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Oral Storytelling

A Resource Pack for Use in Media
Programmes in Secondary Schools
and Higher Education

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Introduction to the resource on Oral Storytelling

This resource is an introduction to the skill of telling oral stories. It is complete, ready for use and does not rely on the expertise of a tutor. It includes introductory material for tutors that explains the purposes of storytelling and how it fits into curricula. It contains 'content' about oral storytelling - material that is suitable either as a background for teaching, or that can be given directly to students to read. As illustration, the resource includes video demonstrations of stories being told by a storyteller and, since it is essential that students actually practice the skills of telling a story, there is a set of stories for telling (though students may find their own). There are suggestions as to how a practice session can be managed with small or large groups of students in limited time and space and considerations of the assessment or feedback details that can accompany the telling of the stories.

This material is based on my recent book 'Using Story - in higher education and professional development', London Routledge (June 2010). There is a version of this storytelling resource for students of all disciplines on the ESCalate website. ESCalate is the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Education. (<http://www.ESCalate.ac.uk>)

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- References
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The written material (hard copy or online) that forms the basis for a taught session, or is given to students to read. The material includes videos of two stories (approx 10 minutes each) told by a storyteller to demonstrate one style of oral storytelling. These stories are available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2mqyxcP1uY> and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_CZFMfaYHg and the appropriate times to watch/listen to them are given in Part B.

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10 short stories suitable for learning for retelling to be given to students as practice material

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- How Peace of Mind was Found
- The Gifts
- Beauty and the Beast



Part A:

Introductory Material for Tutors



The purposes of oral storytelling in the curriculum

Teaching students to tell oral stories may seem to be more related to performance arts than to media programmes. However, taking a closer look at what is involved in telling oral story indicates that there are benefits to be gained for any student at any level. This basic resource on oral storytelling for media students fulfills a **number of different purposes** and any one of them can form the focus of the work. Oral storytelling is also interesting and enjoyable and a life skill.

There are two elements in oral storytelling – the performance (telling) element and the story itself to be studied in terms of structure, what makes an engaging story, etc. In different disciplines one or both are important. For media students, both are relevant. For example, the skills involved in telling a story are, in effect, **good presentation skills**. There is absolutely no point in telling a story unless the audience can be engaged – so engagement of the audience is central to the skill of the storyteller. It should also be central to the **giving of a presentation**, or in media subjects, to **pitching an idea** to a panel of assessors. There are other aspects of presentation practiced in oral storytelling such as the ability not to rely on notes, deployment of appropriate posture, body language and the quality of voice and so on. Often there is no actual teaching of presentation of pitching skills – and this resource can provide it.

In terms of personal development, the ability to tell a story well is a **valuable social (and parenting) skill**. In addition, for students who work with story within their discipline, as in media subjects, **storytelling helps in the understanding**

of the nature of story, its structures, how to engage an audience and the effects of different ways of telling a story. There are interesting issues in the selection of appropriate stories to tell, what characterises stories that ‘work’ and do not ‘work’ etc.

Oral storytelling is a useful skill to use with students at any level. All that has been mentioned above is as relevant to school pupils as it is to students in higher education. At university, work on storytelling can be within the context of self-presentation skills; it could be part of induction or it could be used within modules on communication or those directly relating to story. For students at later stages, or at Master’s level, it may be presented as a way of enhancing workplace communication and pitching skills. Because it represents a change from lectures and tutorials, and is ‘a bit different’, it could be an end-of-year or end-of-module activity.



How to use the materials

Presenting the materials

There are **three main activities** to this basic piece of work as used with students:

1. A short briefing session
2. The students read the material and watch the demonstrations of storytelling;
3. The students learn a story that they have selected, tell it to an audience and probably receive some kind of feedback. Ideally there will be a second opportunity to practice telling a story.

In terms of the **medium of presentation**, the materials may be presented completely online, in hard copy or face-to-face, or as a mix - and there is the storytelling practice. Each student should be expected to demonstrate or show evidence of telling a story to others (the audience may not necessarily be fellow students).

In briefing the students, it is important to be clear about the purpose for the activity in relation to the module or their programme, explaining what it is that they should learn from it. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that the ability to tell a story is a valuable social skill and that the session should be enjoyable. Too easily any disgruntled student can dismiss it as 'just storytelling' and irrelevant. It is 'just storytelling', but it is relevant!

Another point to be made at the introductory stage is that **there is no one way to tell a story**. This piece of work is about helping students to find their own best ways of effectively communicating a story. The demonstrations of storytelling are simply illustration – they do not show a 'right' way. It is worth pointing out that many jokes are forms of short social story; some people are better at telling jokes than others, but anyone can improve.

Students are then given the materials to read and demonstrations of storytelling to watch. In whatever medium is used, it is suggested that the first of the two storytelling demonstrations is shown before the material is read and the second is shown after it has been read.

After they have read the materials, the students should **choose a story to prepare for a practice telling**. This resource contains ten suitable short stories but any story may be chosen. It is important that the student should be able to choose a story that suits him/her because awareness of why one story appeals more than another is part of the skill of the storyteller. If students choose their own stories to tell, it is useful to advise them:

- of the length of time available for the telling e.g. less than 10 minutes
- to choose a story with a simple line, and no complicated names. Many folk or fairy tales are suitable if they are written in no more than two or three pages. There is a list of sources in section D
- to ensure that the story has an ending that is 'strong' and satisfying



Management of the student storytelling practice sessions

The variables here are whether students are face-to-face or engaged in distance learning, the time available, the number of students and the accommodation available. In most situations, the students should be advised that they have up to eight minutes 'telling time'. It is best if this is not exact because being timed creates stress. Further time is required for feedback (see below).

Distance learning students will need to find their own audience - friends, family or colleagues etc and preferably there should be at least four - telling a story to fewer people involves different dynamics. It is likely that some visual or aural record of the process or written reflection on it will be required as evidence that the storytelling took place. This may be linked with an assessment / feedback process (see below).

Below are some suggestions for the **management of the storytelling practice sessions within a class situation** that take into account different combinations of student numbers, accommodation and time available:

- **With small groups of up to ten** students learn their stories and take turns in telling them to the group. Where possible seating should be arranged in a circle. Listening to stories of ten students, and having a simple feedback system might take up to two and a half hours.
- **With more than ten students and plenty of space available** (separate rooms or a hall), students can work in their own 'story circles', with the tutor moving between them. It might be useful to appoint one student to organise the sequence of tellers and manage any feedback system.
- **Where space is available, but not much time, group size could be reduced.** However, the dynamics of storyteller and audience change in small groups so there should be at least six. Such a number will also allow reasonable peer feedback.



Where space or time is not available for each student's story to be heard by at least six others, students can be asked to arrange a session among themselves with a minimum of six present. They will need to be instructed in how to manage the session and any feedback. The session may be recorded as evidence that it has taken place, or the students may be asked to produce written work on their performance (see below).

Sometimes all that is possible for a session on storytelling will be a one to two hour lecture / workshop in one lecture space. In this situation, the initial material (Part A) should be reduced to salient points and 'taught', and the demonstration reduced to one story. There are different ways of managing the storytelling practice element:

- Pairs of students are formed. One from each pair goes outside the room while another short story is told to the others. The other students come in and those who have listened to the story retell it to their partners, with the instructions to 'make it their own' as much as possible. The partners then reverse their roles and another short story is told. A variation on this is that the storytelling group inside the room are given a story to read or it is read to them.

- Small groups of four or five are formed. A short story is told to the whole group (or read or given for reading). There is general discussion of the structure of the story. Most stories divide into description of an initial situation, problems arise/ there are barriers to progress; there is some sort of confrontation and there is resolution. The story may be retold with each student taking one part of the story and in turn retelling their own part with instructions to make that part of the story their own as much as possible.

- Pairs of students are formed. One of the pair is given one very short story, and the other is given another. These stories should be on no more than one A4 sheet of paper. All the students are given time to read and learn the stories and then they are given time to retell the story each way.

If there is time, it may be possible to cajole one or more students who have told stories in the arrangements above, to retell the story to the whole group, and then it can be interesting to discuss the difference between telling to one person or a very small group and to a large group.

In these examples with little time, any feedback is likely to consist of two comments about what (specifically) went well and what could be worked on for another time i.e. positivity.



Assessment, feedback and follow-up issues

There are many reasons for using assessment processes and what is not advocated here for the majority of students is any attribution of marks for how well a story has been told. The exception might be in the context of performance skills work – and then the criteria would need to be considered carefully. However, feedback in relation to the purpose for which the activity is used can be important. Peer feedback rather than that from a tutor is preferable for most storytelling activity for two reasons. Firstly, telling a story in public is a sensitive matter and the judgement of a tutor might seem to be 'heavy'. Secondly if a story is well told, that quality needs to be perceptible to any audience and hence the judgement of peers is equally appropriate to that of a teacher. The use of peer feedback also allows for a range of opinion about quality - and the quality of storytelling is not absolute. To one person hesitancy might be frustrating, but to another it adds atmosphere or tone to the story.

If students are taking turns in telling stories in a peer group, one of the best ways to manage feedback is to allow a period of a few minutes after each story has been told for each listener to write on a slip of paper:

- **two positive points** that indicate what worked well in the story
- **one point** that indicates 'when you tell a story the next time, how about...'

The slips (that could be Post It notes) are collected and given to the storyteller to be considered at his/her leisure. It may fit the purpose of setting the storytelling activity to ask student to do some reflective appraisal on their own performance, taking into account the

comments of listeners. This is likely to enhance the learning from the exercise, and it is a means of **producing evidence that the storytelling activity has occurred** if students are doing the telling activity away from the classroom.

The sequence of activities suggested above is 'the basics'. Ideally the **first session of telling is followed by at least one further session** of telling to a group. The second session may not need to be in a class situation (see other methods above). The second session will enable students to learn from their own first experiences of telling, from any feedback and from watching others. Another advantage of setting a second session is that students can be asked to find their own stories. This introduces a need to consider what makes a good story to tell orally, what sorts of stories are preferred and how they can make their own story 'work' best. It may be better to set up a feedback system for the second telling rather than the first.

