

# *The Old Witch*

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English

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*Easy*

*7 min read*

Once upon a time there were two girls who lived with their mother and father. Their father had no work, and the girls wanted to go away and seek their fortunes. Now one girl wanted to go to service, and her mother said she might if she could find a place. So she started for the town. Well, she went all about the town, but no one wanted a girl like her. So she went on farther into the country, and she came to the place where there was an oven where there was lots of bread baking. And the bread said, "Little girl, little girl, take us out, take us out. We have been baking seven years, and no one has come to take us out."

So the girl took out the bread, laid it on the ground, and went on her way. Then she met a cow, and the cow said, "Little girl, little girl, milk me, milk me! Seven years have I been waiting, and no one has come to milk me."

The girl milked the cow into the pails that stood by. As she was thirsty she drank some, and left the rest in the pails by the cow. Then she went on a little bit farther, and came to an apple tree, so loaded with fruit that its branches were breaking down, and the tree said, "Little girl, little girl, help me shake my fruit. My branches are breaking, it is so heavy."

And the girl said, "Of course I will, you poor tree." So she shook the fruit all off, propped up the branches, and left the fruit on the ground under the tree. Then she went on again till she came to a house. Now in this house there lived a witch, and this witch took girls into her house as servants. And when she heard that this girl had left her home to seek service, she said that she would try her, and give her good wages. The witch told the girl

what work she was to do. "You must keep the house clean and tidy, sweep the floor and the fireplace; but there is one thing you must never do. You must never look up the chimney, or something bad will befall you."

So the girl promised to do as she was told, but one morning as she was cleaning, and the witch was out, she forgot what the witch said, and looked up the chimney. When she did this a great bag of money fell down in her lap. This happened again and again. So the girl started to go off home.

When she had gone some way she heard the witch coming after her. So she ran to the apple tree and cried:

"Apple-tree, apple-tree hide me,  
So the old witch can't find me;  
If she does she'll pick my bones,  
And bury me under the marble stones."

So the apple-tree hid her. When the witch came up she said:

"Tree of mine, tree of mine,  
Have you seen a girl  
With a willy-willy wag, and a long-tailed bag,  
Who's stole my money, all I had?"  
And the apple-tree said, "No, mother; not for seven year."

When the witch had gone down another way, the girl went on again, and just as she got to the cow heard the witch coming after her again, so she ran to the cow and cried:

"Cow, cow, hide me,  
So the old witch can't find me;  
If she does she'll pick my bones,  
And bury me under the marble stones."  
So the cow hid her.

When the old witch came up, she looked about and said to the cow:

"Cow of mine, cow of mine,

Have you seen a girl  
With a willy-willy wag, and a long-tailed bag,  
Who's stole my money, all I had?"  
And the cow said, "No, mother, not for seven year."

When the witch had gone off another way, the little girl went on again, and when she was near the oven she heard the witch coming after her again, so she ran to the oven and cried:

"Oven, oven, hide me,  
So the old witch can't find me;  
If she does she'll break my bones,  
And bury me under the marble stones."

And the oven said, "I've no room, ask the baker," and the baker hid her behind the oven.

When the witch came up she looked here and there and everywhere, and then said to the baker:

"Man of mine, man of mine,  
Have you seen a girl,  
With a willy-willy wag, and a long-tailed bag,  
Who's stole my money, all I had?"

So the baker said, "Look in the oven." The old witch went to look, and the oven said, "Get in and look in the furthest corner." The witch did so, and when she was inside the oven shut her door, and the witch was kept there for a very long time.

The girl then went off again, and reached her home with her money bags, married a rich man, and lived happy ever afterwards.

The other sister then thought she would go and do the same. And she went the same way. But when she reached the oven, and the bread said, "Little girl, little girl, take us out. Seven years have we been baking, and no one has come to take us out," the girl said, "No, I don't want to burn my fingers."

So she went on till she met the cow, and the cow said, "Little girl, little girl, milk me, milk me, do. Seven years

have I been waiting, and no one has come to milk me.” But the girl said, “No, I can’t milk you, I’m in a hurry,” and went on faster.

Then she came to the apple-tree, and the apple-tree asked her to help shake the fruit. “No, I can’t; another day p’raps I may,” and went on till she came to the witch’s house. Well, it happened to her just the same as to the other girl—she forgot what she was told, and one day when the witch was out, looked up the chimney, and down fell a bag of money. Well, she thought she would be off at once. When she reached the apple-tree, she heard the witch coming after her, and she cried:

“Apple-tree, apple-tree, hide me,  
So the old witch can’t find me;  
If she does she’ll break my bones,  
And bury me under the marble stones.”

But the tree didn’t answer, and she ran on further. Presently the witch came up and said:

“Tree of mine, tree of mine,  
Have you seen a girl,  
With a willy-willy wag, and a long-tailed bag,  
Who’s stole my money, all I had?”

The tree said, “Yes, mother; she’s gone down that way.”

So the old witch went after her and caught her, she took all the money away from her, beat her, and sent her off home just as she was.

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