

**The Merrywinkle
International Troupe of Vagabonds
Performs
A Delicious Potpourri
of
Fantastical Fairy Tales
and
Astonishing Folk Legends**

By

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PROLOGUE

(The entire group of performers assemble on stage. The following lines should be delivered in a variety of ways: individually, as duets, trios and/or spoken by the company).

Welcome!

We are the Merrywinkle International Troupe of Vagabonds!

We traverse the globe, spreading mirth and presenting lessons in virtuous behavior.

Tonight, we perform a delicious potpourri,

A potpourri of fantastical fairy tales and astonishing folk legends.

Magical tales from around the world.

Italy.

Germany.

Russia.

Norway.

Persia

Spain.

Tonight's repertoire includes

Slick and Sly

Clever Catherine.

The Devil and Three Golden Hairs.

A Most Agreeable Wife

The Siblings and the Slanderer.

Luciano.

The Scrawny Old Couple

The Giant with no Heart

Join us!

Climb aboard!

Sail across time!

Celebrate your imagination!

As we encounter enchanting spells.

Devious schemes.

Tales of trickery.

Rogues and trolls!

Heroes and happy ends!

LUCIANO

Narrator

Luciano Bab Boob Bab's Wife Boob's Wife Wife

NARRATOR Once there was a young farmer, Luciano.
 LUCIANO There are two things I love in this world. My wife and my mule.
 NARRATOR Luciano grew the sweetest corn and melons on his farm, and raised plump, tender chickens which he sold at market.
 LUCIANO I also tend a flock of sheep in a neighboring village!
 NARRATOR He also tends a flock of sheep in a neighboring village. Often, in the evening, as Luciano returned home he would be joined by Bab and Boob, a pair of boisterous brothers, who teased him mercilessly.
 BAB That's quite a set of whiskers your mule has.
 BOOB Do you ever confuse it with your wife?
 BAB If your mule was a donkey, you'd have the company of two asses.
 NARRATOR One spring day, Luciano gave his mule a large serving of freshly cut grass. Then he inserted a few gold coins into the mule's arse. He waited for Bab and Boob to come along and join him on his walk home. During the walk, the mule cut loose, scattering his droppings on the road.
 BOOB Would you look at that!
 BAB Luciano, the manure is filled with gold coins!
 LUCIANO I know. This mule is my fortune. Without him, I'd be penniless.
 BAB Luciano, sell him to us!
 BOOB Name the price!
 LUCIANO I won't sell my mule for anything in the world, but I will take one hundred gold coins for him.
 NARRATOR Bab and Boob rummaged through their pockets and, between them, produced the money. They took the mule by the bridle and hurried home.
 BAB Honey, we're home!
 BOOB Have we got a surprise for you!
 BAB It's in the stable.
 BOOB Hurry!
 NARRATOR Bab opened the door to the stable. Boob gleefully clapped his hands.
 BOOB'S WIFE It's a mule.
 BAB'S WIFE That's the surprise?
 BOOB It's no ordinary mule.
 BAB By no means.
 BOOB There are gold coins to be found in this mule's crap.
 BOOB'S WIFE Gold coins, you say?
 BAB'S WIFE Now I've heard everything.
 BAB We saw it with our own eyes.
 BAB'S WIFE Yeah. Sure.
 BOOB Bring some sheets. Spread them over the stable floor.

BOOB'S WIFE Sheets? Bed sheets?

BAB We need to collect the manure to sort out the coins.

NARRATOR The following morning Bab, Boob and their wives ran to the stable. The mule had passed nothing but pure, ordinary, unremarkable crap.

BAB That scoundrel Luciano. He cheated us.

BOOB I say we skewer him with our pitchforks.

NARRATOR The brothers threw rocks at Luciano's door.

BOOB That mule you sold us didn't drop a single coin!

BAB Not a single coin!

BOOB Our wives scorn us.

LUCIANO No coins? Strange.

BOOB Not so much as a fleck of gold.

BAB Not a fleck!

LUCIANO Did you behave badly toward him?

BOOB We treated him fine!

BAB He was given fresh grass and a bucket of oats soaked in beer.

LUCIANO Oh, Lord, the poor beast. Pray he doesn't die on you. The mule must be fed a strict diet of dried hay and roasted barley if he is to manufacture coins.

BOOB We didn't know!

LUCIANO Let me come and take a look at him. If the mule hasn't been harmed, I'll take him back. But if this magnificent animal has been injured by your actions, you must keep him and hold your peace.

BOOB Yes, yes. That sounds good.

BAB We agree.

LUCIANO Before we depart, I should stop by the house, to tell my wife our plans.

BAB Of course.

BOOB Hurry. Time is of the essence.

NARRATOR Luciano ran to the kitchen and instructed his wife.

LUCIANO Prepare a pot of beans over the fire. When you hear me return, hide the kettle in the cupboard, sneak out the back and wait in the henhouse.

NARRATOR The men scurried to the stable to inspect the mule.

LUCIANO I can't believe he's still alive.

BAB He does look wrung out.

LUCIANO It's obvious you've ruined him.

BOOB He can't be nursed back to health?

LUCIANO He might survive. Who knows? But he'll never work again.

BAB What now?

LUCIANO What now?

BOOB We gave you a hundred coins for him.

LUCIANO A fair price. But I was not the one to injure him.

BAB I think a partial refund

LUCIANO What's done is done. There's nothing more to say.

BOOB Oh dear, what are we going to tell our wives?

LUCIANO Why not come to my house for dinner? We'll sit down, share a good meal, and forget it ever happened. Let bygones be bygones.

BOOB Alright.

BAB I still think
 BOOB Shut up, brother!
 NARRATOR The trio headed back to Luciano's farm. No one answered the knock, so Luciano unlocked the door. He called for his wife, who came running out of the hen house. They went indoors and Luciano seated his guests at the kitchen table.
 LUCIANO Where is dinner? And why have you let the fire go out?
 WIFE I was cleaning the roost and lost track of time.
 LUCIANO What shall we eat?
 WIFE Don't worry. I'll scrape something together.
 NARRATOR She set the table then opened the cupboard and took out the pot of beans, steaming and fragrant.
 BAB What's this? A kettle that cooks without a fire?
 BOOB My wife would love such a kettle!
 LUCIANO We couldn't do without it. After working in the fields all day, we come home, knowing a hot meal waits for us.
 BOOB I should like to buy that pot.
 LUCIANO Not for all the money in the world will I sell it.
 BAB I'm still sore about the mule. To dispel any hard feelings, sell us the pot.
 BOOB We'll give you three hundred gold pieces.
 LUCIANO If you insist.
 NARRATOR The brothers gobbled down the beans and hurried home, eager to show their wives their latest purchase.
 WIFE These halfwits just about killed you over the mule. What will you do when they discover they own an ordinary pot?
 LUCIANO Don't worry. I have a plan.
 NARRATOR Luciano purchased a bull's bladder from the butcher and filled it with blood.
 LUCIANO Hide this bladder under your apron. Don't be frightened if I throw a knife at you.
 WIFE The things I do for you!
 NARRATOR Before long Bab and Boob stormed into Luciano's house, axes in hand.
 BAB You told us that pot cooked without a fire.
 BOOB Our families thrashed wheat all day and when we came home the beans were raw!
 LUCIANO Don't be excited. We'll get to the bottom of this. I suspect the fault lies with my wife.
 NARRATOR Luciano called for his wife.
 LUCIANO Did you keep your magic pot and give these men a useless kettle?
 WIFE Do you think I'd part with such an extraordinary pot? It's like having a second cook in the kitchen. I won't have you giving it away.
 LUCIANO You deceitful witch.
 NARRATOR Luciano threw his knife at her, striking the hidden bladder. Blood spilled from her belly as she fell to the floor.
 BAB You killed your wife, Luciano!
 BOOB Over a pot!
 LUCIANO Perhaps I was a bit extravagant.