Students may be required to **follow up other aspects of the nature of story** following the exercise and having listened to a number of storytellings, and to link the stories or the telling of them to the purposes for which the activity has been used.



Part B:

Material for Students



An Introduction to Oral Storytelling

Introduction

This material is mainly adapted from Chapter 11 of 'Using Story in Higher Education and Professional Development' (Jennifer Moon – London, Routledge (2010)).

Now look at / listen to the first of the two sample storytellings on Youtube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_CZFMfaYHg which last just under ten minutes.

Oral storytelling has several distinctive characteristics. Firstly, stories are told and not read. Secondly there is the directness of voice (Rosen, 2009). Voice is involved in reading out loud so the issue is the retelling - in Irish terms, the 'craic' - and non-reliance on a text. Harrett (2008) explores the difference between storytelling and reading and seems to end up trying to describe the unspoken qualities of oral storytelling such as the emotional atmosphere, the innuendo, and the mood – ideas not specifically conveyed in language. Harrett talks of the 'magic - the indefinable spark that binds speaker and listeners in a shared journey through imagination'. We cannot define everything in language and I think that the unspoken is partly what makes story work in human communication and Harrett demonstrates this.

There are three sections to this article. In the first section I consider why storytelling is a capacity that might be usefully learned in educational contexts. The second section provides a background to oral storytelling and its place in current times and in the third section I provide an introduction to how oral storytelling 'works' – and how a best to learn how to tell oral stories.



A background to oral storytelling

There is no point in telling a story to others if those others are not engaged by the story. Storytelling implies the enlivening of a story to hold attention – to facilitate engagement. These qualities are central to the process of storytelling but they are also central to good communication and teaching processes (Glanz, 1995; Martin and Darnley, 1996; Moon, 2001, Parkin, 2008). It is the ability to present material confidently without always gazing at a handful of script. This is quite apart from managing the content of the story. So, one reason for learning to tell stories orally concerns communication skills. Most students are expected at some stage in their undergraduate programmes, to make an oral presentation and this is considered as practice for pitching ideas (in media and arts disciplines) and presenting material in other professional situations. Storytelling can be regarded as practice for the presentations and practice in managing self expression, posture, voice and confidence in pitching.

However, oral storytelling has other places in educational contexts. Forms of storytelling come into the active side of politics (Levinson, 2008), business and management (Denning, 2001, 2004), religion, tourism (guiding tourists), various forms of training (Parkin, 1998), language learning (Heathfield, 2009), the arts and architecture, work with children in a variety of contexts in care, social and community work (Gersie, 1991, Jennings, 1999, 2004), library studies, various therapies and of course, performance studies. There are also places for storytelling practice in leadership, confidence-building and public speaking schemes (e.g. Toastmasters) in which the ability to present confidently is central. The confidence that can come with the ability to tell a story is related to personal development planning and

student success programmes (META, 2005) and, of course, storytelling ability is a totally portable form of entertainment – and that can always be useful in social situations (and parenting or grand-parenting!).

For many media disciplines, the ideas around the nature of story itself are central to the studies because essentially media tell stories. In this respect, as well as the value for communication and pitching, oral story telling provides a different way of looking at stories. The qualities that make an orally told story ‘work’ are not always the same as those which make a visual or written story work. Selecting stories for retelling gets you right into thinking about the ‘when’ and ‘how’ and what does and does not work as a story.



The value of learning to tell stories

I add a few notes about the place of oral storytelling in society in case it might seem like an activity of the past, or mainly for children. Storytelling is common to all civilisations (Hopen, 2006). Told stories come under a variety of overlapping headings – wonder tales, fairy tales, tall tales, myths, legends, ghost stories, trickster stories, jokes and more. Storytelling is portable entertainment, and as people travelled they shared their stories and because oral telling leaves stories flexible and open to interpretation and reinterpretation, the stories gained new forms, meanings and names. Sometimes, for example, the beginning of one story was furnished with the ending of another. Maybe this does not happen quite as in Salman Rushdie's book (*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, 1990:85, 86), in which the Plentimaw fish eat stories.... These fish, says Iff (the floating gardener), 'are 'hunger artists...when they are hungry, they swallow stories.... and in their innards ...a little bit of one story joins on to an idea from another and hey presto when they spew the stories out they are not old tales but new ones'. Like it or not, the Disney Corporation has been a great source of reinterpretation of traditional stories (Grainger, 1997; Cassidy, 1994) – but in effect it only carries on a tradition that stretches back through the centuries.

In the past, without electronic sources of entertainment and good sources of lighting, stories were everywhere. They were told 'at the loom, in the field, with needle or adze or brush in hand' as well as in the market square and entertaining the nobles at the ball (Parkinson, nd). Stories were also told in order to change minds (parables). At times, they have been collected to serve purposes – the Brothers Grimm collected stories to

promote nationalism in Germany in the early to mid nineteenth century (Grimm and Grimm, nd). To bring that seriously into the present, it was announced at a folk festival in 2009 that the British National Party was collecting traditional folk song to promote nationalism.

Oral storytelling for adults and children still happens despite good light, printed media, radio, television and computers. There are still many different cultural forms and manifestations of traditional storytelling (Nwobani, 2008; Pendry 2008, Shah, 2008, Jackson, 2008). In the UK, stories are told formally in pubs, around camp fires, in story groups, at festivals, in folk clubs, in schools and in residential care situations. There are storytelling performances in theatres, cafés, at National Trust Properties (Schrieber, 2009), in street performances and ghost walks. Storytelling is used in celebrations and religions (sermons) and after dinner speaking. It is used in work with refugees as a means of giving comfort (Aylwin, 1994). The Society for Storytelling supports storytelling in the UK (<http://sfs.org.uk>) and lists professional storytellers. In the United States there are many schools of storytelling (listed on the internet) and in a more academic context, storytelling is studied in The George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling (www.storytelling.research.glam.ac.uk) and other such centres.



Learning to tell stories orally

I am including in this section much of the content of a workshop on oral storytelling that I run. The main advice to anyone wanting to tell stories is not to stop at listening to a storyteller or reading about it but to go and try telling a story. It may turn out to be easier than it might seem!

Some general points about learning to tell stories orally

Firstly, storytelling is not a matter of learning stories word for word. Occasionally there are sets of words that are important in story because the story revolves around them (e.g. 'fi fy fo fum' in Jack and the Beanstalk) but that is relatively rare. There are, of course, the names of the characters to learn. If these are difficult, shorten them. I have said that it is the nature of oral stories is that they are reinterpreted. When I am looking for stories, I find that some contain whole sections that do not carry forward the action of the story. Sometimes they are bits of other stories that have become incorporated and can be excluded. Sometimes they add to the aesthetic qualities of the story and might be retained but abbreviated. In the end, in a story, everything needs to contribute to the storyline in some way or other. It might be in creating atmosphere.

Selecting stories

Stories are often grouped according to the audience for whom they are intended, but this does not mean that useful stories for adults cannot be drawn from children's books. Many traditional stories were told in the past to adults but in Victorian times were modified for use with children which mainly meant taking out sex and extreme violence. In my experience, adults can get as 'lost' in a good story as children, and

likewise, young children can be enthralled by what are meant to be adult stories even if they do not fully understand the whole story.

There are some storytellers who will only use stories that they have heard orally. I am less precious and find stories mostly in books. There is great delight in looking through a new book of stories for those that might be suitable. I seek books in libraries, occasionally in bookshops, but also in charity and second hand shops. There are some sources of good stories on the internet. There is a list of sources at the end of this article.

Finding stories, and therefore finding the appropriate sources for stories, is a matter of individual choice. The new storyteller has to find out what makes a 'good' story to tell for him/herself. I can only say that the sorts of stories that appeal to me for telling are 'strong stories' with a beginning, middle and clear ending with a clear plot or twist. Beyond that, good stories have a touch of magic – I cannot define 'magic', I can only use that word to describe the something that makes me want to share that story with others. It has a jewel-like quality. I can often look through whole books of stories, and find nothing with that quality. Clearly factors like length and complexity can be an issue too. Most times when I tell stories, they have to be short – sometimes only four minutes or more typically eight to ten minutes, and length becomes a factor in choice. Sometimes stories I tell relate to a theme. Recently I had to select a series of stories for a Medieval Fete that celebrated the anniversary of the consecration of a church and I tried to include stories with references to churches. Other times it is Halloween or Christmas – and so on.



Styles of telling stories

There are different styles of storytelling. None is right or wrong. I did not set out to learn a style, a style just happened when I began to tell stories. Some storytellers act as if they are a conduit through which the story flows. The teller is still and the story comes out through the voice alone. In contrast, others move and the story comes out through voice and body. The movement flows with the voice - it is not that the teller says something and then mimes it. Another style is more conversational – the teller tells the story as a part of a conversation with the listeners. There may also be singing or a musical instrument integrated with the telling – or drum beating is used to denote increasing tension in the story.

Learning a story

It is the ability to learn a story that most concerns potential tellers. It is not difficult to learn a story – usually easier than people think but it is a matter of an individual finding her best way of learning. Some people can learn a story from reading it several times and learning from the words. A common method is to imagine the story as a series of scenes – and, in effect, describe what is going on in each scene. Each description will lead on to the next scene and the teller works from these images of what is going on in the story. This seems to be closer to the nature of story than learning directly from the verbal sequence since images incorporate the unspoken elements of story - but this is a matter of personal preference.

