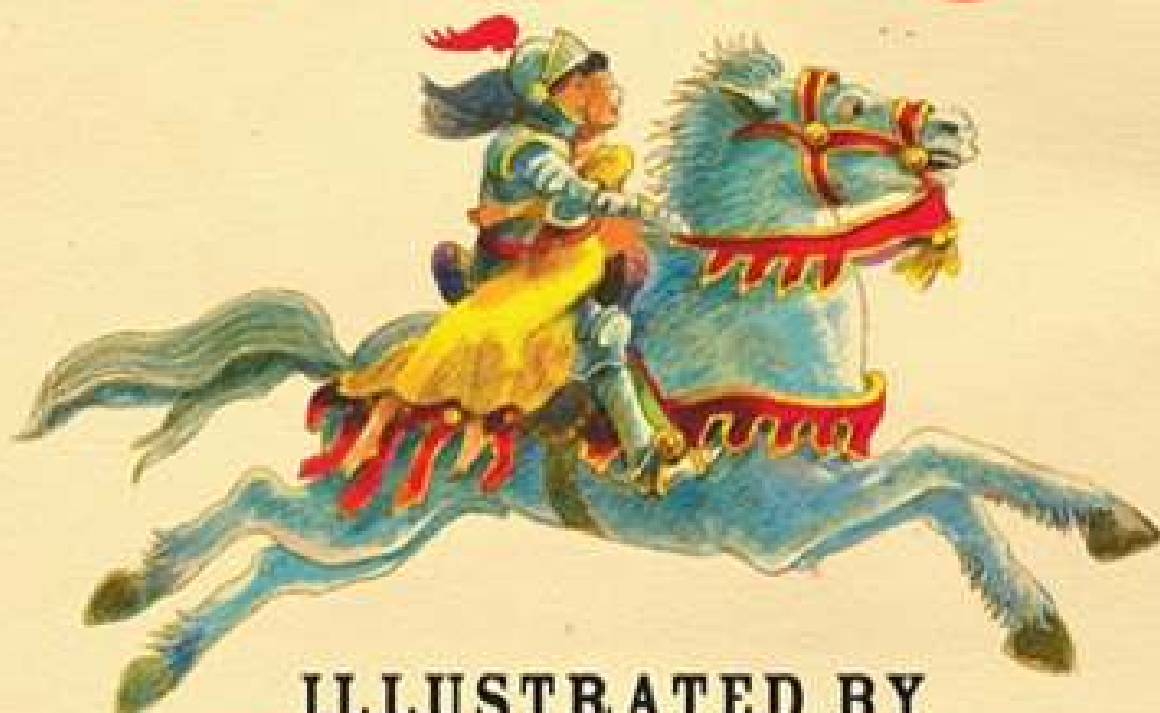


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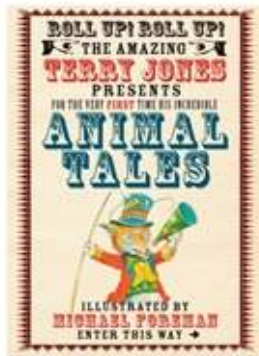


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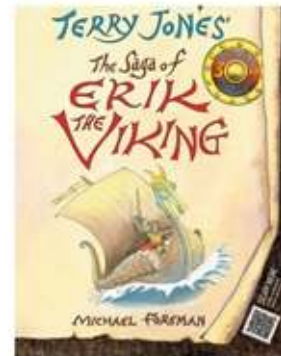


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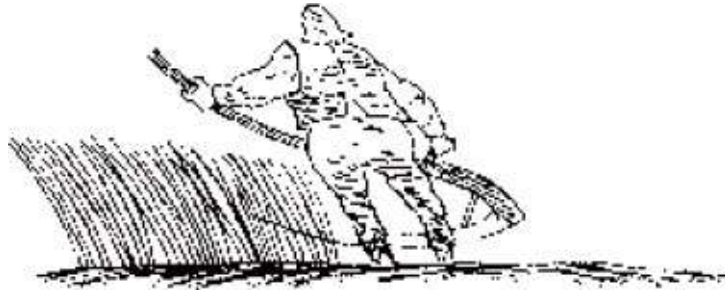
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# THE CORN DOLLY

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A FARMER WAS CUTTING HIS CORN, when he thought he could hear someone crying far away. Well, he kept on cutting the corn, and the crying got louder and louder until he had only one more shock of corn to cut, and it seemed as if the crying were coming right from it. So he peered into the last bit of corn and sure enough, there was a little creature made of corn stalks, sitting sobbing its heart out.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ asked the farmer.

The little creature looked up and said: ‘You don’t care,’ and went on crying.

The farmer was a kindly man, so he said: ‘Tell me what your trouble is, and perhaps there is something I can do.’

