

# THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

## DOG DAYS OF SUMMER



Fang Edition



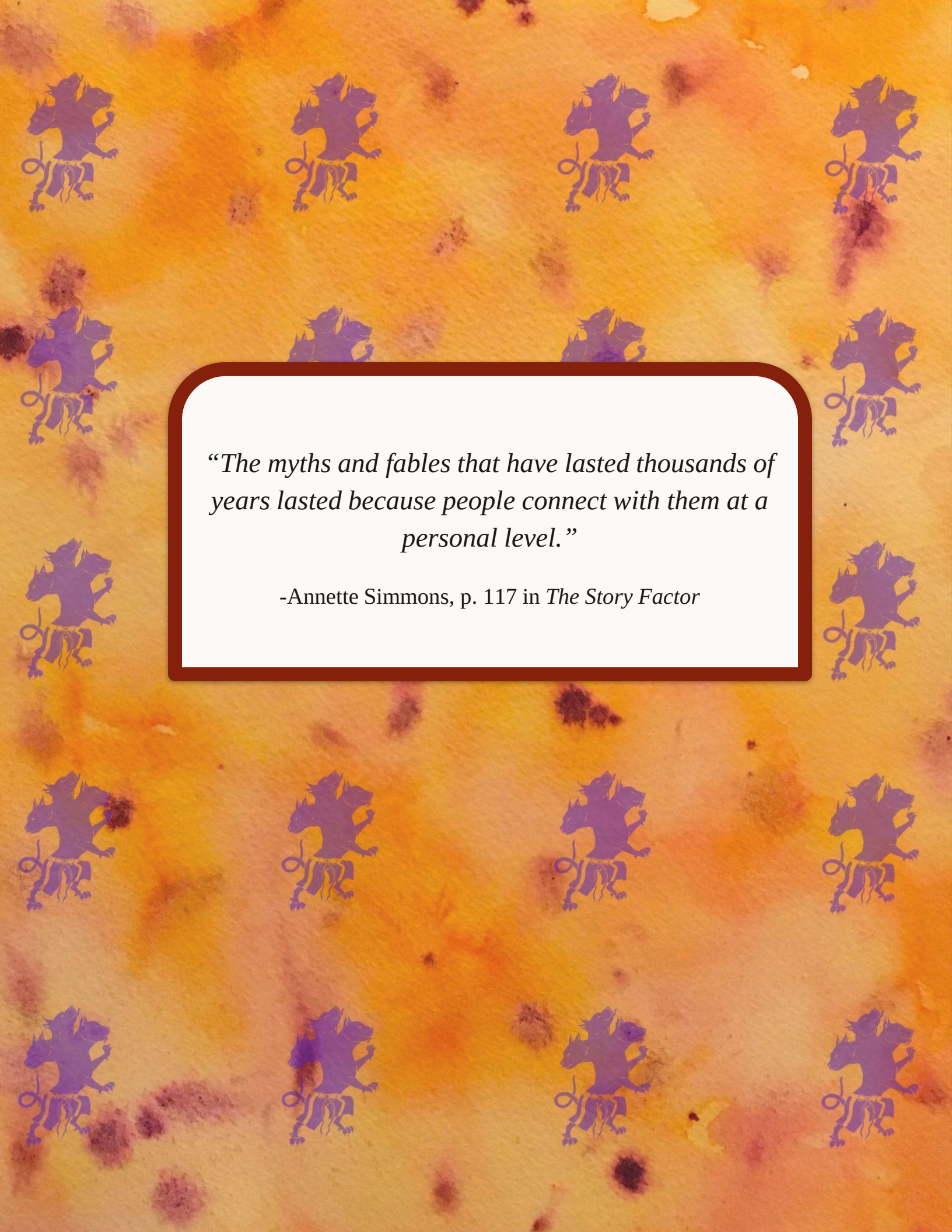


### **About the Cover Artist**

Angela Juhl is a watercolorist, writer, and multi-medium creative. Her writing has appeared in the Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies and in the journal of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research (ISCLR). She has an MA in English Literature, focused on the Gothic, and is studying Library Science and Children's Book Illustration. She and her art haunt Instagram under the username [the\\_autumn\\_gloaming](https://www.instagram.com/the_autumn_gloaming). For more from Angela follow her at [instagram.com/the\\_autumn\\_gloaming](https://www.instagram.com/the_autumn_gloaming)







*“The myths and fables that have lasted thousands of years lasted because people connect with them at a personal level.”*

-Annette Simmons, p. 117 in *The Story Factor*







# THE STORY BEAST

Dog Days of Summer

Vol. 1 ♦ Issue 2

August 2022

*A Fang Edition*



*He Was Reading the News, Unknown Artist, 1877  
From Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes*



**The Story Beast**  
**Vol. 1 ♦ Issue 2 ♦ Dog Days of Summer**  
**August 2022**

**Publisher**

The Story Beast  
[www.storybeast.org](http://www.storybeast.org)

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Captured by Eileen Pan

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# -LETTERS-





A black fountain pen with a silver nib and a dark wooden barrel lies diagonally on a light-colored wooden surface. Next to it is a small, square, dark glass inkwell. In the background, a green plant with small, oval leaves hangs over the top edge of the frame.

Welcome to The Story Beast, Fang Edition!

We will be publishing a thicker and two thinner issues each quarter. We call these editions Fenrir and Fang. Fenrir refers to the monstrous wolf of Norse mythology and Fang is just a cool Beasty word. In the Fenrir editions we will have contributed articles and all columns. In the Fang editions we will have mostly public domain stories with some columns from the editors and leads. We envision Fang Editions to be rich resources for stories and inspiration for your own creative projects. In all editions we will continue to have our Beasts of the month for stories, poems, and artwork.

Thank you for all of your kind words and for the extremely warm reception of our inaugural July Fenrir issue. We are thrilled beyond measure. We strive to surprise and delight you with each new issue. We hope that you will continue to find *The Story Beast* entertaining, enlightening, and inspiring. It is our labor of love and our gift to all of you.

Thank you for entrusting your creative work to us to share with others. This is your e-Publication, so please send in your articles, stories, poems, and artwork. Please let us know how we are doing and send your feedback, comments, and questions -- or just say, "Hi!"

Thank you very much.

*The Spirits of the Beast*  
storybeasteditor@gmail.com





**Dearest Crone:**

You seem to go back and forth in your moods. What helps you regulate your emotions when people cross your paths?

***Curious Beyond Measure***



***Dear Curious Beyond Measure:***

Did you call me moody? Was there a better way to ask your question, hmmm? Already, I don't know if I care if I "regulate" my emotions right now. You also sound familiar. Have I cursed you before?

Never mind. Don't bother answering those questions. Besides, I don't like answering or giving advice more than once a day. I have seen it spaced out a day or even a week before. I tend to see two sisters or two brothers or two step-sisters or two step-brothers.

I'm distracted.

I do love a fine cup of tea. So many flavors in the world. The downside of sitting by the side of the road is that sometimes I cannot tell if I have dried herbs or dust in the mix. Having dirt in tea is not the most pleasant of tastes. That already can get me in a bad mood. It wouldn't matter if it was the kind or the unkind sister at that point. If my tea is off, then I am off! By the way, 641.2 is the Dewey Decimal for Drinks while 641.87 is on Preparing Beverages. Ah, these numbers simply pop up. I do love my books despite the tired legs and bad circulation of blood while sitting by the road. What else can I ponder if not these random numbers while awaiting the next victim...I mean, person, to come along? And why must I linger on tea? We are in the middle of Summer. Surely there are other refreshing drinks out there. I always love the hint of ginger to calm my nerves. I hear people who fly often—whether aided by broomstick or by genetics or natural ability—prefer to take ginger in one form or another to breathe easier. Have you ever had a ginger limeade?



I am so kind, I will even share the recipe: 5-6 Fresh Limes; 1/2 Cup Honey; 1/2 lb Ginger Root; 8 Cups Water.

Do I really need to tell you more than the ingredients? Bah.

You could peel that ginger root. I would start there. A peeler or a knife works. You don't even have to remove all the skin. You will then shred up that ginger. Some people have magical devices called a "food processor" that can transform that ginger to a pulp. Add that ginger to a tea pot. Take 4 cups of boiling water and let it soak or steep for 10 minutes with the ginger. Meanwhile, juice your limes and place in a pitcher and NOT the tea pot. You paying attention? NOT the tea pot. Return to the ginger after steeping. Use a mesh to get rid of any unwanted bits of ginger. Pour the remaining liquid into the pitcher. Add the honey and stir until dissolved. Add your last four cups of water. Chill. Drink cold. I know the tea pot can be confusing, but this is a cool drink. We want a refreshing summertime drink that "regulates" ourselves, right?

Oh, so you were hoping for mental health coping skills? I am a crone, not a therapist. I will not claim such titles. Take it or leave it. I don't care. Bother!

***Yours on the Road -***

***The Crone of All Crones***





# THE STORY BEAST CHALLENGE



SUBMIT YOUR ORIGINAL

-Story

-Poetry

-Art

that follow the monthly issues theme  
for a chance to be the featured

BEAST OF THE MONTH

## 2022 CHALLENGES

October:  
*Spirits*

*Whispering*

November:

*Eternally Grateful*

December:

*Guiding Lights*

Submissions due by the first of the month before.

Submit to [storybeasteditor@gmail.com](mailto:storybeasteditor@gmail.com)



# AUGUST'S BEAST OF STORY

## Dog Days of Summer

### McPhie's Black Dog

by Marilyn McPhie



Long, long ago there was a fine hunter known as McPhie of Colonsay. One day he went out hunting, but night fell swiftly. While making his way home, McPhie saw a light in the distance. Following the light, he happened upon a group of men seated around a fire. One of them, an old man with a long, grey beard, spied McPhie and called out to him, “McPhie, come forward.” Forward he came and saw beside the man a beautiful dog with a litter of pups. “Choose one, McPhie,” said the man. All of the pups were beautiful, but McPhie saw that one was unusual: darkest black and more beautiful than any dog he had ever seen. “I choose that one,” said McPhie. The old man cautioned him, “Choose any but that one.” McPhie insisted that was the one he wanted. Finally, the old man relented. “Take the pup,” he said, “but know now that it will give you but one day’s service.”

McPhie wondered at that, but took the pup. He fed it and cared for it, and soon it grew into a dog that was surpassingly fine. McPhie’s friends and companions, though, had not a good word for the animal. It lay, day after day, curled up in front of the fire and was of no use at all for hunting. “Get rid of that useless hound,” they advised. McPhie said only, “The dog will do me service one day.”

A day came when sixteen of McPhie’s companions arrived from Islay to organize a hunting party on the island of Jura. The island was uninhabited, except for many, many deer. There was on the island a comfortable cave where a hunting party could camp in the evening. The cave was large enough for many hunters, and it had a space cleared for a fire, with a large hole in the roof for smoke to escape.

When the men left McPhie’s house for the hunt, all sixteen men --- and McPhie himself --- called for the dog to accompany them. The dog came as far as the front door of the house, and then lay down and refused to move. “Useless beast,” they said. “You should kill it.” But McPhie said only that the dog would do him service one day. As it turned out, the weather was so fierce, and the winds so strong, that the men could not go to Jura that day to hunt.

The next day was much the same: The men set out, calling for McPhie’s black dog, and again the dog came as far as the door and stopped. The hunters chided McPhie, “Get rid of the dog. Do not feed it any longer.” McPhie insisted once more that the dog would do him a day’s service. The wild weather prevented the hunt again.



The third day, the hunters headed out the door and down to the shore to the boat which would take them to Jura. None of the men had bothered to call for the dog this day. But as they made their way to the boat, one of the men shouted, “Look! If it isn’t McPhie’s black dog.” Sure enough, the dog came running fast, with a fierce and determined look. It jumped into the boat – the first creature in.