When I learn a story I read it through probably twice, then I summarise it on paper in a numbered sequence of scenes or events in the story. My notes might take up to two sides of A5 paper but often a lot less. There is no point in writing the story again. As I write I am visualising

the events of the story. I repeat in the top corner of the sheet any difficult names of people or places. I may underline various ideas in the story that either I must use in order to make the story work or that I want to use because it helps the flow of the story. If there are difficult scenes, I have sometimes even sketched them with 'pin men'. I then tell the story to myself two or three times when I am on my own. I need to get right 'inside' the story in my mind. This practice in telling the story is vital but I often do not tell it to myself as well as I would if there was an audience! Since I have found that I tell a story through my whole body, and move when I tell, I will sometimes tell short sequences of the story to see how I move. I do not plan how I will move – movements just happen, but it is useful to know what might happen! The feeling of the movement seems to help the memory for the story. However, I have said that some people tell stories in this way, and some do not. The moving and telling is easier when I am relaxed. In the videos that accompany this material, I feel that my movements are tense at the start but improve as I relax in the filming.

It is also worth thinking of the involvement of the senses in the telling of a story. Invoking vivid sight, touch, sound and smell or movement sensations enriches the experience for listeners. These ideas can be added to a story. It can also be helpful to go beyond the story – to think more deeply about the characters. What are they feeling, what do they look like? What is their history? What motivates them? This is more important in a longer story in which the personalities of the characters are more relevant.



In learning stories from the sequence of scenes, it is useful to bear in mind that stories tend to have underlying structures. They are often something like the following:

- an introduction or opening word;
- an initial situation is described;
- a problem emerges that has to be solved – this is what makes the story;
- some sort of ‘helpers’ who are crucial to solving the problem are introduced;
- obstacles - there are often three in traditional stories;
- there are attempts to succeed – and there may be more than one try;
- there is success – achievement – transformation - resolution
- and a final few words

I often write further, very brief, notes about the story on an index card which I take to a storytelling session. This is particularly useful when there are difficult names of characters or places or sets of words that have to be said and the card is a last minute crib. Though I have rarely needed the card, it is comforting to know it is there.

Beginning and ending stories

Ending and beginnings are really important. A weak ending leaves the listeners with frustration and negativity. I think that the beginning of a story should be designed according to the context of the storytelling. There are times to give a title and times to ‘jump straight into’ the story with no introduction. I do not always introduce a story with the title and anyway titles are often made up by the person who wrote the story out the last time! I might say ‘this is a story from China’ or some such words. Alternatively there are traditional and quasi traditional beginnings and endings.

Examples of beginnings, largely taken from or modified from Grainger, 1997, include:

- Once upon a time
- Long ago and far, far away....
- Once upon a time and in a place that we may not know...
- Snap and my story is in... (and end on ‘snap my story is out...’)
- It happened where north, south, east and west meet
- Once there was... - or once there was not...
- I light the story fire – and the flame springs up... (and end on ‘the flames of the story fire are dying – but the story’s embers glow for ever...’)

Some of these add atmosphere to a story. One reason for weak endings relates not to the quality of the ending but to the pacing of the telling of the ending where it tails away or ‘subsides’. The pacing may need to be modified to signal the ending – it might slow down or speed up to a climax. It may be helpful to use a formal ending as well such as:

- ...and that is the end of my story...
- ...and so it was until this day – unless, that is, you know differently...
- My tale, now is now told - in your heart, now hold it
- A story, a story, it came - and now it goes...
- ...and that is the way it was, and that is the way it is – to now and maybe for ever.

(again this list is modified from Grainger, 1997)

Sometimes I use a small gong to denote the beginning and the ending of a story as it defines the ‘storytelling space’ very clearly.



Telling the story

In my experience, and this is likely to be the case in formal education, there is usually a limited time for a story. However, I might use the same story for a ten minute spot or for a twenty minute spot. It is a matter of how it is told and the detail included. It is important to judge time - but looking at a watch half way through a story is not a good idea!

Another issue is whether the teller sits or stands. Sometimes there is a storyteller's chair – even sometimes an ornate 'throne' chair. Some people always sit but I stand if possible because it leaves me free to move. However, there are occasions when the audience is seated on the ground (especially children) and telling from a position looming above them does not work. It is a matter of 'reading' the situation and working out how best to manage it. Half kneeling can be a compromise.

As in any performance, there is a need for eye contact with the audience. Storytelling is about engaging, however, there are times when, in a story, the teller is talking through one character to another, and then eye contact may briefly be with the imagined other. With large audiences, the eye contact needs to be exaggerated, as do any gestures or movements.

Pacing and the use of pause are vital skills. Silence is very powerful. It can tell of events in the story as much as the words. That also goes for creating variety in presentation - using loud and soft voice, coming forward and moving back. Occasionally there is extraneous disturbance during the telling of story – like the ubiquitous mobile phone and then the skilled teller may manage to link the phone call into the story – 'oh yes and the phone rang just at that moment – it was her father telling her...' or '...

but it was just a call for someone else'. This will probably elicit a laugh even in a serious story. I find that the odd aside can be useful if said quickly with a forward gesture to denote that the teller is coming out of the story briefly, (e.g. 'I wish I could find one like that'; or 'I could eat an apple like that right now!').

The use of props is a matter of judgement. I do not use props on a regular basis, but sometimes a single object can be useful. In one story I tell, there is a very round pebble. I sometimes say 'it was a pebble like this' and hand one round. The pebble in the story is imbued with magic. I tell the story of willow pattern china, and hand round broken pieces of the china with relevant pictures on it. The pieces of china were found at a Victorian 'dump' near where I live so they have their own story. In another story there are seals that slip out of their skins to become people and I often use a black piece of silk when telling that story.

There are some obvious things that go wrong with storytelling and many of them are the same as those that go wrong with any form of presentation. Beyond having a poor story, some are:

- lack of 'presence' of the teller;
- unclear or too quiet a voice;
- pace is too fast or too slow or there is too much repetition;
- disorganised telling – muddling the sequence;
- body language is not right;
- too much performance (irritating);
- storytelling and movements are not integrated (also irritating);
- apparent disengagement of the teller with her story;
- monotonous telling – and so on.



Most new storytellers think that the worst that could happen is that they will forget the story. In my experience, this rarely happens. Remembering a story is not at all like remembering or forgetting something 'learnt by heart'. My worst fear of forgetting is usually about loss of names but mostly they just seem to appear as if helped by the flow of the story. With foreign or unfamiliar names, a list on the floor is a possibility. It is worth noting that commonly promoted methods for memorising involve linking words into a story (Bower and Clark, 1969; Buzan, 2006). Occasionally I do forget a detail that is important to the story and then I will just say, quite casually 'oh – I forgot to tell you that.....'. I have never dried up. Storytelling is like a conversation with an audience and one finds one's way around difficult bits.

There are books and coaching schemes that help people to learn to tell stories but in the end, it is only by telling stories and watching others tell them that people can become proficient storytellers. Some sources for storytelling method are Baker and Greene (1987), Wood and Richardson (1992), Cassady (1994), Grainger (1997); Parkin (1998); Denning (2001), Parkinson, 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2007. The Society for Storytelling in the UK holds a substantial library of books on story.

Now look at/listen to the second story <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2mqyxcP1uY>



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Sources for stories

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There are also many books of humorous stories – many such stories are short and I might use one before I tell a more traditional story. I have found some excellent material in collections of 'e-stories' and one of the best sources of humour is in the Reader's Digest Magazine – stories are listed under 'Laughter the Best Medicine'. There are collections of these printed separately (e.g. Laughter the Best Medicine, (1998) Quebec, Canada, The Readers Digest Association

There are many stories on the internet (as at February 2010) including:

- <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com> – a large number of stories and resources
- <http://www.pitara.com/talespin/folktales.asp> - short stories
- <http://www.folkloreandmyth.netfirms.com> – a good variety of worldwide stories, some are long
- <http://www.americanfolklore.net> - a range of American stories rewritten in brief



Part C:

Stories for Telling



This section consists of ten stories that provide good material for retelling. As written stories, they contain more description than would be required in a short orally told version, so do not feel that you have to include all the detail when you tell a story.

Contents

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Seeds

There was once a wild and lovely garden that was a long way from the hustle of everyday life. The house, of which the garden had been a part, had crumbled and decayed and existed now only as heaps of yellow ochre rubble and a few low walls around the hearths. Plants sprawled and crawled on these walls. Pink valerian pushed stones apart, ivies clung and ferns sprouted like green fountains. A sycamore grew in what had been the kitchen doorway, and the old garden plants, freed from the constraints of the gardener's hands now conformed only to the law of the wilderness. Scented roses wavered away from the remains of a trellis arch, competing with the prickle of a large gooseberry bush – and bramble was winning hands down, everywhere.

Insects, birds and animals abounded in the old garden. Butterflies clustered on buddleia bushes; bees droned in the sunlit areas and flies zipped across the patches of shade. By night, foxes chased rabbits and a badger had burrowed his way through the fragrant soil of what had been the herb garden. Perhaps those with a lingering right over the land were the cats that were descended from Jemima, a gentle tabby that had been fed by a lonely kitchen maid long ago. Another remnant of the life of the house was the little stature of a boy, made in grey limestone. He stood askew on a stepped pedestal in a marshy area that had been the lily pond. One side of him was in permanent shadow and was greened with moss.

As with all very wild places, the spirits of the wood had moved in. Humans, in their ignorance have called these spirits and fairies, but while they tell the stories of spirits to the young child, they mock the older child who still believes. The spirits dwelled in the root spaces beneath the tall trees, in the dark of hollow trunks that had been the play-places of children in past times and they flew in the high canopy of leaves. They reveled in the breezes, shaking branches and they danced to the music of summer twilight.

Late summer was a special time. The spirits would come from far and wide to the old garden and they played conkers, as children play now with fruit from the chestnut, but they used seeds and the string was spun cobweb. The seasoning of the seeds was a highly regarded skill – the seeds had to be hard but not brittle, and burnished to a high shine. Just the conditions for this treatment were found in the hollow in the base of the statue and over the years the hollow had become filled with woodland seeds....or may be it was just that the canny squirrels had made this their food store.



