

Ten Orphan Fairy Tales

by Elli Peonidou.

Translated by Rosalind Lavington and Nicki Michael.

Παιδικά
Τα 10 ορφανά μαγικά

Elli Peonidou has written extensively for children of all ages, and here she has tackled perhaps a most difficult age group; 8 – 11 year olds. The age group who can read by themselves, perhaps with difficulty, but which still would like to be read to; the age group which needs a more complicated story, but in an engagingly easy format. The Ten Orphan Fairy Tales is a book which can be enjoyed by adults and children alike. It is almost a novel, but breaks into manageable bed time parts.

Ten Fairy Tales accidentally fell out of a hole in Grand Old Father Fairy Tale's sack as he was travelling from the Kingdom of Yesterday to the Kingdom of Today. Not only were they orphaned, but falling thus prematurely, none of them had been given their Happy Ending. And so Elli Peonidou sets out to tell us about the adventures each Orphan Fairy Tale encounters on her search through swamp, desert, mountain, sea, arctic ice, volcano, city, secret world of books, jungle, and the heavens. All the adventures yield at least one Happy Ending, and all the Fairies live happily ever after, although ultimately temporarily bereft of words.

This is a work of great imagination, using the cadences of traditional Fairy Story telling. Marooned between yesterday and today, her Orphan

Fairies roam from worlds of pure fantasy but also stray into situations which are recognisably contemporary. On one journey, 'The Red Volcano', we meet Pegasus whose diet consists of poetry! His mother is Medusa, and we find her washing her snake wig; laying out the serpents to comb them. On another 'The Concrete City' we encounter the ugliness of modern property development and the loneliness of the long term sick. In this story we are invited to consider the value of wealth, and the value of friendship.

Indeed, Elli's Fairies have to wrestle with serious themes such as indolence, selflessness, taking responsibility for our actions, looking after our environment and the importance of books. But how lovely to be cured of indolence by a chorus of birds, or for a solitary pomegranate to shame the selfishness of trees laden with oranges and olives! With the help of her mermaid Happy Ending the Fourth Fairy took on the task of cleaning up the sea, as well as bringing happiness to a reviled sea urchin. Have you ever considered the discomfort of being a Fairy Story squeezed into the confines of a book, only to be released by being read?

In contrast to much literature for this age group published in the U.K., this book is innocent. This is not a bad thing. All young adults retain their capacity for fantasy, and these are lyrical themes indeed to be enjoyed by young and old alike.

ROSALIND LAVINGTON

Here's a listing of the .doc files that make up the complete set of Orphan Fairy Tales written by Elli Peonidou and translated into English by Rosalind Lavington and Nicki Michael.

These files represent the final translations carried out in 2003 and 2004. More information from:

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<i>File-name</i>	<i>contents</i>
Orphana	introduction & fairytale number 1
Fairy2	fairytale number 2
Fairy3	ditto 3
Fairy 4	ditto 4
Fairy56	ditto 5 & 6
Fairy7	ditto 7
Fairyrest	ditto 8, 9, 10 and Conference

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Once upon a time thousands and thousands of years ago, The Grand Old Father of Fairy Tales was carrying a sack of his stories from the Kingdom of Yesterday to the Kingdom of Today. As he was going up the Silent Mountain, a hole began to appear in the sack, and through the slit ten fairy tales fell to the ground. They rolled head over heels straight into the depths of time. The Grand Old Father of Fairy Tales knew nothing of what had happened. In any case, he had ten thousand Fairy Tales in his sack may be even twenty thousand! The other stories had seen their sisters fall out, but were not able to say anything because they were on the Silent Mountain. When the Grand Old Father of Fairy Tales arrived in the Kingdom of Today and opened his sack, it was too late. Besides, he had so much work to do, running from child to child, from book to book, sharing out his stories, that he couldn't bother his head over ten lost tales.

So those Ten Fairy Tales grew up by themselves like wild animals, without The Grand Old Father of Fairy Tales, without Grandmother sitting by the hearth, without Fairy Godmothers floating on feathers, and without Kings on the throne. They were Ten Orphan Fairy Tales.

When the Ten Orphan Tales were a thousand years old, at just about the time when they should grow up into real Fairy Stories, they walked steadily away from the Silent Mountain and cast lots to decide where each of them should go to seek their Happy Endings. And so began

The First Fairy Tale.

The First Tale drew the lot for the Valley of the Grey Swamp. She walked and she walked until she met a Blind Lizard.

"Where are you going to, my dear Fairy Tale?" asked the Blind Lizard.

"I'm going to look for my Happy Ending," said the Fairy Tale. "I'm one of the Ten Orphan Fairy Tales."

"Come, I'll show you the way," said the Blind Lizard. "Tread where I tread."

So the Fairy Tale followed the Blind Lizard and they arrived at a ruined castle. There were broken stones and rubble with ten metre high weeds growing up in between. Out of the ruins flew a flock of wild birds. One of the birds who seemed to be their leader, perching on the highest part of the castle, said

"Motherless Tale from out of the blue,
Little Lost Tale, am I waiting for you?
I've waited here for years and years
In this castle falling about my ears.
For one to change our life must come
To settle here and make a home."

"Here we are!" said the Blind Lizard. "And if you're telling the truth and you really are an Orphan Fairy Tale, then you'll find your Happy Ending here. It's been waiting for you secretly."

The First Orphan Fairy Tale replied "These ruins fill me with melancholy. They smell damp."

"In times gone by, there stood here the most magnificent castle in the whole valley," said the Blind Lizard. "And I was a most refined Lady Lizard. I sat in the sun every morning and every afternoon I took a little turn. Now look! Everything in ruins!"

"Well, first of all we'll have to rebuild the castle," said the Orphan Fairy Tale thoughtfully. "If you please, call the wild birds to me, for I have a plan."

The Blind Lizard called the wild birds. The Fairy Tale instructed them to gather up the building materials: sand, clay, and water. The wild birds began the task immediately. They collected piles and piles of earth and sand from the neighbouring hill, and they filled pails and pails of water from the nearby river.

After that the Orphan Fairy Tale called the bees, the lizards, ants, mice and all the other animals who lived in the ruined castle. They worked together as hard as they could, building day and night. The Orphan Fairy Tale gave the directions. The ants and bees brought the earth, the mice filled the buckets of water, and the lizards did the construction. Bluebottles, mosquitoes and maggots carried the sand high up, grain by grain. It was an enormous task, but there were millions of workers. Besides, there weren't any strikes, holidays, or tea breaks!

In one month and three days the castle was ready. It was a most magnificent castle, with thousands of doors and thousands of windows. The Orphan Fairy Tale sat herself down and admired the castle. She

admired it for a day, she admired it for two days, she admired it for three days. Finally she mused, 'A castle without people is like a Fairy Tale without a happy ending. Better it should remain a ruined castle where the birds can roost. We must search for humans and bring them here'.

"The humans live in the middle of the Swamp," said the Blind Lizard, who could read thoughts just like all the blind. "They sank into it gradually one by one, because they had nothing better to do."

The Orphan Fairy Tale said: "So let us offer them something better to do. If you please, call the birds to me."