BOOB I was under the impression you loved your wife!
BAB That was a terrible thing to do!
LUCIANO You're right. She didn't deserve such treatment, poor dead thing. But, no worries. I'll revive her, using this straw I always carry in my pocket.
NARRATOR Luciano placed the straw in his wife's mouth and gently blew into it. She stood up, smiled and began cleaning up the blood.
BOOB We must have that straw!
LUCIANO Oh, no! I frequently have the urge to kill my wife.
BOOB I feel the same way.
BAB I feel the same way!
LUCIANO Without this straw I couldn't revive her.
BOOB We'll give you five hundred gold coins.
LUCIANO You really know how to break down a man. It's yours.
NARRATOR Bab and Boob paid for the straw. At home they goaded their wives into a fight and at the height of the argument, struck them with knives. The sheriff arrived and arrested the brothers as they knelt by their wives, blowing into the straw.
LUCIANO To this day Bab and Boob sit in a jail cell. And, true to their characters, they are looking for a magical way to escape their fate.

CLEVER CATHERINE

Narrator

Farmer Catherine King Toby Jack Witness Guard

NARRATOR One day a farmer, while plowing his field, unearthed a golden lock. That night, he showed his discovery to his daughter, Catherine.

FARMER Only a king would possess such a beautiful object. Tomorrow, I'll return it to His Majesty, who will surely reward me for my diligence.

CATHERINE It's a lovely lock, father, but the king will not acknowledge your gesture kindly.

FARMER What a simpleton you are, Catherine! Why wouldn't the king be delighted to have this lock?

CATHERINE Mark my words. He will say, "What good is a lock without a key? Your gift is of no use to me."

FARMER Nonsense! He will gush with gratitude!

NARRATOR The following morning the farmer marched to the palace, where he was ushered before the King.

FARMER Oh, most wise esteemed regal high leader

KING Enough with the drivel!

FARMER Yesterday, while plowing the only piece of property I own, a small patch of ground . . . rocky . . . overrun with weeds

KING Get to the point, man!

FARMER I found this solid gold lock.

KING Let me have a look.

FARMER I'm a poor soul, with few possessions. My bones are crumbling. My vision is weak.

KING It's a rather fetching design, but, really, what good is a lock without a key? Your gift is of no use to me.

FARMER Dang and damnation! Exactly as my daughter predicted!

KING I beg your pardon?

FARMER My daughter said those would be your words. But I refused to believe her.

KING She divined my thoughts?

FARMER Precisely.

KING She must be a very clever girl.

FARMER No, I'm the brains of the family.

KING Let me decide that. Here. Take this bundle of flax. Have your daughter make a shirt for each soldier in my army. In the meantime, perhaps I may find some use for the lock.

NARRATOR The farmer, distraught, hurried home.

CATHERINE Hello, Papa. What did the king say?

FARMER Catherine, you're a cooked goose! By order of the King, with this flax, you are to weave a cloak for each of his captains. What's to become of us? That fox means to strip the very flesh from our bones!

CATHERINE Don't throw a fit. Give the bundle a good shake, Papa.

FARMER She mocks me.

CATHERINE Pick up the seeds. Deliver them to the King. If he makes a loom for me from the seeds I'll happily weave the uniforms.

FARMER Why do you torment me so?!

KING A loom from seeds? You have a clever, brazen daughter. I must meet her. Have her come to the palace, neither naked or wearing clothes, neither on foot or on horseback, neither in day or at night. Failing in any of these conditions, both she and you shall be beheaded!

FARMER Catherine, you will be the death of me. You presume to be clever, but are utterly stupid, stupid, stupid!

CATHERINE Can we curb the drama? The King's request can be easily met. Bring me a fishing net and goat, Father. Tomorrow, at dawn, I'll serenade the King, wearing the net and riding a goat, one foot touching the ground and the other tucked behind my knee.

KING What a ridiculous sight! Surely you must be Catherine. The very sort of woman I wish as a wife. Let's get married!

CATHERINE What the hell! Sure.

KING I have but one condition. Never poke your nose into my affairs! You got that?

FATHER The King wants you as his wife? Glory be! What's in it for me? Has he mentioned a dowry? Like I've always said, Catherine, you are just filled with smartness.

CATHERINE Why the anxious look, Papa?

FATHER Our King is fickle. What if he suddenly decides to un-marry you? Huh? What then? Listen. I'll keep your clothes in the chest, in case the King gives you the boot . . . so you can always come home, assuming I'm alive and the house is still standing.

NARRATOR From far and wide, people swarmed to the capital to celebrate the wedding. The inns were filled. The streets were bursting with party-goers. Into the wild celebration stumbled Toby.

TOBY What a sight! I only came to town to sell Millie, my pregnant cow. Now this! Such drunkenness and debauchery! And no place to shelter Millie for the night.

JACK I sympathize with your plight. I'm a farmer, too. Name's Jack. Why don't you join me under Saint Benedict's Bridge and tie your cow to my cart? Have you got any wine?

NARRATOR During the night, Millie gave birth.

JACK That's a fine, strapping calf. I'll see that it is given a good and proper home.

TOBY What do you mean?

JACK Well, the cow's yours, naturally, but it *was* lashed to my cart.

TOBY So!

JACK The cart belongs to me; therefore, the calf belongs to me.

TOBY Not as long as I'm alive!

NARRATOR Within minutes the farmers were engaged in a fierce struggle. A crowd gathered around to witness the brawl, which ended with the arrival of several constables. The farmers were escorted to the palace where the King received them in the Halls of Justice. After hearing the testimony of the farmers the

King decided

KING The calf goes to the owner of the cart!

NARRATOR Poor Toby was distraught. A witness at the trial took pity on him.

WITNESS Go see Queen Catherine; perhaps she can assist you. We hear she's very clever.

GUARD See the Queen? For what reason?

TOBY A legal matter, sir. I was dealt a great injustice by His Majesty.

GUARD Impossible! The King forbids Queen Catherine to hear petitions. (Whispers). The truth be told, the Queen is far wiser than the King, who is quick to dismiss her opinions.

TOBY What am I to do?

GUARD What time is it?

TOBY (Holds out hand, observes shadow on ground). Two strokes past midday.

GUARD Glory be! How remarkable. This is the very hour the Queen strolls through her garden. But I didn't say a word.

NARRATOR Toby scurried around the castle to peer over the garden wall. Sure enough, there was the Queen, kneeling by a patch of rosemary. He called out to her. Separated by the wall, the Queen listened to Toby's tale of injustice.

CATHERINE Here is my advice. Tomorrow the King is hunting near Lake Eloise, which is always dry at this time of year. Sit by the empty lake, casting your fishing line into the dust. When the King comes upon you, he'll ask, "Sir, why are you fishing where there is no water," to which you must reply, "If a cart can give birth to a calf, perhaps a dry lake will produce a fish."

NARRATOR The following day, Toby followed the instructions of Queen Catherine precisely. When the King questioned Toby, he repeated the words of the Queen.

TOBY If a cart can give birth to a calf, perhaps a dry lake will produce a fish.

