he was missing, and looked in vain for him everywhere to call him to dinner.

At last they sat down to the table without little Pepper-Corn, and when they poured the soup out of the kettle into the dish the body of little Pepper-Corn floated on top.

Then the old man and the old woman began to mourn and cry: "Dear Pepper-Corn is dead, dear Pepper-Corn is

dead.”

When the dove heard it she tore out her feathers, and cried: “Dear Pepper-Corn is dead. The old man and the old woman are mourning.”

When the apple-tree saw that the dove tore out her feathers it asked her why she did so, and when it learned the reason it shook off all its apples.

In like manner, the well near by poured out all its water, the queen’s maid broke her pitcher, the queen broke her arm, and the king threw his crown on the ground so that it broke into a thousand pieces; and when his people asked him what the matter was, he answered: “Dear Pepper-Corn is dead, the old man and the old woman mourn, the dove has torn out her feathers, the apple-tree has shaken off all its apples, the well has poured out all its water, the maid has broken her pitcher, the queen has broken her arm, and I, the king, have lost my crown; dear Pepper-Corn is dead.”

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