The Blind Lizard called the birds and then the Orphan Fairy Tale said,

"The humans need something better to draw them out of the swamp and settle here in the castle. We must give the castle to them. Only you can achieve this"

"Us?" cried the birds, "We have tried for a hundred years but we haven't achieved anything."

"You didn't try hard enough, " said the First Orphan Fairy Tale.

"Here's what you should do. Choose amongst yourselves the best songsters in the world. With these songsters you will make a choir, the most melodious choir in the world. The choir will go and take its place around the Grey Swamp, and there you will start to sing the sweetest melodies in the world. You will do this every day for thirty days. When the thirty days are finished you will come back here so that I can tell you what to do next".

The birds went away and did everything which the First Fairy tale had instructed them to do. Whereas before the birds from the wild didn't know how to make any sounds but untrained squawks, now they

started practising throat exercises. They began to make tuneful notes: sweet and lovely trills. Then their leader chose the best songsters amongst them, with the most beautiful voices, and created the most melodious choir in the world.

The choir took up their positions around the swamp, and for thirty days from dawn 'til dusk they sang the sweetest melodies in the world. At the end of the thirty days the leader of the birds went to the First Orphan Fairy Tale and said to her:

"We've done exactly as you instructed, First Orphan Fairy Tale, and nothing has happened. The swamp is still a swamp and the humans are still sunk in it."

"It's difficult for the music to carry into the swamp," said the First Orphan Fairy Tale, "but not impossible! You must go and sing for another thirty days!"

After another thirty days the leader of the birds went back to the First Orphan Fairy Tale.

"The swamp is still a swamp and the humans are still sunk in it. Nothing has happened," he told her.

The First Orphan Fairy Tale was insistent. Another thirty days! The birds began to sing again. Nothing. Not a sign of a movement. The leader of the birds again said to the First Orphan Fairy Tale,

"It's unfair to make us strain our throats all this time! The swamp is dead!"

"You can't be certain," said the First Orphan Fairy Tale "we don't know what's happening under

the surface. The time has come to find out!"

She told the choir of birds to go and take their places ten metres away from the Swamp, and to start singing. The next day she told them to take their places another ten metres away from the Swamp. On the third day another ten metres. The same thing happened every day for thirty days. On the thirtieth day, hardly had the birds begun to sing when something stirred in the Swamp! It was a human head. First one then another. It was the humans pushing up out of the dark to see what was happening. The humans called out to the birds,

"Hey, you birds, come a bit closer so we can hear you. We're bored sunk down here in the Swamp. Your music is sweet and we like it. So come a bit closer ..."

But the birds pretended not to hear. Instead, singing all the time, they moved further away. Very very slowly the humans came out of the Swamp, and followed the birds. As they emerged they looked at each other and burst into laughter.

"What a sight you are! Your face is all slimey and grey!"

"What a sight! - your hair's all tangled up with weeds and water snakes!"

"Pooh! What a niff - just like bad fish!"

The First Orphan Fairy Tale approached the humans.

"Poor you" she said to them, "Come and look at yourselves in the mirror."

The humans looked at themselves in the mirror and got a great fright.

"How on earth has this happened to us? Quick! Bring some clean water so we can have a wash."

So they washed themselves one by one in the river, and dried themselves in the sun. Now that they were clean their eyes could open wide, and they began to look around. They examined the castle. They marvelled at the castle and made as if to go into it. But the First Orphan Fairy Tale blocked their entrance.

"Whoever wants to come into the castle must first buy an entrance ticket," she said.

"We haven't got any money," a tall man said.

"May I know what you did before you sank into the Swamp?" the First Orphan Fairy Tale asked him.

"I was the head cook in the castle"

"Then take your chef's hat and apron and run into the kitchen," said the First Orphan Fairy Tale.

The second one was a farmer, the third a teacher, the fourth a doctor. One by one the humans went about their work just as if they had never left the castle. Little by little they forgot the Swamp. The castle came back to life. Voices, songs, quarrels, all the bustle of human activity filled the castle just as before. And every morning the birds sang their songs from different balconies.

A long time went by in this fashion, but the First Fairy Tale was not content. She complained to the Blind Lizard.

"You told me that I would find my Happy Ending. But I don't see it anywhere."

The Blind Lizard whispered to her. "Shsh - I can hear footsteps. Someone got left behind. Go and take a look!"

The First Fairytale went back to the Grey Swamp. Coming towards her very very slowly, bent over her walking stick, was a little old lady, a hundred years old.

"How did you get left behind, Granny?"

"Ah, my child, it was a great effort for them to pull me out of the Swamp. I told them, 'leave me here! Where will you take an old lady like me?' But they insisted. 'Come with us', they said 'you can't live all by yourself!' Now everyone's got a job, and what can I do? Tell me, little one, what can an old lady like me do?"

"And what did you do when you lived in the castle, Granny?"

"I didn't have a job at all! I was useless then, and I'm just as useless now! All I did was sit down all day and tell stories to my little grandchildren. That's why I'm telling you its better for me to go back and throw myself into the Swamp. I'll always be useless!"

The First Fairy Tale knelt down in front of the old lady and, filled with joy, kissed her hands.

"Are you saying that that's not work, my dear Granny? But this is the most important work of all! You will sit on a golden throne and take your rest, and when the mood takes you, you shall begin telling your Fairy Stories. You will be my Happy Ending! A human can survive for a little while without bread and water, but not even for a second without a Fairy Tale!"

The First Orphan Fairy Tale curled herself up happily in the old lady's lap. The Blind Lizard sighed with contentment. Now at last she could lie down peacefully and sun her frozen body.

Everything had turned out as it should. The birds had found their voices, the castle its humans, the humans their jobs, and the First Orphan Fairy Tale her Happy Ending. Every evening in the castle at dusk, when the birds cease their singing, Granny begins to tell the Fairy Tale, who definitely isn't an orphan any more!

In time the Grey Swamp itself became a Fairy story. Nobody remembers any longer that the humans had sunk down into it. Nobody wants to remember the bad old days. Only the Blind Lizard, who remembers everything, nods her head with a knowing smile.

when they started talking all at once, thus beginning what they called their Conference. They talked about their Happy Endings and the people they had got to know. They spoke of the difficulties the Fairy Tales had encountered everywhere on their journeys, as well as the adventures and the pleasures. After a few minutes the Seventh Fairy Tale threw in an idea.

“What would you say, sisters, if this our first reunion were to be a ‘Conference of Changing Places?’ I’d like to suggest that we should exchange our Happy Endings, and the places we live in, for a little while. So, for instance, though I’m happy with my Little Girl in the Cement City, all the time I dream about seeing some other places, like the Vault of the Heavens, or the Bright Blue Sea. Why live pinned down in the same old place all the time?”

“Seventh makes sense!” said the Fifth Fairy Tale. “Me too, I think it’s wonderful to live with the dwarves and Mrs Polar Bear, but how can I say it? - The cold gets me down. Just for a change I’d very much like to go to the Red Volcano for a short while.”

“I offer it to you for a month or longer!” said the Sixth Fairy Tale, “I’d be happy on holiday on the Ice White Mountain or in the Grey Valley.”

“And me – I’d like a story in the Paper World,” said the Third Fairy Tale. “I’d get to know other Fairy Tales and the world of books generally. It would cheer up my Wise Man too, there on the Brown Mountain.”

