



The Wicked Wood-Fays

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Easy
7 min read

There was once a poor orphan boy who had neither father nor mother, and as he had nothing whatever to live upon, he was obliged to go out in search of service. He wandered about for a long time, but could not find a place anywhere; one day he came to a solitary hut standing close to a forest. Before the door sat an old man, who, instead of eyes, had dark holes in his head; his goats were bleating in the stable, and the old man said,—

“I should be very glad to take you into the meadow, my poor goats, only I cannot, as I am blind, and I have no one here whom I could send with you.”

“Master, send me!” cried the boy. “I should be very glad to feed your goats and wait upon you too.”

“Who are you, and what is your name?” asked the old man.

The boy told him his history, and added that his name was Yanechek.

“Very good, Yanechek,” said the old man, “I will take you into my service, and first of all drive the goats into the meadow to graze; but do not drive them to yonder hill in the forest, as there the jezinky^[1] would come to you, make you sleep, and then tear out your eyes as they have done mine.”

“Do not be afraid of it at all, master,” answered Yanechek; “jezinky shall not tear out my eyes.”

Then he let the goats out of the stable and drove them into the meadow. The first and second day he watched

them near the forest; but on the third day he said to himself, "Why should I be afraid of the jezinky? I shall drive the goats there where the grass is better." Then he cut off three green pieces of brier, put them inside his hat, and drove the goats directly to the top of the hill in the forest. There the goats scattered about and began to graze, and Yanechek sat down in the shade on a stone. He had not sat there long, when suddenly, he could not tell whence, there appeared before him a beautiful girl, dressed all in white, with hair as black as a raven, nicely combed and falling down her shoulders, and black eyes.

"Hail, young shepherd!" she said. "See what beautiful apples grow in our garden; here is one for you, so that you may know how nicely they taste." And she handed him a beautiful red apple. But Yanechek knew that if he were to take that apple and eat it, he would fall asleep, and then the girl would tear out his eyes; he therefore said,—

"Thank you, beautiful maiden; my master has in his garden an apple tree which bears much finer apples. I have eaten enough of them."

"Well, if you do not like it, I shall not press you," answered the girl, and then went away.

In a short time there came another girl, handsomer than the first; she held in her hand a beautiful red rose and said,—

"Hail, young shepherd! See what a beautiful rose I have plucked from yonder ridge between those fields; it smells deliciously,—smell it!"

"Thank you, beautiful maiden," answered Yanechek. "My master has in his garden much finer roses; I have smelt them enough."

"Very well," answered the girl angrily; "if you do not want to smell it, you need not do it."

She then turned round and went away. After a little while there came a third girl, the youngest and handsomest of them all.

"Hail, young shepherd!" she said.

"Thank you, pretty maiden," answered Yanechek.

"You are a fine looking lad," continued the girl; "but you would look handsomer if you had your hair nicely

combed; come, I will comb it for you.”

Yanecek did not answer her a word; but when the girl had approached him in order to comb his hair, he took off his hat, pulled out of it one of the briars, and with it struck the girl on the hand. The girl screamed,—

“Oh, help! help!” and then burst out crying as she could not move away from the spot where she was standing.

Yanecek did not pay any attention to her cries, but tied up her arms with the piece of brier. Then the two other jezinky appeared, and seeing their sister thus caught, they begged Yanecek that he would untie her arms and let her go.

“Do it yourselves,” answered Yanecek.

“We cannot,” said the girls; “we have delicate hands and we should prick ourselves.”

When, however, they saw that Yanecek would not do it, they approached their sister in order to untie the brier. Suddenly Yanecek rushed upon the girls and struck each of them with the brier, and then tied up their arms.

“See, I have caught you now, you wicked jezinky,” cried Yanecek,—“you that have torn out my master’s eyes.”

Then he rushed home to his master and said,—

“Come, master, I have found somebody that will return you your eyes.”

When Yanecek and his old master had come to the hill, Yanecek said to the eldest girl,—

“Now, tell me, where are my master’s eyes? If you will not, I shall throw you into the water.”

The girl protested that she did not know where the eyes were, and Yanecek was about to throw her into the rivulet that was flowing near the hill.

“Do not drown me, Yanecek; do not drown me,” cried the girl, “and I will give you your master’s eyes.”

Then she led him to a cave where there was a large heap of eyes, great and small, black, red, blue, and green, and selected two out of that heap. But when Yanechek had put them into his master's head, the poor old man began to complain bitterly: "Oh, woe, woe is me! These are not my eyes; I can only see owls." Yanechek became very angry, and having caught hold of the girl he threw her into the water. Then he said to the second girl,—
"Will you tell me where my master's eyes are?"

The girl excused herself, saying that she did not know anything about them, but when Yanechek had threatened that he would also throw her into the water, the girl led him to the same cave and selected two other eyes. The old man, however, again complained: "Oh, woe is me! These are not my eyes; I can only see wolves." The same thing was done to the second jezinky as to the first; the water only bubbled over her.

"Will you tell me where my master's eyes are?" asked Yanechek of the third and youngest of the jezinky.

This one also led him to the cave, and selected two eyes out of the heap. But when they were put into the old man's head he again complained that they were not his eyes, saying, "I can only see pikes."

Yanechek seeing that the girl had cheated him, wanted to drown her also, but the jezinky burst out crying, and said,—

"Do not drown me, Yanechek; do not drown me, and I will give you your master's real eyes." And she selected them from the very bottom of the heap of eyes.

When Yanechek had put them into his master's head, the old man cried joyfully,—

"These are my eyes! Thank heaven! now I can see well."

Henceforth Yanechek and his old master lived together happily. Yanechek attended to the goats, and the old man made cheese from their milk, of which they both partook. From that day the youngest jezinky has never shown herself on the hill.

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