Once on Jura, the men settled their packs and provisions in the cave and went hunting. That night they returned to the cave, ate their supper, and lay down to sleep. Each of the sixteen companions sighed, wishing his sweetheart were with him. McPhie, though, warming his legs by the fire, said only that he was content to have his own wife safe and comfortable at home.

Suddenly all grew dark. In the darkness, McPhie saw sixteen shadowy women enter the cave, each going to one of the hunters. One woman approached McPhie. But the black dog came between McPhie and the woman and growled so fiercely that the woman turned and left the cave. McPhie settled down to sleep.

In the night, there arose a terrible disturbance. McPhie opened his eyes, and what should he see, but a hand and arm, larger than that of any human, reaching down from the hole in the roof of the cave. The hand reached out to grab McPhie, but in that instant, the black dog sprang at the arm, fastening its teeth between the elbow and shoulder. The giant creature – whatever it was – cried out. The arm writhed and swung about, attempting to loosen the dog’s grip on its flesh. But the black dog hung on, biting at the arm until it was severed and fell into the cave. The dog ran from the cave, chasing after the creature.

All was quiet in the cave, but McPhie did not sleep the rest of the night.

When morning came, McPhie looked about, and he found his sixteen companions were all dead. The black dog returned to the cave and settled itself at McPhie’s feet. An instant later it was dead, as well.

Now, there was nothing else for McPhie to do, but take the boat back home, and tell the sad story of the fate of his companions. “And what of the black dog?” people asked. McPhie told them of the dog’s service, and he showed them the arm brought back as evidence of the night’s events.

And so it was that the beautiful black dog, previously so maligned, had indeed done a good day’s service for its master. And so it is that we still say, as did McPhie in that day, “Every dog will have his day.”



### **About the Author:**

Storyteller Marilyn McPhie lives in a San Diego, California area called “Little Bluffs” (Penasquitos), and her stories occasionally do include a little bluffing. Her ancestors are from England, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, and Scotland – where legends from the ancient Clan McPhie feature selkies, warriors, and one (in)famous black dog.



# AUGUST'S BEAST OF POETRY

## Dog Days of Summer

### Breaking Free by Sara deBeer

Up North we had lakes and rivers  
but Down South visiting my grandmother  
in her Virginia Beach cottage,  
we'd play tag with lapping ocean waves.  
It was our job to scan the wet sand  
for the miniature clams called "coquinas".  
Each time a wave withdrew,  
the coquinas would frantically attempt  
to escape us. We'd dig ferociously,  
capture buckets of them. Once boiled,  
their broth was rich and satisfying.  
Adults repeated words spoken  
by generations of parents  
as regularly as the surf's rush and retreat:  
"Don't ever turn your back on the ocean."  
"Stand sideways when a wave rushes in  
or it will knock you down."  
Only my great-uncle guided me past the dangers  
I'd been warned of, taught me to dive  
beneath mountainous breakers  
while waiting for a wave with a curl at its crest,  
one perfect for bodysurfing.  
I'd stretch out, tense with excitement,  
as my wave swept me up.  
Together we'd surge toward the shore, but always I'd be  
dropped in the swallow water,  
left standing on my rediscovered feet.  
I'd glance behind me at the incoming surf,  
turn sideways as the next wave rushed past.



#### About the Author:

Sara's great love is telling folktales from world cultures. A listener said, "Sara is a captivating storyteller, sensitive to her audience and their interests. Her extensive repertoire enables her to present programs on a wide variety of themes." Sara is a published poet who also teaches poetry-writing classes.

<https://storydebeer.com/>





# AUGUST'S BEAST OF ART

## Dog Days of Summer



**Wheat is Wheat by Katelyn Yates**  
**Mixed Media and Oil Pastel**



### About the Artist:

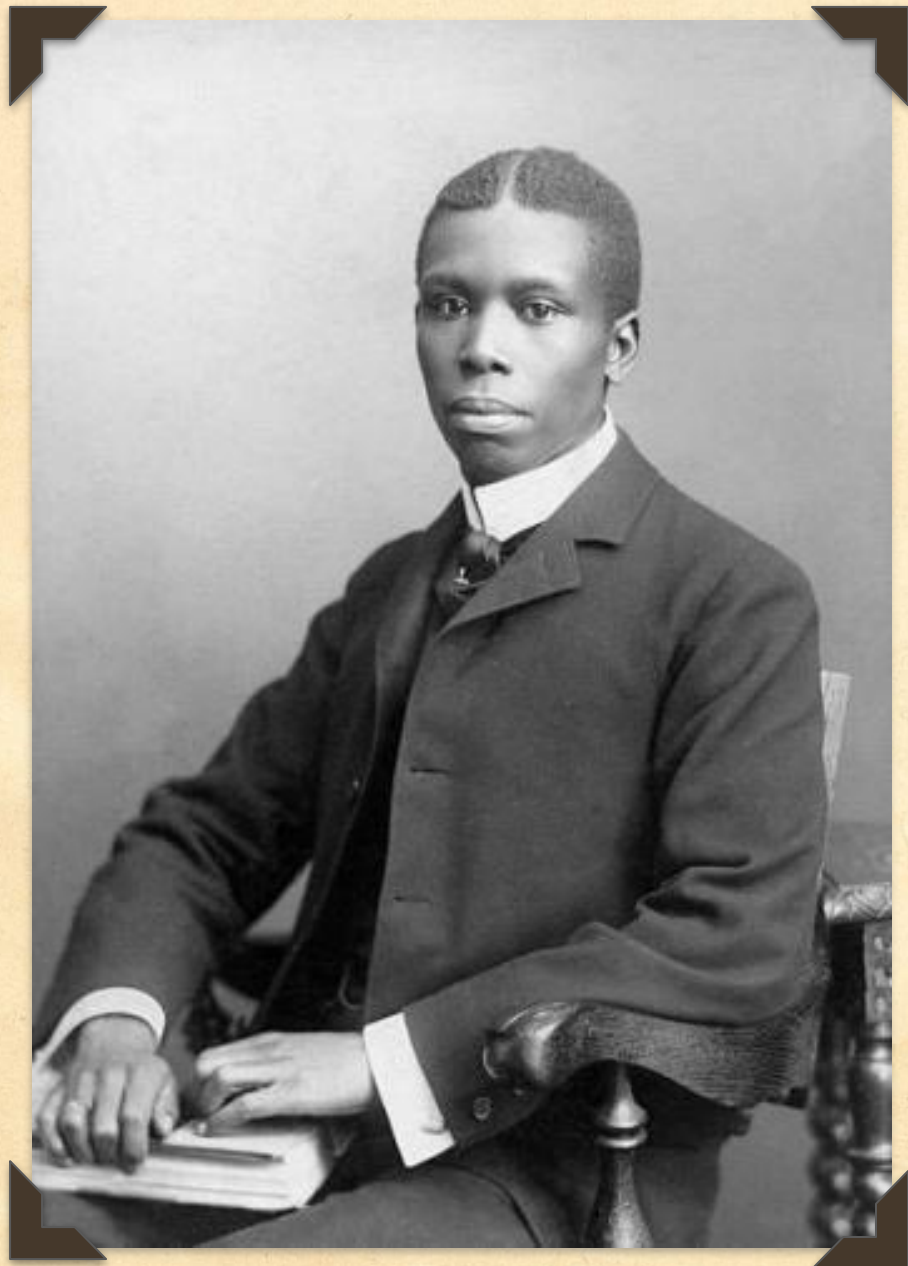
To me, art is a therapeutic hobby. Mixed media collages and self-portraits have helped me gain a better understanding of myself. I also enjoy participating in the Februfairy drawing challenge each year, and drawing characters that I write about in my novels.





# **-LOVE *of* DUNBAR-**

Sharing Paul Laurence Dunbar 1872-1906.  
With Oni Lasana





# LOVE OF DUNBAR

## The Concert

Selected by Oni Lasana

Paul Dunbar was not a country boy, he was raised in Dayton, the "Gem City" in the heart of Ohio's eastern farmlands. His imagination carried him beyond his backyard as he often moves me beyond my cityfied self. His spirited personification in the tradition of Anansi and Aesop resonates throughout his lyrical genius.

The joy of Dunbar is in his dual consciousness of northern dialect poetry and in his, "De Critters Dance" a southern dialect poem among others. The Concert, written in a northern vernacular with its delightful imaginative rhyme and rhythm will easily fit into our dreamy worlds of nature tales. In these dog days of summer, Mother Nature's funky grand country band will call your name immersing you into a lavender bath, right before you step into the square to do a little dance at The Concert like no one's watching.

### Love of Dunbar!

A Literary Discussion & Performance Meetup!

Thursdays on Zoom  
2-4 PM / 7-9 PM EST

Register:

[www.TinyUrl.com/PDunbar](http://www.TinyUrl.com/PDunbar)



Oni Lasana was born in Philadelphia, PA, and is a Cultural Consultant, International Storyteller, Poet, Podcaster, Teaching, and Performing Artist. For 30 years she has been in love with the folktales and poetry of American poet and author Paul Laurence Dunbar. She has presented his works in story theater programs and workshops on three continents, live and virtually. [www.OniLasana.com](http://www.OniLasana.com)

### THE CONCERT by Paul Laurence Dunbar

It was held in God's great temple  
On a happy summer's day.  
There was quite a host to hear it --  
Old and youthful, grave and gay.

Mister Robin was conductor,  
With an oak-twigg in his hand  
Held in readiness to signal  
For the music of his band.

And the band was all attention,  
All alert was everyone.  
Robin bowed and gave the signal  
And the concert had begun.

Master Locust had his 'cello,  
And the cricket played a fife;  
While the bee held up a tuba,  
Blowing it for dearest life.

Then a club of fine musicians --  
Very famous -- called "The Breeze" --  
Charmed the hearts of all their hearers  
With some wondrous symphonies.

#### II

And the "Tree Tops" bowed and nodded  
Their approval in great haste,  
For the symphonies were suited  
To their strictly classic taste.

All the playing was delightful,  
Both in point of time and tone;  
And no instrument was louder  
Than the Wood-Bird's xylophone.

There were vocalists in plenty,  
All the noted ones were there;  
E'en the River came to join them,  
Gladly furnishing its share.

Why the tumult was stupendous  
And was like to shake the place  
When a Blue-Bird warbled treble  
To the water's rolling bass.

Mrs. Katy-Did was present,  
For her alto so well known;  
Also Mr. Bull-Frog, famous  
For his mellow baritone.

#### III

And the tenor of the concert  
Was none other than our friend  
G. Rass Hopper -- why his encores  
Seemed to me, they'd never end.

When the solos all were finished  
And the orchestra was done,  
Then they had the grand finale,  
Which was joined by everyone.

Locust, Bull-Frog, Cricket, Blue-Bird,  
Katy-Did and Bumble Bee,  
Blending all in Nature's chorus  
In delightful harmony.

And the audiences who heard it,  
All are willing to confess  
That they never heard a concert  
Which was such a grand success.

*To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution*





# **-STORY TROVE-**

**A treasure to share!**



## Life's Greatest Happiness



### Storycology Head Editor

**Bowen Lee** divides her time between cities, forests, and the ocean around Monterey, CA. She has been a teacher, a writer, an illustrator, and now, she tells stories, incorporating storytelling into all aspects of teaching. She conducts workshops on storytelling to teach educational content in national and regional education conferences.

<https://storyrex.com>

### A Story for Storycology Adapted from *How to Train Your Puppy*

by The Monks of New Skete

Retold by Bowen Lee

Long ago in China, the Emperor sent messages to all the kingdoms to convene at the Imperial Palace. An Imperial messenger came to the Kingdom of the Golden Valley and delivered the Emperor's message.

"Ah, yes," said the King of the Golden Valley. "Please assure the Emperor that I shall attend."