“Well then, if you want, come at once!” said the Eighth Fairy Tale. “In exchange I’d be happy to take a dive in the Bright Blue Sea!”

“And me,” said the Second Fairy tale, “A trip in the Green Jungle would give me a lot of pleasure. I like the Yellow Desert, but it palls a little when you live there all the time.”

To cut a long story short, the Ten Fairy Tales had come to a unanimous decision: to change places for a short while.

They talked about every detail. They examined it from every angle, they weighed it up in their fairy scales, and at last decided on their exchanges, each having a free choice, and not drawing lots this time.

The First Fairy Tale who suffered from rheumatism as a result of the damp in the Grey Valley, preferred the Brown Mountain, with the Wise Man and the Morning Star.

The Second who was tired of the Yellow Desert, as we have said, chose a visit to the Jungle.

#The Third decided to leave the Brown Mountain for the Paper World of a book. She wanted to get to know new people and new fairy tales.

The Fourth from the Bright Blue Sea said she wanted to go to the Yellow Desert. She wanted to dry her body out a bit, and to have a break from the games with the little fish and octopuses.

#The Fifth who had frozen on the Ice White Mountain, chose the Red Volcano so she could warm up a bit, and also hear Sweet Tongue sing.

#The Sixth who had almost evaporated as she came out from the Red Volcano said she wanted the moisture of the Grey Valley along with the company of the Birds' Choir.

The Seventh had grown tired of the noise in the Cement City and so preferred the quiet of the Vault of Heaven and the riddles the moon asked.

The Eighth who had gone numb squashed in the Paper World, decided to go and take a dive in the Bright Blue Sea to get the life back in her limbs.

The Ninth had grown tired of the luxuriant growth and the heat of the Jungle, and so decided on the refreshing quiet of the Ice White Mountain and the companionship of Mrs Polar Bear and the dwarves.

#The Tenth who lived in the Vault of Heaven, missed human company and so she preferred the Cement City with the Little Girl and the Old Man.

So then, the topic of the first Conference - Changing Places – had been made a reality in a trice without passports, I.D. cards, voting and such like. The exchange visits were not to last for long – just until the next Conference.

The problem however, was quite different. What with the discussions in the Savannah of Speech the Fairy Tales were swept along, each one saying her bit, and lots more besides. When you find Ten Fairy Tales together, especially sisters, and orphans what's more, disaster happens, my friends! They had talked so much that they has run out of words! On the last day of the Conference they opened their mouths and instead of words out came meaningless croaks. As you can well imagine, a Fairy Tale could suffer nothing worse than this: that words should have left her. That's why we say, 'What's left of a Fairy Tale if the words are missing?'

The matter was serious, and so before they separated they decided that it was necessary that the next Conference should be called 'The Conference for Collecting Words'. They issued a special proclamation, which from top to bottom read; 'Whosoever amongst mortals or immortals, whosoever amongst witches and fairy godmothers, whosoever amongst wizards, children, writers and royal subject, whosoever has words to spare, must shut them in a box and tie it up with a yellow ribbon. One of the Ten Fairy Tales will shortly arrive at your door. She will give the secret knock ten times, and you will deliver the sealed box to her. The words shall be transported by hand with every due care to the Second Fairy Tale Conference, the

subject of which shall be 'The Collecting of Words', (date and time to be decided).

Whosoever collects the rarest words shall be awarded the Hobel Prize for Fairy Tales, which is a visit to the world of the Ten Fairy Tales.'

With this proclamation the end of the First Conference of Orphan Fairy Tales' was announced. Now all of them eagerly await the second one!

The Eighth Fairy Tale

The Eighth Fairy Tale drew the lot for the Paper World. It was the most complicated journey of all, even though it looked easy. Her lot clearly told her “The Eighth Fairy Tale will find her Happy Ending in the Paper World. It’s close by yet far away. It’s everywhere and yet nowhere. It’s easy and yet needs work.”

With only these words for help, the Eighth Fairy Tale started her journey to find her Happy Ending. Her first stop was a school. She thought to herself that you could find lots of paper in a school. ‘Paper World’ must mean papers. The teacher was teaching arithmetic; two plus two makes four, and such like. The Fairy Tale sat down to listen, but she got bored. She knew things aren’t always like that; that’s to say that two plus two don’t always make four, especially in fairy tales. But she was patient, and when the lesson ended she went to the teacher privately.

“Good morning to you, I’m the Eighth Orphan Fairy Tale. I don’t know whether you’ve heard of me?” she began.

“Sit down. May I offer you a coffee or an orange squash ...?” said the teacher.

It was plain that he didn’t understand what he was talking about, for it’s well known that all types of liquid give Fairy Tales indigestion.

“I’m looking for my Happy Ending, you know, which is in the Paper World. Have you seen it by any chance?”

“Hmm – me? – not at all, but we can ask the children. We haven’t got any thieves here, so you needn’t worry Unless maybe, some stranger came this way, saw it and stole it. Is it big? How much is it worth? Does it fit into a pocket? ”

The Fairy Tale thought that she was wasting her time. The teacher was all in a fog when it came to Fairy Tales.

“Leave it. It doesn’t matter. I must be going,” she said.

“But for the teacher it was well nigh impossible to let her go.

“Since you have a suspicion that it fell out here.... The thing you’ve lost What was it?”

“My Happy Ending.....”

“Ah yes.. Since you suspect that someone has stolen it, you must search very hard.

Our school, you know, has a good reputation and it’s the best school in the whole region. Our pupils never play truant, we finish our work on the dot, and things never get lost.”

And so saying the teacher rang a bell. A girl came in at once.

“This is our first year Prefect,” said the teacher, “she will help you. Both of you go along to the children and ask each of them in turn, about ... somethingum ... her Happy Ending that she’s lost. She’s looking for it in the Paper World..... Have I got it right? Me, I’m sorry, I’ve got lots of demanding work to keep me busy. I’ve got a parents’ meeting, a staff meeting, I’ve got Good morning!”

The Fairy Tale left the room with the first year Prefect. She turned and said to the Fairy Tale with a grin,

“I recognise you, in spite of your dress. Aren’t you the Eighth Orphan Fairy Tale? Come on, I’ve been waiting for you. Let’s go to my class!”

They went along to the little ones in the first form. They all stood up happily. They welcomed the Fairy Tale and hugged her and kissed her. They cheered altogether, clapping their hands. When they sat down the teacher opened a book and the children

began to chirp like birds. They recited songs, poems, and then Fairy Tales. The Fairy Tale was very pleased. This was her world.

“Might you be my Happy Ending, perhaps?” she asked the teacher.

“Me? - I don’t think so, but then again, how would I know if I were?” she laughed.

“Let’s say that I’m just one of your Happy Endings.”

“Do you mean to say that I’ve still got lots of other journeys to make?”

“The only thing I can say is that I will help you”.

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The teacher suggested that the children play hide and seek. It was a very strange hide and seek. They hid their books under their desks! Then their teacher asked them,

“Now children, who can tell me where your fairy stories are?”

The children pointed underneath their desks.

“And if I took the books and threw them out of the window, you wouldn’t have any fairy stories any more.....?”

“We’d go and fetch them,” said a small boy.

“And if I threw them into the sea....?”

