



Thirteenth

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Italian

Easy
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There was once a father who had thirteen sons, the youngest of whom was named Thirteenth. The father had hard work to support his children, but made what he could gathering herbs. The mother, to make the children quick, said to them: “The one who comes home first shall have herb soup.” Thirteenth always returned the first, and the soup always fell to his share, on which account his brothers hated him and sought to get rid of him.

The king issued a proclamation in the city that he who was bold enough to go and steal the ogre’s coverlet should receive a measure of gold. Thirteenth’s brothers went to the king and said: “Majesty, we have a brother, named Thirteenth, who is confident that he can do that and other things too.” The king said: “Bring him to me at once.” They brought Thirteenth, who said: “Majesty, how is it possible to steal the ogre’s coverlet? If he sees me he will eat me!” “No matter, you must go,” said the king. “I know that you are bold, and this act of bravery you must perform.” Thirteenth departed and went to the house of the ogre, who was away. The ogress was in the kitchen. Thirteenth entered quietly and hid himself under the bed. At night the ogre returned. He ate his supper and went to bed, saying as he did so:

“I smell the smell of human flesh;

Where I see it I will swallow it!”

The ogress replied: “Be still; no one has entered here.” The ogre began to snore, and Thirteenth pulled the coverlet a little. The ogre awoke and cried: “What is that?” Thirteenth began to mew like a cat. The ogress said: “Scat! scat!” and clapped her hands, and then fell asleep again with the ogre. Then Thirteenth gave a hard pull,

seized the coverlet, and ran away. The ogre heard him running, recognized him in the dark, and said: "I know you! You are Thirteenth, without doubt!"

After a time the king issued another proclamation, that whoever would steal the ogre's horse and bring it to the king should receive a measure of gold. Thirteenth again presented himself, and asked for a silk ladder and a bag of cakes. With these things he departed, and went at night to the ogre's, climbed up without being heard, and descended to the stable. The horse neighed on seeing him, but he offered it a cake, saying: "Do you see how sweet it is? If you will come with me, my master will give you these always." Then he gave it another, saying: "Let me mount you and see how we go." So he mounted it, kept feeding it with cakes, and brought it to the king's stable.

The king issued another proclamation, that he would give a measure of gold to whoever would bring him the ogre's bolster. Thirteenth said: "Majesty, how is that possible? The bolster is full of little bells, and you must know that the ogre awakens at a breath."

"I know nothing about it," said the king. "I wish it at any cost." Thirteenth departed, and went and crept under the ogre's bed. At midnight he stretched out his hand very softly, but the little bells all sounded.

"What is that?" said the ogre.

"Nothing," replied the ogress; "perhaps it is the wind that makes them ring." But the ogre, who was suspicious, pretended to sleep, but kept his ears open. Thirteenth stretched out his hand again. Alack! the ogre put out his arm and seized him. "Now you are caught! Just wait; I will make you cry for your first trick, for your second, and for your third." After this he put Thirteenth in a barrel, and began to feed him on raisins and figs.

After a time he said: "Stick out your finger, little Thirteenth, so that I can see whether you are fat." Thirteenth saw there a mouse's tail, and stuck that out. "Ah, how thin you are!" said the ogre; "and besides, you don't smell good! Eat, my son; take the raisins and figs, and get fat soon!" After some days the ogre told him again to put out his finger, and Thirteenth stuck out a spindle. "Eh, wretch! are you still lean? Eat, eat, and get fat soon."

At the end of a month Thirteenth had nothing more to stick out, and was obliged to show his finger. The ogre cried out in joy: "He is fat, he is fat!" The ogress hastened to the spot: "Quick, my ogress, heat the oven three nights and three days, for I am going to invite our relatives, and we will make a fine banquet of Thirteenth."

The ogress heated the oven three days and three nights, and then released Thirteenth from the barrel, and said

to him: "Come here, Thirteenth; we have got to put the lamb in the oven." But Thirteenth caught her meaning; and when he approached the oven, he said: "Ah, mother ogress, what is that black thing in the corner of the oven?"

The ogress stooped down a little, but saw nothing. "Stoop down again," said Thirteenth, "so that you can see it." When she stooped down again, Thirteenth seized her by the feet and threw her into the oven, and then closed the oven door. When she was cooked, he took her out carefully, cut her in two, divided her legs into pieces, and put them on the table, and placed her trunk, with her head and arms, in the bed, under the sheet, and tied a string to the chin and another to the back of her head.

When the ogre arrived with his guests he found the dishes on the table. Then he went to his wife's bed and asked: "Mother ogress, do you want to dine?" Thirteenth pulled the string, and the ogress shook her head. "How are you, tired?"

And Thirteenth, who was hidden under the bed, pulled the other string and made her nod. Now it happened that one of her relatives moved something and saw that the ogress was dead, and only half of her was there. She cried in a loud voice: "Treason! treason!" and all hastened to the bed. In the midst of the confusion Thirteenth escaped from under the bed and ran away to the king with the bolster and the ogre's most valuable things.

After this, the king said to Thirteenth: "Listen, Thirteenth. To complete your valiant exploits, I wish you to bring me the ogre himself, in person, alive and well."

"How can I, your Majesty?" said Thirteenth. Then he roused himself, and added: "I see how, now!" Then he had a very strong chest made, and disguised himself as a monk, with a long, false beard, and went to the ogre's house, and called out to him: "Do you know Thirteenth? The wretch! he has killed our superior; but if I catch him! If I catch him, I will shut him up in this chest!"

At these words the ogre drew near and said: "I, too, would like to help you, against that wretch of an assassin, for you don't know what he has done to me."

And he began to tell his story. "But what shall we do?" said the pretended monk. "I do not know Thirteenth. Do you know him?"

“Yes, sir.”

“Then tell me, father ogre, how tall is he?”

“As tall as I am.”

“If that is so,” said Thirteenth, “let us see whether this chest will hold you; if it will hold you, it will hold him.”

“Oh, good!” said the ogre; and got into the chest. Then Thirteenth shut the chest and said: “Look carefully, father ogre, and see whether there is any hole in the chest.” “There is none.” “Just wait; let us see whether it shuts well, and is heavy to carry.”

Meanwhile Thirteenth shut and nailed up the chest, took it on his back, and hastened to the city. When the ogre cried: “Enough, now!” Thirteenth ran all the faster, and, laughing, sang this song to taunt the ogre:

“I am Thirteenth,
Who carry you on my back;
I have tricked you and am going to trick you.
I must deliver you to the king.”

When he reached the king, the king had an iron chain attached to the ogre’s hands and feet, and made him gnaw bones the rest of his miserable life. The king gave Thirteenth all the riches and treasures he could bestow on him, and always wished him at his side, as a man of the highest valor.

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