

Silverwhite and Lillwacker

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Swedish

Intermediate
24 min read

Once upon a time there was a king, who had a queen whom he loved with a great love. But after a time the queen died, and all he had left was an only daughter. And now that the king was a widower, his whole heart went out to the little princess, whom he cherished as the apple of his eye. And the king's young daughter grew up into the most lovely maiden ever known.

When the princess had seen the snows of fifteen winters, it happened that a great war broke out, and that her father had to march against the foe.

But there was no one to whom the king could entrust his daughter while he was away at war; so he had a great tower built out in the forest, provided it with a plenteous store of supplies, and in it shut up his daughter and a maid. And he had it proclaimed that every man, no matter who he might be, was forbidden to approach the tower in which he had placed his daughter and the maid, under pain of death.

Now the king thought he had taken every precaution to protect his daughter, and went off to war. In the meantime the princess and her maid sat in the tower. But in the city there were a number of brave young sons of kings, as well as other young men, who would have liked to have talked to the beautiful maiden. And when they found that this was forbidden them, they conceived a great hatred for the king. At length they took counsel with an old woman who was wiser than most folk, and told her to arrange matters in such wise that the king's daughter and her maid might come into disrepute, without their having anything to do with it. The old hag promised to help them, enchanted some apples, laid them in a basket, and went to the lonely tower in

which the maidens lived.

When the king's daughter and her maid saw the old woman, who was sitting beneath the window, they felt a great longing to try the beautiful apples.

So they called out and asked how much she wanted for her precious apples; but the old woman said they were not for sale. Yet as the girls kept on pleading with her, the old woman said she would make each of them a present of an apple; they only need let down a little basket from the tower. The princess and her maid, in all innocence, did as the troll-woman told them, and each received an apple. But the enchanted fruit had a strange effect, for in due course of time heaven sent them each a child. The king's daughter called her son Silverwhite, and the son of her maid received the name of Lillwacker.

The two boys grew up larger and stronger than other children, and were very handsome as well. They looked as much alike as one cherry-pit does to another, and one could easily see that they were related.

Seven years had passed, and the king was expected home from the war. Then both girls were terrified, and they took counsel together as to how they might hide their children. When at length they could find no other way out of the difficulty, they very sorrowfully bade their children farewell, and let them down from the tower at night, to seek their fortune in the wide, wide world. At parting the king's daughter gave Silverwhite a costly knife; but the maid had nothing to give her son.

The two foster-brethren now wandered out into the world. After they had gone a while, they came to a dark forest. And in this forest they met a man, strange-looking and very tall. He wore two swords at his side, and was accompanied by six great dogs. He gave them a friendly greeting:

"Good-day, little fellows, whence do you come and whither do you go?" The boys told him they came from a high tower, and were going out into the world to seek their fortune. The man replied:

“If such be the case, I know more about your origin than any one else. And that you may have something by which to remember your father, I will give each of you a sword and three dogs. But you must promise me one thing, that you will never part from your dogs; but take them with you wherever you go.” The boys thanked the man for his kind gifts, and promised to do as he had told them. Then they bade him farewell and went their way.

When they had traveled for some time they reached a cross-road. Then Silverwhite said:

“It seems to me that it would be the best for us to try our luck singly, so let us part.” Lillwacker answered: “Your advice is good; but how am I to know whether or not you are doing well out in the world?”

“I will give you a token by which you may tell,” said Silverwhite, “so long as the water runs clear in this spring you will know that I am alive; but if it turns red and roiled, it will mean that I am dead.” Silverwhite then drew runes in the water of the spring, said farewell to his brother, and each of them went on alone. Lillwacker soon came to a king’s court, and took service there; but every morning he would go to the spring to see how his brother fared.

Silverwhite continued to wander over hill and dale, until he reached a great city. But the whole city was in mourning, the houses were hung in black, and all the inhabitants went about full of grief and care, as though some great misfortune had occurred.

Silverwhite went through the city and inquired as to the cause of all the unhappiness he saw. They answered: “You must have come from far away, since you do not know that the king and queen were in danger of being drowned at sea, and he had to promise to give up their three daughters in order to escape. To-morrow morning the sea-troll is coming to carry off the oldest princess.” This news pleased Silverwhite; for he saw a fine opportunity to wealth and fame, should fortune favor him.