KING A clever reply. I recognize the voice of my Queen in your answer. Do I not?

TOBY Oh, sir

KING It would be foolish to deny what I already know.

TOBY It's true. She instructed me.

KING Okay, I'm an airhead. The calf is yours. I'll have a new order drawn up immediately.

TOBY Thank you, your Majesty!

KING Now, there is another order I must attend to. Catherine!

CATHERINE Oh, yes, dear, kind, good, husband, King

KING You've been meddling in my affairs. No longer are you welcome in my castle. Return to your father immediately. But to prove I'm not hard-hearted, you may take with you that one thing in the palace which pleases you most. Farewell.

CATHERINE I will honor your wishes, but I have one request, if you will hear it.

KING Speak.

CATHERINE May I leave tomorrow rather than this very moment? Darkness would fall before I arrive at my father's house. The journey would subject me to bandits and wild animals.

KING Fine. Tonight, let us dine together, as in the past. At dawn you shall depart,

without argument.

NARRATOR Catherine ran to the kitchen where she instructed the cooks to prepare a great feast. She ordered the Steward to bring up the best wine from the cellar. That evening, at dinner, Catherine plied the King with goose fat, thick slices of beef, rich puddings. She personally attended to his wine goblet and made certain it was never empty. Soon the king fell into a deep sleep.

CATHERINE Gentlemen. Pick up the chair, making certain not to wake our master. Follow me. Keep your wits about you. We have a long way to travel.

NARRATOR For several hours the King was carried, asleep, in his chair, wrapped in a wool blanket. When Catherine reached her destination, she knocked on the door.

CATHERINE Open up. Papa, it's me. Catherine.

FARMER What did your Father say? Did he not foresee this end? Thank God, I didn't destroy your clothes.

CATHERINE Open the door!

FARMER You brought the King!

CATHERINE Hush! Carry him into my old room. We'll undress and put him to bed.

NARRATOR Catherine crawled into bed and laid next to her husband. In the morning the King woke to strange sights and sounds.

KING What's that? A donkey braying? Chickens? The bleating of sheep? And who's responsible for that awful smell? Catherine, what's happened? Where are we?

CATHERINE In my father's house, as you commanded.

KING But why am I here?

CATHERINE Didn't you say I could take the one thing I most loved in the palace?

KING Yes.

CATHERINE Well, I did. It's you!

KING My dear, dear wife. Once again you've outwitted me. Here. Give me a kiss. No longer will I be ruled by pride. I confess. Your wisdom outshines mine. Let's return to the castle. Never again will I make a decision without your advice. From now on, you shall help me administer the affairs of the kingdom.

THE DEVIL AND THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

Narrator

King Old Woman Mother Miller's Wife Erik Crone Robber One
Robber Two Town Crier Sweeper Ferry Man Granny Devil

NARRATOR One summer while the King was touring his kingdom in disguise, he stopped in a small village to secretly review his subjects.

KING What news is being circulated? Is there any talk of the King and his proclamations?

OLD WOMAN You haven't heard? A child has just been born with the mark of a star on his shoulder.

KING This is newsworthy?

OLD WOMAN The mark is a symbol of good luck! In fact, it is prophesied when the boy turns fourteen he will marry the daughter of the King.

KING You don't say! I should very much like to meet the parents of this fortunate child.

OLD WOMAN I'd be happy to introduce them to you.

MOTHER (*Enters with baby*). My husband and I thought we would be childless. And then this, a miracle!

KING He does have a divine aura, doesn't he? May I hold him?

MOTHER Be gentle, please.

KING It must be hard, given your circumstances, to adequately care for him.

MOTHER What do you mean?

KING Being poor . . . it's gotta be tough.

MOTHER We're doing quite well. Really.

KING Would you sell the child to me?

MOTHER Absolutely not!

KING I could provide generously for him.

MOTHER Please, sir, the child is not for sale.

KING What would you say to a thousand pieces of gold?

MOTHER I don't know.

KING Consider my appearance today a miracle, the hand of God at work.

MOTHER You do make a point.

KING I've been chosen guardian of his destiny. Or, are you not religious people?

MOTHER We are! Would you like me to recite the seven commandments?

KING I believe the Bible says - "a child sacrificed today reaps great rewards tomorrow" – something to that effect.

MOTHER Seeing you have the child's interest at heart, I entreat him to you.

NARRATOR The King purchased the child and bid farewell to the villagers. He returned to his carriage hidden in the woods. The driver was instructed to continue onward, to the next town, but when they crossed a bridge the King pulled the bell cord. The driver reigned in the horses; the king stepped from his coach.

KING I wish to be alone for a moment. To contemplate the river.

NARRATOR The driver secured the team of horses and withdrew. From among the

supplies the King found a box and placed the child in it.

KING My daughter, the supremely gifted princess, will not become the wife of a poor commoner!

NARRATOR He threw the box into the river. The driver was summoned and the pair drove off. But the box did not sink and floated down river, pushed by a swift current. Late in the evening, after traveling many miles, the box came to rest against the crest of a mill dam. The miller's wife, gathering her laundry, spied the box. She retrieved it from the water and opened it.

MILLER'S WIFE Look what God has sent us. The babe shall be raised as if he were my own child.

NARRATOR Years later, the King knocked on the Miller's door.

KING Good evening!

MILLER'S WIFE Your Majesty! Come in!

KING Rather a nasty storm we're having. If it's not too much trouble, might I lodge here for the night?

MILLER'S WIFE No trouble at all! Erik, a pail of hot water for the King to warm his feet. And a bowl of mead.

ERIK (Bowing). Long live our King.

KING A handsome, well-mannered lad.

MILLER'S WIFE He's been our pride and joy, from the moment he was discovered.

KING He isn't your son?

MILLER'S WIFE No. Erik is a foundling.

KING Oh?

MILLER'S WIFE Fourteen years ago he came to us - in a box on the river.

KING In a box? On the river?

MILLER'S WIFE Imagine! Subjecting a child to such a watery grave!

KING Heartless. Whoever did this deed should be punished.

MILLER'S WIFE Branded with hot coals!

KING My dear woman, do you think your son could deliver a letter to the Queen? I'd pay each of you a gold coin for the favor.

MILLER'S WIFE Whatever the King desires.

ERIK At your service, your Majesty.

KING Perhaps I could be alone. Just for a moment. As I compose my letter. (Reciting while writing). My dear wife, when you receive this letter make certain the boy who presents it to you is instantly killed and buried.

NARRATOR The King sealed the letter with wax and stamped it with his royal insignia.

KING (Giving letter to ERIK). Godspeed on your journey.

NARRATOR Erik set out at once but as twilight fell he entered a forest and soon strayed off the path. He wandered through the thickets until he saw a small light which guided him to a rickety cottage. He knocked on the door.

CRONE Who's there? From where do you come? What brings you here?

ERIK I'm on my way to see the Queen and hope to pass the night indoors.

CRONE Come in. Do you realize where you are, boy?

ERIK The hovel of a sweet happy old granny?

CRONE No! The hideout of vicious thieves. If you treasure your life, be off, for they will surely kill you when they return.

ERIK I am too tired to seek shelter elsewhere.

NARRATOR He stretched out on a bed and instantly fell fast asleep. Before long a pair of robbers returned with a bag of stolen goods.

ROBBER ONE Who is this strange boy?

ROBBER TWO What is he doing here?

ROBBER ONE Why did you open the door to him?