‘You farmers don’t care what happens to us corn dollies,’ said the creature.

Now the farmer had never seen a corn dolly before, so he said: ‘What makes you think that?’

The corn dolly looked up and said: ‘We live in the standing corn, we keep it safe and do no harm to anyone, and yet every year you farmers come with your sharp scythes and cut down the corn and leave us poor corn dollies homeless.’

The farmer replied: ‘We have to cut the corn to make the flour to make the bread we eat. And even if we didn’t cut it, the corn would wither away in the autumn and you corn dollies would still be homeless.’

But the corn dolly burst into tears again and said: ‘Just because we’re small and made of straw, you think you can treat us anyhow, and leave us with nowhere to live in the cold winter.’





~~The farmer said: 'I'll find somewhere for you to live.'~~ And he picked up the corn dolly and took to the barn and said: 'Look! You can live here and be snug and warm all through the winter.'

But the corn dolly said: 'You live in a fine house made of stone, but just because us corn dollies are small and made of straw, you don't think we're good enough to live in a proper house.'

The farmer said: 'Not at all,' and he picked up the corn dolly and carried it into his house and sat on the window-sill in the kitchen.

'There,' he said, 'you can live there.'

But the corn dolly scowled and said: 'Just because we're small and made of straw, you think we're not good enough to sit with you and your wife.'

The farmer said: 'Not at all,' and he picked up the corn dolly and carried it to the fireside, and he pulled up a chair and sat the corn dolly down between himself and his wife. But still the corn dolly was not happy.

'What's the matter now?' asked the farmer.

'Just because we're small and made of straw,' said the corn dolly, 'you've sat me on a hard chair while you and your wife sit in soft chairs.'

'Not at all,' said the farmer, and he gave the corn dolly a soft chair. But still the corn dolly was not happy.

'Is there still something the matter?' asked the farmer.

'Yes,' said the corn dolly. 'Just because I'm small and only made of straw, you've sat me over here while you and your wife sit next to the fire and keep nice and warm.'

The farmer said: 'Not at all. You can sit wherever you like,' and he picked the corn dolly up and put it next to the fire. And just then a spark flew out of the fire and landed on the corn dolly. And, because it was only made of straw, it burst into flames, and, because it was only very small, it was all gone before the farmer or his wife could do anything to save it.



# THE SILLY KING

---



**K**ING HERBERT XII HAD RULED WISELY and well for many years. But eventually he grew very old and although his subjects continued to love him dearly, they all had to admit that as he had grown older he had started to do *very* silly things. One day, for example, King Herbert went out of his palace and walked down the street with a dog tied to each leg. Another time he took off all his clothes and swam in the fountain in the principal square, singing selections of popular songs and shouting ‘Radishes!’ at the top of his voice.

Nobody, however, liked to mention how silly their king had become. Even when he hung from the spire of the great cathedral, dressed as a parsnip and throwing Turkish dictionaries at the crowd below, no one had the heart to complain. In private they would shake their heads and say: ‘Poor old Herbert, whatever will he do next?’ But in public everyone pretended that the King was as grave and as wise as he had always been.

Now it so happened that King Herbert had a daughter whom, in a moment of slightly more silliness than usual, he had named Princess Fishy – although everyone called her Bonito. Rather conveniently the Princess had fallen in love with the son of their incredibly rich and powerful neighbour, King Rupert, and one day it was announced that King Rupert intended to pay a state visit to King Herbert to arrange the marriage.

‘Oh dear!’ said the Prime Minister. ‘Whatever shall we do? Last time King Herbert had a visitor, he poured custard over his head and locked himself in the broom cupboard.’

‘If only there was someone who could make him act sensibly,’ said the Lord Chancellor, ‘just when King Rupert’s here at any rate.’

So they put up a notice offering a thousand gold pieces to anyone who could help. And from the length and breadth of the land came doctors offering their services, but it was all no use. One eminent doctor had a lotion which he said King Herbert must rub on his head before going to bed, but King Herbert drank it all on the first night, and was very ill. So a second eminent doctor produced a powder to cure the illness caused by the first doctor, but King Herbert put a match to it, whereupon it exploded and blew his eyebrows off. So a third doctor produced a cream to replace missing eyebrows, but King Herbert put it on his teeth and they all turned bright green overnight.

Not one of the doctors could make King Herbert less silly, and he just got ill from their lotions and potions and creams and powders.

---

Eventually the day of the state visit arrived, and King Herbert was still swinging from the chandeliers in the throne room and hitting people with a haddock.

Everyone was very agitated. The Prime Minister had chewed his nails right down to nothing, and the Lord Chancellor had gnawed through his chain of office, but no one had any idea of what to do. Just then the Princess Fishy stood up and said: 'Since no one else can help, let me try.'