The messenger was given a rest from his journeys and all was well until it was time for him to leave. "Sire," the young messenger said to the King. "I have a request. The last kingdom I am to deliver the Emperor's message to is the Kingdom of the Dragon Mountain. To get there I must cross the wilderness, and I fear I will lose my way. Could you provide me with an escort?"

"Yes, I can do that," said the King. And he summoned a dog. The dog sat at the king's feet and looked up at him.

"This young man needs an escort to the Kingdom of the Dragon Mountain. You will take him safely to the gate."

The dog went to the door and waited for the messenger.

The messenger was aghast, for in those ancient times, no one had pets. But the King waved him away. "It will be alright," said the King. So the messenger had no choice but to follow the dog.

But the messenger was seething with anger. "What an insult!" he thought. "That King of the Golden Valley is so rude! I represent the Emperor himself! I deserve an envoy, at the least an expert guide, but all I have been given is this lowly animal, this despicable dog!"

But when they went through the desert, many times the dog saved his life. And by the time they got to the mountains and began climbing, the young messenger learned how good a companion the dog could be. The dog never abandoned him. It depended upon him for food and water, and he could tend to the dog's paws when they were cut by rocks or thorns.

By the time they got to the gate of the Kingdom of the Dragon Mountain, the messenger had learned an important lesson. The greatest happiness in this life is sharing your life with another.

**Hear Bowen Lee tell this story on her podcast:**

<https://anchor.fm/bowen-lyam-lee/episodes/Puppy-Training-e1l5htv>



# The Matchmaking Jackal

## A Story for Journeys

Recorded and translated into English by Reverend Lal Behari Day

Once on a time there lived a weaver, whose ancestors were very rich, but whose father had wasted the property which he had inherited in riotous living. He was born in a palace-like house, but he now lived in a miserable hut. He had no one in the world, his parents and all his relatives having died. Hard by the hut was the lair of a jackal. The jackal, remembering the wealth and grandeur of the weaver's forefathers, had compassion on him and one day coming to him, said, "Friend weaver, I see what a wretched life you are leading. I have a good mind to improve your condition. I'll try and marry you to the daughter of the king of this country."

"I, become the king's son-in-law!" replied the weaver. "That will take place only when the sun rises in the west."

"You doubt my power?" rejoined the jackal. "You will see, I'll bring it about."

The next morning the jackal started for the king's city, which was many miles off. On the way he entered a plantation of the Piper betel plant and plucked a large quantity of its leaves. He reached the capital and contrived to get inside the palace. On the premises of the palace was a tank, in which the ladies of the king's household performed their morning and afternoon ablutions. At the entrance of that tank, the jackal laid himself down. The daughter of the king happened to come just at the time to bathe, accompanied by her maids. The princess was not a little struck at seeing the jackal lying down at the entrance. She told her maids to drive the jackal away. The jackal rose as if from sleep and instead of running away, opened his bundle of betel leaves, put some into his mouth, and began chewing them. The princess and her maids were not a little astonished at the sight. They said among themselves, "What an uncommon jackal is this! From what country can he have come? A jackal chewing betel leaves! Why, thousands of men and women of this city cannot indulge in that luxury. He must have come from a wealthy land."





The princess asked the jackal, "Sivalu! (A name for a jackal, not unlike Reynard in Europe.) From what country do you come? It must be a very prosperous country where the jackals chew betel leaves. Do other animals in your country chew betel leaves?"

"Dearest princess," replied the jackal, "I come from a land flowing with milk and honey. Betel leaves are as plentiful in my country as the grass in your fields. All animals in my country—cows, sheep, dogs—chew betel leaves. We want no good thing."

"Happy is the country," said the princess, "where there is such plenty, and thrice happy the king who rules in it!"

"As for our king," said the jackal, "he is the richest king in the world. His palace is like the heaven of Indra. I have seen your palace here; it is a miserable hut compared to the palace of our king."

The princess, whose curiosity was excited to the utmost pitch, hastily went through her bath, and going to the apartments of the queen-mother, told her of the wonderful jackal lying at the entrance of the tank. Her curiosity being excited, the jackal was sent for. When the jackal stood in the presence of the queen, he began munching the betel leaves. "You come," said the queen, "from a very rich country. Is your king married?"

"Please your majesty, our king is not married. Princesses from distant parts of the world tried to get married to him, but he rejected them all. Happy will that princess be whom our king condescends to marry!"

"Don't you think, Sivalu," asked the queen, "that my daughter is as beautiful as a Peri, and that she is fit to be the wife of the proudest king in the world?"

"I quite think," said the jackal, "that the princess is exceedingly handsome; indeed, she is the handsomest princess I have ever seen. But I don't know whether our king will have a liking for her."

"Liking for my daughter!" said the queen, "You have only to paint her to him as she is, and he is sure to turn mad with love. To be serious, Sivalu, I am anxious to get my daughter married. Many princes have sought her hand, but I am unwilling to give her to any of them, as they are not the sons of great kings. But your king seems to be a great king. I can have no objection to making him my son-in-law."

The queen sent word to the king, requesting him to come and see the jackal. The king came and saw the jackal, heard him describe the wealth and pomp of the king of his country, and expressed himself not unwilling to give away his daughter in marriage to him.

The jackal after this returned to the weaver and said to him, "O lord of the loom, you are the luckiest man in the world; it is all settled; you are to become the son-in-law of a great king. I have told them that you are yourself a great king, and you must behave yourself as one. You must do just as I instruct you, otherwise your fortune will not only not be made, but both you and I will be put to death."

"I'll do just as you bid me," said the weaver.

The shrewd jackal drew in his own mind a plan of the method of procedure he should adopt, and after a few days went back to the palace of the king in the same manner in which he had gone before, that is to say, chewing betel leaves and lying down at the entrance of the tank on the premises of the palace. The king and queen were glad to see him, and eagerly asked him as to the success of his mission.





The jackal said, "In order to relieve your minds I may tell you at once that my mission has been so far successful. If you only knew the infinite trouble I have had in persuading his Majesty, my sovereign, to make up his mind to marry your daughter, you would give me no end of thanks. For a long time, he would not hear of it, but gradually I brought him round. You have now only to fix an auspicious day for the celebration of the solemn rite. There is one bit of advice, however, which I, as your friend, would give you. It is this: My master is so great a king that if he were to come to you in state, attended by all his followers, his horses, and his elephants, you would find it impossible to accommodate them all in your palace or in your city. I would therefore propose that our king should come to your city, not in state, but in a private manner; and that you send to the outskirts of your city your own elephants, horses, and conveyances, to bring him and only a few of his followers to your palace."

"Many thanks, wise Sivalu, for this advice. I could not possibly make accommodation in my city for the followers of so great a king as your master. I should be very glad if he did not come in state and trust you will use your influence to persuade him to come in a private manner, for I should be ruined if he came in state."

The jackal then gravely said, "I will do my best in the matter," and then returned to his own village, after the royal astrologer had fixed an auspicious day for the wedding.

On his return, the jackal busied himself with preparing for the great ceremony. As the weaver was clad in tatters, he told him to go to the washermen of the village and borrow from them a suit of clothes. As for himself, he went to the king of his race, and told him that on a certain day he would like one thousand jackals to accompany him to a certain place. He went to the king of crows and begged that his corvine majesty would be pleased to allow one thousand of his subjects to accompany him on a certain day to a certain place. He preferred a similar petition to the king of paddy-birds.

At last, the great day arrived. The weaver arrayed himself in the clothes which he had borrowed from the village washermen. The jackal made his appearance, accompanied by a train of a thousand jackals, a thousand crows, and a thousand paddy-birds. The nuptial procession started on their journey, and towards sundown arrived within two miles of the king's palace. There the jackal told his friends, the thousand jackals, to set up a loud howl. At his bidding, the thousand crows cawed their loudest, while the hoarse screeching of the thousand paddy-birds furnished a suitable accompaniment. The effect may be imagined. They all together made a noise the like of which had never been heard since the world began.

While this unearthly noise was going on, the jackal himself hastened to the palace, and asked the king whether he thought he would be able to accommodate the wedding party, which was about two miles distant, and whose noise was at that moment sounding in his ears.



The king said “Impossible, Sivalu. From the sound of the procession, I infer there must be at least one hundred thousand souls. How is it possible to accommodate so many guests? Please, so arrange that the bridegroom only will come to my house.”

“Very well,” said the jackal; “I told you at the beginning that you would not be able to accommodate all the attendants of my august master. I’ll do as you wish. My master will alone come in undress. Send a horse for the purpose.”

The jackal, accompanied by a horse and groom, came to the place where his friend the weaver was, thanked the thousand jackals, the thousand crows, and the thousand paddy-birds for their valuable services, and told them all to go away, while he himself and the weaver on horseback wended their way to the king’s palace. The bridal party, waiting in the palace, were greatly disappointed at the personal appearance of the weaver; but the jackal told them that his master had purposely put on a mean dress, as his would-be father-in-law declared himself unable to accommodate the bridegroom and his attendants coming in state.

The royal priests now began the interesting ceremony, and the nuptial knot was tied forever. The bridegroom seldom opened his lips, agreeably to the instructions of the jackal, who was afraid lest his speech should betray him. At night when he was lying in bed, he began to count the beams and rafters of the room and said audibly, “This beam will make a first-rate loom, that other a capital beam, and that yonder an excellent sley.” The princess, his bride, was not a little astonished. She began to think in her mind, “Is the man, to whom they have tied me, a king or a weaver? I am afraid he is the latter; otherwise, why should he be talking of weaver’s loom, beam, and sley? Ah, me! Is this what the fates keep in store for me?”

In the morning, the princess related to the queen-mother the weaver’s soliloquy. The king and queen, not a little surprised at this recital, took the jackal to task about it. The ready-witted jackal at once said, “Your Majesty need not be surprised at my august master’s soliloquy. His palace is surrounded by a population of seven hundred families of the best weavers in the world, to whom he has given rent-free lands, and whose welfare he continually seeks. It must have been in one of his philanthropic moods that he uttered the soliloquy which has taken your Majesty by surprise.”

The jackal, however, now felt that it was high time for himself and the weaver to decamp with the princess, since the proverbial simplicity of his friend of the loom might any moment involve him in danger. Therefore, the jackal represented to the king that weighty affairs of state would not permit his august master to spend another day in the palace, that he should start for his kingdom that very day with his bride, and his master was resolved to travel *incognito* on foot. Only the princess, now the queen, should leave the city in a *palki*. After a great deal of yea and nay, the king and queen at last consented to the proposal. The party came to the outskirts of the weaver’s village; the *palki* bearers were sent away; and the princess, who asked where her husband’s palace was, was made to walk on foot.

The weaver’s hut was soon reached, and the jackal, addressing the princess, said, “This, madam, is your husband’s palace.”

The princess began to beat her forehead with the palms of her hands in sheer despair. “Ah, me! Is this the husband whom Prajapati (The god who presides over marriages) intended for me? Death would have been a thousand times better.”



As there was nothing for it, the princess soon got reconciled to her fate. She, however, determined to make her husband rich, especially as she knew the secret of becoming rich. One day she told her husband to get for her a pice-worth of flour. She put a little water in the flour and smeared her body with the paste. When the paste dried on her body, she began wiping the paste with her fingers; and as the paste fell in small balls from her body, it turned into gold. She repeated this process every day for some time and thus got an immense quantity of gold. She soon became mistress of more gold than is to be found in the coffers of any king.

With this gold, she employed a whole army of masons, carpenters, and architects, who in no time built one of the finest palaces in the world. Seven hundred families of weavers were sought for and settled round about the palace. After this, she wrote a letter to her father to say that she was sorry he had not favoured her with a visit since the day of her marriage, and that she would be delighted if he now came to see her and her husband. The king agreed to come, and a day was fixed.