“Then we’d get other ones,” said another small boy.

“And if we threw all of those into the sea...?”

“Then fairy story writers would write some more,” said a third small boy.

Our Fairy Tale understood. She’d find her other Happy Endings somewhere in an office where they write fairy tales.

Happily she said goodbye to the teacher and to the children, and spread her wings to fly off to another place. She was in such a hurry that she got all tangled up in a tree.

The first form children burst into laughter. They could see her through the window.

“I’ll come back to you again soon,” said the Fairy Tale as she flew away, “as soon as I find my other Happy Endings. We’ll play hide and seek ....”

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The second stop for our Fairy Tale was an office. A Gentleman with Glasses sat in front of lots of papers. He was writing then tearing up the paper, writing and tearing up the paper.

“Good morning,” said the Fairy Tale, “May I introduce myself to you? I’m the Eighth Orphan Fairy Tale and I’m looking for my other Happy Ending. Maybe you’ve seen it?”

“Where have you come from? Are you one of mine, or are you a stranger?”

“I told you. I’m an orphan and I’m searching for my second Happy Ending. I found my first Happy Ending in a school ...”

“Ah yes, you’re for adoption. Could you wait, please?”

The Fairy Tale looked all around. There were lots and lots of fairy tales there, but they weren’t finished. One didn’t have a head or legs. Others didn’t have lips and couldn’t speak. The fourth had a mouth, but shut tight so it couldn’t smile. The fifth was scary and the others were afraid of it. All of them, every last one had something wrong .

They were thrown on papers, heaps of papers, on the floor and in drawers.

“Ouff!” said the Gentleman with the Glasses at last, “I can’t find the ending, overwhelmed as I am with fairy tales. Now, tell me then. You’re an orphan and you want to be in a book with all the others?”

“I want to find my second Happy Ending, that’s what I want. And if my Happy Ending is to be found in a book, I haven’t got any objection”

“Hmm, this is something we need to talk about. As you can see I write fairy tales. I should be very happy to adopt you and put you in a book; in other words to become

your second Happy Ending, like you said. But I'm thinking, wouldn't it be very boring for you between the pages? You have learned to roam around free. In a book it will seem as if you're in prison, - you'll get really fed up!"

Our Eighth Fairy Tale didn't know what to decide. True enough she didn't like the darkness and squeezing in a book.

"I've got a suggestion," said the Gentleman with the Glasses, "If you like you can go in for a little while, and if you don't like it you can come out again."

The Eighth Fairy Tale agreed. She joined the other fairy tales belonging to the Gentleman with the Glasses. For the first few days there was a lot of discomfort, machines and type setting whilst the book was born. Then more discomfort in boxes, journeys by car and into the book shop. The Fairy Tale got to know a lot of people there; fairies from fairy tales, poems and legends. It was nice there, and she liked it. And so it was that being very sociable she made a lot of friends. Her first and best friend was the fairy tale Snow White. Night after night they talked together, because they were right next door to each other on the shelf. Her second friend on the other side was Sweet Pea. A little further on was the Little Prince, and furthest away with her red hood and the wolf, was Little Red Riding Hood.

Now the Eighth Orphan Fairy Tale didn't feel that she was so much of an orphan. It was as if she had found a family. But something was still missing. She felt squashed amongst all those papers. She asked Tom Thumb who was as we have said, her closest friend,

"You fairy tales who live in books in books, what do you do when you get fed up?"

"Good question," said Tom Thumb, "But some of us are lucky, we don't stay long on the shelf. I don't want to boast, but me personally, you'll see, I'll be gone in a couple

of days. Children love me, and I think their mothers do too, - and they'll take me away."

"They'll take you away where? You'll have to forgive me, but as you know I'm an orphan and I don't know...."

"They'll take me home. They'll 'buy' me, as they say."

"And what will they do to you there at home?"

"Poor you! You really are in the dark! They'll read me, and give me life. I'll become a real live, much loved fairy tale."

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The Eighth Fairy Tale listened carefully. She'd like very much to go to somebody's home herself, with a Mother and a child to read her, so she'd be a real live much loved Fairy Tale. This way she'd find a third Happy Ending. So as soon as the opportunity arose, as soon as a Mother touched her lightly, she tried to attract her attention. She wiggled her body, puffed herself up, put on a little colour, and finally began to sing softly,

"Please I beg you look at me

I'm an orphan, plain to see

A home is what I really long for

So I won't wander like a beggar."

The other fairy tales around her grew angry. This wasn't a proper way to get chosen by someone!

"Listen," said the Little Prince sternly, "We're friends, but what you're doing isn't right. You can't persuade Mothers and children to take you just because you say you're an orphan! What does orphan mean? The rules of the Paper World say that if

you're truly deserving, then definitely someone will find you and bring you out of hiding."

"Oh, forgive me. I'm really sorry," said the Eighth Fairy Tale, "I didn't know your rules."

And so she sat back politely squeezed into her corner. The other fairy tales left one after the other. Sweet Pea, just as he had predicted, left first. The Eighth Fairy Tale was very sad for she missed his company, his jokes and fun. He was her first friend and she felt lonely without him. She thought about giving up, but her other friend, The Little Prince, advised her to be a bit patient.

"If you go now you'll miss your turn," he said to her, "You'll see, someone will find you and take you away."

So the Eighth Fairy Tale stayed and waited there on the shelf, squeezed between the other books and fairy tales. Then suddenly one day she heard a cheerful sound.

"Mummy, this one here, I want this fairy tale. We had it in my class at school, my teacher told it to us."

It was a little boy from the first form where the Fairy Tale had first visited and played hide and seek with the teacher. His mother took the Eighth Fairy Tale off the shelf, and put it in the Little Boy's hands.

Our Eighth Fairy Tale was overcome with delight, and quickly said goodbye to the other fairy tales.

"Until we meet again," she whispered.

"Say some nice things about us where you're going, so we don't get left on the shelf too," a little fairy tale who was new on the shelf called to her.

“I’ll do whatever I can,” promised our Eighth Fairy Tale as she settled cosily in the arms of the Little Boy.

That evening in the Little Boy’s bed as they were talking, the Eighth Fairy Tale asked him,

“Little Boy, maybe you’re my third and best Happy Ending?”

The Little Boy laughed.

“And what does it mean, that I’m your third and best Happy Ending? How funny you are, Fairy Tale!”

The Eighth Fairy Tale didn’t ask another thing. She was warm and comfy in the Little Boy’s bed. They went to sleep together, and then still together, they found themselves back in the Paper World again, journeying through other magic worlds. Certainly for now he was her third Happy Ending. The next day they went to class and played hide and seek with the children.

And, as we say, they all lived happily ever after.

The Ninth Fairy Tale

The Ninth Fairy Tale drew the lot for the Green Jungle. It was a difficult but beautiful Journey. First stop the River of Crocodiles. As she tried to cross it, a fat crocodile who was basking on the bank stopped her.

“Where are you off to, if you please?” said the Crocodile.

“I’m going to the Green Jungle. I’m searching for my Happy Ending.

“In order to go into the Green Jungle you must have a permit,” said the Crocodile,

“Entry is not permitted to anyone who comes from the civilised world. Your civilisation gives the Jungle a headache.”