The next morning Silverwhite hung his sword at his side, called his dogs to him, and wandered down to the sea-shore alone. And as he sat on the strand he saw the king’s daughter led out of the city, and with her went a courtier, who had promised to rescue her. But the princess was very sad and cried bitterly. Then Silverwhite stepped up to her with a polite greeting. When the king’s daughter and her escort saw the fearless youth, they were much frightened, because they thought he was the sea-troll. The courtier was so alarmed that he ran away

and took refuge in a tree. When Silverwhite saw how frightened the princess was, he said: "Lovely maiden, do not fear me, for I will do you no harm." The king's daughter answered:

"Are you the troll who is coming to carry me away?" "No," said Silverwhite, "I have come to rescue you." Then the princess was glad to think that such a brave hero was going to defend her, and they had a long, friendly talk. At the same time Silverwhite begged the king's daughter to comb his hair. She complied with his request, and Silverwhite laid his head in her lap; but when he did so the princess drew a golden ring from her finger and, unbeknown to him, wound it into his locks.

Suddenly the sea-troll rose from the deeps, setting the waves whirling and foaming far and near. When the troll saw Silverwhite, he grew angry and said: "Why do you sit there beside my princess?" The youth replied: "It seems to me that she is my princess, not yours." The sea-troll answered: "Time enough to see which of us is right; but first our dogs shall fight." Silverwhite was nothing loath, and set his dogs at the dogs of the troll, and there was a fierce struggle. But at last the youth's dogs got the upper hand and bit the dogs of the sea-troll to death. Then Silverwhite drew his sword with a great sweep, rushed upon the sea-troll, and gave him such a tremendous blow that the monster's head rolled on the sand. The troll gave a fearsome cry, and flung himself back into the sea, so that the water spurted to the very skies. Thereupon the youth drew out his silver-mounted knife, cut out the troll's eyes and put them in his pocket. Then he saluted the lovely princess and went away.

Now when the battle was over and the youth had disappeared, the courtier crawled down from his tree, and threatened to kill the princess if she did not say before all the people that he, and none other, had rescued her. The king's daughter did not dare refuse, since she feared for her life. So she returned to her father's castle with the courtier, where they were received with great distinction.

And joy reigned throughout the land when the news spread that the oldest princess had been rescued from the troll.

On the following day everything repeated itself. Silverwhite went down to the strand and met the second princess, just as she was to be delivered to the troll.

And when the king's daughter and her escort saw him, they were very much frightened, thinking he was the sea-troll. And the courtier climbed a tree, just as he had before; but the princess granted the youth's petition,

combed his hair as her sister had done, and also wound her gold ring into his long curls.

After a time there was a great tumult out at sea, and a sea-troll rose from the waves. He had three heads and three dogs. But Silverwhite's dogs overcame those of the troll, and the youth killed the troll himself with his sword. Thereupon he took out his silver-mounted knife, cut out the troll's eyes, and went his way. But the courtier lost no time. He climbed down from his tree and forced the princess to promise to say that he, and none other, had rescued her. Then they returned to the castle, where the courtier was acclaimed as the greatest of heroes.

On the third day Silverwhite hung his sword at his side, called his three dogs to him, and again wandered down to the sea-shore. As he was sitting by the strand, he saw the youngest princess led out of the city, and with her the daring courtier who claimed to have rescued her sisters. But the princess was very sad and cried bitterly. Then Silverwhite stepped up and greeted the lovely maiden politely. Now when the king's daughter and her escort saw the handsome youth, they were very much frightened, for they believed him to be the sea-troll, and the courtier ran away and hid in a high tree that grew near the strand. When Silverwhite noticed the maiden's terror, he said:

"Lovely maiden, do not fear me, for I will do you no harm." The king's daughter answered: "Are you the troll who is coming to carry me away?" "No," said Silverwhite, "I have come to rescue you." Then the princess was very glad to have such a brave hero fight for her, and they had a long, friendly talk with each other. At the same time Silverwhite begged the lovely maiden to do him a favor and comb his hair. This the king's daughter was most willing to do, and Silverwhite laid his head in her lap. But when the princess saw the gold rings her sisters had wound in his locks, she was much surprised, and added her own to the others.

Suddenly the sea-troll came shooting up out of the deep with a terrific noise, so that waves and foam spurted to the very skies. This time the monster had six heads and nine dogs. When the troll saw Silverwhite sitting with the king's daughter, he fell into a rage and cried: "What are you doing with my princess?" The youth answered: "It seems to me that she is my princess rather than yours." Thereupon the troll said: "Time enough to see which of us is right; but first our dogs shall fight each other." Silverwhite did not delay, but set his dogs at the sea-dogs, and they had a battle royal. But in the end the youth's dogs got the upper hand and bit all nine of the sea-dogs to death. Finally Silverwhite drew out his bare sword, flung himself upon the sea-troll, and

stretched all six of his heads on the sand with a single blow. The monster uttered a terrible cry, and rushed back into the sea so that the water spurted to the heavens. Then the youth drew his silver-mounted knife, cut out all twelve of the troll's eyes, saluted the king's young daughter, and hastily went away.