The princess made great preparations for the day of her father's arrival. Hospitals were established in several parts of the town for diseased, sick, and infirm animals. The beasts in thousands were made to chew betel leaves on the wayside. The streets were covered with Cashmere shawls for her father and his attendants to walk on. There was no end of the display of wealth and grandeur. The king and queen arrived in state and were infinitely delighted at the apparently boundless riches of their son-in-law. The jackal now appeared on the scene, and saluting the king and queen, said, "Did I not tell you?"

*Here my story endeth,  
The Natiya-thorn withereth, etc.*


Reverend Lal Behari Day's note on the ending (found in the Preface to *Folk-tales of Bengal*):

Sambhu's mother used always to end every one of her stories—and every orthodox Bengali storyteller does the same—with repeating the following formula:

*Thus my story endeth,  
The Natiya-thorn withereth.  
"Why, O Natiya-thorn, dost wither?"  
"Why does thy cow on me browse?"  
"Why, O cow, dost thou browse?"  
"Why does thy neat-herd not tend me?"  
"Why, O neat-herd, dost not tend the cow?"  
"Why does thy daughter-in-law not give me rice?"  
"Why, O daughter-in-law, dost not give rice?"  
"Why does my child cry?"  
"Why, O child, dost thou cry?"  
"Why does the ant bite me?"  
"Why, O ant, dost thou bite?"  
Koot! koot! koot!*

What these lines mean, why they are repeated at the end of every story, and what the connection is of the several parts to one another, I do not know. Perhaps the whole is a string of nonsense purposely put together to amuse little children.





## Chasing the Tale: “The Matchmaking Jackal”

Spirits of the Beast

How much of a journey is created by the stories we tell about where we’re going and where we’ve been? Recorded and translated into English by Reverend Lal Behari Day in late 19th century Bengal “The Matchmaking Jackal” follows the journey of a jackal protagonist keenly aware of the stories he tells himself and others. He takes hold of the narrative as he sets out to help his friend, an impoverished weaver:

*The jackal, remembering the wealth and grandeur of the weaver’s forefathers, had compassion on him, and one day coming to him, said, “Friend weaver, I see what a wretched life you are leading. I have a good mind to improve your condition.”*

As our shared and separate journeys unfold in these difficult times we often ask the question perceptive storyteller Maja Bumberák distilled so well: “What stories now?” In “The Matchmaking Jackal,” from Reverend Lal Behari Day’s *Folk-tales of Bengal*, shared with thanks to the author and [Project Gutenberg](https://www.gutenberg.org/), we’re offered a glimpse at the way story can shape journeys, and in turn, lives. This story also has an element rarely found: a story arc where in spite of twists, ultimately all the characters are uplifted.

This recorded version offers an insightfulness, wit, and knowledge of a story’s power which draws on the strong Bengali storytelling tradition author Reverend Lal Behari Day describes growing up within, as well his own talents as a storyteller who translated stories from Bengali to English to reach audiences in other parts of the world, different cultures, and also across time: to us today, readers more than a hundred years in the future. All credit for writing and footnotes belongs to him. He writes in his preface to *Folk-tales of Bengal*:

“I had myself, when a little boy, heard hundreds—it would be no exaggeration to say thousands—of fairy tales from that same old woman, Sambhu’s mother. For she was no fictitious person; she actually lived in the flesh and bore that name. But I had nearly forgotten those stories; at any rate, they had all got confused in my head, the tail of one story being joined to the head of another, and the head of a third to the tail of a fourth. How I wished that poor Sambhu’s mother had been alive! But she had gone long, long ago to that bourn from which no traveler returns, and her son Sambhu, too, had followed her thither . . . None of my authorities knew English; they all told the stories in Bengali, and I translated them into English when I came home. I heard many more stories than those contained in the following pages; but I rejected a great many, as they appeared to me to contain spurious additions to the original stories which I had heard when a boy. I have reason to believe that the stories given in this book are a genuine sample of the old stories told by old Bengali women from age to age through a hundred generations.”







### Story Craft & Innovation Head Editor

Nick combines storytelling, comedy, and public speaking to talk about his life. He combines teaching, coaching and performing to help others enjoy their life. It's all held together with two blogs and a supportive storytelling community. Find out more at:

Stories, Jokes, and Talks with Folks:  
<http://storiesjokesandfolks.com>

Storytelling On Purpose:  
<http://stop365.blog>

## Aesop's Fables

### Stories for Taming the Beast

Selected by Nick Baskerville

#### The Dog and the Manger

A Dog looking out for its afternoon nap jumped into the Manger of an Ox and lay there cosily upon the straw. But soon the Ox, returning from its afternoon work, came up to the Manger and wanted to eat some of the straw. The Dog in a rage, being awakened from its slumber, stood up and barked at the Ox, and whenever it came near attempted to bite it. At last the Ox had to give up the hope of getting at the straw, and went away muttering: "Ah, people often grudge others what they cannot enjoy themselves."

#### The Dog and the Shadow

It happened that a Dog had got a piece of meat and was carrying it home in his mouth to eat it in peace. Now on his way home he had to cross a plank lying across a running brook. As he crossed, he looked down and saw his own shadow reflected in the water beneath. Thinking it was another dog with another piece of meat, he made up his mind to have that also. So he made a snap at the shadow in the water, but as he opened his mouth the piece of meat fell out, dropped into the water and was never seen more. Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow.

#### The Donkey and the Lapdog

A Farmer one day came to the stables to see to his beasts of burden: among them was his favourite Donkey, that was always well fed and often carried his master. With the Farmer came his Lapdog, who danced about and licked his hand and frisked about as happy as could be. The Farmer felt in his pocket, gave the Lapdog some dainty food, and sat down while he gave his orders to his servants. The Lapdog jumped into his master's lap, and lay there blinking while the Farmer stroked his ears. The Donkey, seeing this, broke loose from his halter and commenced prancing about in imitation of the Lapdog. The Farmer could not hold his sides with laughter, so the Donkey went up to him, and putting his feet upon the Farmer's shoulder attempted to climb into his lap. The Farmer's servants rushed up with sticks and pitchforks and soon taught the Donkey that clumsy jesting is no joke.



## The Dog and the Wolf

A gaunt Wolf was almost dead with hunger when he happened to meet a House-dog who was donkeying by.

"Ah, Cousin," said the Dog. "I knew how it would be; your irregular life will soon be the ruin of you. Why do you not work steadily as I do, and get your food regularly given to you?"

"I would have no objection," said the Wolf, "if I could only get a place."

"I will easily arrange that for you," said the Dog; "come with me to my master and you shall share my work."

So the Wolf and the Dog went towards the town together. On the way there the Wolf noticed that the hair on a certain part of the Dog's neck was very much worn away, so he asked him how that had come about.

"Oh, it is nothing," said the Dog. "That is only the place where the collar is put on at night to keep me chained up; it chafes a bit, but one soon gets used to it."

"Is that all?" said the Wolf. "Then good-bye to you, Master Dog."

Better starve free than be a fat slave.

### **Chasing the Beast: Aesop's Fables**

by Nick Baskerville

Back before I knew what a storyteller was, I knew my grandma. I would sit in the living room of her Row House in North Philly and be filled with the very essence of the 1970s. A living room filled with figurines, incense, and soulful music. She would tell me stories over and over again. The stories from the bible with religious understanding. Stories about my uncle and my mom and the trouble they got into. And the stories Aesop's fables that etched life lessons into me. I never knew any of that was happening. I just knew my grandma told great stories, and I loved to listen to them all.





# The Wicked King and His Bride

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## A Story for Healing Springs

Retold in English by Rabbi Gerald Friedlander in *Jewish Fairy Stories*

Long, long ago there lived in the Holy Land an old peasant and his wife. They had an only son who was also married. The family all lived happily together in a little house in a village near Samaria. The son, whose name was Chaninah, was a very good man, deeply learned in the Holy Scriptures and the ancient lore of Israel.

In course of time the old father, feeling his end drawing near, called his beloved son to his bedside and said to him,

“Hearken, my son, to the words which I am about to speak. Your mother and I will soon die. After our death and burial, you will observe the customary period of mourning and lamentation. On the day following go to the nearest market-place and buy the first thing offered to you, be the price what it may. I also charge you to continue the study of the Holy Word of the Bible by day and by night, keep the Divine Commandments, support the poor and be kind to the dumb creatures.”

After he had spoken these words, he blessed his son and closed his eyes in the sleep of death. Chaninah went to tell his mother of the death of his father. The sad news was too much for the poor woman and the shock killed her instantly. The pious son buried his beloved parents in the village cemetery and returned home to keep the customary period of mourning and lamentation, which lasted seven days.

Mindful of his father’s dying words, Chaninah went on the following morning to the nearest market-place. One of the merchants, carrying a beautiful silver casket in his hands, came to him and said,

“Will you buy this casket?”

“What is the price?” asked Chaninah.

“I will take eighty pieces of silver for it,” answered the merchant, and he added, “I will not accept any less.”

Chaninah agreed, and there and then paid the large sum of money demanded, thinking all the while of his dear father’s last wish. The money which he had spent in buying the casket was nearly all the fortune he possessed.

Without any further delay he returned home with his purchase, which he was anxious to show to his wife.

“Look here,” he cried, “I have spent nearly all our money in buying this casket, even as dear father told me to do just before he died.”

“Open it,” said his wife; “there is sure to be something very valuable inside it.”

He lifted the lid of the casket and was astonished to find that it contained another silver box. He took this out and opened it, curious to learn what was inside. To their great surprise a little green frog leapt out.

“Well, I never,” cried Chaninah, “this is an expensive creature.”

“Do not forget,” his wife said, “your father’s command to be kind to the dumb creatures.”

“Quite right,” said his husband, “we will provide for the frog as though the little fellow were one of us.”



The frog grew larger and larger, and the silver box was no longer large enough for its quarters. Chaninah therefore made a nice roomy cupboard for their new friend's abode. After a while the wife told her husband that there was no more money left to buy food. With a very sad heart the good man called the frog to his side and said,

"I am awfully sorry to tell you, dear little friend, that we cannot feed you any longer because we have no food left even for ourselves."

"Please don't worry," cried the frog, "I hope you will believe me when I tell you that I am indeed more than grateful to you both, for all your kindness and hospitality. Let me prove my gratitude by giving you this piece of advice. In the box where you found me, you will see a strip of parchment. If you place it in the fold of your turban you will be able to understand not only the different languages of mankind but also the speech of birds, fish, and beasts."

Chaninah did exactly as the frog told him, and calling his wife, told her that they would accompany the frog to his new home wherever it might be. The frog said this should be in a pond in the wood nearby. They all went to the wood feeling sad that poverty was forcing them to part company.

As soon as they came to the wood the frog told them to rest themselves. Then at the bidding of the frog, the birds and beasts in the wood brought to Chaninah and his wife an immense quantity of valuable gems and an assortment of roots and herbs. The kind-hearted frog gave these gifts to his good friends, explaining how the herbs and roots were to be used for healing purposes. Then at last the frog bids his friends farewell and tells them that he was really a son of Adam and the demon Lilith, and that he had the power of changing himself into any shape.

Chaninah and his wife gathered up the precious gems, roots, and herbs and returned home. On the way they met a caravan and offered some of the gems for sale. A good bargain was struck and Chaninah and his wife found themselves with plenty of money. They left their old home and bought a nice house. Riches did not spoil them, for their hearts were kind. Moreover, Chaninah kept faithfully the charge of his beloved father. He studied the holy words of Scripture by day and by night and observed the Divine precepts with a good will. Their home was always open to the poor. The good fortune of Chaninah spread far and wide. His reputation as a charitable man reached the ears of the King who invited him to visit his Court.