“But I’m nothing but a Fairy Tale, and an orphan at that! I don’t come from the civilised world, I come from the depths of time, and I’m searching for my Happy ending as I told you.”

“But me, I’m under orders to take a bite out of anyone who dares to cross the river. So don’t blame me if I bite you!”

The Crocodile was a bit of a numbskull, and he didn’t understand about Fairy Tales.

“You said that anyone going into the Jungle needs a permit.”

“Certainly, a permit from the King of the Jungle, personal, with a seal.”

“And where shall I find him, please?”

“In the Jungle, of course!”

“But how shall I get into the Jungle if it’s not allowed?”

“I don’t know. That’s your problem!”

We know well that Fairy Tales don’t give up, even when confronted by numbskulls like the Crocodile. The Ninth Fairy Tale realised she’d have to find some other way to cross the river. Further down there was a Blind Mouse. He was collecting stores for the winter. He was wearing dark glasses because the sun bothered him.

“Hallo,” said the Fairy Tale, “please could you show me the way to the King of the Jungle? I’ve got to get a permit to enter the Jungle.”

“I’m very happy to point it out, but you’ll need a guide. Unfortunately I won’t be able to accompany you. I’m looking for winter stores, and my time is limited. Please, come this way.”

The route which the Blind Mouse showed her was a bit narrow. In fact it was a hole which led deep into the ground. However such things held no difficulties for Fairy Tales. Our Fairy Tale squeezed herself up and shrank into a ball, so small that she was like a walnut, and rolled into the hole. But it was very very dark in there. She couldn’t see the nose on her face, as they say.

“Hey, Mr Blind Mouse, have you got a little light?” she called. But the Blind Mouse didn’t hear her. He’d already gone off looking for his supplies.

So the Fairy Tale went on blindly in the Blind Mouse’s tunnels. She went for many miles without meeting a soul, - only tree roots and seedlings which blocked the way every so often. After a while she got fed up and began to say to herself

“How did I get tangled up in the hole, - me, - a fairy tale! ”

“A fairy tale? Really, you, a fairy tale? You honour our humble world?”

It was a tiny voice somewhere quite close.

“Who is it? Who’s speaking so close to me?” asked the Fairy Tale.

“A caterpillar, as small as a worm. I’ve never seen a fairy tale until now. It’s an honour for me.”

“And you can’t see one now either, it’s so dark!” said the Ninth Fairy Tale, “The Blind Mouse showed me the hole and after that nothing! I was walking blindly, and got lost in corridors and galleries. I must go to the King of the Jungle to get a permit.”

“Oh, how careless!” said the Caterpillar, “The Blind Mouse often makes mistakes like that. Because he doesn’t like the light he believes everyone prefers to be in darkness! I’ll show you the way myself. Follow me!”



Our Fairy Tale felt the Caterpillar's body; soft and damp. She followed him and soon she found herself outside in the light. The Caterpillar stopped.

“There, now you're close. The King will receive you, no matter where he is. You must forgive me, but I have to return to my house, it doesn't do to linger in a strange place. In the Jungle there are many dangers – birds and lot of other things. And a little caterpillar, alone and helpless, you understand could become a snack! Goodbye, and if you find a little corner in your list of characters, fit me in somewhere. All fairy tales forget us caterpillars. Perhaps it's because they believe that we can't speak, can't hear, and we can't see down there deep in the ground where we live. Yet we know how to do all those things, and we feel them, like any living thing. And I'm not ashamed to say that we are just as hard working as everyone else. Thanks to us the earth breathes. Without us it would die of suffocation. Oh, I'm talking too much. I do beg your pardon! My sadness overcame me. We are an unjustly treated species. Adieu, Fairy Tale, and have a good time, wherever you're going!”

The Fairy Tale felt for him. She made a note of the name 'caterpillar' in her list of characters. She would put him in at the first opportunity. He was so very polite! Now, for certain she was walking in the Jungle. The vegetation became very dense like real jungle. She made progress with difficulty. Suddenly a monkey dropped out of a tree right in front of her.

“Oh! You gave me a fright!” said the Fairy Tale, “But please tell me, where is the King of the Jungle? I must get a permit.”

“Hee, hee, hee! A permit for what?”

“A permit to enter the Jungle.”

“Hee, hee, hee! But you’re in the Jungle already!”

“Yes, but I haven’t got a permit.”

Hee, hee, hee! That’s exactly what the King will ask you the moment he sees you.

And when you say ‘I haven’t got a permit’ he’ll eat you up!”

“Your King eats fairy tales?”

Hee, hee, hee! He eats whatever he comes across.”

“But what shall I do then? I want to find my Happy Ending. Give me some advice, Monkey!”

“Hee, hee, hee! I don’t know. Ask the Elephant. He’s big, he’s got big feet, he’s got big ears, and a big nose. He should have a big brain, and luckily for you he hasn’t got a big mouth, hee, hee, hee, or big teeth, hee, hee, hee!”

“You’re right! I’ll go and ask him.”

The Elephant was grazing in a clearing.

“Good morning to you, Mr Elephant, have you perhaps seen my Happy Ending? I’m the Ninth Fairy Tale.

The Elephant turned round with difficulty to see who was speaking to him. He lifted his trunk high, and then let it down as if he were saying hello.

“Hello, and welcome to the Jungle. Fairy Tales seldom come all this way to us.”

“I drew a lot. We’re ten Fairy Tales you know, and we’re all searching for a Happy Ending. It seems to me that my Happy Ending is round about here somewhere.

Perhaps you could help me? ”

The Elephant scratched his forehead with his trunk and said philosophically,

“For each and all one fate is hidden

Some to be crowned and some louse ridden.

But if you want advice from me,

Proceed and soon a storm will break, you'll see!"

He didn't get to the end, for a great storm began which drenched everyone. The Fairy Tale hid under the Elephant to keep dry. It was an excellent shelter, as if it were a strong concrete ceiling. As soon as the rain stopped, the Fairy Tale asked again, "Have you seen my Happy Ending at all, Mr Elephant?"

The Elephant raised his trunk high like a politician speaking on a platform and said, "I have seen it, but it did not see me.

For my trunk it wouldn't pay one p,
It went in the direction of the King
Without a word to me or saying anything"

"What do you mean to say, Mr Elephant? - That my Happy Ending came this way and went to the King? Please tell me, where can I find this famous King of the Jungle?"

"Wherever you are you'll hear him. His roars shake us every morning, and always saying the same thing 'I'm the King, I'm the King'. He feels insecure. He believes everyone and anyone is plotting to kick him off the throne. Pooh! Let him think what he wants!"

At that moment she actually heard a terrifying roaring which shook the whole jungle.

"So what did I tell you?" said the Elephant, "He's off again! Ok, ok, we know you're the King. For goodness sake shut up! Phew!!"

The Fairy Tale went in the direction of the place where she had heard the noise. After a while she saw the famous lion with his golden mane, sitting down so he could practice his roaring.

"Good morning, Your Majesty. My respects to you," said the Fairy Tale humbly.

“Where have you sprung from? You’re not one of my subjects,” growled the lion imperiously shaking his mane.

“No, I’m the Ninth Fairy Tale, searching for my Happy Ending”

“Pooh!” said the lion with a certain contempt.

