

Lady Mary's Child: Grimm Brothers Fairy Tale #3

Once upon a time, there was a woodcutter who lived in the forest. (A “*woodcutter*” is someone whose job is to cut down trees.) The woodcutter had a wife, and together they had one child--a little girl who was 3 years old. But the woodcutter and his wife were so poor that they couldn't feed their child. So they were very sad.

One morning the woodcutter went out to his work as usual. And while he was cutting wood, he suddenly saw a tall and beautiful woman standing before him. And she said, “I am the Lady Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.” (In the Christian religion, “*Lady Mary*” is the mother of Jesus Christ, and is often believed to have special magical powers.) “You are poor and hungry, and don't have enough food to feed your daughter. Give your daughter to me, and I will take her with me, and I will feed her, and love her, and take care of her.”

So the woodcutter did what Lady Mary had said. He brought his daughter to Lady Mary, and Lady Mary took the child up to heaven with her. (“*Heaven*” is a wonderful magical place in the sky where God and the angels live.) In heaven, the child was very happy. She ate sweet cakes, and drank sweet milk, and her clothes were made of gold, and little angels played with her. (“*Angels*” are magical creatures with wings. They live in heaven and help God.)

When the child was 14 years old, Lady Mary came to talk to her one day. “Dear child, I am going to go on a long journey for many days, so you must stay here in heaven without me. While I am gone, I will give you the keys to the thirteen doors of heaven. 12 of these doors you may open, if you want, and see the wonderful things inside them. But the 13th door you must never open. If you open the 13th door, terrible things will happen to you.”

The girl promised to do what Lady Mary had said, and Lady Mary left to go on her journey.

While Lady Mary was gone, the girl began to explore the doors of heaven. Each day, she opened one new door, until she had seen all 12. Behind each door was one of the apostles. (The “*apostles*” were the men who helped Jesus Christ. There were 12 of them in total.) The apostles were each sitting in a great room full of light, and it was very wonderful to see. Each time the girl opened one of the doors, she saw how wonderful the apostles were, and the angels, who always followed the girl around, were also very happy to see such wonderful apostles.

At last, only the 13th door was left. And the girl wanted very badly to see what was inside it. So she said to the angels, “I will not open the door all the way, and I will not go inside it. But I will unlock it and open it a little bit so that I can see through the opening.”

“Oh no,” said the angels. “That would be a sin.” (A “*sin*” is when you do a bad thing.) “Lady Mary has told you not to open the door, so you mustn't open it.”

After this, the girl was quiet. But in her heart, she still really wanted to see what was behind the 13th door. She thought about it, and thought about it, until she was almost crazy with curiosity. (*“Curiosity”* is the feeling of wanting to know about something.)

At last, when the angels had left her, and the girl was all alone, the girl thought, “Now, I am all alone, and I will look into the 13th room. If I do it now, no one will ever know.” So she took the key out of her pocket, and held the key in her hand, and put the key in the lock, and turned the key. And then, the door suddenly sprang open. And behind the 13th door, the girl saw God himself, sitting in fire and light and glory. (*“Glory”* is something of great beauty.)

The girl stood still for a long time, and looked at everything in amazement. Then she decided to stick out her hand and touch the light. She touched the light with her finger, and her finger became golden.

Immediately after this, the girl felt very afraid. She shut the door quickly, and ran away. But the feeling of fear would not leave her. She could not calm down, and her heart kept beating quickly. The gold, too, stayed on her finger, and would not go away, no matter how many times the girl washed her hands.

Not long after that, Lady Mary returned from her journey. Lady Mary came to talk to the girl, and asked to have the keys of heaven back. “Did you open the 13th door?” asked Lady Mary.

“No,” answered the girl.

Then Lady Mary put her hand on the girl’s heart, and felt how fast it was beating. And Lady Mary knew that the girl had disobeyed her. (*“Disobey”* means to not do what someone tells you to do.)

So Mary asked her a second time, “Are you sure that you did not open the 13th door?”

“Yes, I’m sure,” said the girl.

Then, Mary saw the golden finger. So Mary asked a third time, “Are you sure you never opened the 13th door?”

“No, I never opened it,” said the girl.

Then Lady Mary said, “You have disobeyed me, and you have lied to me three times. You have sinned, and people who sin cannot stay in heaven.

Then, the girl fell into a deep sleep. And when she woke up, she was back on Earth. She was in the middle of a wilderness. (A *“wilderness”* is a natural place far away from where people live.) The girl tried to cry out, but she could not. Lady Mary had taken her voice, and the girl could not talk, or make any other sounds with her mouth.

Next, the girl tried to run away, but she could not. She was surrounded on all sides by a thick thornbush, so that she could not escape. (A *“thorn”* is a sharp point that grows on some plants. It hurts if you touch it. A *“thornbush”* is a bush full of thorns.)

The thornbush made a complete circle around the girl. But in the middle of this circle, there was a hollow tree. (If something is “*hollow*” it means that it is empty inside.) The girl crawled into the hollow tree, and it became her new home. She slept in the tree, and she could also stay in the tree when it was windy or rainy. But it was a terrible life. The girl cried a lot when she remembered how happy she had been in heaven, and how the angels used to play with her.