The King took a great fancy to Chaninah and persuaded him to take up his abode in the palace. The King was by no means a pious man, in fact he was very wicked and cruel. He was unmarried, and this fact alone displeased his subjects. His counsellors urged him to find a good wife, saying to him,—

"Let us, O King, remind you that we require not only a king but also a queen and little princes; for there will surely come a time when a new king will have to be found—because kings and queens are mortals and they cannot live forever."

They did not tell the King what their real motive was in advising him to marry. They thought that if the King were to find a true and good wife it might be possible for her to use her influence and make him a better man. The King dismissed his counsellors, promising to see them again in a week's time, when he would tell them whether he would marry or not.



When they came to the palace at the appointed time the King's valet met them and told them that His Majesty would receive them in the palace garden. They went there and found the King sitting on his throne. As they approached, he rose up and bade them welcome. At that moment a beautiful bird flew over the King and dropped a long golden hair upon his shoulder. The King took the hair in his hand and turning to his counsellors said, —

"I will marry only the maiden to whom this golden hair belongs. No other wife shall be mine. You wish me to marry—well and good—so be it. I now command you to discover the owner of this golden hair, and mark you, if you do not bring her to me within a year from to-day I will have you and all your families put to death."

The counsellors were greatly distressed at the turn of events. They feared that their lives would be forfeit. How were they to find the lady whose golden hair had brought misfortune to them and their families? With sad hearts they left the royal presence, and when they were outside the palace they asked one another, "What is to be done?"

Chaninah, who was now one of the King's counsellors, offered to find the lady destined to be their queen. He hastened home to bid his wife farewell and to prepare for his journey. He took a bag into which he put six loaves, a small assortment of his precious herbs and roots, and twelve silver coins. Having blessed his wife, he set out on his quest.

He walked during the best part of the day and at sunset, feeling very tired, he sat down on a large stone beneath a tree. He was just about to doze off when he was suddenly startled by hearing a raven's croak. He listened and understood that the bird had not found any food for three days. He at once opened his bag and gave the raven a large piece of bread. On the morrow Chaninah met a dog howling miserably.

"Come and tell me," he said to the dog, "all your troubles. I understand the speech of beasts and birds,," he said to the dog,

The dog said that he was very ill and hungry, for it was just a week since he had eaten any food. Chaninah gave him one of the healing roots and a loaf of bread. The dog devoured the bread and ate the root and thanked his good friend.

Next day Chaninah came to a river and found some fishermen trying in vain to pull in their net, which contained a large fish. The fishermen pulled so hard that they feared their net would break. Chaninah lent them a willing hand and then they were able to pull in the net. The fishermen shouted with joy, —

"We have enough now for dinner to-day and to-morrow."

Chaninah asked them to sell the fish and he would give them twelve pieces of silver as its price. They agreed and gave him the fish as soon as he had paid them. They could hardly believe their eyes when they saw Chaninah throwing the fish back into the river. Bidding them farewell he continued his journey.

At last he Chaninah came to a large town where, unknown to him, dwelt the maiden whom he was seeking. She was a princess, the only daughter of the King of that country.

Chaninah came to the courtyard of the palace and stood still a while gazing around. The Princess was looking out of the window of her room, and saw Chaninah, whose strange attire attracted her attention. She sent her chamberlain to bring him to her presence.





In reply to her inquiry as to the why and wherefore of his visit to her father's land, Chaninah tells her the story of his quest. Looking at her he sees that she is the very lady whom he has to find to be the wife of the King, his master, for her tresses were golden even like the hue of the hair which the King found upon his shoulder.

"Come, good lady, with me," he cried, "and save my people, the wise men of Israel and their families, who are in mortal danger. Come and be Queen in our land and save the soul of our lord the King."

The Princess had listened very attentively to all of the strange story told by Chaninah, and in reply she said, "Well do I remember drying my hair one day last month in the garden of our palace, and whilst doing so a strange bird flew over my head three times and then plucked out one of my hairs. He flew away with the hair, and I can now believe that this is the very bird which that brought my hair to the King of your land. I will accede to your wish and consent to become the Queen of your land if you fulfill two tasks which I will set you. The first I will mention at once. Here I have two empty flasks. You must bring them back to me full of water. I do not mean the water of the brook or well, but the one flask must contain water from Paradise and the other must be filled with water from Hell. When you have done this task, I will tell you all about the second one."

With a kind word of farewell the Princess dismissed Chaninah. He left the palace with a sad heart and prayed to God to help him in his difficulty. Was he not trying to save the lives of his brethren in the Holy Land?

After a little while he Chaninah hears the croak of a raven speaking as follows:

"Dear friend! Do you no longer remember me? Did you not give me bread when you met me? I was so hungry then, for I had not tasted any food for three days. Now just tell me, How can I be of service? I will gladly do my best to please you."

Chaninah told the raven all about the task which the Princess had set him to do.

"Here are the flasks," he said. ; "One must be filled with water from Paradise and the other must be filled with water from Hell." The raven told him to tie a flask to each wing and at sunset to be at the spot where they were conversing. The raven flew to the netherworld and singed his wings in passing through the flames of Hell. At last he reached the black boiling waters in the centre of Hell and filled one flask. He then flew to the gates of Paradise and found the spring which flows from its midst and bathed in its cool water to heal his wings. He then filled the other flask and flew to the spot where he had arranged to meet his friend. He gave the flasks filled with the desired water to Chaninah, who returned to the palace and told the Princess that the task was done.

The Princess was in doubt whether the water of each flask was genuine. She proposed to test the contents there and then. Opening the flask containing the water from Hell, she poured a few drops upon the palm of her hand. The water burnt her skin and she quickly put some of the water of the other flask upon the burnt spot and healed it at once. She told Chaninah that she was quite satisfied with this performance.

"But now," she said, "you have to perform a much more difficult task. Just listen. Some years ago, I was playing with my ring in a boat and by accident I dropped it into the water. It was a golden ring with my initials engraved on the gold and set with a beautiful pearl. Restore this ring, and when I have it again, I will comply with your request."





The Princess thought that it would be impossible to find her ring and that she would not be bothered to accede to the wish of Chaninah. She again dismissed him with a few kind words and told him not to be disappointed if he failed to find the ring. Chaninah at once turned his thoughts to God and prayed for Divine help. He then went to the nearest river, hoping that his good fortune would not forsake him. As soon as he came to the water, he beheld the large fish which he had purchased and thrown back into the river.

“Tell me,” said the fish, “what you desire, and I will try to help you.”

Chaninah told the fish the story of the ring of the Princess, and said that he must have this ring as soon as possible.

“Meet me at yonder bridge,” said the fish, “to-morrow morning at daybreak and I will bring you news concerning the ring.”

The fish then swam away and made for the bottom of the great sea in order to seek the help of Leviathan, the monster king of the deep.

Leviathan welcomed the fish, and having heard his story promised to help him. He issued an order throughout his vast kingdom compelling every fish to report to him if any such ring had been heard of or discovered. If he should discover that a fish had the ring and failed to produce it, very severe penalties were sure to follow. Within an hour the ring was brought to the palace of Leviathan and placed before his throne. Leviathan then gave it to the fish which that had promised to help Chaninah.

Next morning at daybreak the fish delivered the ring to Chaninah, who rejoiced greatly at the cleverness of the fish. How glad he was that he had fulfilled his dear father’s wishes in being kind to birds, beasts and fish.

At noon Chaninah entered the palace and was brought at once to the Princess.

“Behold, your Royal Highness!” he cried in a joyful voice, “your Royal Highness ! Is this not your ring? Your initials are engraved on the gold.”

The Princess admitted that this was her ring, and as the two tasks, which she had imposed, had been satisfactorily accomplished, she now consented to accompany Chaninah to the Holy Land.

On the way they were attacked by robbers. Chaninah, fearing that he would be overpowered, called for help. At that moment a dog ran up to his side and barked so furiously that the robbers made off. The dog was glad to repay Chaninah for having fed him and healed him in days gone by.

At last they came to the Holy Land, and when the King saw the beautiful princess with the golden hair he was very happy. Amidst general rejoicing the royal wedding took place. The King rewarded Chaninah by making him his chief counsellor of State.

The good man’s success, however, was marred by a great misfortune which had befallen him during his absence. His good wife had died.

Moreover, some of the royal servants were envious of his advancement in the King’s favour. They resolved to hire some ruffians who were to waylay him. One day as he was leaving the palace the ruffians attacked him and killed him in the courtyard.

As soon as the news of the sad event was told to the Queen, she cried, “Never mind! let me see what can be done.” She went to her cabinet and took out the flask containing the water from Paradise. She then went to the courtyard where the King and nobles were gathered around the corpse.



“Make way for Her Majesty the Queen!” the people cried.

When the Queen saw the dead body of her friend she smiled. All eyes were fixed on her. She sprinkled some of the precious water upon the corpse and immediately Chaninah opened his eyes and arose. Now the people understood why the Queen had smiled.

“Come now,” said the King to his wife, “kill me and restore me to life again. I should just like to know how it feels to be dead.”

The Queen declined to murder her husband, and turning to him she cried,

“Do not be so wicked. Life is sacred. Moreover, the wonderful water will only bring a person back to life provided his life had been good.”

“Your Majesty,” she added, “must repent and mend your ways, otherwise you will not be restored to life in the hereafter.”

The King went away in anger and returned to his royal apartments. Here he ordered one of his servants to kill him.

“If you refuse,” cried the wicked King, “I will instantly kill you.”

Whereupon the servant obeyed the King and slew him.

The Queen was at once informed of the wicked death of the King. She was truly sorry to find that he had not allowed himself to be influenced by her advice, but that he had trifled with his life. She therefore fetched the flask containing water from Hell. Then she sprinkled its contents upon the body of the wicked King. His body immediately was burnt to ashes. She thereupon turned to the astonished members of the Court who were looking on, and in a gentle voice she said,

“Do you not see, good friends, that if my husband had been a good and holy man he would have been restored to life, just like Chaninah? But the fact is that he was a cruel and bad man. You all knew this even before I came here from my father’s land.”

After the burial of the King, the counsellors came to the Queen and urged her to marry Chaninah, who had proved such a trusty friend. The suggestion pleased the Queen, who gladly gave her heart and hand to the good man. They ruled the people in justice and kindness, and as long as they reigned there was peace in the land.





## Chasing the Tale: “The Wicked King and His Bride”

### Spirits of the Beast

Healing in stories, despite remedies and even magic being made available for cures, often emphasizes a willingness to hear stories—not only of other humans, but of other animals—as essential. Compiled and translated into English in early 20th century England by Rabbi Gerald Friedlander “The Wicked King and His Bride” follows Chaninah to his dying father’s bedside, and then through a series of twists in fortune where Chaninah’s practice of following his father’s final request—that Chaninah live within their tradition’s principles, support those in need, and be kind to animals who aren’t human—allows Chaninah to be both healer and healed at different points in the tale:

*“Come and tell me,” he said to the dog, “all your troubles. I understand the speech of beasts and birds.”*

While the dog in this story does not have a leading role, their presence is critical to the story. Unlike a number of unfortunate dogs in folktales, this dog isn’t beaten or decapitated. Instead, the dog is healed when Chaninah shares bread and a healing root to save the dog from starving. Another version, one of a series titled “The Princess with the Golden Hair,” encountered in a collection not currently in the public domain, has a slightly different twist that highlights the dog’s importance (beware of spoilers). A raven friend of Chaninah’s gathers burning water from Gehenna to help Chaninah with a critical task. The raven’s wings are badly scorched. Though the raven manages to bring the pitcher to Chaninah, the raven can no longer fly to the healing waters in Eden that Chaninah must still reach and would heal the raven.

It is the dog, in this alternate version, who rescues both Chaninah and the raven. Carrying the raven, who—in turn—carries the pitcher for Chaninah, the dog travels to Eden by a secret path. Once in Eden the raven splashes about in the water, healing their wings and filling the pitcher. Thanks to the dog’s willingness to help, together the dog and raven can bring Chaninah the pitcher of healing waters that will, in another twist of fate, save Chaninah’s life.

