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The Juniper Tree

A long while ago, perhaps as much as two thousand years, there was a rich man who had a wife of whom he was very fond; but they had no children. Now in the garden before the house where they lived, there stood a juniper tree; and one winter's day as the lady was standing under the juniper tree, paring an apple, she cut her finger, and the drops of blood trickled down upon the snow. "Ah!" said she, sighing deeply and looking down upon the blood, "how happy should I be if I had a little child as white as snow and as red as blood!" And as she was saying this, she grew quite cheerful, and was sure her wish would be fulfilled. And after a little time the snow went away, and soon afterwards the fields began to look green. Next the spring came, and the meadows were dressed with flowers; the trees put forth their green leaves; the young branches shed their blossoms upon the ground; and the little birds sang through the groves. And then came summer, and the sweet-smelling flowers of the juniper tree began to unfold; and the lady's heart leaped within her, and she fell on her knees for joy. But when autumn drew near, the fruit was thick upon the trees. Then the lady plucked the red berries from the juniper tree, and looked sad and sorrowful; and she called her husband to her, and said, "If I die, bury me under the juniper tree." Not long after this a pretty little child was born; it was, as the lady wished, as red as blood, and as white as snow; and as soon as she had looked upon it, her joy overcame her, and she fainted away and died.

Then her husband buried her under the juniper tree, and wept and mourned over her; but after a little while he grew better, and at length dried up his tears, and married another wife.

Time passed on, and he had a daughter born; but the child of his first wife, that was as red as blood, and as white as snow, was a little boy. The mother loved her daughter very much, but hated the little boy, and bethought herself how she might get all her husband's money for her own child; so she used the poor fellow very harshly, and was always pushing him about from one corner of the house to another, and thumping him one while and pinching him another, so that he was for ever in fear of her, and when he came home from school, could never find a place in the house to play in.

Now it happened that once when the mother was going into her store-room, the little girl came up to her, and said, "Mother, may I have an apple?" "Yes, my dear," said she, and gave her a nice rosy apple out of the chest. Now you must know that this chest had a very thick heavy lid, with a great sharp iron lock upon it. "Mother," said the little girl, "pray give me one for my little brother too." Her mother did not much like this; however, she said, "Yes, my child; when he comes from school, he shall have one too." As she was speaking, she looked out of the window and saw the little boy coming; so she took the apple from her daughter, and threw it back into the chest and shut the lid, telling her that she should have it again when her brother came home. When the little boy came to the door, this wicked woman said to him with a kind voice, "Come in, my dear, and I will give you an apple." "How kind you are, mother!" said the little boy; "I should like to have an apple very much." "Well, come with me then," said she. So she took him into the store-room and lifted up the cover of the chest, and said, "There, take one out for yourself"; and then, as the little boy stooped down to reach one of the apples out of the chest, bang! she let the lid fall, so hard that his head fell off amongst the apples. When she found what she had done, she was very much frightened, and did not know how she should get the blame off her shoulders. However, she went into her bedroom, and took a white handkerchief out of a drawer, and then fitted the little boy's head upon his neck, and tied the handkerchief round it, so that no one could see what had happened, and seated him on a stool before the door with the apple in his hand.

Soon afterwards Margery came into the kitchen to her mother, who was standing by the fire, and stirring about some hot water in a pot. "Mother," said Margery, "my brother is sitting before the door with an apple in his hand; I asked him to give it me, but he did not say a word, and looked so pale that I was quite frightened." "Nonsense!" said her mother; "go back again, and if he won't answer you, give him a good box on the ear." Margery went back, and said, "Brother, give me that apple." But he answered not a word; so she gave him a box on the ear; and immediately his head fell off. At this, you may be sure she was sadly frightened, and ran screaming out to her mother, that she had knocked off her brother's head, and cried as if her heart would break. "O Margery!" said her mother, "what have you been doing? However, what is done cannot be undone; so we had better put him out of the way, and say nothing to any one about it."