'Don't talk nonsense, Bonito!' said the Prime Minister. 'Fifty of the most eminent doctors in the land have failed to cure the King, what could *you* possibly do?'

'I may not be able to cure the King,' said the Princess, 'but if I could show you how to turn an egg into solid gold, then would you do as I said?'

And the Lord Chancellor said: 'Princess, if you could indeed show us how to turn an egg into solid gold, then we should certainly do as *you* told us.'

'For shame!' said the Princess. 'Then you should do as I say now. I can no more turn an egg into solid gold than you can, but even if I could it wouldn't prove that I could help my father.'

Well, the Lord Chancellor and the Prime Minister looked at each other and, because they had no ideas themselves, and because they had no other offers of help, they agreed to do what the Princess told them.

Shortly afterwards, King Rupert arrived. There were fanfares of trumpets; drums rolled; the people cheered, and they looked for King Rupert's son, but they couldn't see him. King Rupert was dressed in gold and rode a white horse, and on his head he bore the richest crown anyone had ever seen. The Lord Chancellor and the Prime Minister met him at the gates of the town and rode with him down the main street.

Suddenly, just as they were about to enter the palace, an old woman rushed out of the crowd and threw herself in front of King Rupert's horse.

'Oh, King Rupert!' she cried. 'Dreadful news! An army of fifty thousand soldiers is marching through your country!'

King Rupert said: 'Surely that cannot be!' But just then a messenger in King Rupert's own liveries rode up on a horse and cried: 'It's true, your Majesty! It's more like a million of them – I've never seen so many!'

King Rupert went deadly pale and fell off his horse in a faint.

They carried him into the throne room, where King Herbert was standing on his head, balancing a box of kippers with his feet. Eventually, King Rupert regained consciousness, and found his son and the Princess looking down at him.

'I am afraid we are homeless now, my dear,' said King Rupert to the Princess. 'An army of fifty million soldiers has overrun our country. Do you think your father will let us stay here to live?'

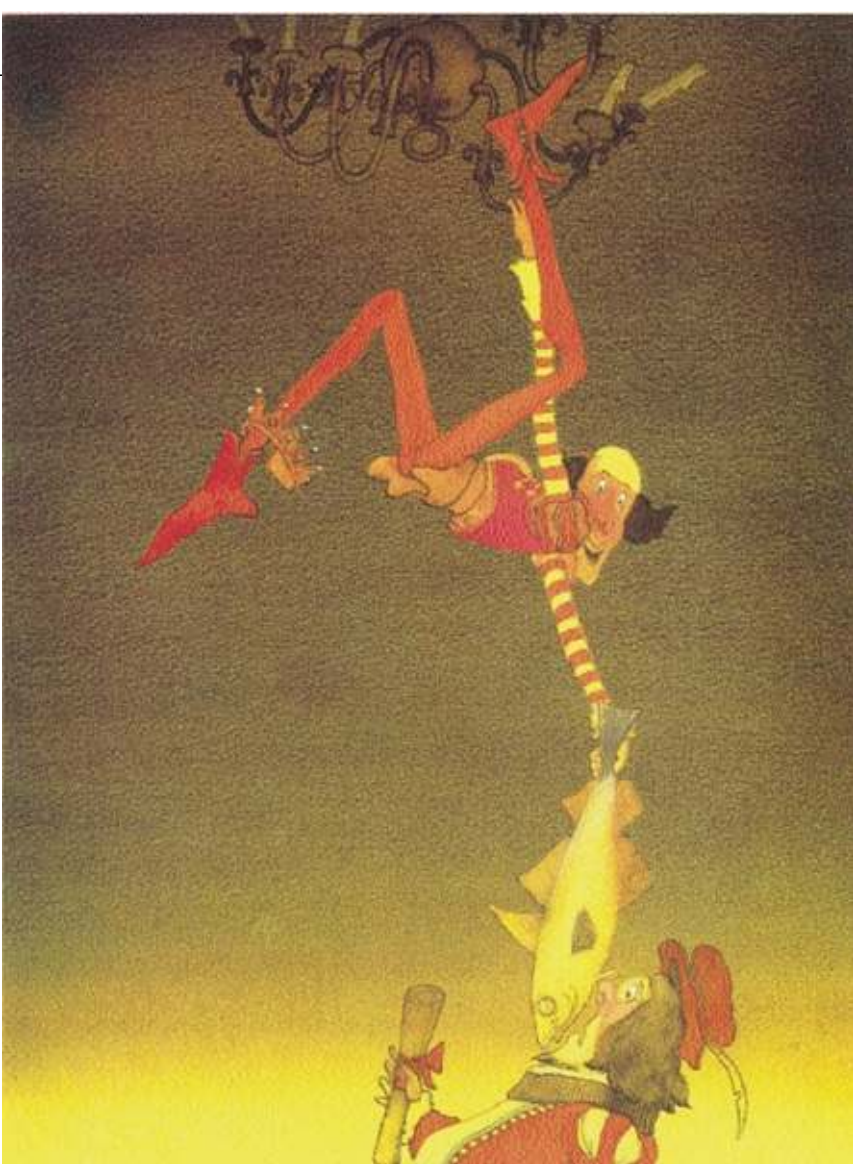
'Of course he will,' said the Princess. 'Only you mustn't mind if he's a bit silly now and again.'