The only food the girl could find to eat were wild berries, and nuts, and roots. (“*Roots*” are the part of a plant that grows under the ground and gets water and food from the soil.)

In the autumn, she gathered a lot of nuts and leaves, and saved them in the tree for the winter. The nuts were her only food during the winter. And she used the leaves to cover herself and keep warm during the cold winter nights.

Year after year, she lived this way in the wilderness, and was unhappy. Her clothes became very old and dirty. And yet, her hair grew very long, and became beautiful.

One day, in the spring, when all the trees were green, the king of the country was hunting in the forest. The king was hunting after a deer, and the deer jumped over the thornbush, which closed off that part of the forest. So the king got off of his horse, and, with his sword, cut a path through the thornbushes. (A “*path*” is a narrow area of ground between the plants that people can walk through in the forest.)

And once the king was inside the thornbushes, he saw the girl. Only by now, she was no longer a girl, but a young woman. Her clothes were dirty, but her hair was very beautiful.

The king was very surprised, and he spoke to her. “Who are you? What are you doing here all alone in the forest?”

But she couldn’t give any answer, because Lady Mary had taken her voice.

The king said, “Will you come back with me to my castle?”

The young woman still could not talk, but she nodded her head to say yes.

So, the king took her in his arms, and carried her to his horse, and rode home with her. And when they got back to the castle, the king had her cleaned up, and he gave her the most beautiful clothes to wear. And after that, the king gave her the best of everything--the best clothes, the best food, the best room, and the best bed.

Even though the young woman could not speak, she was so beautiful, and so charming, that the king fell in love with her. And it was not long before he married her. And she became the queen.

After one year passed, they had a son together. But one night, when the queen was lying alone in bed, Lady Mary came to her, and Lady Mary said, “If you will tell the truth, and admit that you opened up the 13th door, then I will give you back your voice.” (“*Admit*” means to agree that you did something bad.) “But if you lie to me again, and continue in your sin, then I will take your newborn baby away with me.”

Then, Lady Mary allowed the queen to speak. But the queen still would not tell the truth, and she said, "No, I did not open the 13th door."

So Lady Mary took the newborn baby away from the queen, and disappeared with it.

The next morning, everyone looked for the baby, but they could not find it. And when they could not find the baby, people began to whisper to each other that the queen was a baby-eater, and that she had eaten her own baby in the night. The queen heard these whispers, but because her voice was gone, she could not say anything to defend herself. The king heard the whispers as well, but the king loved the queen so much that he would not believe it.

After a year had gone by, the queen had a second son. And in the night, Lady Mary came to her again. "If you admit that you opened the 13th door, I will give you back your voice, and give you your first child back. But if you lie to me again, I will take your new child with me also."

Lady Mary allowed the queen to answer, but the queen said, "No, I did not open the 13th door."

What do you think will happen next?

So Lady Mary took the newborn baby from the queen, and went back to heaven.

When this second child also disappeared, the people began to say very loudly that the queen was a baby-eater. And the king's councillors demanded that the queen be punished. (A "*councillor*" is someone who helps the king to rule.)

But the king loved his queen so much that he refused to believe it. And he told his councillors that he would kill anyone who said that the queen was a baby-eater.

The next year, the queen gave birth to a beautiful little daughter. And once again, Lady Mary came to the queen during the night. "Follow me," Lady Mary said, and she took the queen by the hand, and brought her up to heaven. There, Lady Mary showed the queen her two oldest children, who were playing in heaven with the angels, and who were very happy. The queen was very happy to see that her children were happy. And Lady Mary said to the queen, "Is your heart not softened? Can you please tell me the truth now? Did you open the 13th door? If you tell me the truth, I will give you back your voice, and your two little sons."

But the queen said, "No, I did not open the 13th door."

So, Lady Mary let the queen sink back to Earth, and also took her third child.

The next morning, when everyone discovered that the third child was missing, the people said very loudly, "The queen is a baby-eater. She must be punished."

The king was very sad, but he couldn't protect the queen any longer. The people were too angry.

And so, a trial was held. (A "*trial*" is when someone is asked questions in front of a judge to decide if they have done something bad.) Because the queen still could not speak, she could not defend herself. And so she was sentenced to be burned alive as punishment for eating her babies.

The wood was gathered together, and the queen was tied to a stake in the middle of the woodpile. And as the fire started, the queen's hard heart at last melted, and she felt sorry for her sin. "If only I could tell the truth before I died, and admit my sin," she thought to herself.

And at that moment, her voice came back to her. So she called out to the sky, "Yes, Lady Mary, I did it."

And immediately, rain fell from the sky, and put out the fire. And then a great light shone from the sky, and Lady Mary came down from heaven with the queen's two sons by her side, and the queen's newborn baby in her arms. And Lady Mary spoke kindly to the queen. "Anyone who is sorry for their sin, and admits it, will be forgiven," Lady Mary said. (To "*forgive*" someone is to decide not to be angry with them, or to punish them, after they have done something bad.)

Then Lady Mary gave the queen back her three children. And moreover, Lady Mary also gave the queen back her voice. And moreover, Lady Mary also gave the queen happiness for the rest of her life.

And the queen, and the king, and their three children all lived happily ever after.