CRONE Take it easy, punks. He's just a child. An innocent, lost child.

ROBBER TWO If we allow him to go free, he'll report our whereabouts.

ROBBER ONE He must be killed!

CRONE I wouldn't do that! Look in his hand. He has a letter for the Queen.

ROBBER ONE The Queen?

ROBBER TWO Let's have a look.

CRONE Be careful of the seal.

ROBBER TWO (Reading). The boy is to be killed by the Queen's guard!

ROBBER ONE That's not nice!

ROBBER TWO Why not compose a new letter and reseal it?

ROBBER ONE What shall we write?

ROBBER TWO That the boy shall be married within the hour to the King's daughter!

NARRATOR Upon receiving the letter, the Queen followed its orders, which delighted the Princess enormously. When the King returned to the palace, he discovered the prophecy was fulfilled.

KING Not so fast! This marriage will be nullified unless the Groom journeys to hell and brings me three golden hairs from the head of the Devil.

ERIK The Devil does not frighten me. I shall do your bidding.

NARRATOR On his search for the Gates to Hell, Erik encountered a town crier, a street sweeper and a ferry man.

TOWN CRIER In the market square there is a fountain. Once it flowed with wine. Today it doesn't produce even water. Can you tell us why?

ERIK I will return with the answer.

SWEEPER In the center of town is a tree that once bore golden apples. Today it doesn't sprout a single leaf. What is the cause?

ERIK I will return with the answer.

FERRY MAN Everyday I row, from shore to shore, across the river. Why can I not be free of my oars?

ERIK I will return with the answer.

NARRATOR Erik entered the Gates of Hell. Through the smoke he perceived a shadowy figure.

ERIK Are you the Devil?

GRANNY No, I'm his Grandmother. Go away.

ERIK I've come to collect three golden hairs from your grandson's head. Without them I cannot be husband to my wife.

GRANNY You do know the brat will kill you the moment he returns.

ERIK Oh?

GRANNY Any goodness I have was lost on him. And above all he adores his hair. Do you love this wife of yours?

ERIK Very much.

GRANNY My heart has but one soft spot and you found it. I'll do what I can.
ERIK There's something else.
GRANNY It's never simple, is it, with you humans?
ERIK It concerns a fountain, a tree and a ferryman.
NARRATOR The old woman listened to Erik's story, then transformed him into an ant, so he could safely hide in the folds of her dress.
DEVIL Granny, I smell the flesh of a man. Have you entertained a human?
GRANNY Oh, you sweet silly boy. What would I do with a man? Eat your supper!
DEVIL Something is amiss, Granny.
GRANNY You're overworked, is all. When you're through eating, why don't you rest your pretty little head with its pretty golden hair in my lap and I'll pick the lice from your scalp?
DEVIL Thanks, Granny.
NARRATOR After the Devil had fallen asleep, the grandmother plucked a single hair from his head.
DEVIL Dang it all! What are you doing?
GRANNY I had an awful dream. In my fright, I must have seized your hair.
DEVIL Tell me the dream.
GRANNY In a pretty town – whose inhabitants are pledged to you – there is a fountain. Once it flowed with wine. Today it is dry and people are beginning to question their allegiance to you, and you to them.
DEVIL If they were more inquisitive they'd discover a toad under a stone in the well. When the toad is killed, the wine will flow once again.
GRANNY I'm sorry to have disturbed you.
NARRATOR After the Devil had once again fallen asleep, the grandmother plucked a second hair.
DEVIL Damn it to hell, Granny. What is going on?
GRANNY Please don't be angry. I can't seem to shake off these bad omens.
DEVIL What did you dream his time?
GRANNY In a distant land there stands a tree which once produced golden apples. Today the tree is nearly dead. In their quest to know the answer, the people are turning to . . . *God!*
DEVIL A mouse is gnawing the roots of the tree. If the rodent is killed the tree will thrive once again. Why can't humans figure out these things? Now, let me rest in peace.
NARRATOR For a third time that night the Devil was awakened by his Grandmother.
DEVIL What now!? Another horrid dream?
GRANNY Yes. A ferry man came to me, wanting to know why he cannot be free of rowing his boat.
DEVIL Mortals are such fools! If the ferry man hands the oars to someone else, he would be free of his task.
NARRATOR The Devil passed the rest of the night peacefully. In the morning, after the Devil left to attend to the furnaces, the grandmother summoned the ant, which resumed its human form.
GRANNY Here are the three strands of hair. As to the riddles, I trust you overheard the Devil yourself.

ERIK Yes. Thank you.
NARRATOR On his return to the palace, Erik revealed the secrets to the ferryman, the street sweeper and the town crier. Each rewarded Erik with a bag of gold.
KING Congratulations! Without question these golden hairs belonged to the Devil I wish you a long and happy marriage.
ERIK Thank you.
KING But pray tell, dear son-in-law, where did you acquire such handsome bags of gold?
ERIK One simply has to cross the river.
KING Do you think I could find the source?
ERIK Of course! Tell the ferry man I sent you. And do as he bids.
NARRATOR The King collected several empty bags and set off. When he reached the river, he cried out to the ferry man.
KING Row me across the river.
FERRY MAN It's late. I've ferried my last customer across the river. But you're free to use the boat.
NARRATOR The King jumped in the boat, grabbed the oars and began rowing. To this day he rows back and forth, a slave to his task.

A MOST AGREEABLE WIFE

Gustav, The Husband

Eddie, The Wife

Sully, The Narrator and Neighbor

Each character is a marionette

SULLY A long time ago, before me wife and I moved to the city of Grimstad, we had a farm in the hills of Lunde. Our neighbor was Gustav; he claimed to have the most agreeable wife in all the world.

GUSTAV I have the most agreeable wife in all the world.

EDDIE With a husband like Gustav, who wouldn't be agreeable? He's the most adorable, kind, thoughtful snuggle bug a person would ever want to meet.

SULLY The couple had a modest cottage

EDDIE It's perfect. Gustav built it himself. By hand.

SULLY A quaint garden

EDDIE Framed by a charming picket fence where Gustav grows the sweetest vegetables in all the world!

SULLY And two cows.

GUSTAV I love those cows. Love, love, love those cows.

EDDIE Honey, I've been thinking . . . we ought to take one of the cows into town and sell it.

GUSTAV Darcy and Dora are like family!

EDDIE Yes, dear, but with the profits we'd have a little extra spending money.

GUSTAV Do you have a secret wish to buy something?

EDDIE Sweetie, we both have a long list of chores. One less cow would be one less thing to look after.

GUSTAV They're such handsome, gentle beasts. Equally strong. Perfectly matched. How would we decide who to sell?

EDDIE It makes no difference to me. You decide, dear!

GUSTAV Won't they miss one another?

EDDIE Having to harvest hay for two cows is taking a toll on your back, Honey. And milk from one cow is quite enough.

GUSTAV What if the buyer turns out to be a butcher!

EDDIE Oh, sugar cakes! Do be agreeable!

SULLY In the end, Gustav agreed with his wife. He tethered Dora and, together, they walked into town. I was mending the fence when Gustav returned, trudging down the road, empty-handed. (To GUSTAV). I see you sold Dora.

GUSTAV No. I didn't have a single offer.

SULLY Where's Dora?

GUSTAV On the way back I made a number of trades and now I find I'm penniless.

SULLY You leave with a cow and return with nothing! I wouldn't want to be in your shoes! Surely, you'll get a tongue lashing from your wife when you get home.