'Of course not,' said King Rupert, 'we're all a bit silly now and again.'

'That's true,' said the Prince. 'For example, the old lady who stopped you outside the palace was none other than the Princess here, but you didn't recognize her.'

‘Indeed I did not,’ said King Rupert.

‘And the messenger was none other than your own son,’ said the Princess, ‘and yet you didn’t even recognize him.’



‘Indeed I did not,’ said King Rupert.

‘Moreover,’ said the Princess, ‘you didn’t even stop to consider how you could defeat that army of million soldiers.’

‘I have no need to consider it,’ said King Rupert. ‘How could I possibly deal with an army of such size?’

‘Well, for a start you could pour a kettle of boiling water over them,’ said the Princess, ‘for they’re only an army of soldier ants.’

Whereupon King Rupert laughed out loud at his own silliness, and agreed that the Princess should marry the Prince without delay, and he didn’t even mind when King Herbert poured lemonade down his trousers and put ice-cream all over his crown.



# THE WONDERFUL CAKE-HORSE

---



A MAN ONCE MADE A CAKE shaped like a horse. That night a shooting star flew over the house and a spark happened to fall on the cake-horse. Well, the cake-horse lay there for a few moments. Then he gave a snort. Then he whinnied, scrambled to his legs, and shook his mane of white icing, and stood there in the moonlight, gazing round at the world. The man, who was asleep in bed, heard the noise and looked out of the window, and saw his cake-horse running around the garden, bucking and snorting, just as if he had been a real wild horse.

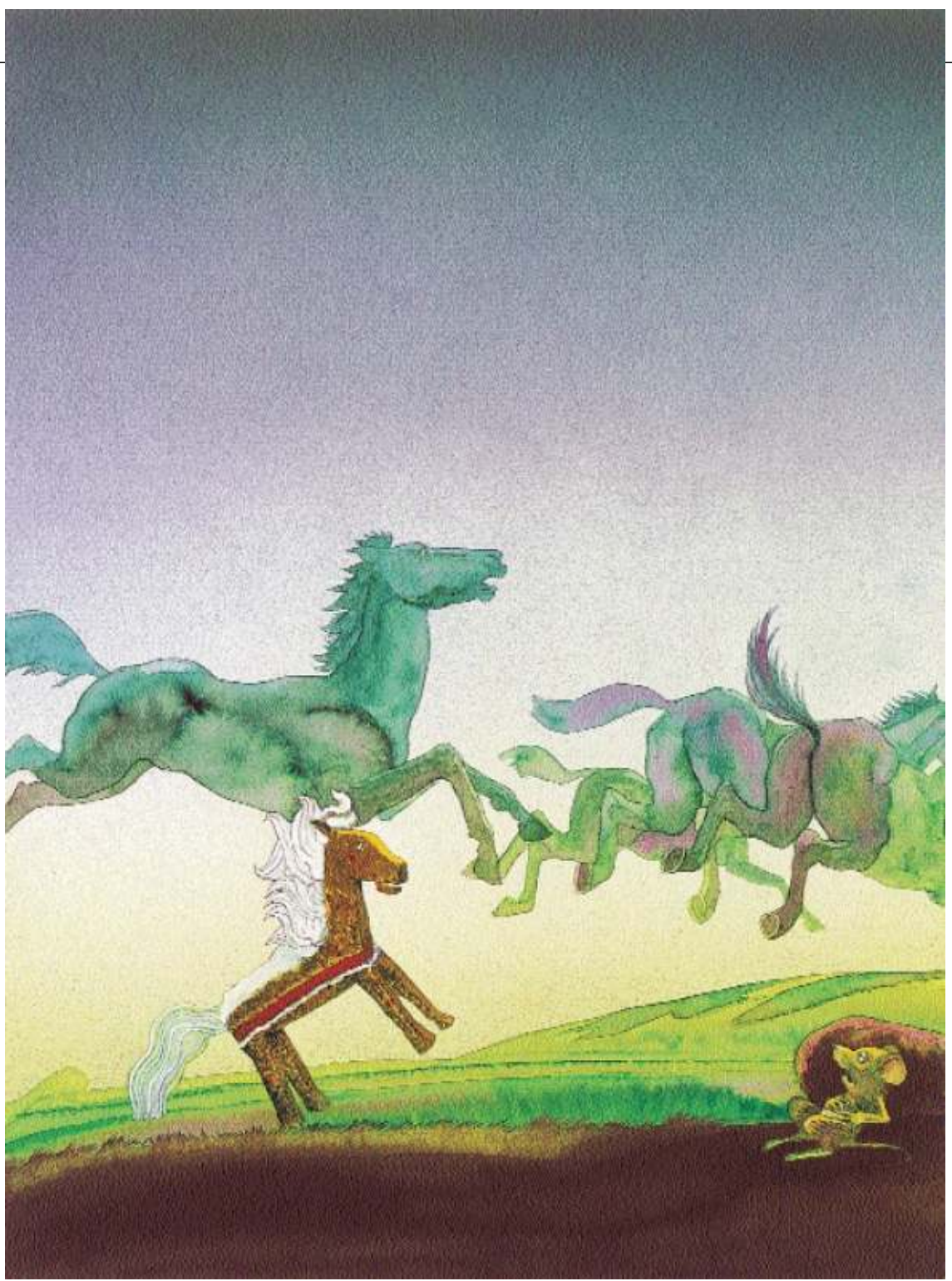
‘Hey! Cake-horse!’ cried the man. ‘What are you doing?’