And so the wilderness rested over the years and, but for the occasional lovers from the village who sort the peace of the deep shade, no person entered. However, sadly, as happens in the modern day, the land was spotted by a man who was interested in making money. He persisted until he bought the land and then he laid out plans for building. One day, late in the summer, the sound of chain saws came, ripping at fresh wood. The trees shuddered deep to their roots. As men tramped through and used fires to destroy the undergrowth, all life that could move, fled. Birds ceased to sing and the woodland spirits thrashed around, disturbed and angry and then, on a day of high winds, they disappeared. Soon the men reached the site of the house and carted away the old stone and razed the land on which it had stood. The statue was knocked down by a digger, into the mud that had been the lily pond and was buried further by a mound of earth pushed on top. In a day or two more, men came with tanks on their backs and sprayed chemicals over the ground to rid it of the vestiges of the wild. The remaining plants drooped as everything was destroyed. Trenches were now dug and foundations put in. Houses went up – red brick square houses with new brass knockers and tarmac drives.

The people who came to live in the house that was built over the site of the kitchen garden of the old house, were themselves old. They had time to be keen gardeners. They abhorred weeds and removed even the cooling mosses that softened their lawn. The garden was dug, hoed, raked and sprayed. The edges of flowerbeds were cut sharp and the faces of the flowers glowered out, colourful, but pompous. They were from the Garden Centre and were expensive.

These people had grandchildren who would make occasional visits. The children lived in a city flat and the garden was a great source of joy to them, especially the gap between the wood fence and the shed that their grandfather could not get at with his garden tools. One day, they would build a pond there. They imagined watching fish swim under lilypads – but that time was a long way off.

'Don't let your ball go on the garden bed, now, will you. Don't break the flowers...' the Grandmother would say as the children went out. But they were used to those kinds of words in the city.

One Easter, when the children arrived, a section of the vegetable garden was newly dug and the children looked wistfully at it and eventually asked if they could dig in the soil there and their Grandfather nodded. They decided to practice digging a pond. They started to dig, but did not get very far before they struck something hard and sparks flew from the spade. As they cleared



the soil, a face began to appear and the eyes of the boy statue stared up at them. They wanted to rush in and tell everyone but half way to the door they slowed and, nearly together decided to keep this a secret. They dragged and pulled the statue down the path towards the space behind the shed. As it bumped through the earth, seeds, hidden so long ago, fell from the base. The children cleared earth from the statue and the girl and ran to the house and struggled back with a large yellow bucket, slopping water onto the newly scattered seeds as she went. The children spent even more time in the garden, now that they felt that they owned a small part of it.

'How they enjoy my garden', said the Grandfather, thinking of his floral display.

The children went home. Spring came and warmed the earth even behind the shed and the wild seeds sprouted and grew and came into flower without anyone knowing. In the summer the children were back – but this time everyone was sad because the Grandfather was ill and could no longer tend the garden. The new plants flourished and the statue was once again surrounded by growing things. While the grown-ups were deep in their worried conversations, the children played around the statue and the wild things in the garden.

A few weeks later the family arrived for the last visit. They came with a van crammed with furniture. They were now moving into the house and their Grandparents were moving to a flat. What was particularly exciting was that the children were to have the bottom of the garden for a play area. They were free to do what they liked with it.

It was over a year later. The sun had shone for weeks but now cooled towards autumn. A mouse scuttled through the undergrowth at the bottom of the garden, shaking stems and then abruptly changing direction as it came face to face with a large shiny black beetle that had crawled up from the edge of a small pond. A bee buzzed around a yellow flower. And in among the stems and leaves, other forms raced and darted, collecting seeds and carrying them to the hole in the base of the statue. That evening in the dusk, with the first few burnished seeds carefully threaded onto cobweb strands, the games were back in play. And even in this small place, the spirit of the wild lived on.

Jenny Moon



Jack and the Wisdom at the End of the World

You will have heard of Jack and his beanstalk adventures and how Jack met the Giant at his castle in the clouds and the goose that laid the golden egg. Well the goose was old now and no longer laid eggs - she just ate. Jack's mother was getting on too and she worried about Jack, with the money running out – and – well she knew her son did not have the best brain...and he had no girlfriend either.... So one day, with great soul searching, she suggested that it was time he should sort out his fortune by paying a visit to the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World.

Jack, in his good willed way, said 'Mother, I am sure you are right', and the next day, he left, carrying the packed lunch – of course - made up for him.

He set out in the direction of the sunrise, walking jauntily along the road and humming. The road came to the riverside and there was a ferryman waiting there with a pole in his hands, ready to pole the punt to the other bank. The ferryman asked Jack where he was going and. Jack told him that he was on his way to visit the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World to seek his fortune.

'I see', said the ferryman thoughtfully, 'Jack – while you are there, I suppose you wouldn't do me a favour and ask the Wise Woman how I can be freed. You see, I am stuck to this boat and my pole and have to just keep plying the river, back and forth for ever and ever. And Jack, you know, I am so bored'.

'That's unfortunate', said Jack, 'I will ask her'. And with that he jumped from the boat and walked on towards the place of sunrise. He went up and over the rolling hills and onto the path through the forest. Feeling a bit tired, he sat for a moment in the dim light on the roots of a tree. No sooner than he sat, but the tree started to creak and groan. He did not like the sad sounds. He asked the tree what was wrong - and added,

'I am on my way to see the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World. I am seeking my fortune'.

The tree creaked again and said 'You are lucky Jack. I'm am small and crooked and it's miserable being small and crooked. Can you – err- ask the Wise woman how I could grow up to be like other trees? I so want to be up there in the light, Jack'.



Jack agreed cheerily and went his way counting on his fingers the two things now that he had to say to the Wise Woman. He reached the edge of the wood and his path stretched over fields, up hill and down dale. He was rather pleased with himself. Then, coming over a hilltop, in the corner of a field he noticed a cottage with smoke curling from the chimney. It looked very friendly but when he came near he heard the sound of a woman, weeping. She was sitting on a bench by the door, handkerchief in hand, with tears flowing down her pretty cheeks. Jack was a kindly soul and he asked her what was wrong.

'Oh Jack, I can't stop weeping – it goes on and on and I am so miserable'.

'But you have such a pretty cottage', Jack said – and he added, 'Well I am on my way to seek my fortune from the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World. My mother told me to go and here I am!'

'Won't you stay with me for a while, Jack'? She sniffled a bit and her tears dried. – 'Look, Jack, it will be getting dark soon, you could have some tea and stay the night here'. Jack thought that would be a good idea and so he had a delicious tea and slept well in a bed with a gingham coverlet. But the next morning, despite her pleading, he insisted that he must continue and she started to weep again.

'Jack, Jack – just one thing. Would you just ask the Wise Woman how I can stop weeping all the time'?

Eventually Jack came to the end of the World, and the Wise Woman, was there, asking where he had been because she had been expecting him.

'There are three things I have to ask you', Jack said, 'Well – I think it was three. The woman back there, who is crying – she wants to stop crying.....'

'Oh yes', said the woman, 'she needs to find a husband to live with her and then she would stop crying'.

'Ah I will tell her that', said Jack, 'And what about the tree that groans in the forest, how could it grow like the other trees?'

'Yes, I know about that tree, Jack. When it was a seedling, some robbers came with a chest of jewels they had stolen and hid it by the tree. The tree roots do not have room to grow. There is a



spade leaning up against the tree. If someone were to dig up the treasure, the tree could grow up fine and strong’.

‘I will tell it that’, Jack said, ‘- and the ferryman who cannot stop poling the ferry back and forth across the river?’

‘Ah now he had an unwise encounter with the Giant’s wife and a spell was cast on him. I have to tell you this quietly....’ She leant forward and whispered something to Jack. ‘Now you tell him that, and he will be free’.

‘Well thank you Wise Woman. You have been very helpful and I will pass on all the advice. I must get on my way now’. Jack turned to go, but the Woman called him. ‘Jack – is it possible that you have forgotten something?’

‘Oh yes’, Jack said. ‘Yes, what about me and how I can seek my fortune?’

‘Well Jack: to seek your fortune, you just have to be ready to seize every opportunity that your way’. Delightedly Jack agreed to do that and he went his way and his first stop was at the cottage of the woman who wept.

As Jack approached the cottage, he heard the sound of weeping and there she was with a large handkerchief. Then she saw him and her tears dried and a pretty smile grew on her face.

‘Jack, welcome back! It’s lovely to see you again. Come and have a cup of tea and tell me what the Wise Woman said’.

‘Well she said that you need to find a husband and then you will stop crying. And tea would be nice – but I must be on my way’.

‘Surely not, Jack! Stay for supper and you can sleep here again - and maybe you could stay for a few days and we can – well Jack....’ she sidled up to him, ‘.....we could get to know each other a bit better couldn’t we.....’.

‘I have to go and do as the Wise Woman said, and find chances to seize in order to find my fortune’. And, as he walked away, there was a sound of sobbing and then the full flood of tears.

Jack walked on through dale and over hill until he came to the forest and he found the little tree and as soon as he was sitting on its root it creaked and groaned.

‘Oh Jack, it’s you again. So what did she say – the Wise Woman?’ Jack told the little tree how robbers had buried treasure and that



treasure was restricting its growth. Jack looked around, 'Ah and there is a spade there - and if you can get someone to dig up the treasure, you will grow big and strong'.

'There is your chance, Jack – you dig it up', said the tree.

'No no', Jack said, 'I have to hurry on and find an opportunity to seize so I can find my fortune. I cannot hang around here with you', and on he went.

Jack passed through the trees and onto the path up and down the mountain and eventually he came to the river bank where the ferryman was waiting for him.

'Ah, it's my friend Jack. Step aboard and tell me all about your trip'. So Jack got onto the punt and told the ferryman about the tree in the wood and the box of treasure and the pretty woman who cried and how she needed a husband.