Although this version by Rabbi Gerald Friedlander gives the dog a different task, the dog’s friendship with Chaninah remains critical to the integrity of the story, and as a source of healing for each other and by extension, others.

This written retelling offers a balance of compassion and pain, splashes of humor, and awareness of how stories can allow for deep, healing connections that comes both from the Jewish tradition and from author Rabbi Gerald Friedlander who retold the story in English, and set it in his own time. All credit for his writing and noting of his source, the *Ma’aseh Book*, belongs to him. He writes in his preface to *Jewish Fairy Stories*:

*“The tales in this book have been gathered together from various Jewish writings. The translation is not literal in any sense of the word. In fact, each story has been recast and presented in a modern setting. Some of the stories are fairy tales. Jewish fairy tales reveal an aspect of the Jewish soul in much the same way as the various national fairy tales embody something of the spirit of the different peoples and nations.”*



# **The Old Man Who Made the Trees Blossom**

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## **A Folktale from Japan**

As retold by Spirits of the Beast

Once upon a time there was a very kind old man and his wife living in a certain village. Next door to them lived a very mean old man and his wife. The kind old couple had a little white dog named Shiro. They loved Shiro very much and always gave him good things to eat. But the mean old man hated dogs, and every time he saw Shiro he threw stones at him.

One day Shiro began barking very loudly out in the farmyard. The kind old man went out to see what was the matter. Shiro kept barking and barking and began digging in the ground. "Oh, you want me to help you dig?" asked the kind old man. So he brought out a spade and began digging. Suddenly his spade hit something hard. He kept digging and found a large pot full of many pieces of gold coins. Then he thanked Shiro very much for leading him to so much gold and took the money to his house.

Now the mean old man had been peeping and had seen all of this. He wanted some gold, too. So the next day, he asked the kind old man if he could borrow Shiro for a while. "Why, of course you may borrow Shiro, if he'll be of any help to you," said the kind old man.

The mean old man took Shiro to his house and out into his field. "Now find me some gold, too," he ordered the dog, "or I'll beat you." So Shiro began digging at a certain spot. Then the mean old man tied Shiro up and began digging himself. But all he found in the hole was some terrible smelling garbage and no gold at all. This made him so angry that he hit Shiro over the head with his spade and killed him.

The kind old man and woman were very sad about Shiro. They buried him in their field and planted a little pine tree over his grave. And every day they went to Shiro's grave and watered the pine tree very carefully. The tree began to grow very fast and in only a few years it became very big. The kind old woman said, "Remember how Shiro used to love to eat rice cakes? Let's cut down that big pine tree and make a mortar, an usu. Then with the mortar we'll make some rice cakes in memory of Shiro."

So the old man cut down the tree and made an uzu out of its trunk. Then they filled it full of steamed rice and began pounding the rice to make rice cakes. But no sooner did the old man begin pounding than all the rice turned into gold. Now the kind old man and woman were richer than ever.

The mean old man had been peeping through the window and had seen the rice turn to gold. He still wanted some gold for himself very badly. So the next day he came and asked if he could borrow the mortar. "Why, of course you may borrow the mortar," said the kind old man.

The mean old man took the mortar home and filled it full of steaming rice. "Now watch," he said to his wife. "When I begin pounding this rice, it'll turn to gold." But when he began pounding, the rice turned into terrible smelling garbage, and there was no gold at all. This made him so angry that he got his ax and cut the mortar up into small pieces and burned it up in the stove.

When the kind old man went to get his mortar back, it was all burned to ashes. He was very sad, because the mortar had reminded him of Shiro. So he asked for some of the ashes and took them home with him.

It was the middle of winter and all of the trees were bare. He thought he'd scatter some of the ashes around his garden. When he did, all the cherry trees in the garden suddenly began to bloom right in the middle of winter. Everybody came to see this wonderful sight, and the lord who lived in a nearby castle heard about it.



Now this lord had a cherry tree in his garden that he loved very much. He could hardly wait for spring to come so that he could see the beautiful blossoms on this cherry tree. But when spring came, he discovered that the tree was dead and he felt very sad. So he sent for the kind old man and asked him to bring the tree back to life. The old man took some of ashes and climbed the tree. Then he threw the ashes up into the dead branches, and almost more quickly than you can think, the tree was covered with the most beautiful blossoms.

The lord had come on horseback to watch and was very pleased. He gave the kind old man a great deal of gold and many presents. And best of all, he knighted the old man and gave him a new name, “Sir Old-Man-Who-Makes-Trees-Blossom.”

Sir Old-Man-Who-Makes-Trees-Blossom and his wife were now very rich, and they lived very happily for many more years.

## **Chasing the Tale: “The Old Man Who Made the Trees Blossom”**

### **Spirits of the Beast**

With this month’s theme, this was the folktale which leapt up and begged to be told. In researching this story, I discovered that there are many versions, each emphasizing various aspects of Japanese culture. In some versions, the kind old man shares his gold with the entire village illustrating altruism and emphasizing the value of community. In one version, the mortar produces rice, instead of gold and the old man and his wife never go hungry again.

In some versions, the old man sits with the body of Shiro all night long showing respect for the dead. Some listeners may find the cruelty done to little Shiro distasteful, but the story itself revolved around the spirit of Shiro transcending that experience and coming back time and time again to bring prosperity to his old master and disappointment to his murderer. Shiro can sometimes talk to the kind old man in some versions and even after death instructs the old man to make something useful from his tree, indicating a belief in life after death.

The mean old man is sent away to prison for his crimes in some versions and comes back a better man. In one version, the mean old man is threatened with prison and makes amends with the kind old man. They become friends and both come together in remembrance each year on the anniversary of Shiro’s death. Shiro means white, the color often associated with death and magical happenings.

The kind old man never retaliates against his mean neighbor demonstrating forbearance and forgiveness. The renaming of the old man by the lord or magistrate is significant in that the kind old man not only gains wealth, but also honor and prestige. He is reborn. He is no longer a commoner and is raised in social rank, which affords privilege and wealth. This is of tremendous significance, as in ancient Japan, there was very little upward mobility between the social classes.

The cherry blossoms are significant in that they are very beautiful, but last for only a very short time, illustrating the beauty, mystery, and ephemeral quality of life. Cherry blossoms bloom in the spring, and herald in a time of awakening and promise, after a cold, gray winter of introspection. Dark dormant trees erupt with color and life, but in a few short days, showers of delicate pink and white petals all too soon give way to new leaves.

Japanese people are very conscious of seasonal changes and the *hanami* (cherry blossom viewing) is one of the most popular customs. Where the cherry blossoms are in bloom, people spread out picnic mats and enjoy themselves while celebrating the arrival of spring. The origin of *hanami* customs date back to Heian period (794 - 1191), when the aristocrats at court held parties to enjoy the beauty of *sakura* (cherry blossoms). Over the course of centuries, the custom spread to the warrior class (samurai), but it wasn’t until Edo period (1603 – 1868 CE) that *hanami* became popular among the common people.

In Japan and in some areas of the US, the blooming of cherry trees is celebrated with a festival, the *Sakura Matsuri*, or Cherry Blossom Festival. These festivals are often held to promote Japanese culture and traditions. The message of the cherry blossom is that beauty and life are fleeting and that it is important to live in the moment and to live well, holding eternal spring in your heart.



## **For the Love of a Goat**

### **A Story for Teacher Tales & Tentacles**

As told by Rachel Hedman

Zeus could have been devoured by his father, Cronus. Already his siblings of Demeter, Hestia, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon sat in his father's belly. Rhea, his mother, took a stone and swaddled it in cloth. That stone, too, sat in Cronus. Zeus was still not safe.

Rhea rushed to the island of Crete to Mount Ida. Seeking a cave to hide within, she took baby Zeus and handed him to Amalthea. She was a compassionate goat with plenty of milk to give a baby.

Cronus searched far and wide for baby Zeus. While he had swallowed that stone, he figured it out eventually that all was not what it appeared. Rhea avoided Cronus. He knew this meant that lies abounded. Her eyes never met his eyes. Rhea grieved for the others that Cronus swallowed. Her emotions were true. Now, she tilted her head. When she ate, she stared at her plate and never looked up.

Then, one day, Cronus heard crying. An infant's cry. The sound came from the direction of Crete. Cronus stopped all that he was doing. When he stood up, Rhea stood up. She had heard the cries, too. That was all Cronus needed to confirm what he heard.

Strangely, when he got to Mount Ida, he found Amalthea surrounded by nine male armored dancers from the company of Kouretes. These men shouted and clapped every time that Cronus was sure that infant cries sounded. Cronus shook his head and pushed his hands into his ears. Was he fooling himself? Did he think he heard baby Zeus because he suspected Rhea?

More than once, Cronus came to Mount Ida. More than once, the nine male armored dancers whooped and made such noise. They used spears and shields to add to the clamor this time. It was too much. Eventually, Cronus stopped going to Mount Ida.

Amalthea thanked the dancers and continued to care for Zeus.

In time, Zeus gained enough strength to confront Cronus and release his siblings. When Zeus left Amalthea, he promised to remember her always. She aged and came to that point in life of having little time left.

Zeus, now known as the god of gods, wanted to honor whom he had seen as a mother. He visited Amalthea. Upon her dying breath, Zeus transformed her skin into a powerful shield and protection. As Amalthea protected him, she would continue to protect others. This skin became known as the aegis. Other powers came from this shield. If shaken, clouds gathered and enveloped Mount Ida. Thunder crashed that brought fear into the hearts of those who heard such sounds.

The aegis has its own story, but here we honor Amalthea. For this, having a goat in or about the home was welcomed. More loyal than any dog. The goat remains beloved.





### Chasing the Tale: “For the Love of a Goat”

Rachel Hedman

Can a goat be loved? Why must dogs be thought of first before goats as a valued pet?

During Ancient Greece, the dog was as loved as the goat. We have Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards the underworld. Interestingly, Hecate, the goddess of dogs and crossroads, was depicted as having three heads. We also had Argos who awaited years and years for his master Odysseus to return. Only when Odysseus came back did Argos die with fulfillment and peace.

What of the beloved goat? Yes, goats were used as a sacrificial animal to the Greek gods and goddesses. Children delighted in having the goat as a pet as long as their parents did not take it to the temple.

Perhaps this story would have been told by those parents to their children.





# -PUZZLES and GAMES-

"Curiouser and curiouser!"





### Riddle

A boy, a dog, and a  
horse crossed a  
bridge.  
The boy rode across  
the bridge.  
Yet he walked.  
How come?

-SB

Last Month's Answer: A Key

## LOST WORD SOCIETY

by Carmen Agra Deedy

This month we are introducing a word puzzle in cooperation with Carmen Agra Deedy's LOST WORD SOCIETY. Each month we will give you an archaic, obsolete, or otherwise "lost" word. We will make up three silly sentences using the word, probably incorrectly. Your job is to make up a definition for the lost word. The challenge, if you decide to accept it, is for you to use your new word in a story, just for fun. Next month we will publish the true definition of the "lost" word and provide you with another one. Remember, don't look it up, make it up. Sound like fun?

Here we go. Have fun!

### **MALISON (n.) Archaic.**

- 1) The malison cared nothing for his parents, laughing hysterically, as they groveled in the muddy ditch for the small coins he tossed their way.
- 1) Peasants, tradesmen, and children all cheered, as the magnificent malison rolled through the throngs, the path before it strewn with flowers and sweet smelling herbs.
- 1) He had the malison with the duck confit in the chalice from the palace and a flagon of dragon, which was the brew that was true.