‘Aren’t I a fine horse!’ cried the cake-horse. ‘You can ride me if you like.’

But the man said: ‘You’ve got no horse-shoes and you’ve got no saddle, and you’re only made of cake!’

The cake-horse snorted and bucked and kicked the air, and galloped across the garden, and leaped clean over the gate, and disappeared into the night.

The next morning, the cake-horse arrived in the nearby town, and went to the blacksmith and said: ‘Blacksmith, make me some good horse-shoes, for my feet are only made of cake.’





But the blacksmith said: 'How will you pay me?'

---

And the cake-horse answered: 'If you make me some horse-shoes, I'll be your friend.'

But the blacksmith shook his head: 'I don't need friends like that!' he said.

So the cake-horse galloped to the saddler, and said: 'Saddler! Make me a saddle of the best leather one that will go with my icing-sugar mane!'

But the saddler said: 'If I make you a saddle, how will you pay me?'

'I'll be your friend,' said the cake-horse.

'I don't need friends like that!' said the saddler and shook his head.

The cake-horse snorted and bucked and kicked his legs in the air and said: 'Why doesn't anyone want to be my friend? I'll go and join the wild horses!' And he galloped out of the town and off to the moors where the wild horses roamed.

But when he saw the other wild horses, they were all so big and wild that he was afraid they would trample him to crumbs without even noticing he was there.

Just then he came upon a mouse who was groaning to himself under a stone.

'What's the matter with you?' asked the cake-horse.

'Oh,' said the mouse, 'I ran away from my home in the town, and came up here where there's nothing to eat, and now I'm dying of hunger and too weak to get back.'

The cake-horse felt very sorry for the mouse, so he said: 'Here you are! You can nibble a bit of me if you like, for I'm made of cake.'

'That's most kind of you,' said the mouse, and he ate a little of the cake-horse's tail, and a little of his icing-sugar mane. 'Now I feel much better.'

Then the cake-horse said: 'If only I had a saddle and some horse-shoes, I could carry you back to the town.'

'I'll make you them,' said the mouse, and he made four little horse-shoes out of acorn-cups, and a saddle out of beetle-shells, and he got up on the cake-horse's back and rode him back to town.

And there they remained the best of friends for the rest of their lives.

# THE FLY-BY-NIGHT

---



A LITTLE GIRL WAS LYING IN BED one night when she heard a tapping on her window. She was rather frightened, but she went to the window and opened it, telling herself that it was probably just the wind. But when she looked out, do you know what she saw? It was a little creature as black as soot with bright yellow eyes, and it was sitting on a cat that appeared to be flying.

‘Hello,’ said the creature, ‘would you like to come flying?’

‘Yes, *please!*’ said the little girl, and she climbed out of the window on to the cat and off they flew.

‘Hang on tight!’ cried the creature.

‘Where are we going?’ asked the little girl.

‘I don’t know!’ called the creature.

‘Who are you?’ asked the little girl.

‘I haven’t got a name,’ said the creature, ‘I’m just a fly-by-night!’ And up they went into the air over the hills and away.

The little girl looked around her at the bright moon, and the stars that seemed to wink at her and chuckle to themselves. Then she looked down at the black world below her, and she was suddenly frightened again, and said: ‘How will we find our way back?’