GUSTAV Even though I've been called a simpleton from time to time, my wife is so agreeable she has never said a word against me!

SULLY I don't believe a word of it! No wife would stand for the loss of a cow with nothing in return!

GUSTAV Shall we lay a bet upon it? I have a hundred dollars in a tin in a cupboard that says she won't. Now match my wager!

SULLY I will! A hundred it is!

GUSTAV Fine! Get your purse! Accompany me home. Stand outside our door and listen as I my recount my troubles. If my wife so much as raises her voice against me, you win!

SULLY Deal! (To AUDIENCE). I followed Gustav home and hid in the bushes, under the kitchen window.

EDDIE Good evening, husband. God be praised! You're safely home.

GUSTAV Hello, dearest.

EDDIE How did it go?

GUSTAV So, so.

EDDIE You made an honest sale?

GUSTAV No one was looking to buy cows today. So, on the way home, I swapped Dora for a horse.

EDDIE For a horse?! Well, that's good! We can harness the horse to the buggy in the barn and drive to church in style. What a thoughtful husband you are!

GUSTAV I no longer own the horse, for I met a farmer and swapped the horse for a pig.

EDDIE You don't say! I would have done the same thing! Now we shall have a bit of bacon to serve our guests. Who wants a horse? People would only say we are proud, too lazy to walk to church.

GUSTAV The pig is no longer ours. I swapped it for a goat.

EDDIE Glory be! A thousand thanks. Having a pig would never do, now that I think about it. People would begrudge us, be envious of our good fortune. No! I much prefer the goat. We will milk the kid and make stout cheese.

GUSTAV We are no longer in possession of the goat. I traded it for a sheep.

EDDIE Bless us! Everything you do pleases me. Had I been with you, my advice would have been, "take the sheep." What do we want with a goat? We'd spend all our time, climbing the hills, trying to corral the thing. With a sheep I shall have wool to make warm clothing. In the autumn we will slaughter the sheep and have fresh meat!

GUSTAV I'm afraid we won't be shearing any sheep. I swapped the sheep for a goose.

EDDIE Well done! What would I do with a sheep? We don't own a spinning wheel. Imagine how tedious it would be to weave a cloth and then cut and stitch it together. We will buy clothes as we've always done. Think on it. I shall make a delicious roast goose and, with its down, I'll stuff a pair of pillows for our bed.

GUSTAV Cooked goose sounds tasty but I exchanged the goose for a cock.

EDDIE A cock!? Is there no end to your cunning? A cock is as good as a clock, for each morning the cock crows at five o'clock. We'll rise and sit down to breakfast well before sun up. We all know I'm a klutz in the kitchen. I'd probably burn the goose to a crisp. As for the pillows, instead of goose down, I'll stuff them with grass.

GUSTAV After my adventure, I was so hungry I swapped the cock for a sausage and loaf of bread, which I promptly ate. I'm afraid, dear wife, I haven't a thing to show for my efforts.

EDDIE Who needs a cock? I think we've sense enough to rise out of bed on our own accord. Thanks be to God, you're home, safe and satisfied. In you I have all I desire. Who has need of a cock or a goose, a sheep, goat, horse or cow?

GUSTAV (Calling). Sully, wherever you are, step forward.

SULLY (Appears). Hello, Gustav.

GUSTAV What say you? Have I won our bet?

SULLY Aye, you did. That you did. Indeed.

GUSTAV You can give the winnings to my wife, Sully.

EDDIE What's this?

GUSTAV Because I have the most agreeable wife in all the world, it seems I am not empty-handed after all. Here, dear, I give to you my wager. The money is yours.

THE SIBLINGS AND THE SLANDERER

Narrator

Gustav Anne King Sergius General Beggar

NARRATOR Once, a wealthy merchant lived in St. Petersburg with his two children, Anne and Gustav. On his deathbed he blessed his children, asking them to live in love and harmony. After the funeral, Gustav revealed his plans to Anne.

GUSTAV Sister, I wish to continue in our father's business, so I've outfitted three ships with goods to be traded abroad. I will command the expedition.

ANNE Will you be gone a long time?

GUSTAV Yes. I trust you will behave properly in my absence.

ANNE Promise to not partake in evil practices.

GUSTAV Do not entertain strangers.

ANNE Always be honest in your dealings.

GUSTAV Say your prayers.

ANNE Honor our father's memory.

GUSTAV Neglect not your duties.

ANNE Practice good hygiene.

GUSTAV Here is my portrait.

ANNE And mine for you.

GUSTAV Keep it close.

ANNE Don't lose it.

GUSTAV Farewell.

ANNE Godspeed.

NARRATOR For three years Gustav sailed the seas and conducted business. Then he anchored his fleet of ships in the harbor of a wealthy port, ruled by King Sergius. From the ship's hold, Gustav gathered precious stones, rich tapestries and exotic perfumes.

GUSTAV King Sergius, please accept these gifts gathered from around the world. Hoping you find the artifacts worthy, I request permission to sell my wares within your city.

KING SERGIUS Never in my life have I received such a splendid gift. For your generosity, you shall be given the best stall in the market. Buy and sell as you wish.

GUSTAV Thank you, your Majesty.

KING SERGIUS Tomorrow, if it's not an inconvenience, I should like a tour of your ships.

GUSTAV As you wish.

NARRATOR The following day King Sergius, along with his advisors, met in Gustav's cabin.

KING SERGIUS Who, may I ask, is the lady in that portrait?

GUSTAV My sister, Anne.

KING SERGIUS Without question, she is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.

GUSTAV I'll pass on the compliment.

KING SERGIUS Tell me her character.

GUSTAV Anne is virtuous and chaste.

KING SERGIUS Her manner?
 GUSTAV She is mild, with a ready smile and generous in her compliments.
 KING SERGIUS If what you say is true, I should like to have her as my wife.
 NARRATOR General Rurik, an advisor to King Sergius, bristled with envy. He had a daughter and hoped the King would marry her.
 GENERAL If I might have leave to speak, your Majesty?
 KING SERGIUS Speak.
 GENERAL This sister is not what she is made out to be.
 KING SERGIUS Oh?
 GENERAL Long ago I met her. I shared her bed on many occasions.
 KING SERGIUS Gustav, how can you say your sister is mild and chaste if she engages in such behavior?
 GUSTAV Your Majesty, if General Rurik tells the truth, let him acquire her ring and learn her secret mark.
 KING SERGIUS I agree to this request. General Rurik, you are granted a leave of absence. Return within a quarter of a year. If you fail this challenge, you shall be beheaded.
 NARRATOR General Rurik sailed to St. Petersburg. He wandered the streets, deep in thought, trying to devise a plan.
 BEGGAR Alms for the poor. Alms for the poor.
 GENERAL I can't be troubled, just now.
 BEGGAR What's on your mind, laddie?
 GENERAL Why should I share my troubles with you? There's nothing you can do.
 BEGGAR Don't be too sure. My vision is keen. My knowledge is vast.
 GENERAL Do you know where Anne, sister to Gustav, the merchant, lives?
 BEGGAR Of course!
 GENERAL I will give you enough gold to last a year if you bring me her ring and uncover her secret mark.
 BEGGAR Nothing to it!
 NARRATOR The beggar picked up her crutches and walked to the home of Gustav and Anne. She knocked on the door.
 ANNE Hello!
 BEGGAR Sorry to bother you, dear, but I'm about to depart on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.
 ANNE You don't say!
 BEGGAR A few more alms and I'll have collected enough to safely make the journey.
 ANNE Have these coins.
 BEGGAR Shall I pray for you when I arrive in that glorious city?
 ANNE That would be awfully kind of you.
 BEGGAR (Patting the hand of ANNE). What's your name, dear?
 ANNE Anne.
 BEGGAR (Rubbing the hand of ANNE and slipping off her ring). So many Annes in this world. We wouldn't want the Lord's blessing to fall on the wrong girl, would we? Is there a special feature you have, so the angels can identify you?
 ANNE I do have a unique birth sign.
 BEGGAR And what's that, dear?