For more fun explore:  
**Carmen Agra Deedy's LOST WORD SOCIETY**  
at <https://www.facebook.com/carmenagradeedy>  
for new words every weekend!

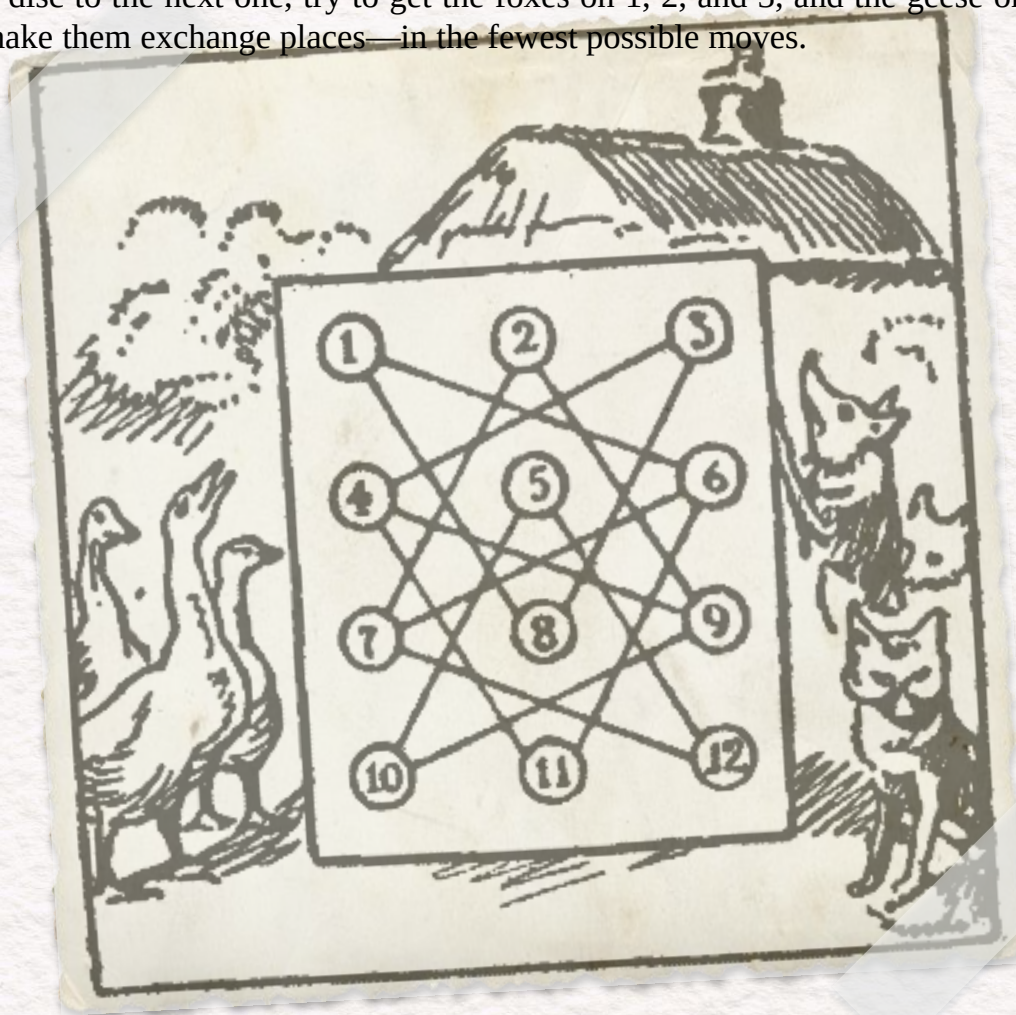


## Foxes and Geese

by Henry Ernest Dudeney from *The Canterbury Puzzles: And Other Curious Problems*,  
1919 Edition

Here is a little puzzle of the moving counters class that my readers will probably find entertaining. Make a diagram of any convenient size similar to that shown in our illustration, and provide six counters—three marked to represent foxes and three to represent geese. Place the geese on the discs 1, 2, and 3, and the foxes on the discs numbered 10, 11, and 12

Now the puzzle is this. By moving one at a time, fox and goose alternately, along a straight line from one disc to the next one, try to get the foxes on 1, 2, and 3, and the geese on 10, 11, and 12—that is, make them exchange places—in the fewest possible moves.



But you must be careful never to let a fox and goose get within reach of each other, or there will be trouble. This rule, you will find, prevents you moving the fox from 11 on the first move, as on either 4 or 6 he would be within reach of a goose. It also prevents your moving a fox from 10 to 9, or from 12 to 7. If you play 10 to 5, then your next move may be 2 to 9 with a goose, which you could not have played if the fox had not previously gone from 10. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that only one fox or one goose can be on a disc at the same time. Now, what is the smallest number of moves necessary to make the foxes and geese change places?





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### **The Tramps and the Biscuits**

by Henry Ernest Dudeney from *The Canterbury Puzzles: And Other Curious Problems*,  
1919 Edition

Four merry tramps bought, borrowed, found, or in some other manner obtained possession of a box of biscuits, which they agreed to divide equally amongst themselves at breakfast next morning. In the night, while the others were fast asleep under the greenwood tree, one man approached the box, devoured exactly a quarter of the number of biscuits, except the odd one left over, which he threw as a bribe to their dog. Later in the night a second man awoke and hit on the same idea, taking a quarter of what remained and giving the odd biscuit to the dog. The third and fourth men did precisely the same in turn, taking a quarter of what they found and giving the odd biscuit to the dog. In the morning they divided what remained equally amongst them, and again gave the odd biscuit to the animal. Every man noticed the reduction in the contents of the box, but, believing himself to be alone responsible, made no comments. What is the smallest possible number of biscuits that there could have been in the box when they first acquired it?



# Adventures of The Puzzle Club

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by Henry Ernest Dudeney from *The Canterbury Puzzles: And Other Curious Problems*,  
1919 Edition

When it recently became known that the bewildering mystery of the Prince and the Lost Balloon was really solved by the members of the Puzzle Club, the general public was quite unaware that any such club existed. The fact is that the members always deprecated publicity; but since they have been dragged into the light in connection with this celebrated case, so many absurd and untrue stories have become current respecting their doings that I have been permitted to publish a correct account of some of their more interesting achievements. It was, however, decided that the real names of the members should not be given.

The club was started a few years ago to bring together those interested in the solution of puzzles of all kinds, and it contains some of the profoundest mathematicians and some of the most subtle thinkers resident in London. These have done some excellent work of a high and dry kind. But the main body soon took to investigating the problems of real life that are perpetually cropping up.

It is only right to say that they take no interest in crimes as such, but only investigate a case when it possesses features of a distinctly puzzling character. They seek perplexity for its own sake—something to unravel. As often as not the circumstances are of no importance to anybody, but they just form a little puzzle in real life, and that is sufficient.

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## The Ambiguous Photograph

A good example of the lighter kind of problem that occasionally comes before them is that which is known amongst them by the name of "The Ambiguous Photograph." Though it is perplexing to the inexperienced, it is regarded in the club as quite a trivial thing. Yet it serves to show the close observation of these sharp-witted fellows. The original photograph hangs on the club wall, and has baffled every guest who has examined it. Yet any child should be able to solve the mystery. I will give the reader an opportunity of trying his wits at it.

Some of the members were one evening seated together in their clubhouse in the Adelphi. Those present were: Henry Melville, a barrister not overburdened with briefs, who was discussing a problem with Ernest Russell, a bearded man of middle age, who held some easy post in Somerset House, and was a Senior Wrangler and one of the most subtle thinkers of the club; Fred Wilson, a journalist of very buoyant spirits, who had more real capacity than one would at first suspect; John Macdonald, a Scotsman, whose record was that he had never solved a puzzle himself since the club was formed, though frequently he had put others on the track of a deep solution; Tim Churton, a bank clerk, full of cranky, unorthodox ideas as to perpetual motion; also Harold Tomkins, a prosperous accountant, remarkably familiar with the elegant branch of mathematics—the theory of numbers.



Suddenly Herbert Baynes entered the room, and everybody saw at once from his face that he had something interesting to communicate. Baynes was a man of private means, with no occupation.

"Here's a quaint little poser for you all," said Baynes. "I have received it to-day from Dovey."

Dovey was proprietor of one of the many private detective agencies that found it to their advantage to keep in touch with the club.

"Is it another of those easy cryptograms?" asked Wilson. "If so, I would suggest sending it upstairs to the billiard-marker."

"Don't be sarcastic, Wilson," said Melville. "Remember, we are indebted to Dovey for the great Railway Signal Problem that gave us all a week's amusement in the solving."

"If you fellows want to hear," resumed Baynes, "just try to keep quiet while I relate the amusing affair to you. You all know of the jealous little Yankee who married Lord Marksford two years ago? Lady Marksford and her husband have been in Paris for two or three months. Well, the poor creature soon got under the influence of the green-eyed monster, and formed the opinion that Lord Marksford was flirting with other ladies of his acquaintance.

"Now, she has actually put one of Dovey's spies on to that excellent husband of hers; and the myrmidon has been shadowing him about for a fortnight with a pocket camera. A few days ago he came to Lady Marksford in great glee. He had snapshotted his lordship while actually walking in the public streets with a lady who was not his wife."

"What is the use of this at all?" asked the jealous woman.

"Well, it is evidence, your ladyship, that your husband was walking with the lady. I know where she is staying, and in a few days shall have found out all about her."

"But, you stupid man," cried her ladyship, in tones of great contempt, "how can any one swear that this is his lordship, when the greater part of him, including his head and shoulders, is hidden from sight? And—and—she scrutinized the photo carefully—"why, I guess it is impossible from this photograph to say whether the gentleman is walking with the lady or going in the opposite direction!"

"Thereupon she dismissed the detective in high dudgeon. Dovey has himself just returned from Paris, and got this account of the incident from her ladyship. He wants to justify his man, if possible, by showing that the photo does disclose which way the man is going. Here it is. See what you fellows can make of it."

Our illustration is a faithful drawing made from the original photograph. It will be seen that a slight but sudden summer shower is the real cause of the difficulty.

All agreed that Lady Marksford was right—that it is impossible to determine whether the man is walking with the lady or not.

"Her ladyship is wrong," said Baynes, after everybody had made a close scrutiny. "I find there is important evidence in the picture. Look at it carefully."





"Of course," said Melville, "we can tell nothing from the frock-coat. It may be the front or the tails. Blessed if I can say!

Then he has his overcoat over his arm, but which way his arm goes it is impossible to see."

"How about the bend of the legs?" asked Churton.

"Bend! why, there isn't any bend," put in Wilson, as he glanced over the other's shoulder. "From the picture you might suspect that his lordship has no knees. The fellow took his snapshot just when the legs happened to be perfectly straight."





"I'm thinking that perhaps——" began Macdonald, adjusting his eye-glasses.

"Don't think, Mac," advised Wilson. "It might hurt you. Besides, it is no use you thinking that if the dog would kindly pass on things would be easy. He won't."

"The man's general pose seems to me to imply movement to the left," Tomkins thought.

"On the contrary," Melville declared, "it appears to me clearly to suggest movement to the right."

"Now, look here, you men," said Russell, whose opinions always carried respect in the club. "It strikes me that what we have to do is to consider the attitude of the lady rather than that of the man. Does her attention seem to be directed to somebody by her side?"

Everybody agreed that it was impossible to say.

"I've got it!" shouted Wilson. "Extraordinary that none of you have seen it. It is as clear as possible. It all came to me in a flash!"

"Well, what is it?" asked Baynes.

"Why, it is perfectly obvious. You see which way the dog is going—to the left. Very well. Now, Baynes, to whom does the dog belong?"

"To the detective!"

The laughter against Wilson that followed this announcement was simply boisterous, and so prolonged that Russell, who had at the time possession of the photo, seized the opportunity for making a most minute examination of it. In a few moments he held up his hands to invoke silence.