'And what about me, Jack? What did the Wise Woman say about me?'

'Well she said that you are under a spell and that to get out of it, you simply have hand the pole to a fool and then you must get off the boat as quickly as possible and the fool will come under the spell and have to ply the ferry across the river for ever. There was a pause as the ferryman got out his handkerchief.

'Err, err Jack, could you just take the pole from me for a moment while I blow my nose...' he said. Jack leant across and took the pole from the ferryman and immediately the ferryman sprung onto the bank.

Actually, Jack quite liked the river - and plying back and forth was all right even if it was for ever, and he even called the boat, the Fortune, though he may still be there and he may be getting a bit tired of it all by now.

The ferryman? Ah well he rushed to the forest, dug up the robber's treasure, and with a sack of jewelry, he raced over hill and dale to the house of the woman who wept – and soon they were married and her weeping stopped. And maybe he is still there – counting his fortune.

Traditional story rewritten by Jenny Moon



The Pebble

This is about Sam and a strange hour – and how Sam could have become a very wealthy 6-year old...

The story starts long before parents, grandparents and even grander parents were alive – in the days when the magic of Magimen was stronger than it is today. Maybe people knew more then – well actually, some did! Then, each village had its own Magiman, who lived in a cave beyond the village huts.

The village of Ubug had a Magiman called Mogum. Mogum was not quite a real Magiman. It took three lifetimes to become a real one and he was in his first, but he tried hard. Mogum's cave was stuffed with herbs, spices, crystals in bottles and powders all higgledy-piggeldy. On walls were scrawled and scribbled recipes for spells, and strung from the stone roof were crushers, mushers, sieves, saucepans – the paraphernalia of magic-making. Mogum had yet to become a tidy Magiman.

Folks would wander the wooded path over the rickety bridge to Mogum's cave to ask for spells. Mogum would grind and mix, stir and knead the wet and dry ingredients to make spells. Though few spells worked, the villagers wanted to keep their Magiman so they persuaded themselves that Mogum was doing fine – but no-one dared to ask for a big spell.

One day, a cheeky lad broke the rules and asked Mogum to make him into a Magiman for one hour. Well he did not just ask - he put it as a bet. Mogum thought – if this were to work and he were to win this bet, he might jump a lifetime and get Real immediately. How impressed everyone would be! He chucked and sent the boy away, pondering his recipes and humming with excitement. He found one spell that seemed promising, huffed and puffed and set about some spices and powders with pounders and mushers. He heated and burned, cooked and cooled and dried the smelly substances until they were as he thought they should be. Then he went into the woods and found a spotted toadstool and the shed skin of a poisonous snake.

Three days later, garbed in his most spangled cloak, Mogum called the boy back and started to chant around a bowl of brown liquid that looked like gravy, though from it crackled and flashed blue and red sparks.

'Good', said Mogum, 'Good, good...'. He was about to smear the stuff on the boy when there was a rumble. The bowl wobbled



seriously, then blue smoke erupted from it. Cats everywhere jumped – as happens when magic goes seriously wrong – then there was the huge bang! Mogum and the boy landed some way away. The boy ran. Mogum looked at his ragged cloak and at his cave which was a heap of rubble. Blue and red sparks spluttered from everywhere.

‘Dear me, dear me!’ he said, then, as any self-respecting Magiman would do, he wandered off to look for a new cave and a new village.

All this happened a very long time ago. The ground splattered by the spell soon covered in earth. The rocks of the cave were crushed to pebbles. Plants seeded there. People forgot the spell – all they noticed was that there were unusually tall trees with larger shinier leaves there and then they forgot that too. The land was ploughed into fields and houses were built, and fell down and new ones were built on top. Sam’s house was built there and because Sam liked to make things, Sam’s Dad made him a sandpit in their little garden.

On a fine autumn evening, Sam was playing in his sandpit. The sun made patterns on the sand as it shone through the apple trees and sometimes an apple would fall. Sam made a sandcastle with a track running down and he tried to get apples to roll down, but they fell off. He looked for something else and picked up a comfortably round pebble from the garden bed. He was about to try rolling it when Mum called him for tea. He knew there were chips so he ran in quickly, slipping the stone into his pocket.

The hour that followed was the strangest ever for Sam, and his parents.

Sam reached the door and pulled off his sandy trainers. He could not smell chips and on the table was a plate of cold meat and some salad.

‘You said chips...’

Mother had decided that the cold meat had to be finished.

‘I’ve got those nice little tomatoes.....’

‘But you said it was chips. I wish we could have chips’. Sam was rubbing the round stone in frustration. Quite suddenly there was a smell of chips, and in one of Mum’s own dishes was on the table, piled high with golden chips. Sam reached forward and took one.



'Oh Mum...!', he said, assuming that she had been teasing.

Dad arrived and could make no sense of what Sam's Mum was saying. The chips were, after all, there. What was the fuss? They tucked into the meal and talked about what had happened.

'I am sorry to say that you don't just wish and something happens', said Dad. '- I'll just try wishing for a piece of best fillet steak'. Of course, nothing happened.

They finished the chips. Sam sat back; hand in pocket, thinking about wishing.

'Now, I wish.....I wish we could have the juiciest sausages, creamy ice cream with chocolate sauce, fizzygallop drink...'. He reeled off a list but by the time he had finished, the table groaned with the weight of the wonderful treats on his list.

'Well....', said Dad.

'Well.....' said Mum. 'I wish I knew But of course, she did not have the stone, so her wish did not come true. They settled down to eating again – and they ate and ate. They were confused and it was a relief to do something familiar like eat – and eat.

'We'll think about it later', said Dad, shuffling to a comfortable chair with his hand on his middle. Then the magic hour ran out. The stone, long ago splattered by the magic of Mogum's spell, at last became an ordinary stone that eventually worked its way through the hole in Sam's pocket and back onto the garden bed. Sam and his parents never did know how they could have used the magic – but they were a happy family and so maybe that was just as well.

Jenny Moon



Designing Rabbit

This is a North American Indian story.

This story is set in the days before Creator had sorted out what he (– or she?) was going to do about the seasons. He was in discussion with the Sun over this and, on dull days or whenever the Sun was not busy shining, they would get together over a cup of yellow moon tea in the Creator's sitting room to discuss the matter. They had sorted out summer and winter – and autumn seemed to slot quite well between these two - but they had not sorted out what would happen in the spring.

The Creator had not quite sorted out what some of the animals should look like either. He was trying out a prototype of rabbits. At present, he was trying a version with four legs of equal lengths and a long pointed nose somewhat like that of a mouse. And rabbits had, in that version, a long silky tail that trailed behind them. They did eat grass through. That bit of the design seemed to be working well.

It was winter now – and snow covered the hills. Valleys and forests were white and the lakes were frozen hard. Rabbit was eating in his customary way, using his long front paws to scrape down through the snow to the grass underneath. The grass was crunchy and Rabbit licked his pink lips.... He liked it like this.

However, this was also the day when the Creator and the Sun finally finished their design for spring and set it in motion. Sun shone as brightly as he could and then revved up the heat. The snow twinkled and then started to melt. The crunchy grass that rabbit so loved, became soggy and the ground, once so clean and white, became mud. Rabbit did not like this at all – soggy grass and brown mud were not for him. He looked around for something else to eat and then chanced to look up, and in the sunshine, the buds of the willow were breaking out in the branches above and they looked particularly delicious. Hunger was beginning to gnaw in Rabbit's stomach but there was a problem. He stretched, and jumped and reached but could get to only two buds. Then he had an idea. There was still snow lying in some places and he rolled snowballs and packed them round the willow bush and then packed more snow between them to make a platform through which all the branches stuck out, with the lovely buds on them. Rabbit was able to scramble out to the buds that he so wanted to eat. Perched on the platform he gorged himself – and of course, after such a big meal, what else would he want but to lie down. He curled up on the snow platform in the sun and was soon well asleep.



...and the sun went on shining - and shining and the snow platform melted. When Rabbit finally awoke, he was stretched across several branches with twigs sticking into him in a most uncomfortable manner and he could hardly move.

Now in addition to the same-sized legs, the pointy nose and the long tail, in those days, Rabbits still had a bit of brain and so he used it to consider his predicament. He needed to get down to the ground. Eventually he decided that the best he could do was to launch himself – and perhaps that was all he could do really. He launched himself – and fell through the air elegantly for a few seconds and then stopped suddenly with his tail caught in the fork of two branches. So there he was, spread-eagled in the air like a Christmas tree ornament, spinning gently round. He thought again and decided that he might free himself if he spun himself round more quickly, so he sort of swam in the air and started to spin and he spun faster and faster – and faster. There was suddenly a loud crack that even the Creator heard. Rabbit's tail broke, leaving some in the tree and leaving him with a tiny puff for a tail. Now, constrained by nothing, Rabbit fell hard onto the earth. His long front legs buried themselves into the soft mud, and his nose became squashed up. The Creator came to see what was going on and he laughed and laughed at the silly looking creature that Rabbit now was, especially when Rabbit hopped away on his new legs, deeply embarrassed. But it seemed that the design worked quite well and so the Creator left Rabbit that way. And this is how all rabbits are now – and if you look at willow bushes early in the spring, you will see some of Rabbit's tail that was left behind.

Traditional story rewritten by Jenny Moon



The Middle of the Sound

The village of Appledown lay comfortably settled between rolling green hills on three sides and the sparkling blue sea on the other. The tides rose and fell over a broad stretch of yellow sand on which the children built magnificent sandcastles.

Eglin lived in the smallest house in Appledown. It was called Egg Cottage. It was small – but tall and narrow – so tall and narrow, in fact, that Eglin and his visitors had to turn nearly sideways to go through the front door, and the letterbox could only fit up and down.