‘Oh! Don’t worry about *that.*’ cried the fly-by-night. ‘What does it matter?’ And he leant on the cat’s whiskers and down they swooped towards the dark earth.

‘But I must be able to get home!’ cried the little girl. ‘My mother and father will wonder where I am!’

‘Oh! Poop-de-doo!’ cried the fly-by-night, and he pulled back on the cat’s whiskers and up they soared – up and up into the stars again, and all the stars were humming in rhythm:

*Boodle-dum-dee*

*Boodle-dum-da,*

*Isn’t it great,*

*Being a star!*

And all the stars had hands, and they started clapping together in unison.

Then suddenly the Moon opened his mouth and sang in a loud booming voice:

*I’m just the Moon,*

*But that's fine by me*

---

*As long as I hear that*

*Boodle-dum-dee!*

And the cat opened its mouth wide and sang: 'Wheeeeeeee!' and they looped-the-loop and turned circles to the rhythm of the stars.

But the little girl started to cry and said: 'Oh please, I want to go home!'

'Oh no, you don't!' cried the fly-by-night, and took the cat straight up as fast as they could go, and the stars seemed to flash past them like silver darts.

'Please!' cried the little girl. 'Take me back!'

'Spoilsport!' yelled the fly-by-night and he stopped the cat dead, then tipped it over, and down they swooped so fast that they left their stomachs behind them at the top, and landed on a silent hill.

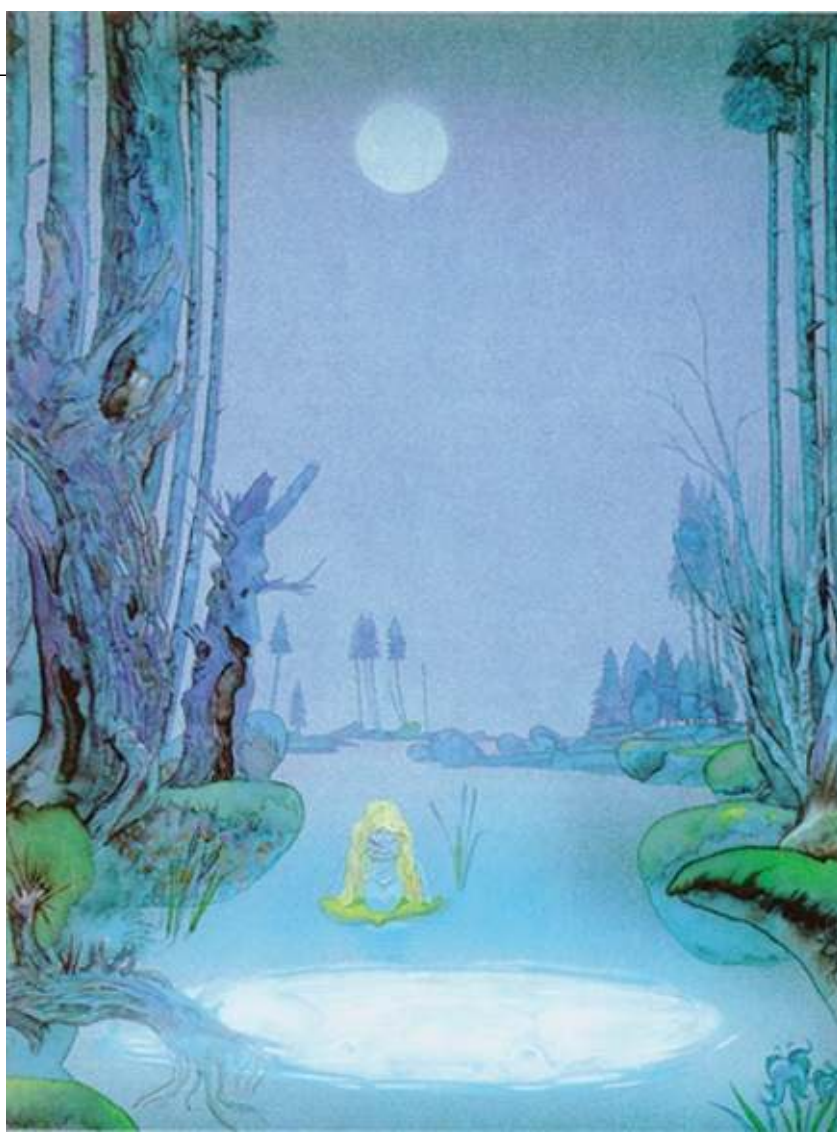
'Here you are!' said the fly-by-night.

'But this isn't my home,' said the little girl, looking around at the dark, lonely countryside.

'Oh! It'll be around somewhere, I expect,' said the fly-by-night.