“I heard that ... you saw it...I mean .. my Happy Ending.”

“A King doesn’t see anybody. Other people see the King. This person you’re talking about, your Happy Ending, yes, she saw me. She asked a favour of me.”

“A favour? - what favour?”

“She wanted to ask for a permit for some orphan so she could enter the Jungle.”

“She made the request for me – looking after me! I thank you, my King, for granting the permit.”

“Who said I granted her the permit? I can do without all the orphans starting to run around in the Jungle.”

Without saying another thing the Lion sharpened his claws, and brushed his teeth, obviously so that he was ready for action. The Fairy Tale thought of his big insides. She must bluff!

“What a shame I have to go now,” she said, “You know, Your Majesty, you will be first on my list of characters. Kings always go first in my world. Even though you don’t want me, I’ll find my Happy Ending somewhere else, not in the Jungle. Good day!”

Saying this, the Fairy Tale made a deep bow in front of the King and pretended that she was going to leave.

“Hang on a moment!” called the Lion, “What list are you talking about? I don’t understand.”

“Goodness! A well brought up fairy tale has her list, her cast as they say, the characters, the heroes, the goodies, the baddies. But why am I telling you all this? I must hurry up and leave your Jungle. Forget about me!”

“Well, if it’s like that, take the permit! ‘Residency of the Jungle Establishment’ Only, I must be the first to see your list, to approve your cast.”

“Marvellous!” said the Fairy Tale joyfully, “Now tell me, where is my Happy Ending?”

“Go down there and you’ll find her.”

Our Fairy Tale went in the direction in which he pointed. Just as she was going through the undergrowth she heard a whisper right next to her.

“The Jungle is green and green am I.

Come, my Fairy Tale, close to my eye.”

The voice was her Happy Ending. The Ninth Fairy Tale felt as overjoyed as a child who has lost its mother and then found her again.

“Where are you, my Happy Ending? – Are you invisible?”

“Invisible I am not

If you think a lot

All look to no avail

Think, my Fairy Tale!”

She heard the voice so close! She pushed aside the branches of a tree so she could get by. Then suddenly the Fairy Tale understood. The voice came from inside the tree.

Her Happy Ending was inside a tree.

“I should have guessed it,” said the Fairy Tale, “my dear Happy Ending is inside a tree!”

“It’s me, and I am. Imprisoned in here I’m waiting for you to set me free.”

“What must I do?”

“Scratch a lucky number on the trunk.”

The Fairy Tale scratched the number 304.

“Now you say the words ‘I want’ three hundred and four times.”

The Fairy Tale did as her Happy Ending bid her. Immediately the trunk opened and there appeared a staircase leading downwards. Our Fairy Tale went down three hundred and four steps, and was faced by a door. She knocked, and it opened all by itself. Then our Fairy Tale saw in front of her a little black girl dressed in bright green.

“Welcome, my Ninth Fairy Tale, I, the Daughter of the Jungle, will be your Happy Ending, and you are the one who set me free,” said the beautiful Black Girl. “Right now my mother the Jungle is waiting for us to give her sight of a fairy!”

The Ninth Fairy Tale went out with her Happy Ending for a tour around the Jungle. Everyone greeted them with respect. Big animals like elephants, giraffes, apes, leopards, rhinoceros, as well as little ones like mice, butterflies, lizards, caterpillars, all hoped to be heroes in a fairy tale.

“Slow down! One by one!” shouted the Fairy Tale, writing them down on her list

The Tenth Fairy Tale

The Tenth Fairy Tale drew the lot for the Vault of Heaven. At first she didn’t want to go.

“It’s too far!” she said again and again, grizzling, “Who knows how freezing it is so high up there?”

Well, she was the littlest as well as the most spoilt, saying her silly things.

“Come on!” her sisters said to her, “Get ready! - Your Happy Ending is waiting for you - Don’t be so lazy!”

Each of the other Nine Fairy Tales had already started their own journeys. One by one they left. When the Tenth was all alone, she didn’t like it, and thought that she’d have to travel high and low for her Happy Ending. Since she was a bit lazy she wanted to find the quickest way to get up to the Vault of Heaven. And the quickest way was to get on a sunbeam! In order to find a stray sunbeam the Tenth Fairy Tale hid herself and waited. Hardly had the sun peeped over the mountain, when our Fairy Tale hastily snatched a golden sunbeam!

“Now I’ve got you, will you take me to the Vault of Heaven?”

“But I’ve just come from there, and how shall I get back there now? I have to wait until my Father the Sun, sets.”

“I’m sorry, but it’s impossible for me to wait even for a second! You know very well that a second makes lots of light years. Do me this kindness, Sunbeam; take me to the Vault of Heaven. My Happy Ending is waiting for me and I’ve been delayed. I’m the last Orphan Fairy Tale. All my other sisters have already found their Happy Endings, and are living happily ever after. Only I am waiting around as an orphan still.”

‘The Golden Sunbeam relented. He was soft hearted by nature. To tell the truth, he already liked the Fairy Tale, daring and dashing as she was.

“Come on then,” he said to her –“before they get news of us. Get on quickly and we’ll be off! Let’s hope my sisters don’t see me!”

So the Fairy Tale climbed on the glistening Sunbeam, and his cloak spread out like a fan as they flew towards the sun.

“What I’m doing is harmful and wrong,” said the Sunbeam. “My father, the Sun, will go out of his mind if he finds out! Just think what would happen if all my sister sunbeams turned back to the sky early! What would happen? Dark shadows would fall on the whole of creation! The trees and the flowers wouldn’t bloom, and the birds wouldn’t sing. It would put everyone to sleep! But I like you, that’s why I’m doing you this favour - turn round – look! Where I was before is now in darkness.”

No mistake, a profound darkness hung over the places where the Sunbeam was before. The people who were ready to go to work, went back to bed, yawning. Cockerels which had begun to crow, shut up, and alarm clocks which had begun to buzz, stopped immediately.

The Tenth Fairy Tale was having a great time.

“Goodness, just look! They think it’s night time!”

“Don’t waste time! - Tell me, where do you want to start?” asked the Sunbeam as he dashed towards the heavens. It was scattered with stars, each one brighter than the other. The Fairy Tale was confused, and didn’t know which out of so many to choose.

“Lets see – that one – the little one that shines like a diamond!” she said.

“That’s Adamantine,” said the Sunbeam, “He’s called that because, as you said, he shines like a diamond. And here we are!”

“Have we arrived already?” wondered the Fairy Tale.

“You forget, a sunbeam travels faster than anything else. Hello, Adamantine, I’ve brought you a visitor. She’s the Tenth Orphan Fairy Tale.”

“Hello,” said Adamantine, “I’m sorry, your visit was unexpected, and I haven’t managed to smarten myself up – please forgive me. Look how bedraggled I am! Oh

that your visitor should see me in such a mess! I must just powder my nose with a little silver dust.”

“What’s the point, Adamantine? You’re the brightest star in the heavens.”

“I am, I know. But that’s not just by luck. Do you know how much buffing, how much work it takes to keep my face dazzling? Aah! I’m dead tired! See how much silver dust I use? Whole tons! – No, nothing’s easy when you’re a star, especially the brightest! Do you see that one there, - the little boy star? As soon as he was born he began to adorn himself and puff himself up. He spies on me to see how I make my face so shiny. He says dreadful things – that he wants to be brighter than me! Oh , it takes such hard work to remain at the top!”