Eglin was very proud of his little house. He painted and re-painted it. This month the door was pale blue, with the letterbox red. The windows above the door were blue and Eglin had out his yellow curtains with the poppy borders. His house looked particularly bright because on both sides of it were grey houses painted in grey and black, and black and grey. The three houses were packed so tightly together that people said that they looked like a sandwich standing on end – with a magnificent filling.

In the grey and black house lived Mr and Mrs Grimble. For every bit that Mrs Grimble was small and active, Mr Grimble was big and round. He was fond of his great arm-chair which was placed by the fire in winter, and by the window overlooking the beach in the summer. It worked quite well. While Mr Grimble whiled away his time in the chair, Mrs Grimble danced around him, saying

'You never do anything Grimble! Paint the walls! Mend the ladder! Do the curtain rail!' And the more he did not do it, the more she tired herself out. But each time this happened, oh – the noise that would come through the walls into Egg Cottage! There was her high twittering and his low rumbling voice and Eglin, who enjoyed sitting and thinking, could not hear himself think.

On the other side of Egg Cottage were the Ubbles with an unaccountable number of children, though Eglin thought that there might be five when his teapot jumped off its mat five times in a row as they slammed their front door one by one. It was also when the Ubbles were in their house, that Eglin could not hear himself think. He liked to sing too, and he could not hear his own songs. All this meant that when Eglin did have a chance to think, he thought, however much he loved Egg Cottage, that he would like even more to buy the cottage for sale up the hillside.



It was a cottage on its own with no neighbours, but with a pretty flower bed and a pear tree partly shading a small green lawn with a white fence all the way round. But Eglin did not have the money for it.

Eglin loved to walk. Every day he put on his rainproof, sunproof, and windproof red hat and set out. He would pass the Ubbles' house and then go down past the grocery shop, the church hall and the school, and then turn down the High Street to the sea-front. On the beach, he would, throw bread for the gulls and watch the crabs sidle sidle round in the weed of the rock-pools.

The day in question was a wet and blustery autumn day. Clouds raced, the sea crashed, and spray blew in, stinging the eyes. Eglin was there as usual, glad of the wind and wave sounds that blotted out a particularly noisy morning at Egg Cottage. He had finished his time with the crabs and was feeding the gulls – when one bird stood there for longer than the others, looking at him. The gull cocked his head on one side and winked. Then Eglin thought he heard the gull speak – unless he was just hearing the wind and the waves. It came like a song in his head:

Poor poor Eglin wears a frown
In the midst of all that sound -
But there's a treasure to be found
In the midst of all that sound,
Eglin - tell your neighbours, Eglin.
Tell them...tell them...
tell them...

The bird seemed to be laughing, then it flapped its wings, circled around Eglin, and, catching a current of air swooped away. Eglin pushed his hat up further on his forehead. Songs did come to him, but not like that one. He did not know if the song had come from the bird or from his own head so he thought it and his thoughts told him to go and do what the song said and tell the Grimble and Ubbles.

Mrs Grimble opened her front door, a door as wide as Eglin's was tall. Eglin told her the story.

'Treasure, oh ...oh yes....' She flashed her bright little eyes and rubbed her hands quickly and said 'Ah yes' several times, as Grimble came to the door yawning.

'Ah well you may as well leave it to us, Eglin, there's a good chap.... I shall go and sit down to think about it'. The door was closed firmly. A deep rumble and high twittering sounds were evident even before Eglin reached the gate to the Ubbles house.



The Ubbles' front door was as broken down and faded as Eglin's was newly painted and fresh. At the second knock, the door shuddered, flew open and an unaccountable assortment of bodies nearly fell on top of Eglin. The children got up and a little boy with dirty cheeks said

'Hlo Mister' and 'What d'yer want?' all in the same breath. When Eglin explained and repeated gull's words, the little boy jumped about excitedly and all the others jumped about and suddenly they all disappeared into the house and the door slammed as fast as it had burst open. The sound of footsteps and voices rose.... and rose.

Eglin went home. He sat in his rocking chair, but he could not hear himself think, though ideas of treasure and the peace at the cottage on the hillside were somewhere in his head. He made himself a cup of tea, but the kettle nearly rattled off the stove and the cup nearly jumped out of its saucer. There was so much noise that Eglin had to go for another walk.

He passed the Ubbles' house. Through the window, he saw CD's and teddy bears flying across the room. The television was on its side and something was in pieces on the table. An Ubble child was prodding at the piano with a screwdriver. Eglin hurried on, wondering where Mr and Mrs Ubble were.

As Eglin reached home from his walk, feeling a little refreshed, he was met by a loud shriek and a louder twittering and Mrs Grimble shot out of her front door, running up the street, her skirt tucked up. She was yelling 'We've got it, we've got it....', as she went. Eglin turned to watch her. She ran into the entrance to the park where the Appledown bandstand stood.

'The middle of the sound', thought Eglin, 'Clever – maybe she has got it'. But a little later, the Grimble front door slammed and a voice rumbled, 'I told you so' and then the rumble continued and the twittering started up and Eglin's china dog began to dance on its shelf and the coat-hangers clattered on their rail. Then the Grandfather clock in his hall started to chime at every sound and Eglin decided to go to bed and get under the duvet –

'But how can I sleep in the midst of all this noise', he thought. He had a funny feeling as he thought this so he said it aloud and again, slightly differently – 'How can I get to sleep in the middle of all this sound.....'. A smile came to his face. 'Ah ha!' he said, 'Ah ha, maybe I understand now. We shall see...'.

Eglin climbed the stairs, wondering what would happen next.



What did happen next, amid all the other noise, was a rattling from Eglin's bedroom and then a clonk and then the sound of his bedsprings springing. He recognised the sound of the clonk as the opening of the hatchway into the attic in his tall and narrow roof, which he had only opened once years ago, and shut again quickly as ten spiders made their way towards him.

When Eglin reached the top of the stairs and went into his bedroom, there on the bed, still bouncing on the flowery quilt, was a brown wooden box that had burst open. On the box were the words 'Simpson, Egg Cottage, 1850'. From the box spilled strange coins and old jewelry. Eglin was so astonished that the sound all around him faded – and a picture of the little cottage on the hillside grew in his mind.

'If this is mine, I can buy that little cottage', he thought.

In four weeks time, the treasure box that had belonged to the Simpsons, who had lived at Egg Cottage so many years before, was on a pretty round table. The box was cleaned, polished and it overflowed with fruit – black grapes, red apples, yellow bananas, and green pears. Eglin sat outside on the lawn under the shade of the pear tree, listening to the song of a bird. On the fence sat a curious gull. He seemed to cock his head and laugh, before swooping off in the breeze.

Jenny Moon



The Buried Moon

This story is set in a low lying area fen area in Lincolnshire, called the Lincolnshire Cars. It is a traditional story that may date back to times of Moon worship. It is a useful story for Halloween!

The Lincolnshire Cars was an area of bog, of marsh, stagnant ditch and fen with the odd scraggy bush. There were small villages dotted around and causeways, known only to the locals who crossed between the villages. Then, and who knows, maybe now too, it was a place of evil. Things would emerge by night and roam on the bogs, bent on devilish deeds. But this happened only on dark nights when there was no light from the Moon. There would be boglins crawling through the goo of the smelly and bubbling mud. Dead folks would rise up, stare out and sink back. Witches zipped through the air above them, with cats on their sticks that would flash fiery eyes here and there. Slimy hands would reach from the quaking bog grass, beckoning and grasping and drawing things down into the slime with them and there were will 'o the wykes with their tiny lit lanterns carried on sticks. And all the time there was a rising and falling moan and sighing, and sometimes things cried out like the middle of your worst dream.

The Moon knew that evil went on when she was not shining her beautiful light on the Cars. It upset her to sense these happenings when her back was turned and one day she decided to go and see for herself. She waited until the end of the month and then slipped on her black cloak and pulled the hood over her shining face and came down to the Cars. All that could be seen of her in the darkness was a slip of white foot feet as she tripped lightly over the bogs, hardly touching the ground. For the evil beings, this was the greatest opportunity ever – for the Moon with her light was their greatest enemy. And they were all there that night, the slimy hands grasping at her, the witches whisking round her head, with the cats casting their eyes of fire at her and the dead folks rising from the bog to stare with tongues lolling out of open mouths. The shrieking and moaning was terrible that night.

All was well for the Moon at first but suddenly her gown caught on a scraggy bush and she stumbled. She struggled to stand, but slimy hands had her in their grip and in seconds the other things were there, pulling her down. Then, in amongst all the commotion there was another sound – the clear call of a human in distress somewhere nearby. She struggled harder and her hood briefly flopped back, allowing her full light to shine out over the



Cars. The cry was from a villager who had lost his way in the Cars earlier in the day. For a moment the dreadful things receded into the mud and the light enabled him to find the causeway and to reach safety.

However the Moon was still trapped, still caught on the bush and in her struggle, her hood fell back. Darkness returned and the dreadful things were back, now plotting and planning how they would bury the Moon for ever as she grew tired and weak. The Things fought over their ideas – so much that the first signs of dawn streaked the darkness. They panicked and, pushed a large oblong stone down on the Moon, burying her in the bog. Two will o' the wykes stood guard with their lanterns. Dawn came and the Things pulled back into the slime.

For a few nights the villagers did not notice the absence of the new Moon but time went on and the continuing darkness bothered them and worse, the Things from the bog became more bold. At nights there were noises round the cottages, taps on the doors, and hands appearing at windows. The sighing, moaning and shrieking grew and in their dread the villagers kept their fires alight all night, afraid to let the darkness into their cottages, afraid that it would be followed by the Things. After a while, a band of men went to see the Wise Woman who lived at the Old Mill to ask what they should do. She looked in mirror, stirred the brewpot and thumbed through the pages of her great book and said that at present she could not tell them what had happened to the Moon. She advised them to put straw, a pile of salt and a button on the sills of their doors to keep the dreadful Things at bay – and to return to her if they heard any news. They did this but it helped but little.