'But we've come miles and miles from my home!' cried the little girl. But it was too late. The fly-by-night had pulled back on the cat's whiskers and away he soared up into the night sky, and the last the little girl saw of him was a black shape silhouetted against the moon.

The little girl shivered and looked around her, wondering if there were any wild animals about.



‘Which way should I go?’ she wondered.

‘Try the path through the wood,’ said a stone at her feet. So she set off along the path that led through the dark wood.

As soon as she got amongst the trees, the leaves blotted out the light of the moon, branches clutched at her hair, and roots tried to trip up her feet, and she thought she heard the trees snigger, quietly; and they seemed to say to each other: ‘That’ll teach her to go off with a fly-by-night!’

Suddenly she felt a cold hand gripping her neck, but it was just a cobweb strung with dew. And she heard the spider busy itself with repairs, muttering: ‘Tut-tut-tut-tut. She went off with a fly-by-night! Tut-tut-tut-tut.’

As the little girl peered into the wood, she thought she could see eyes watching her and winking at each other and little voices you couldn’t really hear whispered under the broad leaves: ‘What a silly girl – to go off with a fly-by-night! She should have known better! Tut-tut-tut-tut.’

Eventually she felt so miserable and so foolish that she just sat down and cried by a still pond.

‘Now then, what’s the matter?’ said a kindly voice.

The little girl looked up, and then all around her, but she couldn’t see anyone. ‘Who’s that?’ she asked.

‘Look in the pond,’ said the voice, and she looked down and saw the reflection of the moon, smiling up at her out of the pond.

‘Don’t take on so,’ said the moon.

‘But I’ve been so silly,’ said the little girl, ‘and now I’m quite, quite lost and I don’t know how I’ll ever get home.’

‘You’ll get home all right,’ said the moon’s reflection. ‘Hop on a lily-pad and follow me.’

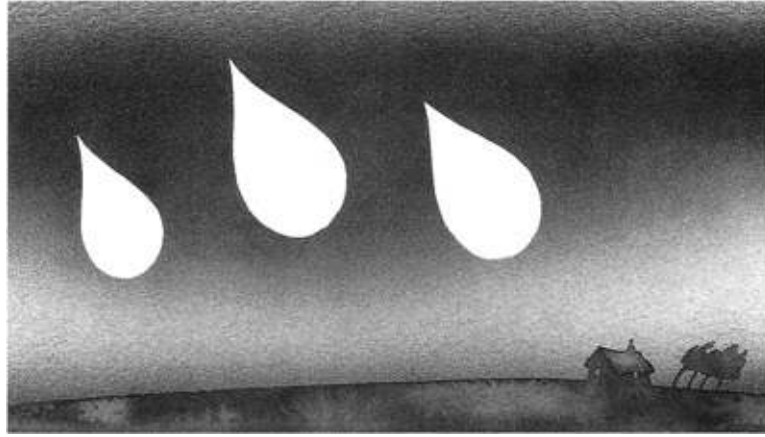
So the little girl stepped cautiously on to a lily-pad, and the moon’s reflection started to move slowly across the pond, and then down a stream, and the little girl paddled the lily-pad after it.

Slowly and silently they slipped through the night forest, and then out into the open fields they followed the stream, until they came to a hill she recognized, and suddenly there was her own house. She ran as fast as she could and climbed in through the window of her own room, and snuggled into her own dear bed.

And the moon smiled in at her through the window, and she fell asleep thinking how silly she had been to go off with the fly-by-night. But, you know, somewhere, deep down inside her, she half-hoped she’d hear another tap on her window one day, and find another fly-by-night offering her a ride on its flying cat. But she never did.

# THREE RAINDROPS

---



A RAINDROP WAS FALLING out of a cloud, and it said to the raindrop next to it: 'I'm the biggest and best raindrop in the whole sky!' 'You are indeed a fine raindrop,' said the second, 'but you are not nearly so beautifully shaped as I am. And in my opinion it's shape that counts, and I am therefore the best raindrop in the whole sky.'

The first raindrop replied: 'Let us settle this matter once and for all.' So they asked a third raindrop to decide between them.

But the third raindrop said: 'What nonsense you're both talking! *You* may be a big raindrop, and you are certainly well-shaped, but, as everybody knows, it's purity that really counts, and I am purer than either of you. I am therefore the best raindrop in the whole sky!'

Well, before either of the other raindrops could reply, they all three hit the ground and became part of a very muddy puddle.

# THE BUTTERFLY WHO SANG

---

A BUTTERFLY WAS ONCE SITTING ON A LEAF looking extremely sad. ‘What’s wrong?’ asked a friend frog. ‘Oh,’ said the butterfly, ‘nobody really appreciates me,’ and she parted her beautiful red and blue wings and shut them again.