When the father came home to dinner, he said, "Where is my little boy?" And his wife said nothing, but put a large

dish of black soup upon the table; and Margery wept bitterly all the time, and could not hold up her head. And the father asked after his little boy again. "Oh!" said his wife, "I should think he is gone to his uncle's." "What business could he have to go away without bidding me good-bye?" said his father. "I know he wished very much to go," said the woman; "and begged me to let him stay there some time; he will be well taken care of there." "Ah!" said the father, "I don't like that; he ought not to have gone away without wishing me good-bye." And with that he began to eat; but he seemed still sorrowful about his son, and said, "Margery, what do you cry so for? your brother will come back again, I hope." But Margery by and by slipped out of the room and went to her drawers and took her best silk handkerchief out of them, and tying it round her little brother's bones, carried them out of the house weeping bitterly all the while, and laid them under the juniper tree; and as soon as she had done this, her heart felt lighter, and she left off crying. Then the juniper tree began to move itself backwards and forwards, and to stretch its branches out, one from another, and then bring them together again, just like a person clapping hands for joy; and after this, a kind of cloud came from the tree, and in the middle of the cloud was a burning fire, and out of the fire came a pretty bird, that flew away into the air, singing merrily. And as soon as the bird was gone, the handkerchief and the little boy were gone too, and the tree looked just as it had done before; but Margery felt quite happy and joyful within herself, just as if she had known that her brother had been alive again, and went into the house and ate her dinner.

But the bird flew away, and perched upon the roof of a goldsmith's house, and sang:

"My mother slew her little son;
My father thought me lost and gone:
But pretty Margery pitied me,
And laid me under the juniper tree;
And now I rove so merrily,
As over the hills and dales I fly:
Oh, what a fine bird am I!"

The goldsmith was sitting in his shop finishing a gold chain; and when he heard the bird singing on the house-top, he started up so suddenly that one of his shoes slipped off; however, without stopping to put it on again, he ran out into the street with his apron on, holding his pincers in one hand, and the gold chain in the other. And when he saw the bird sitting on the roof with the sun shining on its bright feathers, he said, "How sweetly you sing, my pretty bird! pray sing that song again." "No," said the bird, "I can't sing twice for nothing; if you will give me that gold chain, I'll try what I can do." "There," said the goldsmith, "take the chain, only pray sing that song again." So the bird flew down, and taking the chain in its right claw, perched a little nearer to the goldsmith, and sang:

"My mother slew her little son;
My father thought me lost and gone:
But pretty Margery pitied me,
And laid me under the juniper tree;
And now I rove so merrily,
As over the hills and dales I fly:
Oh, what a fine bird am I!"

After that the bird flew away to a shoemaker's, and sitting upon the roof of the house, sang the same song as it had done before.

When the shoemaker heard the song, he ran to the door without his coat, and looked up to the top of the house; but he was obliged to hold his hand before his eyes, because the sun shone so brightly. "Bird," said he, "how sweetly you sing!" Then he called into the house, "Wife! wife! come out here, and see what a pretty bird is singing on the top of our house!" And he called out his children and workmen; and they all ran out and stood gazing at the bird, with its beautiful red and green feathers, and the bright golden ring about its neck, and eyes which glittered like the stars. "O bird!" said the shoemaker, "pray sing that song again." "No," said the bird, "I cannot sing twice for nothing; you must give me something if I do." "Wife," said the shoemaker, "run upstairs into the workshop, and bring me down the best pair of new red shoes you can find." So his wife ran and fetched them. "Here, my pretty bird," said the shoemaker, "take these shoes; but pray

sing that song again." The bird came down, and taking the shoes in his left claw, flew up again to the house-top, and sang:

"My mother slew her little son;
My father thought me lost and gone:
But pretty Margery pitied me,
And laid me under the juniper tree;
And now I rove so merrily,
As over the hills and dales I fly:
Oh, what a fine bird am I!"