Now that the battle was over, and the youth had disappeared, the courtier climbed down from his tree, drew his sword and threatened to kill the princess unless she promised to say that he had rescued her from the troll, as he had her sisters.

The king's daughter did not dare refuse, since she feared for her life. So they went back to the castle together, and when the king saw that they had returned in safety, without so much as a scratch, he and the whole court were full of joy, and they were accorded great honors. And at court the courtier was quite another fellow from the one who had hid away in the tree. The king had a splendid banquet prepared, with amusements and games, and the sound of string music and dancing, and bestowed the hand of his youngest daughter on the courtier in reward for his bravery.

In the midst of the wedding festivities, when the king and his whole court were seated at table, the door opened, and in came Silverwhite with his dogs.

The youth stepped boldly into the hall of state and greeted the king. And when the three princesses saw who it was, they were full of joy, leaped up from their places, and ran over to him, much to the king's surprise, who asked what it all meant. Then the youngest princess told him all that had happened, from beginning to end, and that Silverwhite had rescued them, while the courtier sat in a tree. To prove it beyond any chance of doubt, each of the king's daughters showed her father the ring she had wound in Silverwhite's locks. But the king still did not know quite what to think of it all, until Silverwhite said: "My lord king! In order that you need not doubt what your daughters have told you, I will show you the eyes of the sea-trolls whom I slew." Then the king and all the rest saw that the princesses had told the truth. The traitorous courtier received his just punishment; but Silverwhite was paid every honor, and was given the youngest daughter and half of the kingdom with her.

After the wedding Silverwhite established himself with his young bride in a large castle belonging to the king, and there they lived quietly and happily.

One night, when all were sleeping, it chanced that he heard a knocking at the window, and a voice which said:

“Come, Silverwhite, I have to talk to you!” The king, who did not want to wake his young wife, rose hastily, girded on his sword, called his dogs and went out. When he reached the open air, there stood a huge and savage-looking troll. The troll said: “Silverwhite, you have slain my three brothers, and I have come to bid you go down to the sea-shore with me, that we may fight with one another.” This proposal suited the youth, and he followed the troll without protest. When they reached the sea-shore, there lay three great dogs belonging to the troll. Silverwhite at once set his dogs at the troll-dogs, and after a hard struggle the latter had to give in. The young king drew his sword, bravely attacked the troll and dealt him many a mighty blow. It was a tremendous battle. But when the troll noticed he was getting the worst of it, he grew frightened, quickly ran to a high tree, and clambered into it. Silverwhite and the dogs ran after him, the dogs barking as loudly as they could. Then the troll begged for his life and said: “Dear Silverwhite, I will take wergild for my brothers, only bid your dogs be still, so that we may talk.” The king bade his dogs be still, but in vain, they only barked the more loudly. Then the troll tore three hairs from his head, handed them to Silverwhite and said: “Lay a hair on each of the dogs, and then they will be as quiet as can be.” The king did so and at once the dogs fell silent, and lay motionless as though they had grown fast to the ground. Now Silverwhite realized that he had been deceived; but it was too late. The troll was already descending from the tree, and he drew his sword and again began to fight. But they had exchanged no more than a few blows, before Silverwhite received a mortal wound, and lay on the earth in a pool of blood.

But now we must tell about Lillwacker. The next morning he went to the spring by the cross-road and found it red with blood. Then he knew that Silverwhite was dead. He called his dogs, hung his sword at his side, and went on until he came to a great city. And the city was in festal array, the streets were crowded with people, and the houses were hung with scarlet cloths and splendid rugs. Lillwacker asked why everybody was so happy, and they said: “You must hail from distant parts, since you do not know that a famous hero has come here by the name of Silverwhite, who has rescued our three princesses, and is now the king’s son-in-law.” Lillwacker then inquired how it had all come about, and then went his way, reaching the royal castle in which Silverwhite dwelt with his beautiful queen in the evening.

When Lillwacker entered the castle gate, all greeted him as though he had been the king. For he resembled his foster-brother so closely that none could tell one from the other. When the youth came to the queen’s room, she also took him for Silverwhite. She went up to him and said: “My lord king, where have you been so long? I

have been awaiting you with great anxiety.” Lillwacker said little, and was very taciturn. Then he lay down on a couch in a corner of the queen’s room.