ANNE I really shouldn't say.

BEGGAR We're alone. From your lips to God's ear, with no stops between.

ANNE Under my left arm I have a golden hair.

BEGGAR I'll mention it in my prayers. God bless you, my dear.

NARRATOR The beggar returned to General Rurik. They exchanged favors and the General sailed home.

KING SERGIUS Do you have the ring?

GENERAL I do.

KING SERGIUS Do you know the young woman's mark?

GENERAL A golden hair under her left arm.

KING SERGIUS Gustav, has the General answered correctly?

GUSTAV Yes.

KING SERGIUS Clearly you have lied to me about your sister's qualities. You shall be put to Death!

GUSTAV I accept your verdict. Before I'm executed, grant me one favor. Allow me to write a letter to my sister, asking that she come to bid me farewell.

KING SERGIUS Your favor is granted. Until she arrives, you shall be kept under lock and key.

NARRATOR Anne received the letter and set out at once to visit her brother. During her travels Anne wept quietly for her brother's fate. Those tears turned to diamonds and Anne wove them into a golden glove she was knitting. At last she arrived in the city ruled by King Sergius. Rather than visit Gustav in prison, Anne immediately went to the palace.

ANNE Your Majesty, tell me, what do you make of this glove?

KING SERGIUS It is a priceless work of art.

ANNE Apparently General Rurik thought so too, for he stole its companion from my home. I ask that his home be searched and the missing glove be returned to me.

NARRATOR The General was ordered to appear before the King.

KING SERGIUS A complaint has been lodged against you, General Rurik. The accuser says you stole a precious glove, the match to this one.

GENERAL This is outrageous. I own no such glove, and have no knowledge of its whereabouts.

ANNE How can you claim to not know? Have you not, by your own admission, been to my house many times? Haven't you visited by boudoir and laid with me in bed?

GENERAL I've never been in this woman's house! Until now, we've never met. (Looking around). Who is she?!

ANNE Never been to my house? Then why has my brother, Gustav, been condemned to die by your hand?

KING SERGIUS General Rurik, it seems you have been found out. The wrong man has been Condemned to die.

NARRATOR Justice was carried out. Gustav was freed and the General was hung in his place. As for King Sergius, his wish came true, and he married the virtuous and clever Anne.

SLICK AND SLY

	Narrator			
Slick	Sly	King	Snare	Scam
NARRATOR	Once, in a ramshackle town, two notorious thieves happened to have dinner in the same tavern.			
SLICK	(Alone, at a table). My name is Slick. You want to see the inside of a safe? Come to Slick. Number one shyster, pickpocket, hoodlum in the county.			
SLY	(Alone, at another table). My name is Sly. I love the sound of that. Pure. Clean. Simple. Says what it means. Number one swindler, ghoul, burglar in the county.			
SLICK	This locket. Until five minutes ago it belonged to the waitress.			
SLY	Five minutes ago this gold tooth was still inside that bartender's head.			
SLICK	I'd love to stay and chat but I have an eight-thirty date. With a cast iron lady.			
SLY	I'd love to share a few secrets but there's a poker game at the parrish.			
SLICK	My watch!			
SLY	My purse!			
SLICK	Gone!			
SLY	Lifted!			
BOTH	There's only one thief who could have pulled this off.			
SLICK	My competition! Sly!			
SLY	Slick! My adversary!			
BOTH	(Shaking hands with SLY). We meet at last.			
SLY	It was bound to happen.			
SLICK	What do you say we work together?			
SLY	Partners?			
SLICK	We'd make a killing.			
SLY	I'm in.			
NARRATOR	Slick and Sly set out for the city where they plotted the robbery of the King's treasury. Since the stronghold was surrounded by guards, the pair of thieves dug a tunnel to the treasury. Once inside, they stole everything: the royal jewels, sacks and sacks of golden coins, priceless works of art			
SLICK	We left the paintings.			
SLY	We despise art. It bores us.			
NARRATOR	Upon learning that his treasury was ransacked, the King was distraught.			
KING	How shall we ever catch such bold and clever thieves?			
NARRATOR	I have an idea. (Whispers into ear of KING).			
KING	Oh! I just had an inspirational thought! Why don't I visit Snare? He resides in prison, convicted for stealing from my pantry.			
SNARE	I didn't do it. You've imprisoned the wrong man.			
KING	The silverware with my insignia was found in your pockets!			
SNARE	It wasn't my coat!			
KING	Whatever. We have a bigger problem, Snare. Someone – by burrowing into my treasury - emptied it. Well, didn't empty it. They overlooked the paintings. If you tell me who did this and how to catch them, I'll set you free.			

SNARE Surely it is the hand of Slick or Sly – or both, working together.

KING How do we apprehend them?

SNARE Simple. Raise the price of meat to one hundred dollars a pound. Whoever can afford meat at that price is your thief.

KING It shall be done.

NARRATOR No longer able to afford the high cost of meat, everyone in town stopping buying it.

SNARE King, someone took the bait. A friar purchased an entire side of beef from the butcher. No doubt, it's the thief . . . in disguise!

KING How do we snare this trickster?

SNARE I myself will put on a disguise. I'll dress as a beggar and wander the streets, asking for food. The person who gives me meat will be your thief. I'll mark his door with a red sign and your guards can arrest the man!

NARRATOR Snare's plan worked beautifully; he located Slick and left a mark on his door.

KING Release the guards!

NARRATOR Sly; however, noticed the unusual marking and went throughout the city, branding everyone's door with a red sign.

KING Foiled again!

SNARE They're a foxy pair, that Slick and Sly. Might I suggest this? Have your heralds announce all tax revenue is now being stored in the royal wine cellar. Instead of money, fill the vault with pitch. Whoever attempts to steal the loot will be caught. The carcass will be your culprit!

NARRATOR Once again, Slick and Sly sprang into action. Sly lead the way and in the darkness fell into the gooey trap.

SLY Slick, stop where you are. The cellar has been filled with tar. I'm stuck. Give me your hand!

NARRATOR Sly could not be freed, so Slick cut off Sly's head and hurried away with it.

SNARE The thief has been caught! His body is being pulled from the pitch this very minute.

KING Yes, but I hear the corpse is headless, so the crook can't be identified.

SNARE Don't despair. Lash a rope around the dead man's ankles. Have him dragged by a horse through the city. Listen for the sound of weeping; it will identify the house of the thief.

NARRATOR When Sly's wife looked out the window, she burst into tears at the sight of her husband's body. Slick, who was minding the widow, pulled the woman inside. Fearing they would be caught, Slick began throwing dishes about the kitchen.

KING Did you locate the hideout?

SCAM We investigated one incident. False lead. Domestic dispute – a husband scolding his wife for having destroyed the china. Other than that . . . (Shrugs).

KING You've not been very helpful, Scam. Perhaps I should propose a solution.

SCAM By all means.