‘What d’you mean?’ asked the frog. ‘I’ve seen you flying about and thought to myself: that is one hell of a beautiful butterfly! All my friends think you look great, too! You’re a real stunner!’

‘Oh *that*,’ replied the butterfly, and she opened her wings again. ‘Who cares about looks? It’s my singing that nobody appreciates.’

‘I’ve never heard your singing; but if it’s anywhere near as good as your *looks*, you’ve got it made,’ said the frog.

‘That’s the trouble,’ replied the butterfly, ‘people say they can’t hear my singing. I suppose it’s so refined and so high that their ears aren’t sensitive enough to pick it up.’

‘But I bet it’s great all the same!’ said the frog.

‘It is,’ said the butterfly. ‘Would you like me to sing for you?’

‘Well ... I don’t suppose my ears are sensitive enough to pick it up, but I’ll give it a try!’ said the frog.

So the butterfly spread her wings, and opened her mouth. The frog gazed in wonder at the butterfly’s beautiful wings, for he’d never been so close to them before.

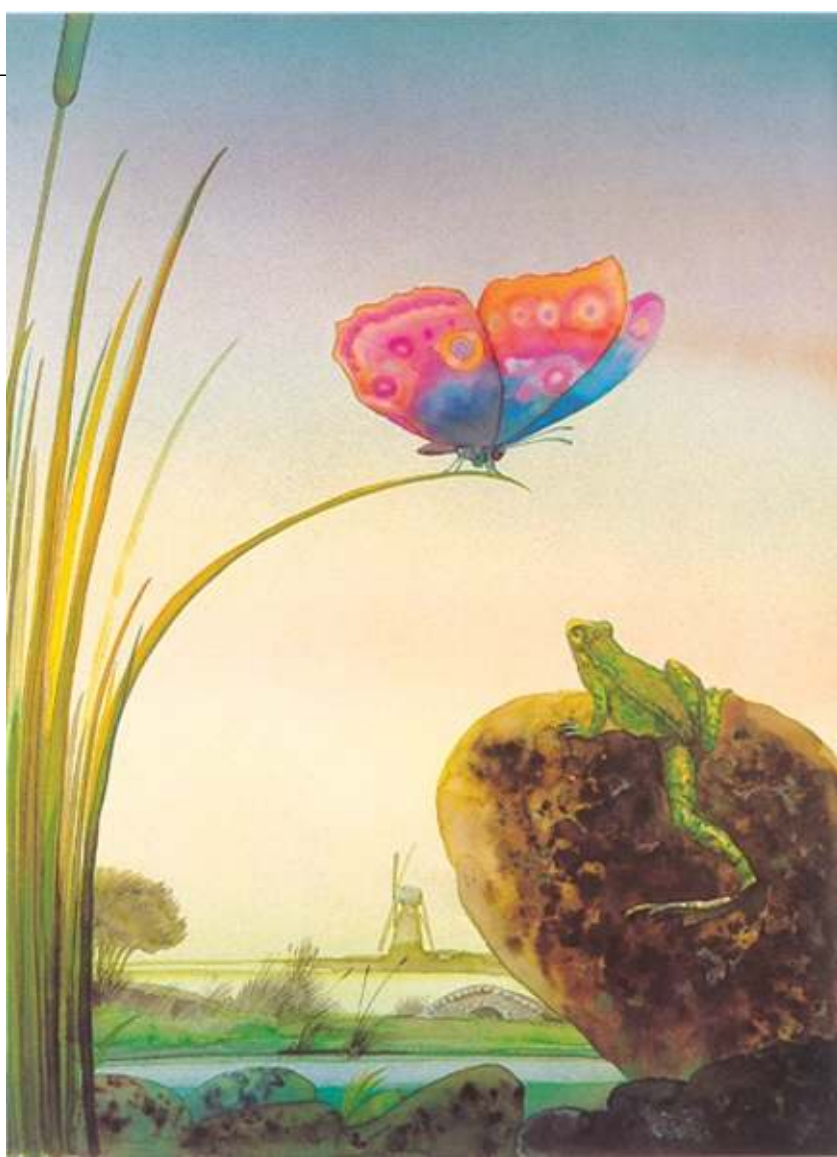
The butterfly sang on and on, and still the frog gazed at her wings, absolutely captivated, even though he could hear nothing whatsoever of her singing.

Eventually, however, the butterfly stopped, and closed up her wings.

‘Beautiful!’ said the frog, thinking about the wings.

‘Thank you,’ said the butterfly, thrilled that at last she had found an appreciative listener.

After that, the frog came every day to listen to the butterfly sing, though all the time he was really feasting his eyes on her beautiful wings. And every day, the butterfly tried harder and harder to impress the frog with her singing, even though he could not hear a single note of it.





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