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Sighing deeply, Adamantine began to rub and polish his face.

“Perhaps, - perhaps my Happy Ending is here?” asked the Fairy Tale bashfully, but Adamantine didn’t hear her at all. Now he was throwing handfuls of silver powder on his face and dusting off with a fluffy cloud.

“Let’s try Flamer,” said the Sunbeam. “Perhaps he’s noticed your Happy Ending.”

The star Flamer was burning up all over as if he had a very high fever.

“Good morning to you, Flamer. How are we today?” The Sunbeam came to the point immediately. “Our Fairy Tale is looking for her Happy Ending, and I’m asking you whether she’s come this way?”

“A little water, please! – I’m dying of thirst,” stammered Flamer. “I’m all burning up – please, have you got a little water?”

“Bother! I didn’t think of it”, the Fairy Tale apologised. "You see I left home in rather a hurry, and didn’t bring anything with me.”

“Nobody thinks of me, - and I’ve got such a thirst! Other stars have rivers, lakes and seas, but I’m just flames.”

“If I’d found my Happy Ending I would have asked her to come and quench your thirst, Flamer,” said the Fairy Tale.

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She got on the Sunbeam again and they carried on. The third star was as soft as a cloud. He was called Chillyfluff. The Sunbeam landed on him carefully, so as not to break him.

“I’ve got a friend here, Chillyfluff,” he said, “It’s the Tenth Orphan Fairy Tale, who’s looking for her Happy Ending. Perhaps you’ve seen her somewhere?”

“Good question,” said Chillyfluff, “Do you think I’ve got the time to see who goes by? All day I’m preoccupied with how to keep my body together so that it won’t burst into bubbles. Everything bad happens to me. I’m all air and water. I’m freezing cold!”

“Flamer is on fire with the heat, and Chillyfluff is tortured with cold. Why don’t you get together? I think you’d suit each other,” said the Fairy Tale. “Flamer would warm you up and you could cool him down with some water. I’ll write it down in my notes so’s not to forget. If I find my Happy Ending I shall ask her to arrange it.”

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The Sunbeam hurried up, for he had to get back. For sure his father the Sun would be beside himself with anger. The Sunbeam had turned everything upside down.

“Tenth airy Tale, you’re so slow!” said the Sunbeam, “If you don’t hurry up I shall make you go back. I can’t see your Happy Ending here amongst the stars.”

“And what about the big one there, the one that looks like a balloon?” asked the Fairy Tale.

“Good heavens! – That’s the Moon! Didn’t you recognise her?”

“She seems different to me so high up here. Let’s go over there!”

“Very well, I’ll take you there, but then I must leave immediately. Moon and Sunbeam don’t mix! If your Happy Ending isn’t here either, at least you can take a moonbeam for the rest of your journey.”

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And so it was. With one hop the Sunbeam disappeared and the Fairy Tale was left all alone in the Vault of Heaven. In front of her was the Moon, all round and pale and smiling.

“Greetings! – Welcome to you – come over here so I can welcome you properly, my dear Fairy Tale. You must be tired from your journey!”

“But do you know me?”

“The Moon knows everything. At the hour when everyone is asleep my rays reach into the dark corners and learn all their secrets.”

“So then you’ll know about my Happy Ending. Perhaps you’ve seen her? Maybe she’s come by here?”

The Moon smiled enigmatically and said,

“Your Happy Ending passed this way

I saw her close by

And some words did I say.

I know where her street is

I know where her yard

And for you to see her

You needn’t work hard.”

“Why do you torment me, my Dear Moon?” complained the Fairy Tale. The Moon burst into laughter.

“As you have heard, Tenth Fairy Tale, I love riddles as much as you love magic. If you solve three riddles you’ll find your Happy Ending. Do you want to try?”

What could the Tenth and last Fairy Tale do? She agreed.

“The first riddle:

In a cradle like a fairy

Which afterwards turns green

Brown on the outside

And white inside is seen.

It's like a wooden box when ripe

To taste inside you’ll have to strike!

What am I?

The Fairy Tale thought and thought, and at last said,

“An almond!”

“Well done, Fairy Tale, - you’ve got it! Now for the second riddle.

Wheels it has not

But yet it runs.

It always goes down

And never returns.

No price has it got

It loves life a lot

And costs not a jot!

What am I?”

The Fairy Tale thought and thought, and at last said “Water!”

“Well done, Fairy Tale, you’ve guessed it! And now for the third riddle:

When you’re sad or when you’re gay

Without a bed it's restful all day

It's not for sale, but it can be bought

And if you don't like it

It can be changed without thought!

What am I?

The Fairy Tale thought and thought and at last she said, "I don't know"

"Come on! – One more try, my dear little Fairy Tale," said the Moon. The Fairy Tale tried and tried again, but it was still no good.

"What a shame, dear Moon, I came all the way up here, and I've got to go back down to earth without finding my Happy Ending. And the Vault of Heaven will still not have any fairies – what a shame!"

"Goodness! Whoever said anything about you going back to the earth? We want you here. Come here, and I'll take you to your Happy Ending."

"Without solving the riddle?"

"Without solving the riddle."

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The Tenth Fairy Tale's Happy Ending was sitting knitting with magic needles and fairy tale thread. Her hair was like moon dust and her eyes were like stars. She got up immediately and ran towards the Fairy Tale.

"Come here, Fairy Tale mine! How I've waited for you!" she exclaimed hugging her.

"I've knitted you a tunic made of sky so you can wear it and not get cold."

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It was very beautiful and the Fairy Tale was delighted. But deep down inside her stayed the question of the Moon's riddle.

"What is it, my little Fairy Tale, that makes you sad?" asked her Happy Ending.

“The Moon’s riddle is eating me up. I solved the first one and I solved the second one but I couldn’t find the answer to the third and best. I am a Fairy Tale from a good background, even though I’m an orphan, and I’d don’t like being indebted to anyone.”

“You’re worried about that, my Fairy Tale?” said her Happy Ending. “Tell me the riddle, ad I’ll see if I can solve it.” The Fairy Tale repeated it:

When you’re sad or when you’re gay

Without a bed it’s restful all day

It’s not for sale, but it can be bought

And if you don’t like it

It can be changed without a thought!”

“Music!” said the Happy Ending immediately.

“Oh so easy, - and I got foxed and didn’t get it!” said the Fairy Tale. “Thank you, my dear Happy Ending. I’ll run and tell the Moon,” said the Fairy Tale.

“Stop! Before you go I’ll tell you a riddle so you can pay back the Moon. The Moon’s mad on riddles!”

“Tell me, tell me!”

“It’s like a ball, but it doesn’t roll.

It has no wings, but yet it flies

It isn’t a light but yet it’s bright.

Everything can see it - hills and valleys too.

What am I?”

It didn’t take our Fairy Tale much thought to find the answer. I wonder if the Moon will find the answer as easily? Well anyhow, from that moment on the Dear Moon and the Tenth Fairy Tale had found the most enthralling game for whiling away the long hours up there in the sky. They make up riddles and throw them from one to the

other like magic balls. Often Flamer, Adamantine, Chillyfluff and lots of other stars who met the Fairy Tale along the way, joined in.