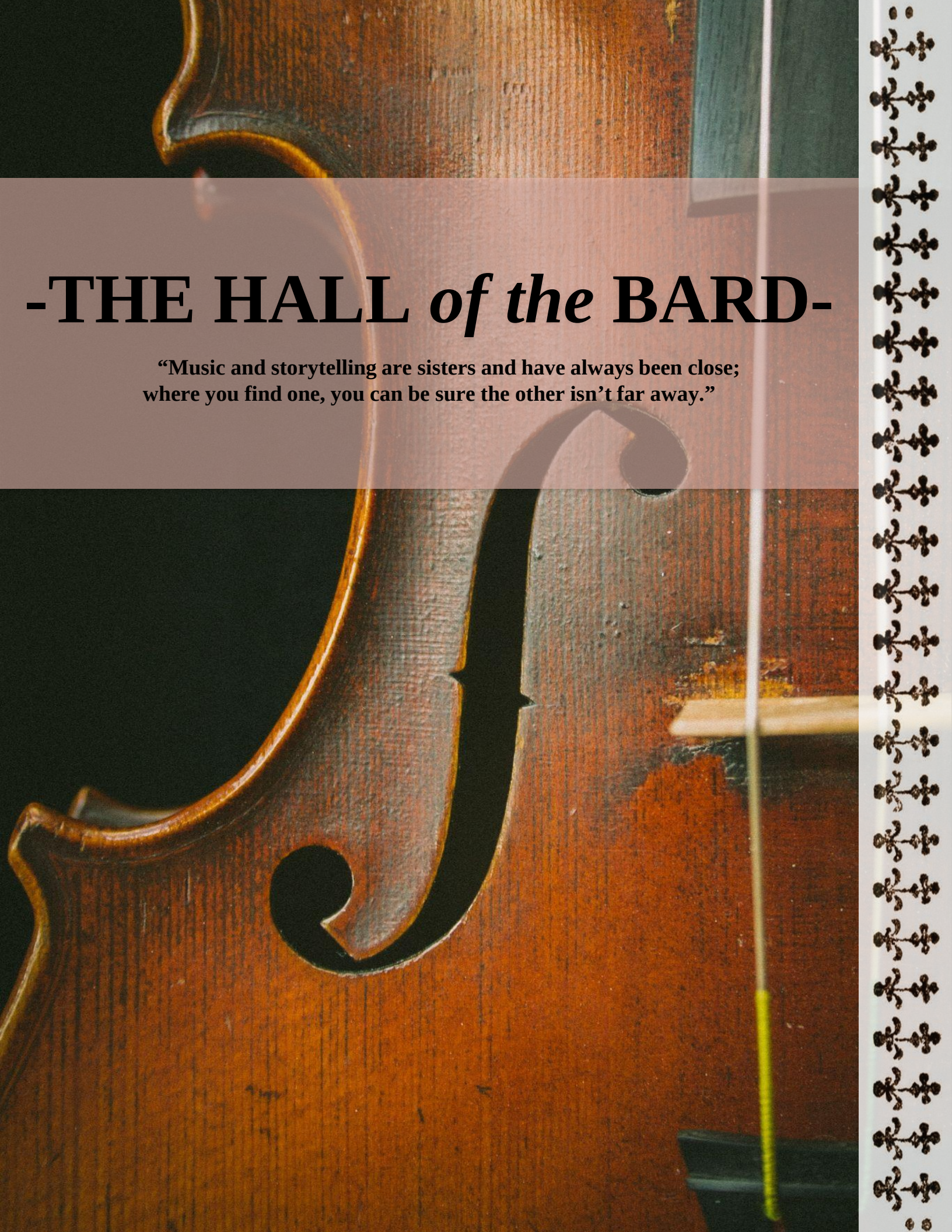
"Baynes is right," he said. "There is important evidence there which settles the matter with certainty. Assuming that the gentleman is really Lord Marksford—and the figure, so far as it is visible, is his—I have no hesitation myself in saying that——"

"Stop!" all the members shouted at once.

"Don't break the rules of the club, Russell, though Wilson did," said Melville. "Recollect that 'no member shall openly disclose his solution to a puzzle unless all present consent.'"

"You need not have been alarmed," explained Russell. "I was simply going to say that I have no hesitation in declaring that Lord Marksford is walking in one particular direction. In which direction I will tell you when you have all 'given it up.'"





# -THE HALL *of the* BARD-

“Music and storytelling are sisters and have always been close;  
where you find one, you can be sure the other isn’t far away.”



# THE HALL OF THE BARD

by Rachel Baker

Welcome back to the Hall, friend! We saved a spot for you. Now, I understand if you would rather try to catch a breeze by the door, but you'll be taking your chances with the flies if you do. I've been shooing them away from my drink for hours.

Suit yourself. Wherever you sit, I'm glad you came. It's been a long afternoon here. Every minute feels like an hour when the heat sits so heavy. As the late light oozes from the sky like honey off a spoon, I admit I wish nothing more than for the day to be over. Lighting our customary fire is out of the question. I'm already slowly roasting where I sit. Ah, well, there are things we can change and things we can't and dwelling on our discomfort will only heighten our discontent. That's the thing about heat; sometimes it makes us lazy and sometimes it makes the blood boil—and sometimes both. How often have you sat miserably under a wet blanket of humid air, not sure whether you want to melt into the floor or smash a stack of plates and dance on the pieces? Your head feels like it's full of cottonwood fluff and before you know it, you've done something you wish you hadn't or said something you can't take back. When the dust clears, it doesn't matter what you intended.

There's a song I know—maybe you've heard it—about a rash decision on a hot day, a tragic tale of how a sweet summer afternoon can turn sour in a single instant. I made next to no editorial changes to this one other than updating some of the language. It's an old story, told many times in many ways, and why wouldn't it be when this story has it all? Handsome knights, fair ladies, portentous dreams, restless ghosts, and of course pure, true love. More than enough to distract us from the heat for a moment. Moment by moment—moments are all we have—a string of choices large and small, one after another after another, with no way to know the small ones from the large until we've made them.

And of course, this one. This moment when you're here with me and I'm here with you. Set aside the rest for a while. Listen.



## Fair Margaret and Sweet William(Child 74)

As it fell out on a long summer's day,  
Two lovers, they sat on a hill;  
They sat there all that summer's day,  
And could not talk their fill.

'I see no harm by you, Margaret,  
Nor you see none by me;  
Before tomorrow eight o'clock  
A wedding you shall see.'

Sweet William came to Margaret's bower,  
And he knocked at the ring,  
And who so ready as Lady Margaret  
To rise and to let him in?

Down then came her father dear,  
Clothed all in blue:  
'I pray, Sweet William, tell to me  
What love's between my daughter and you?'

'I know none by her,' he said,  
'And she knows none by me;  
Before tomorrow at this time  
Another bride you'll see.'

Fair Margaret sat in her bower window,  
A'combing of her hair,  
And there spied William and his bride  
As they were riding near.

Down she cast her ivory comb,  
And up she tossed her hair;  
She went out from her bower alive,  
But never so more came there.

When day was gone, and night was come,  
And all folk were asleep,  
In glided Margaret's grimly ghost,  
And stood at William's feet.

'How d'ye like your bed, Sweet William?  
How d'ye like your sheet?  
And how d'ye like that lady there,  
That lies in your arms asleep?'

'Well I like my bed, Margaret,  
And well I like my sheet;  
But better I like that fair lady  
That stands at my bed's feet.'

'God give you joy, you lovers two,  
In bride-bed fast asleep;  
Lo, I go to my green grass grave,  
And wear my winding sheet.'

When night was gone, and day was come,  
All people were awake,  
William's bride waked from her sleep,  
And thus to him she spake:

'I dreamed a dream, my wedded lord,  
That seldom comes to good;  
I dreamed our bower was full of swine,  
And our bride-bed full of blood.'

'Such dreams, such dreams, my lady sweet,  
They never do prove good,  
To dream thy bower is full of swine,  
And thy bride-bed full of blood.'

William called his merry men all,  
By one, by two, and by three,  
Saying, 'I'll away to Margaret's bower,  
By the leave of my lady.'

When he came to Margaret's bower,  
He knocked at the ring,  
And who so ready as Margaret's brothers  
To let Sweet William in?

'Oh, is she in the parlor,' he said,  
'Or is she in the hall?  
Or is she in the long chamber,  
Amongst her merry maids all?'

'She's not in the parlor,' her brothers said,  
'Nor is she in the hall,  
But she is in the long chamber,  
Laid out against the wall.'

'Open the winding sheet,' he cried,  
'That I may see the dead;  
That I may kiss her pale and wan  
Whose lips were once so red!'

With that up spoke her brothers,  
And made a piteous moan:  
'You may go kiss your jolly bride,  
And leave our sister alone!'



Fair Margaret and Sweet William (Child 74)

'If I do kiss my jolly bride,  
I do but what is right;  
For I made no vow to your sister dear,  
By day or yet by night.

'Pray tell me then how much you'll deal  
Of your white bread and your wine;  
So much as is dealt at her funeral today  
Tomorrow you'll need at mine.'

Margaret died today, today,  
Sweet William died the morrow;  
Margaret died for pure, true love,  
Sweet William died for sorrow.

On Margaret's grave there grew a rose,  
On William's grew a briar;  
They grew till they joined in a lover's knot,  
Which all folk did admire.

There came then a parish clerk,  
As you this truth shall hear,  
Who by misfortune cut them down,  
Or they would still be there.

— ◆ —

We'll have to take Francis Child's word for that. I wasn't there myself. And the moral of the story is—what? Don't string two sweethearts along at once? Don't panic when you meet the parents? Stop and think, just for a moment, before you do something rash?

What? No, I'm not going to tell you. That's for you to decide. But as with many tragedies, it does seem like a lot of sorrow could have been avoided if the characters in the song had taken a second to consider their actions. If only William had been truthful with Margaret from the start, or if only he hadn't panicked and blurted out a lie to her father. If only Margaret had taken a few deep breaths before rushing out of her bower and considered there might be more to live for than a dishonest lover.

"I made no vow to her," William protests later, but one wonders whether that's its own kind of lie. William gave Margaret sweet words and summer afternoons, not to mention veiled references to a wedding she had no reason to believe wouldn't be hers. Lovers and storytellers both make promises by our actions, by what we offer and what we withhold. I made no vow to you, either, when you sat down by the door—not with my words—but if I had broken it, I think you would know. You'd be justified in holding me to it. So before you let the heat go to your head, stop and think for a moment. Consider what promises you might be breaking.

My promise to you today is this: you'll always be welcome here. Until next time.

— ◆ —



**About the Author**

Rachel Baker is a fiction writer, playwright, and lover of storytelling in all its forms. She has had short plays produced with Theater Cedar Rapids in Cedar Rapids, IA and Violet Surprise Theater in Chicago, IL. She currently lives in Iowa City with her partner and their two cats, where she is working on her first novel and “will come and go all as she please, and not ask leave of any.”

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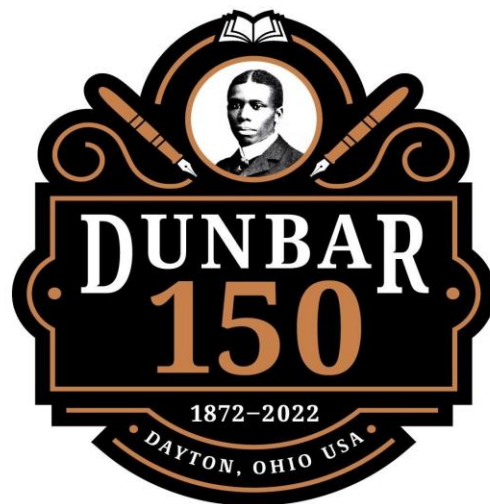
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