And when he had done singing, he flew away, holding the shoes in one claw and the chain in the other. And he flew a long, long way off, till at last he came to a mill. The mill was going clipper! clapper! clipper! clapper! and in the mill were twenty millers, who were all hard at work hewing a millstone; and the millers hewed, hick! hack! hick! hack! and the mill went on, clipper! clapper! clipper! clapper!

So the bird perched upon a linden tree close by the mill, and began its song:

"My mother slew her little son;
My father thought me lost and gone:"

here two of the millers left off their work and listened:

"But pretty Margery pitied me,
And laid me under the juniper tree;"

now all the millers but one looked up and left their work;

"And now I rove so merrily,
As over the hills and dales I fly:
Oh, what a fine bird am I!"

Just as the song was ended, the last miller heard it, and started up, and said, "O bird! how sweetly you sing! do let me hear the whole of that song; pray, sing it again!" "No," said the bird, "I cannot sing twice for nothing; give me that millstone, and I'll sing again." "Why," said the man, "the millstone does not belong to me; if it was all mine, you should have it and welcome." "Come," said the other millers, "if he will only sing that song again, he shall have the millstone." Then the bird came down from the tree: and the twenty millers fetched long poles and worked and worked, heave, ho! heave, ho! till at last they raised the millstone on its side; and then the bird put its head through the hole in the middle of it, and flew away to the linden tree, and sang the same song at it had done before.

And when he had done, he spread his wings, and, with the chain in one claw, and the shoes in the other, and the millstone about his neck, he flew away to his father's house.

Now it happened that his father and mother and Margery were sitting together at dinner. His father was saying, "How light and cheerful I am!" But his mother said, "Oh, I am so heavy and so sad, I feel just as if a great storm was coming on." And Margery said nothing, but sat and cried. Just then the bird came flying along, and perched upon the top of the house; "Bless me!" said the father, "how cheerful I am; I feel as if I was about to see an old friend again." "Alas!" said the mother, "I am so sad, and my teeth chatter so, and yet it seems as if my blood was all on fire in my veins!" and she tore open her gown to cool herself. And Margery sat by herself in a corner, with her plate on her lap before her, and wept so bitterly that she cried her plate quite full of tears.

And the bird flew to the top of the juniper tree and sang:

"My mother slew her little son;—"

Then the mother held her ears with her hands, and shut her eyes close, that she might neither see nor hear; but there was a sound in her ears like a frightful storm, and her eyes burned and glared like lightning.

"My father thought me lost and gone:—"

"O wife!" said the father, "what a beautiful bird that is, and how finely he sings; and his feathers glitter in the sun like so many spangles!"

"But pretty Margery pitied me,
And laid me under the juniper tree;—"

At this Margery lifted up her head and sobbed sadly, and her father said, "I must go out, and look at that bird a little nearer." "Oh! don't leave me alone," said his wife; "I feel just as if the house was burning." However, he would go out to look at the bird; and it went on singing:

"But now I rove so merrily,
As over the hills and dales I fly:
Oh, what a fine bird am I!"

As soon as the bird had done singing, he let fall the gold chain upon his father's neck, and it fitted so nicely that he went back into the house and said, "Look here, what a beautiful chain the bird has given me; only see how grand it is!" But his wife was so frightened that she fell all along on the floor, so that her cap flew off, and she lay as if she were dead. And when the bird began singing again, Margery said, "I must go out and see whether the bird has not something to give me." And just as she was going out of the door, the bird let fall the red shoes before her; and when she had put on the shoes, she all at once became quite light and happy, and jumped into the house and said, "I was so heavy and sad when I went out, and now I'm so happy! see what fine shoes the bird has given me!" Then the mother said, "Well, if the world should fall to pieces, I must go out and try whether I shall not be better in the air." And as she was going out, the bird let fall the millstone upon her head and crushed her to pieces.

The father and Margery hearing the noise ran out, and saw nothing but smoke and fire and flame rising up from the place; and when this was passed and gone, there stood the little boy beside them; and he took his father and Margery by the hand, and they went into the house, and ate their dinner together very happily.

[The end of *Grimm's Fairy Tales: The Juniper Tree* by the Brothers Grimm]