KING Issue a decree that I will pardon the thief if he can steal the sheets out from under me at night. Meanwhile, have my gun cleaned and placed on the night stand, along with a handful of bullets.

SLICK The King is so out of his league. Here is what I shall do. I'll dig up a fresh cadaver from the graveyard. At midnight, I'll climb to the roof of the palace then hoist up the body with a rope, letting it dangle outside the window of the King's bedchamber. The outcome should be obvious.

KING At last I have the criminal in my sights. (Fires gun). If the bullet didn't kill him, the fall will.

NARRATOR The King ran downstairs to observe his handiwork. Slick, meanwhile, snuck into the room and removed the sheets. He sat at the foot of the bed, waiting for the King's return.

SLICK Good evening, your Majesty. Your sheets. I accept your pardon.

KING Fine. So you won't be tempted to seal any more of my belongings, I'll make you part of the family by giving you my daughter in marriage.

SLICK Thank you. I understand she is magnificently beautiful. I accept.

KING Pray she herself is not a thief, planning to strip you of your goods, my little Slick!

THE SCRAWNY OLD COUPLE

This tale is presented as a shadow show; however, the narrator stands in front of the screen on which shadows are cast.

Narrator Neighbor 3	Old Man Tora	Old Woman	Neighbor 1	Neighbor 2
NARRATOR	Once upon a time a scrawny old man lived in a ramshackle hut with his scrawny old wife. The couple complained constantly.			
OLD MAN	Look at us!			
OLD WOMAN	We're poor as dirt. Our skin is withered.			
OLD MAN	Our stomachs are shrunken.			
OLD WOMAN	We have nothing to eat.			
OLD MAN	The weather conspires against us.			
OLD WOMAN	Our children no longer acknowledge us.			
OLD MAN	We'd be better off dead!			
NARRATOR	The scrawny old couple often visited their neighbors, bemoaning their plight. The neighbors grew more and more weary of the devious ways of the scrawny old couple.			
NEIGHBOR 1	That scrawny old pair was at my home yesterday. When they'd gone I discovered a bag of beans missing!			
NEIGHBOR 2	Really! Last week they dropped in, begging for a pinch of salt. Afterwards, my necklace was gone!			
NEIGHBOR 3	I'm not surprised! Four days ago they needed firewood. Later, when I opened the chest, I couldn't find the basket of dried fruit.			
NEIGHBOR 2	Every time they visit, something goes missing. But I never catch them in the act.			
NARRATOR	One day the scrawny old man and woman visited Tora. Tora had worked hard all his life, saving a few coins so he might be cared for in his old age. Now he lay sick in his bed.			
OLD MAN	You don't look sick!			
OLD WOMAN	If we can stand and walk about, I don't see why you can't.			
OLD MAN	I was a victim of cholera once. That didn't stop me.			
OLD WOMAN	At this very moment worms are eating my bones; you don't see me cowering in bed!			
NARRATOR	As the scrawny old man wiped Tora's brow, the scrawny old woman helped herself to some silver coins in the the piggy bank by Tora's bedside.			
TORA	What do you think you're doing?			
NARRATOR	The couple scurried away, their hands filled with coins.			
TORA	Help! Somebody! Help! Can anyone hear me?!			
NEIGHBOR 2	Tora! What's wrong?			
TORA	That scrawny old couple was here!			
NEIGHBOR 3	Tora! Are you okay?			
TORA	They stole all my coins!			

NEIGHBOR 1 Don't worry, Tora. We'll get back your coins.
NARRATOR The neighbors were tired of looking the other way when the scrawny old couple misbehaved. This time they decided to act!. They stormed the couple's house.

NEIGHBOR 3 Give back the silver coins you stole from Tora or we'll beat you with whips made from hippopotamus hide!

OLD WOMAN What are you talking about?!

OLD MAN We didn't take Tora's coins.

OLD WOMAN We're an honest old couple. Never once have we broken the law!

NEIGHBOR 2 We'll be back!

NEIGHBOR 3 We'll beat the truth out of you.

NEIGHBOR 1 We won't stop until you return the silver coins that belong to Tora!

NEIGHBORS Scrawny old couple!

NARRATOR While the neighbors went to get their whips, the old couple retrieved the coins they had hidden in the pantry. They ran into the forest with the loot. The neighbors saw the couple escaping and gave chase. (Pause while a chase scene occurs). After running through the forest for several hours, the scrawny old couple was exhausted. They decided to climb into a tree.

NEIGHBOR 3 We will not let you leave the tree until you throw down the coins you stole from Tora.

OLD MAN We will stay here, in the tree, until the bastards leave.

NEIGHBOR 2 We heard that! We are not leaving!

OLD WOMAN Empty threats! Soon they'll get hungry and go home. We'll climb down and run away.

NEIGHBOR 1 We'll have our dinner brought here! We'll stay and build huts and take turns, watching you.

NARRATOR (As lights dim on the screen). Days . . . weeks passed. The scrawny old couple grew hungry and ate the fruit of the tree. They ate the leaves. Soon, they were nibbling on the bark. They became scrawnier every day. (Lights on the screen brighten).

OLD MAN See how tough our skin has grown!

OLD WOMAN See how long our toe nails and finger nails have become.

OLD MAN It's to be expected. How else could we hang on to the branches?

NEIGHBORS We're not leaving!

NARRATOR (Lights on the screen dim). Summer turned to winter. The scrawny old couple shivered with cold. (Lights on the screen brighten).

OLD WOMAN Look at you! You are covered in hair!

OLD MAN So are you!

OLD WOMAN I have a strange sensation at the end of my spine.

OLD MAN So do I! What is happening to us?

OLD WOMAN It looks like the beginnings of a tail.

OLD MAN So it does.

OLD WOMAN I fear I shall lose my mind if this doesn't stop. (She screeches)

OLD MAN (Shrieks).

NEIGHBOR 3 Look! The old scrawny couple are now leaping from branch to branch!

NARRATOR One day, while swinging between the trees, the scrawny old man dropped the

coins that belonged to Tora.

NEIGHBOR 1

At last ... we acquired the silver coins!

NARRATOR

The neighbors returned the money to Tora. But the scrawny old couple refused to leave their tree. In time, they give birth to a tribe of tree people who, to this day, shriek and quarrel among the trees of the forest.

