



# *The Boy Who Found Fear at Last (Andrew Lang version of Fear)*

Andrew Lang's Fairy Books

Turkish

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*Intermediate*

*14 min read*

Once upon a time there lived a woman who had one son whom she loved dearly. The little cottage in which they dwelt was built on the outskirts of a forest, and as they had no neighbours, the place was very lonely, and the boy was kept at home by his mother to bear her company.

They were sitting together on a winter's evening, when a storm suddenly sprang up, and the wind blew the door open. The woman started and shivered, and glanced over her shoulder as if she half expected to see some horrible thing behind her. 'Go and shut the door,' she said hastily to her son, 'I feel frightened.'

'Frightened?' repeated the boy. 'What does it feel like to be frightened?'

'Well — just frightened,' answered the mother. 'A fear of something, you hardly know what, takes hold of you.'

'It must be very odd to feel like that,' replied the boy. 'I will go through the world and seek fear till I find it.' And the next morning, before his mother was out of bed, he had left the forest behind him.

After walking for some hours he reached a mountain, which he began to climb. Near the top, in a wild and rocky spot, he came upon a band of fierce robbers, sitting round a fire. The boy, who was cold and tired, was delighted to see the bright flames, so he went up to them and said, 'Good greeting to you, sirs,' and wriggled himself in between the men, till his feet almost touched the burning logs.

The robbers stopped drinking and eyed him curiously, and at last the captain spoke.

'No caravan of armed men would dare to come here, even the very birds shun our camp, and who are you to venture in so boldly?'

'Oh, I have left my mother's house in search of fear. Perhaps you can show it to me?'

'Fear is wherever we are,' answered the captain.

'But where?' asked the boy, looking round. 'I see nothing.'

'Take this pot and some flour and butter and sugar over to the churchyard which lies down there, and bake us a cake for supper,' replied the robber. And the boy, who was by this time quite warm, jumped up cheerfully, and slinging the pot over his arm, ran down the hill.

When he got to the churchyard he collected some sticks and made a fire; then he filled the pot with water from a little stream close by, and mixing the flour and butter and sugar together, he set the cake on to cook. It was not long before it grew crisp and brown, and then the boy lifted it from the pot and placed it on a stone, while he put out the fire. At that moment a hand was stretched from a grave, and a voice said:

'Is that cake for me?'

'Do you think I am going to give to the dead the food of the living?' replied the boy, with a laugh. And giving the hand a tap with his spoon, and picking up the cake, he went up the mountain side, whistling merrily.

'Well, have you found fear?' asked the robbers when he held out the cake to the captain.

'No; was it there?' answered the boy. 'I saw nothing but a hand which came from a grave, and belonged to

someone who wanted my cake, but I just rapped the fingers with my spoon, and said it was not for him, and then the hand vanished. Oh, how nice the fire is !' And he flung himself on his knees before it, and so did not notice the glances of surprise cast by the robbers at each other.

'There is another chance for you,' said one at length. 'On the other side of the mountain lies a deep pool; go to that, and perhaps you may meet fear on the way.'

'I hope so, indeed,' answered the boy. And he set out at once.

He soon beheld the waters of the pool gleaming in the moonlight, and as he drew near he saw a tall swing standing just over it, and in the swing a child was seated, weeping bitterly.

'That is a strange place for a swing,' thought the boy; 'but I wonder what he is crying about.' And he was hurrying on towards the child, when a maiden ran up and spoke to him.

'I want to lift my little brother from the swing,' cried she, 'but it is so high above me, that I cannot reach. If you will get closer to the edge of the pool, and let me mount on your shoulder, I think I can reach him.'

'Willingly,' replied the boy, and in an instant the girl had climbed to his shoulders. But instead of lifting the child from the swing, as she could easily have done, she pressed her feet so firmly on each side of the youth's neck, that he felt that in another minute he would be choked, or else fall into the water beneath him. So, gathering up all his strength, he gave a mighty heave, and threw the girl backwards. As she touched the ground a bracelet fell from her arm, and this the youth picked up.

'I may as well keep it as a remembrance of all the queer things that have happened to me since I left home,' he said to himself, and turning to look for the child, he saw that both it and the swing had vanished, and that the first streaks of dawn were in the sky.

With the bracelet on his arm, the youth started for a little town which was situated in the plain on the further side of the mountain, and as, hungry and thirsty, he entered its principal street, an ogre stopped him. 'Where did you get that bracelet?' asked the ogre. 'It belongs to me.'

'No, it is mine,' replied the boy.

'It is not. Give it to me at once, or it will be the worse for you !' cried the ogre.

‘Let us go before a judge, and tell him our stories,’ said the boy. ‘If he decides in your favour, you shall have it; if in mine, I will keep it !’

To this the ogre agreed, and the two went together to the great hall, in which the kadi was administering justice. He listened very carefully to what each had to say, and then pronounced his verdict. Neither of the two claimants had proved his right to the bracelet, therefore it must remain in the possession of the judge till its fellow was brought before him.

When they heard this, the ogre and the boy looked at each other, and their eyes said: ‘Where are we to go to find the other one ?’ But as they knew there was no use in disputing the decision, they bowed low and left the hall of audience.

Wandering he knew not whither, the youth found himself on the sea-shore. At a little distance was a ship which had struck on a hidden rock, and was rapidly sinking, while on deck the crew were gathered, with faces white as death, shrieking and wringing their hands.