People gathered in groups and shared their fears and it happened that one night in the tavern a group of men were talking and they were overheard by a visitor from a village the other side of the Cars. He cried out

'Hey, I think I know where the Moon is'. He told them how he had been lost on the Cars, terrified that he would die, when suddenly there had been a few moments of clear light, enough for him to escape.

The group of men went back to the Wise Woman and this time she came back from her mirror and told them that they should do what they feared most of all, set out onto the bog in the darkness. They were to place a stone in their mouths and without speaking, seek a coffin, a cross and a candle. They set out, shaking with utter terror. They walked for a while, close together to avoid the grasping hands, the witches and the crawling boglins – and they



came to what looked like a coffin half in and half out of water. Above it, on a scraggy bush, a fragment of cloth was stretched like a cross, and nearby was the lantern of a will o' the wyke. One of the men had a stave, and they used it to lever up the large stone. It rose slowly and quite suddenly fell aside. For a moment, lying in the muddy water at their feet, there was the beautiful face of the Moon, shining up in glory and then she was back, up in the sky and shining down on them. There was a great howling – a shrieking and moaning and crying like you have never heard before as the Things shrunk back into the bog.

Since then the Moon has shone especially brightly over the fens in gratitude for the manner in which the men of the Cars rescued her.

Traditional story rewritten by Jenny Moon



The Pickpocket's Story

A man was wandering in a busy city street. He looked lazy and idle but if you were to watch him more closely, you would see that he was far from idle. He was watching people, and when they stopped to look in shop windows, he would come in close behind them and you might also see some quick movements of his hands, something slipped into his pocket and then later casually transferred to a battered shopping bag in his other hand, or to his back pocket. Having picked the pocket of one tourist, he would be on the look-out for another – with the idle look about him again. Peter the Picker – as the others knew him, was actually undoubtedly successful and a good looking guy – but truth to tell, he was a bit lonely. Women in whom he was interested wanted to know about how he could be so wealthy when he did not seem to do any kind of job.

One day he was doing the side street where people queue under tall trees, to go into a museum – it was not his usual territory. He was standing in the queue with his hand easing up a fat wallet in the back pocket of a substantial bottom when he felt something brush his backside. He whisked his hand round to his own back pocket and his own wallet was gone. A woman was walking briskly away from the queue, tucking something away into a handbag. He ran after her and looking her closely in the eye, he said.

'I think we are at the same game aren't we? You've got my wallet in your bag'. She hesitated and then with a sly smile, opened her bag and handed him his wallet. There was an urgent pause and then they both burst into laughter.

The chatted for a bit about which streets they worked and the prize spots and other pick pocketing matters and went for a coffee. Well to cut a long story short, they liked each other; they met a few times and then decided to work together. They were a formidable team and the streets of that city were unsafe places for those with fat wallets or open handbags. And from being working partners, the relationship developed and they became lovers and as life happens, they decided to have a baby.

The baby was born, a beautiful boy with blond hair and chubby limbs and their friends teasingly called him Top Pocket Junior - or TPJ for short. However there was one unfortunate problem with TPJ. He was born with one of his arms crooked – his elbow was permanently bent. Do what the parents could, they were unable to release the arm. Being fairly wealthy, they went to private



specialists and consultants but none of these visits seemed to change the position of the arm – it looked as if TPJ he would grow up with the crooked arm. Well this was the situation until one day they were at a popular seaside, wheeling the baby along the seafront in his grand pushchair. In amongst the stalls and other slot machines and the sellers of candy floss, they passed a hypnotist's booth. The woman pickpocket said

'We have failed with everything else, let's see what hypnosis can do, so they wheeled the baby inside. There was a woman with long coiled black hair and a sparkling gown, seated in an ornate chair. They explained the problem and the woman nodded slowly.

'Yes, my Dears, my charts said you'd be in today', she said. 'Be seated'. Then she turned to the baby, spoke a few words and lifted from a stand a sparkling crystal pendulum and dangled it above the baby's head. It started to spin slowly and she talked in a low voice. For a while nothing happened, and then the crooked arm very slow rose towards the dangling crystal and started to straighten out. Suddenly something fell and clattered gently on the floor. It was something that had been clasped in the crook of the baby's arm and it sparkled like a diamond – indeed, it was diamond that was set in gold. It was the midwife's engagement ring.

Rewritten by Jenny Moon



How Peace of Mind was Found

Long ago, there was little village called Carik – a cluster of thatched stone huts by the side of a lake with blue hills rising beyond. The villagers came and went, growing their food, sewing and mending, making their tools and fishing on the lake. Children played happily in the shallows of the clear water and every day there were bright coloured stalls where traders sold their wares. Some of the traders were local, and some came from the villages in the hills.

Every so often, after the fishermen had unloaded their fish, there was a Gathering of the villagers and their Elders. Such things as the progress of the crops and the catches of fish and how to deal with naughty children were discussed. The Gatherings were usually harmonious. Sometimes there was singing - it was largely a happy village. However, in the late days of one particularly stormy summer, there were problems with the harvest and this seemed to lead to disputes among the traders. At the same time the fishermen found that their old boats were beginning to leak. The disputes and leaks could be repaired, but there was unease too. The mood of the Gathering was ill tempered and towards its end, one man stood up to address the Chief Elder:

'Mostly things are good in our village. The sun shines and we go about our days happily, but, lately we are troubled. We argue and grumble. How can we find our peace of mind again?'

There was silence - then the Elder stood:

'You are right, Tom, we are troubled. Our peace of mind is lost. We must consider how to find it again'.

Within the week, word went round that a delegation was to set out in search of peace of mind in the Great City beyond the hills. The Great City was a place of spires and turrets, gleaming marble and clever people. There, some peace of mind surely could be purchased and brought back for the village, and within the day a small group of villagers was assembled with donkeys to carry food and tents for the long journey. They carried the money that had been collected for the purchase of the peace of mind.

The group set out - at first along the lake side and then up the steep paths towards the pass over the hills. They traveled by day and camped and shared stories around the fire at night. After several days, they could see, sparkling in the far distance, the spires and turrets of the Great City and another day took them to the city walls and the bridge over a moat. They set up camp for



the night and the next day entered the city. They had decided to spread out and explore. They were, after all, not too clear what peace of mind might look like. They would have to ask many people before they could find it. One walked in the bazaar, looking at the delight on the faces of the women as they admired the beauties of cloth. Another sought the highest turret – the one nearest to the gods of the blue sky, and another walked among people who relaxed and smoked pipes by the doors of the temple. Another walked among the pillars of the temple itself absorbing the holiness. Soon word got round the city that men from the lakeside village had money to purchase peace of mind and the ears of the schemers and thieves pricked up. It was not long before a dishonest trader caught the arm of one villager.

‘Do I hear you are seeking to purchase peace of mind – because... er...’, he said, stroking his beard. ‘I can help you. By chance, I have some for sale – on special offer’.

The villager was delighted and agreed to meet the man the following day with the money. Over night, the trader found a cheap wooden box, painted it in bright colours and edged it with gilt. He picked up from the ground three pebbles and put them into a leather pouch, tied the pouch and put it into the box.

The excited villagers met the trader the next day and eagerly handed over their money. As the trader gave them the box, he said,

‘There is one thing. You must not look inside the box until you arrive in your village - or the peace of mind within will be disturbed and lost’.

The villagers set off back to their village, singing with joy at their good fortune as they wound their way along the paths. At times, they talked about what might be in the box and how it might give them peace of mind. At times too there were thoughts in their minds that they might just have a little look inside before they reached the village because, after all, they had done all the work in seeking and purchasing the peace of mind. Surely they deserved some for themselves before they reached the village.

They spent the last night, a particularly dark night, by some ruins. During the night, three of them, at different times, silently crept from his mattress, picked up the box, opened it, untied the pouch and picked one of the pebbles for himself. Each thought ‘I will put it back when I have the peace of mind’ and in the dark, each imagined that he was slipping a magic gemstone into his pocket. The last man, of course, had a problem: if he took the pebble, there would be nothing left - but he had an idea. In the dust of the ruins there were many large black beetles scurrying about.



He picked one up and slipped it into the bag and closed up the box.

When the men picked up the box the next day it felt different but they ascribed its different feel to the transforming qualities of the peace of mind within it and they felt even happier that they brought back something of great value.

Later that day, towards dusk, the group arrived at the village to great celebration of their success. The precious box was handed carefully to the Chief Elder who, in his fine silks, carried it ceremoniously on a silver tray to a large hut near to the water's edge. The villagers filed in behind him and, in the half darkness and in reverend silence, the box was opened. Before there was much more than a crack open, the beetle shot out, straight up the dangling sleeves of the Chief Elder. Nobody, not even the Elder, saw what it was that had emerged from the box. Something had come out and disappeared and all that remained in the box was an old leather pouch. Amid consternation, the hut door was shut and people looked high and low for the peace of mind that had so mysteriously disappeared - and they became increasingly upset. In all the commotion, the beetle rapidly made off down the inside of the Chief Elder's silks, to the floor and scuttled to the nearest crack in the flagstones. Of course people saw it, but that was no surprise, there were plenty around.

During that evening there was a great sadness in the village. They had acquired peace of mind, only to lose it before they could make use of it. However, during the night, the Chief Elder was touched with a rare moment of wisdom. As far as anyone knew, the lost peace of mind was still in the hut. The hut would become the Place of Peace. From then on, if a villager felt the need for peace of mind, he or she would go to the big hut and sit for a while in silence and without fail, he or she would emerge, feeling more at ease – more peaceful.

And that is how peace of mind was brought to the village of Carik. They say that in later years the hut was made into a church and people continued to seek peace of mind there – and still do today.