THE GIANT WITH NO HEART

	Narrator Salmon	King Wolf	Dusty Princess Leah	Lotus, The Giant	Raven
NARRATOR	Once upon a time there was a king with seven sons: Coco, Giggles, Dimples, Jolly, Twinkie, Sport and Dusty.				
KING	Sons, I remember the happy hour you each were born. Now you are strong young men and it is time to take a wife. To find a bride and court her, I give you each a splendid suit, a horse, and a purse of coins – with one exception. Dusty is to remain with me. To have you all gone would be more than I can bear. Dusty will keep me company in your absence. Find a princess for your brother and when you return bring her with you. Good luck				
DUSTY	Don't forget! A bride for me, too! I prefer blonds!				
NARRATOR	The six brothers toured many palaces and serenaded hundreds of princesses. Then they met a king who had six beautiful daughters.				
DUSTY	(To KING). Will they remember me, Papa? Will they find a bride for me?				
NARRATOR	In no time the six brothers won the hearts of the six sisters. The princesses gathered their belongings, bid their father farewell, and headed to the home of the six . . . seven . . . brothers. On their journey the caravan passed by the house of Lotus, the giant.				
LOTUS	Who are these mortals, singing, like drunken fools, their hearts full of love? Their happiness makes my teeth itch!				
NARRATOR	With a twitch of his nose, Lotus turned them all – princes and princesses – into stone!				
KING	Goodness, Dusty, it certainly is taking a long time for your brothers to return. I'm beginning to fear they have encountered something dire and we may never see them again. If you weren't here with me, I fear I should take my life, so sad I am at losing your brothers.				
DUSTY	I've been thinking . . . you should grant me permission to go find them. That's what I've been thinking.				
KING	Oh, dear me, no, Dusty! I cannot give you leave to leave . . . for fear, you too, would not return.				
DUSTY	Please, Papa! My heart's set on it. I'm begging you.				
KING	If you insist, dear boy. But I loaned our finest horses to your brothers. All we have is that sorry old steed.				
DUSTY	I don't mind. We'll get on just fine! Farewell, Father. I promise to return, bringing my brothers back with me.				
NARRATOR	After a short ride, Dusty came to a raven, lying in the road.				
RAVEN	Dear friend, I haven't eaten in weeks. Can you spare a bit of food? Help me and I promise, at your utmost need, to help you.				
DUSTY	I don't know how a raven could ever help me but I'll be happy to share what little food I have.				
RAVEN	Thank you. I just need enough to prime my wings and I'll fare well.				
NARRATOR	A little further down the road, Dusty rode by a brook and saw a salmon lying				

helpless on the bank.

SALMON Sweet, young man, toss me into the water, please. Do this and, in your greatest need, I'll help you.

DUSTY I doubt a fish could ever assist me, but I don't wish for you to lie there and die . . . so, back into the water you go!

SALMON Thank you! Your deed will not be forgotten.

NARRATOR Dusty rode on for miles and miles. He rounded a bend in the road and met a wolf.

WOLF You, there, handsome lad! Let me have your horse. For two years I've had nothing to eat. The wind practically whistles through my ribs.

DUSTY No! Not my horse! What is it with all you helpless, starving animals? If I give you my horse, what will I ride on?

WOLF You can ride on my back. You'll find I'm very swift, provided I eat the horse and regain my strength.

DUSTY This is . . . just wrong.

WOLF Help me and I'll help you in your darkest need.

DUSTY I've never known wolves to be very helpful, but since you are so famished, you may take my horse.

NARRATOR After eating the horse, the wolf turned to Dusty.

WOLF Where are you headed? What is your mission?

DUSTY I am searching for my brothers. Six lads, not unlike me, on a quest to find wives.

WOLF I may know exactly where they are! Jump on my back!

NARRATOR The wolf raced across the countryside and stopped just short of the giant's house.

WOLF Look through the trees. That's where Lotus, the giant, lives. And there, on the road, are your brothers, turned to stone. And the princesses who accompanied them, stone.

DUSTY There are only six princesses!!!

WOLF Lotus goes abroad during the day. Knock on his door. It will be answered by a princess. If you wish to put an end to the giant and have your brothers restored, do as she tells you. (DUSTY mimes knocking on door).

LEAH Gracious! This is no place for uninvited guests. Leave at once, before Lotus returns.

DUSTY I am here to conquer the giant and to free my brothers, who were turned to stone by him.

LEAH Defeat Lotus? It's impossible. He has no heart in his body.

DUSTY Nevertheless, I must try. I will try to save you, too, for I can see you are in his bondage.

LEAH Come in. My name is Leah. Together we may hit upon a plan. Hide under the bed. Be still as a mouse and note what he says.

LOTUS Cupcake! Open the door. Your Daddy's home. Ha! I smell man flesh.

LEAH Yes. I know. Don't be alarmed! A vulture, carrying off a man's bone, dropped it down the chimney. I quickly threw out the bone, but its smell remains.

NARRATOR That night, in bed, Princess Leah scratched the back of Lotus and asked . . .

LEAH Where do you keep your heart?
 LOTUS That's no business of yours.
 LEAH I'm only showing my concern for your well being.
 LOTUS It's under the rock outside the front door. Are you satisfied?
 NARRATOR The next morning, after Lotus left, Leah and Dusty pried up the rock.
 DUSTY Nothing!
 LEAH We'll try again tonight. I'll spread flowers over the door sill. I'll sweeten his porridge with sugar. I comb the burrs from his beard.
 NARRATOR That evening, Lotus stomped home.
 LOTUS What a disgusting stench! Sure as dumplings, there is a man in this house!
 LEAH Oh, no! A stray dog wandered into the kitchen, hoping to trade his bare human bone for a shank of lamb. I shooed him off!
 LOTUS Why are flowers scattered about the door sill?
 LEAH That was me, dear Lotus. I'm so fond of you that, knowing your heart lie under the sill, I wished to anoint it with flowers.
 LOTUS You don't say! I'm greatly touched, but the truth be told, my heart is not under that stone.
 LEAH Oh? No? Really? Not under the stone?
 LOTUS No, no. Far away in a lake is a small island. On that island is a tiny church. Inside that church is a sacred well, In that well swims a duck. In the duck there is an egg. In that egg resides my heart, darling Leah.
 NARRATOR The following morning Dusty embraced Princess Leah and said goodbye. When Dusty opened the door, the wolf was waiting for him.
 WOLF Come, climb on my back. I will take you to the island.
 NARRATOR After traveling all day, with Dusty astride his back, the wolf came to the enchanted lake and swan to the island.
 DUSTY Now what do I do? The key to the church is in the tower.
 WOLF Call upon the raven.
 RAVEN Hello. Would you like the keys in the tower? I can do that.
 NARRATOR Dusty unlocked the doors and entered the church. There was the duck, just as Lotus said.
 DUSTY Here ducky, ducky, ducky.
 NARRATOR Just as Dusty picked up the duck it dropped the egg into the well.
 DUSTY Oh dear! Now what do I do?
 WOLF Call on the salmon.
 SALMON You'd like me to deliver the egg at the bottom of the well? Easily done.
 NARRATOR After Dusty retrieved the egg, Wolf said
 WOLF Now, squeeze it!
 NARRATOR The giant cried out.
 LOTUS My heart! My poor poor heart. What ails my heart?
 WOLF Harder!
 LOTUS No! Whoever has possession of my heart, stop. I beg you. Why are you torturing me? What do you want?
 DUSTY Restore to life the young men you turned to stone. And their brides, too.
 LOTUS It's done. They're alive. Let go my heart.
 WOLF Now squeeze the egg in two.

NARRATOR Dusty squeezed once more and the giant collapsed at the feet of Princess Leah.

LEAH He's dead. At last I'm free.

NARRATOR Dusty returned to the giant's house.

LEAH You saved me, as you said you would! And look, your brothers and their brides have waited here to thank you.

DUSTY Will you accompany me back to father's castle and be my wife?

LEAH I will! I do!

NARRATOR After a long absence, the seven brothers returned home with their seven brides.

KING Sons, welcome home! You have all chosen well, but the prettiest bride, without question, is Princess Leah. For that, Dusty shall have the place of honor on the day you take your vows.

EPILOGUE

(The performers reassemble on stage. The following lines are delivered in a variety of ways: individually, as duets, trios and/or spoken by the company).

And so our storybook journey
Through magical lands
Across time
In grand castles and humble cottages
Where dreams come true
And good prevails
Ends.
The Merrywinkle
International Troupe of Vagabonds
Says
“Bon Voyage”
And wishes each and everyone
A life of enchantment
A table of goodness
A circle of friends
A multitude of stories
And nights glistening with stardust.