‘Have you met with fear ?’ shouted the boy. And the answer came above the noise of the waves.

‘Oh, help ! help ! We are drowning !’

Then the boy flung off his clothes, and swam to the ship, where many hands were held out to draw him on board.

‘The ship is tossed hither and thither, and will soon be sucked down,’ cried the crew again. ‘Death is very near, and we are frightened !’

‘Give me a rope,’ said the boy in reply, and he took it, and made it safe round his body at one end, and to the mast at the other, and sprang into the sea. Down he went, down, down, down, till at last his feet touched the bottom, and he stood up and looked about him. There, sure enough, a sea-maiden with a wicked face was tugging hard at a chain which she had fastened to the ship with a grappling iron, and was dragging it bit by bit beneath the waves. Seizing her arms in both his hands, he forced her to drop the chain, and the ship above remaining steady, the sailors were able gently to float her off the rock. Then taking a rusty knife from a heap of seaweed at his feet, he cut the rope round his waist and fastened the sea-maiden firmly to a stone, so that she could do no more mischief, and bidding her farewell, he swam back to the beach, where his clothes were still

lying.

The youth dressed himself quickly and walked on till he came to a beautiful shady garden filled with flowers, and with a clear little stream running through. The day was hot, and he was tired, so he entered the gate, and seated himself under a clump of bushes covered with sweet-smelling red blossoms, and it was not long before he fell asleep. Suddenly a rush of wings and a cool breeze awakened him, and raising his head cautiously, he saw three doves plunging into the stream. They splashed joyfully about, and shook themselves, and then dived to the bottom of a deep pool. When they appeared again they were no longer three doves, but three beautiful damsels, bearing between them a table made of mother of pearl. On this they placed drinking cups fashioned from pink and green shells, and one of the maidens filled a cup from a crystal goblet, and was raising it to her mouth, when her sister stopped her.

‘To whose health do you drink?’ asked she.

‘To the youth who prepared the cake, and rapped my hand with the spoon when I stretched it out of the earth,’ answered the maiden, ‘and was never afraid as other men were! But to whose health do you drink?’

‘To the youth on whose shoulders I climbed at the edge of the pool, and who threw me off with such a jerk, that I lay unconscious on the ground for hours,’ replied the second. ‘But you, my sister,’ added she, turning to the third girl, ‘to whom do you drink?’

‘Down in the sea I took hold of a ship and shook it and pulled it till it would soon have been lost,’ said she. And as she spoke she looked quite different from what she had done with the chain in her hands, seeking to work mischief. ‘But a youth came, and freed the ship and bound me to a rock. To his health I drink,’ and they all three lifted their cups and drank silently.

As they put their cups down, the youth appeared before them.

‘Here am I, the youth whose health you have drunk; and now give me the bracelet that matches a jewelled band which of a surety fell from the arm of one of you. An ogre tried to take it from me, but I would not let him have it, and he dragged me before the kadi, who kept my bracelet till I could show him its fellow. And I have been wandering hither and thither in search of it, and that is how I have found myself in such strange places.’

‘Come with us, then,’ said the maidens, and they led him down a passage into a hall, out of which opened many chambers, each one of greater splendour than the last. From a shelf heaped up with gold and jewels the eldest

sister took a bracelet, which in every way was exactly like the one which was in the judge's keeping, and fastened it to the youth's arm.

'Go at once and show this to the kadi,' said she, 'and he will give you the fellow to it.'

'I shall never forget you,' answered the youth, 'but it may be long before we meet again, for I shall never rest till I have found fear.' Then he went his way, and won the bracelet from the kadi. After this, he again set forth in his quest of fear.

On and on walked the youth, but fear never crossed his path, and one day he entered a large town, where all the streets and squares were so full of people, he could hardly pass between them.

'Why are all these crowds gathered together?' he asked of a man who stood next him.

'The ruler of this country is dead,' was the reply, 'and as he had no children, it is needful to choose a successor. Therefore each morning one of the sacred pigeons is let loose from the tower yonder, and on whomsoever the bird shall perch, that man is our king. In a few minutes the pigeon will fly. Wait and see what happens.'

Every eye was fixed on the tall tower which stood in the centre of the chief square, and the moment that the sun was seen to stand straight over it, a door was opened and a beautiful pigeon, gleaming with pink and grey, blue and green, came rushing through the air. Onward it flew, onward, onward, till at length it rested on the head of the boy. Then a great shout arose:

'The king! the king!' but as he listened to the cries, a vision, swifter than lightning, flashed across his brain. He saw himself seated on a throne, spending his life trying, and never succeeding, to make poor people rich; miserable people happy; bad people good; never doing anything he wished to do, not able even to marry the girl that he loved.

'No! no!' he shrieked, hiding his face in his hands; but the crowds who heard him thought he was overcome by the grandeur that awaited him, and paid no heed.

'Well, to make quite sure, let fly more pigeons,' said they, but each pigeon followed where the first had led, and the cries arose louder than ever:

'The king ! the king !' And as the young man heard, a cold shiver, that he knew not the meaning of, ran through him.

'This is fear whom you have so long sought,' whispered a voice, which seemed to reach his ears alone. And the youth bowed his head as the vision once 'more flashed before his eyes, and he accepted his doom, and made ready to pass his life with fear beside him.

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