Jenny Moon



The Gifts

Way back in time there was a girl born to a nobleman. She was the pride of her parents, though Eleanor was quite a tomboy. She loved to play with the boys, running in the fields or playing hide and seek in the woods. As Eleanor grew older, she became more and more beautiful and one by one the three brothers, who were her playmates, fell in love with her and when she was getting to the age of marriage it was not one but three proposals that she received. That made her sad because she loved all three brothers equally and did not want to choose just one of them and besides, she was not really ready to settle down. The parents met and earnestly discussed the situation and it was decided that the brothers should go on what we would call a gap year in order that they could grow up a bit and think whether they wanted still to marry Eleanor. While away, each would purchase a gift for her and on the basis of the gifts, she would choose which brother she would marry.

The boys departed from a crossroad some way from their home, and agreed to meet there in exactly two years. One went East, another North and the third went South. Each wandered far and wide, and each grew up into a fine young man, having many adventures on the way. One, in the East, helped to extract genies from discarded lamps. The brother in the North looked after two young children that he found wandering in the forests. Their names were Hansel and Gretel and he spent all his money on them. The other brother in the South helped a boy called Jack cut down an enormous beanstalk down which a sky giant threatened to descend. In one thing the brothers remained the same, however and that was that each remained determined to marry Eleanor on his return.

The time came for the boys to be thinking about their journey back – and the gifts that they would purchase. The first brother, in the East was wandering around a bazaar one day and came across some interesting carpets. They were woven with strange colours and had long silky tassels. He was shuffling through them to choose the best when the trader came up.

'Ah yes', he said, 'you want to purchase a carpet but I must tell you that there is more to these than meets the eye'. He pulled one out. 'Sit on it', he said. The brother duly sat on the carpet on the floor. Then the man muttered a strange word and the brother felt the carpet shift and wobble beneath him and then, with a few slips and slides, it lifted on a gentle current of air, carrying the brother with it.



‘Think where you want to go and it will take you’, he said.

‘Let me down, said the boy, ‘and I will have this straight away, it is a perfect gift for my lady – indeed, now I am sure that I could say she is my ‘wife to be’’.

The second brother in the North decided that since he had so little money left he would purchase a beautiful flower at the market but before he got there, a peddler in the street offered him a healing lemon. It was fragrant and a yellow that reminded him of Eleanor’s hair. Eleanor, he said, is worthy of more than the gifts of the wealthy – which he assumed that his brothers would buy.

The third brother was also thinking for gifts and he mentioned this to Jack, whose gardening prowess had given rise to the beanstalk. Jack told him that he had just the thing and to wait and Jack returned with a mirror. It was ornate with a pretty painted border of red and yellow – but it was not quite the quality of gift that the brother had envisaged. Jack said,

‘I can see that this is not quite what you thought you wanted – but this mirror will not disappoint you. Look into it and think of your second brother’. The third brother looked into the mirror and instead of seeing his own face, there was his brother, in the street, buying a lemon and talking about it as his gift for Eleanor. He thought of his other brother – and there he was walking along with a tassly bit of carpet under his arm.

‘Yes, the mirror will show you the person you think of, wherever that person is’, said Jack. And the brother said immediately that he would have the mirror. With his brothers carrying such poor gifts, he felt optimistic enough to begin to plan his wedding.

The brothers met at the cross roads after exactly two years. They put down their gifts in order to embrace each other warmly then each showed his gift and when it came to the mirror, they decided to try it out by looking for Eleanor in it. To their horror, the mirror showed Eleanor in a bed, with her parents about her. She looked deathly pale and a Priest leant over her giving the last rights and the image was beginning to fade. The brothers were desperate to get back. Within a few seconds all three of them leapt onto the carpet and hung onto each other as it wobbled and finally took off. In very little time they were outside the Manor and rushed in to find Eleanor. The brother with the lemon was ahead of the others, and as soon as he arrived, he pushed the priest aside and bit the lemon so that juice ran and he placed drops of juice on Eleanor’s pale lips. Before the Priest struggled to his feet and gathered up his prayer book and cross, Eleanor’s face was



showing signs of colour and a weak smile broke out on her lips. As the other brothers entered the room, she sat up in her bed.

And you might ask which of the three brothers she married. Well she reasoned like this. But for the mirror, the brothers would not have known she was ill; but for the carpet they would not have reached her in time and but for the lemon she would not have lived. So that was not very helpful. However the brother with the carpet could go anywhere in the world he wanted, offering tours far and wide earning a good living. The second brother had his mirror and surely he would earn great esteem as a soothsayer all over the world. But the brother with the lemon only had a squeezed old bit of lemon – and she said therefore, she would marry him.

Rewritten by Jenny Moon



The Beauty and the Beast

There was a rich Merchant who lived with four daughters - but his wife had died. Three of the daughters spent most of their time pampering themselves and thinking of the rich men that they hoped to marry. The youngest daughter was named Beauty. When the father was not around, the others bullied her into doing their share of the household chores as well as her own.

One day there came a message that the Merchant's ship had come into port laden with silks and rich embroidery, gowns and jewelry from the East. The Merchant made ready to set off for the port, that was further away than usual - and, as usual, the older girls asked their father to bring them back fine gowns and jewels from the cargo before he sold it on. Noticing that Beauty said nothing, he asked her what she wanted and she told him only that she wanted his safe return and - perhaps a simple red rose. He smiled. He so loved the simple grace of this child.

He set off on horseback, full of good hopes, staying in grand inns with sumptuous meals and fine wines, anticipating his greater wealth but things did not go according to plan. As he traveled, pirates raided the port and the shipload of riches was taken off to sea again. The Merchant was now desperate. He had been relying on the money he would earn from the cargo, and now he had to sell his horse in order to have food to eat on the way home and so he set off for home on foot, seeking only the cheapest lodgings.

After some days, late on an evening when he had still not found suitable lodgings, he passed near a great mansion in deep woodland. He knocked at the kitchen door, hoping he would be able to sleep by the kitchen fire and to do an odd job to earn his breakfast. However, his knock pushed the door open - but all was quiet and no-one came. He knocked again and then crept in. The kitchen was dark and there was no fire in the grate. He called out. There was no reply and so he pushed on a further door that opened into a great hall. Still there was no-one - but a fire blazed in a large stone fireplace. Velvet chairs were drawn up the fire and the place was lit by candles that twinkled through a vast and sparkling chandelier. The wood paneled walls were hung with rich tapestry and hangings.

The Merchant walked over to the fire to rub his hands in the heat. Then, so tired, he sat for a moment - but fell fast asleep. He woke to find a meal spread on a low table near him with a place set for one. He called again to no avail, then, desperately hungry, he set about the meal and immediately fell asleep again until the morning.



In the morning the tray had been cleared and the Merchant, now much refreshed, looked everywhere for someone to thank. He went out into the garden where the sun shone on bushes of beautiful roses. 'Beauty wanted a red rose - just one won't hurt', he thought, and he bent to pick one. At once there was a great roar. A terrifying figure – like a cross between man and beast came lolloping and galloping towards him and, gripping the Merchant's arm in a large claw it raged:

'You have taken hospitality and now ungratefully you deign to steal from my garden. You will pay...'

The Merchant was terrified. He had no money. The beast calmed a little, but still holding him it roughly growled.

'What I most want is a girl to look after my house and talk with me – maybe to marry. Send one in two weeks or I will seek you out and you will die. Go!'

The Merchant left, very shaken, but still holding the rose. Since everything else was so wrong for him, dying might not be such a bad choice, but he wanted first to see his daughters and a day or two later, he arrived home. The three older daughters came running up to him but fell back scowling when they saw that he was on foot and had no horse laden with presents. Beauty came running from the kitchen with her arm open wide to hug him. She was delighted with her rose, but quickly she noticed that her father was quiet and eventually she persuaded him to tell her the story. The older daughters hoped that their father would come into wealth again and argued that since the rose was for Beauty, she should go. The Merchant was prepared to die but Beauty would not have that and bravely prepared to depart.

Beauty found the mansion and, like her father, knocked and no-one was there. She entered and found the fire lit and food ready for her so she ate, and like her father, she slept. In the morning she was woken by a gruff, but not unfriendly voice that seemed to come from behind a curtain.

'You have come, brave girl – and you are beautiful as well. I do not want to frighten you so let us talk, but I will remain hidden for now'.

Over days, then months, Beauty settled into the mansion. In the day she tended the garden and walked in the forest, watching the birds and animals, and in the evening, she had long and fascinating conversations with the Beast. Earnestly she asked him to show himself but still he remained hidden until one day, when they had been happily laughing, the curtain shifted and



shyly and slowly the ugly man-beast emerged. Beauty held back her shock and walked towards him and stroked his forehead, and from then on they spent their days together.

Time went on. The Beauty and the Beast lived well and in great happiness and one day the Beast asked Beauty to marry him - but she turned away sadly. She sorely missed her father - he must be very old and she so wanted to see him. The Beast agreed that she could go, for two weeks, but if she was any longer, then, he said, he would die of a broken heart. She agreed and departed the next day.

When she arrived home looking healthy and happy, in fine clothes, the father was overjoyed but the sisters were deeply jealous of her fortune. With so little money they had been unable to find the rich husbands they wanted. They did their best to detain Beauty, lying to her that their father had pined for her, spending his time in bed and that he would die if she left. However, a night after Beauty should have started the return journey, she dreamed that the Beast lay writhing in pain outside on the cold ground - and immediately, she got up and set off. She found him lying under the rose bush from which her father had picked the rose. He was indeed dying and in a weak voice he said that he had starved himself as he could not live without her. She knelt by his side and kissed him and whispered to him that she would marry him for his kindness and gentleness. Before her eyes, the ugliness of the beast dissolved and a fine and handsome prince lay before her. A wicked witch, who had a score to settle with his parents, had cast a spell on him at birth that would only be lifted if a beautiful young girl agreed to marry him.

The wedding was joyous indeed. Beauty's father could not have been happier and he came to live in a cottage near the mansion. It was not long before the sisters met and married men who, like them, valued wealth above all else and they were sometimes happy. Beauty and her prince, however, led the happier lives with simple pleasures.

Traditional story, rewritten by Jenny Moon



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