

The Wood Sprite

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Russian

Easy
3 min read

One day the daughter of a pope, without asking leave of her mother or her father, went for a walk into the wood, and utterly lost her way. Three years went by. Now, in this wood, in which her mother and father lived, there was a bold hunter. On every holy day he used to go hunting with his gun and his dog in the dreamy forest.

One day he went into the wood, and the hairs of his dog bristled up. Then the hunter looked, and in front of him there was a stump on the wood path, and a Peasant stood on the stump and was cleaning his bast shoe. He went on with his shoe and was threatening the moon: "Light, give me light, clear moon." It was all very strange to the hunter.

"Why does this Peasant," he thought, "live by himself? He looks so young, but his hair is quite grey."

He only thought this, but the Peasant guessed his thought and said, "Why am I grey? Because I am the Devil's grandfather."

Then the hunter understood that it was no mere peasant he saw, but the Wood Sprite, and he aimed at him with his gun, Bang! and he hit him in the belly. The Wood Sprite groaned, almost fell down from the stump, and that very instant jumped up again and crept into the thicket. After him ran the dog, and after the dog ran the hunter. So he went on and on and on, and he came up to the mountains, and on one of the mountains there was a fissure, and in the fissure stood a little hut.

He entered the hut and looked, and there was the Wood Sprite rolling on a bench, absolutely out of breath, and beside him a maiden who was weeping bitterly. "Who will now give me food and drink?"

"Hail, fair maiden!" said the hunter; "tell me what you are and whence."

"O doughty youth, I do not know myself: I have never seen the free world, and I have never known my father and mother."

"Well, come quickly, I will take you back to Holy Russia."

So he took her with him and led her out of the wood, and he went through the villages, inquiring of all of the places. Now, this maiden had been taken away by the Wood Sprite, and had lived with him for three whole years, and she had been enclosed and cut off, and was almost entirely naked, but she had no shame.

Then they came to the village, and the huntsman began to ask whether anyone had lost a maiden.

Then the pope said, "This is my daughter."

And the pope's wife came: "Oh, my dear daughter, where have you been so long? I never thought I should see you any more."

Then the daughter looked at them, but was simply staggered and understood nothing, and only afterwards, little by little, came to herself. The pope and his wife gave her in marriage to the huntsman and rewarded him with all good things.

Then they went to look for the hut in which she had lived with the Wood Sprite. They wandered far into the woods, but could not find it.

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