The young woman did not know what to think of his actions; for her husband did not act queerly at other times. But she thought: “One should not try to discover the secrets of others,” and said nothing.

In the night, when all were sleeping, there was a knocking at the window, and a voice cried: “Come, Lillwacker, I have to talk to you!” The youth rose hastily, took his good sword, called his dogs and went. When he reached the open air, there stood the same troll who had slain Silverwhite. He said: “Come with me, Lillwacker, and then you shall see your foster-brother!” To this Lillwacker at once agreed, and the troll led the way. When they came to the sea-shore, there lay the three great dogs whom the troll had brought with him. Somewhat further away, where they had fought, lay Silverwhite in a pool of blood, and beside him his dogs were stretched out on the ground as though they had taken root in it. Then Lillwacker saw how everything had happened, and thought that he would gladly venture his life, if he might in some way call his brother back from the dead. He at once set his dogs at the troll-dogs, and they had a hard struggle, in which Lillwacker’s dogs won the victory. Then the youth drew his sword, and attacked the troll with mighty blows. But when the troll saw that he was getting the worst of it, he took refuge in a lofty tree. Lillwacker and his dogs ran after him and the dogs barked loudly.

Then the troll humbly begged for his life, and said: “Dear Lillwacker, I will give you wergild for your brother, only bid your dogs be still, so that we may talk.” At the same time the troll handed him three hairs from his head and added: “Lay one of these hairs on each of your dogs, and then they will soon be quiet.” But Lillwacker saw through his cunning scheme, took the three hairs and laid them on the troll-dogs, which at once fell on the ground and lay like dead.

When the troll saw that his attempt had failed, he was much alarmed and said: “Dearest Lillwacker, I will give you wergild for your brother, if you will only leave me alone.” But the youth answered:

“What is there you can give me that will compensate for my brother’s life?” The troll replied: “Here are two flasks. In one is a liquid which, if you anoint a dead man with it, it will restore him to life; but as to the liquid in the other flask, if you moisten anything with it, and some one touches the place you have moistened, he will be unable to move from the spot. I think it would be hard to find anything more precious than the liquid in these

flasks." Lillwacker said: "Your proposal suits me, and I will accept it. But there is something else you must promise to do: that you will release my brother's dogs." The troll agreed, climbed down from the tree, breathed on the dogs and thus freed them. Then Lillwacker took the two flasks and went away from the sea-shore with the troll. After they had gone a while they came to a great flat stone, lying near the highway. Lillwacker hastened on in advance and moistened it with liquid from the second flask. Then, as he was going by, Lillwacker suddenly set all six of his dogs at the troll, who stepped back and touched the stone. There he stuck, and could move neither forward nor backward. After a time the sun rose and shone on the stone. And when the troll saw the sun he burst—and was as dead as a doornail!

Lillwacker now ran back to his brother and sprinkled him with the liquid in the other flask, so that he came to life again, and they were both very happy, as may well be imagined. The two foster-brothers then returned to the castle, recounting the story of their experiences and adventures on the way. Lillwacker told how he had been taken for his brother. He even mentioned that he had lain down on a couch in a corner of the queen's room, and that she had never suspected that he was not her rightful husband. But when Silverwhite heard that, he thought that Lillwacker had offended against the queen's dignity, and he grew angry and fell into such a rage that he drew his sword, and thrust it into his brother's breast. Lillwacker fell to earth dead, and Silverwhite went home to the castle alone. But Lillwacker's dogs would not leave their master, and lay around him, whining and licking his wound.

In the evening, when the young king and his wife retired, the queen asked him why he had been so taciturn and serious the evening before. Then the queen said: "I am very curious to know what has befallen you during the last few days, but what I would like to know most of all, is why you lay down on a couch in a corner of my room the other night?" Now it was clear to Silverwhite that the brother he had slain was innocent of all offense, and he felt bitter regret at having repaid his faithfulness so badly. So King Silverwhite at once rose and went to the place where his brother was lying. He poured the water of life from his flask and anointed his brother's wound, and in a moment Lillwacker was alive again, and the two brother's went joyfully back to the castle.

When they got there, Silverwhite told his queen how Lillwacker had rescued him from death, and all the rest of their adventures, and all were happy at the royal court, and they paid the youth the greatest honors and compliments. After he had stayed there a time he sued for the hand of the second princess and obtained it. Thereupon the wedding was celebrated with great pomp, and Silverwhite divided his half of the kingdom with

his foster-brother. The two brothers continued to live together in peace and unity, and if they have not died, they are living still.

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