Everyone down here on the earth, who has eyes to see further than the end of their nose, on the night of the full moon can look up at the sky and catch a glimpse of some small balls flying from one star to another. They're not balls, they're the riddles we spoke of before.

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### **The Fairies' First Conference**

Just like all families who get together every so often to celebrate Christmas or Easter, or some other family occasion like a wedding or a baptism, so, after a while the Ten Orphan Fairy Tales decided to meet again for their first reunion. The place was to be the foot of the Silent Mountain. It was a difficult place to meet for they were obliged to keep their lips sealed until all of them was gathered. But as we know, fairies often choose the hard way.

The Eighth Fairy Tale was the first to arrive. The Paper World where she had settled down was best suited for journeys. If you think about it, a book can be squeezed into a

handbag, the bag in a car, ship or plane, and before you can say knife you can get to the edge of the world. As soon as she got to the Silent Mountain, the Eighth Fairy Tale jumped out of the book, had a good stretch to get the feeling back into her limbs, and settled down without a word to wait for the others.

After a short while, the Third Fairy Tale arrived. She had tumbled down the Brown Mountain and her clothes were all smothered in chocolate colour. So she gave them a good shake, greeted her sister by winking happily, and the two of them together waved at the next one in the distance, who was just arriving.

It was the Seventh Fairy Tale who came from the Cement City. She kept on blowing off the exhaust fumes which had settled on her without saying a word because, as we have said, she was on the Silent Mountain. So she sat down beside the others and waited for the rest of them.

In a little while the First and Second arrived. They had met one another on the way and came on foot together. The Grey Valley where the First was, and the Yellow Desert where the Second went, were in the same direction. They seated themselves in silence, and so these two waited for the others.

The Fourth arrived all wet. As we know, she lived in the Bright Blue Sea, and the Sixth, bright red, for we know she lived in the Red Volcano. The Fifth who lived on the Ice White Mountain arrived frozen, and the Ninth who lived in the Green Jungle was covered with buzzing flies. Last of all the Tenth Fairy Tale who lived in the Vault of heaven, arrived riding on a moonbeam and panting.

They counted themselves silently, and confirmed that nobody was missing. Then huddling themselves together in a bunch they went down to the Vale of Words.

They couldn't stand the silence a moment longer; as if they were dumb. They had so much to say; joys and sorrows to share. Hardly had they arrived at the Vale of Words

when they started talking all at once, thus beginning what they called their Conference. They talked about their Happy Endings and the people they had got to know. They spoke of the difficulties the Fairy Tales had encountered everywhere on their journeys, as well as the adventures and the pleasures. After a few minutes the Seventh Fairy Tale threw in an idea.

“What would you say, sisters, if this our first reunion were to be a ‘Conference of Changing Places?’ I’d like to suggest that we should exchange our Happy Endings, and the places we live in, for a little while. So, for instance, though I’m happy with my Little Girl in the Cement City, all the time I dream about seeing some other places, like the Vault of the Heavens, or the Bright Blue Sea. Why live pinned down in the same old place all the time?”

“Seventh makes sense!” said the Fifth Fairy Tale. “Me too, I think it’s wonderful to live with the dwarves and Mrs Polar Bear, but how can I say it? - The cold gets me down. Just for a change I’d very much like to go to the Red Volcano for a short while.”

“I offer it to you for a month or longer!” said the Sixth Fairy Tale, “I’d be happy on holiday on the Ice White Mountain or in the Grey Valley.”

“And me – I’d like a story in the Paper World,” said the Third Fairy Tale. “I’d get to know other Fairy Tales and the world of books generally. It would cheer up my Wise Man too, there on the Brown Mountain.”

“Well then, if you want, come at once!” said the Eighth Fairy Tale. “In exchange I’d be happy to take a dive in the Bright Blue Sea!”

“And me,” said the Second Fairy tale, “ A trip in the Green Jungle would give me a lot of pleasure. I like the Yellow Desert, but it palls a little when you live there all the time.”

To cut a long story short, the Ten Fairy Tales had come to a unanimous decision: to change places for a short while.

They talked about every detail. They examined it from every angle, they weighed it up in their fairy scales, and at last decided on their exchanges, each having a free choice, and not drawing lots this time.

# The First Fairy Tale who suffered from rheumatism as a result of the damp in the Grey Valley, preferred the Brown Mountain, with the Wise Man and the Morning Star.

# The Second who was tired of the Yellow Desert, as we have said, chose a visit to the Jungle.

#The Third decided to leave the Brown Mountain for the Paper World of a book. She wanted to get to know new people and new fairy tales.

# The Fourth from the Bright Blue Sea said she wanted to go to the Yellow Desert. She wanted to dry her body out a bit, and to have a break from the games with the little fish and octopuses.

#The Fifth who had frozen on the Ice White Mountain, chose the Red Volcano so she could warm up a bit, and also hear Sweet Tongue sing.

#The Sixth who had almost evaporated as she came out from the Red Volcano said she wanted the moisture of the Grey Valley along with the company of the Birds' Choir.

# The Seventh had grown tired of the noise in the Cement City and so preferred the quiet of the Vault of Heaven and the riddles the moon asked.

# The Eighth who had gone numb squashed in the Paper World, decided to go and take a dive in the Bright Blue Sea to get the life back in her limbs.

# The Ninth had grown tired of the luxuriant growth and the heat of the Jungle, and so decided on the refreshing quiet of the Ice White Mountain and the companionship of Mrs Polar Bear and the dwarves.

#The Tenth who lived in the Vault of Heaven, missed human company and so she preferred the Cement City with the Little Girl and the Old Man.

So then, the topic of the first Conference - Changing Places – had been made a reality in a trice without passports, I.D. cards, voting and such like. The exchange visits were not to last for long – just until the next Conference.

The problem however, was quite different. What with the discussions in the Savannah of Speech the Fairy Tales were swept along, each one saying her bit, and lots more besides. When you find Ten Fairy Tales together, especially sisters, and orphans what's more, disaster happens, my friends! They had talked so much that they has run out of words! On the last day of the Conference they opened their mouths and instead of words out came meaningless croaks. As you can well imagine, a Fairy Tale could suffer nothing worse than this: that words should have left her. That's why we say, 'What's left of a Fairy Tale if the words are missing?'

The matter was serious, and so before they separated they decided that it was necessary that the next Conference should be called 'The Conference for Collecting Words'. They issued a special proclamation, which from top to bottom read; 'Whosoever amongst mortals or immortals, whosoever amongst witches and fairy godmothers, whosoever amongst wizards, children, writers and royal subject, whosoever has words to spare, must shut them in a box and tie it up with a yellow ribbon. One of the Ten Fairy Tales will shortly arrive at your door. She will give the secret knock ten times, and you will deliver the sealed box to her. The words shall be transported by hand with every due care to the Second Fairy Tale Conference, the

subject of which shall be 'The Collecting of Words', (date and time to be decided).

Whosoever collects the rarest words shall be awarded the Hobel Prize for Fairy Tales, which is a visit to the world of the Ten Fairy Tales.'

With this proclamation the end of the First Conference of Orphan Fairy Tales' was announced. Now all of them eagerly await the second one!