

# Fitcher's Bird

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Once upon a time there was a sorcerer who disguised himself as a poor man, went begging from house to house, and captured beautiful girls. No one knew where he took them, for none of them ever returned.

One day he came to the door of a man who had three beautiful daughters. He appeared to be a poor, weak beggar, and he carried a pack basket on his back, as though he wanted to collect some benevolent offerings in it. He asked for a bit to eat, and when the oldest daughter came out to give him a piece of bread, he simply touched her, and she was forced to jump into his pack basket. Then he hurried away with powerful strides and carried her to his house, which stood in the middle of a dark forest.

Everything was splendid in the house, and he gave her everything that she wanted. He said, "My dear, you will like it here with me. You will have everything that your heart desires."

So it went for a few days, and then he said to her, "I have to go away and leave you alone for a short time. Here are the house keys. You may go everywhere and look at everything except for the one room that this little key here unlocks. I forbid you to go there on the penalty of death."

He also gave her an egg, saying, "Take good care of this egg. You should carry it with you at all times, for if you should lose it great misfortune would follow."

She took the keys and the egg, and promised to take good care of everything.

As soon as he had gone she walked about in the house from top to bottom examining everything. The rooms glistened with silver and gold, and she

thought that she had never seen such splendor.

Finally she came to the forbidden door. She wanted to pass it by, but curiosity gave her no rest. She examined the key. It looked like any other one. She put it into the lock and twisted it a little, and then the door sprang open.

What did she see when she stepped inside? A large bloody basin stood in the middle, inside which there lay the cut up parts of dead girls. Nearby there was a wooden block with a glistening ax lying on it.

She was so terrified that the egg, which she was holding in her hand, fell into the basin. She got it out again and wiped off the blood, but it was to no avail, for it always came back. She wiped and scrubbed, but she could not get rid of the stain.

Not long afterward the man returned from his journey, and he immediately asked for the key and the egg. She handed them to him, shaking all the while, for he saw from the red stain that she had been in the blood chamber.

"You went into that chamber against my will," he said, "and now against your will you shall go into it once again. Your life is finished."

He threw her down, dragged her by her hair into the chamber, cut off her head on the block, then cut her up into pieces, and her blood flowed out onto the floor. Then he threw her into the basin with the others.

"Now I will go get the second one," said the sorcerer, and, again disguised as a poor man, he went to their house begging.

The second sister brought him a piece of bread, and, as he had done to the first one, he captured her by merely touching her, and he carried her away. It went with her no better than it had gone with

her sister. She let herself be led astray by her curiosity, opened the blood chamber and looked inside. When he returned she paid with her life.

Then he went and captured the third sister, but she was clever and sly. After he had given her the keys and the egg, and had gone away, she carefully put the egg aside, and then examined the house, entering finally the forbidden chamber.

Oh, what she saw! Her two dear sisters were lying there in the basin, miserably murdered and chopped to pieces. In spite of this she proceeded to gather their parts together, placing them back in order: head, body, arms, and legs. Then, when nothing else was missing, the parts began to move. They joined together, and the two girls opened their eyes and came back to life. Rejoicing, they kissed and hugged one another.

When the man returned home he immediately demanded the keys and the egg, and when he was unable to detect any trace of blood on them, he said, "You have passed the test. You shall be my bride."

He now had no more power over her and had to do whatever she demanded.

"Good," she answered, "but first you must take a basketful of gold to my father and mother. You yourself must carry it there on your back. In the meanwhile I shall make preparations for the wedding."

Then she ran to her sisters, whom she had hidden in a closet, and said, "The moment is here when I can rescue you. The evildoer himself shall carry you home. As soon as you have arrived at home send help to me."

She put them both into a basket, then covered them entirely with gold, so that nothing could be seen of them.

Then she called the sorcerer in and said, "Now carry this basket away, but

you are not to stop and rest underway. Take care, for I shall be watching you through my little window."

The sorcerer lifted the basket onto his back and walked away with it. However, it pressed down so heavily on him that the sweat ran from his face. He sat down, wanting to rest, but immediately one of the girls in the basket called out, "I am looking through my little window, and I can see that you are resting. Walk on!"

He thought that his bride was calling to him, so he got up again. Then he again wanted to sit down, but someone immediately called out, "I am looking through my little window, and I can see that you are resting. Walk on!"

Every time that he stopped walking, someone called out, and he had to walk on until, groaning and out of breath, he brought the basket with the gold and the two girls to their parents' house.

At home the bride was making preparations for the wedding feast, to which she had had the sorcerer's friends invited. Then she took a skull with grinning teeth, adorned it with jewelry and with a wreath of flowers, carried it to the attic window, and let it look out.

When everything was ready she dipped herself into a barrel of honey, then cut open the bed and rolled around in it until she looked like a strange bird, and no one would have been able to recognize her. Then she walked out of the house.

Underway some of the wedding guests met her, and they asked, "You, Fitcher's bird, where are you coming from?"

"I am coming from Fitcher's house."

"What is his young bride doing there?"

"She has swept the house from bottom to top, and now she is looking out of the attic window."

Finally her bridegroom met her. He was slowly walking back home, and, like the others, he asked, "You, Fitcher's bird, where are you coming from?"

"I am coming from Fitcher's house."

"What is my young bride doing there?"

"She has swept the house from bottom to top, and now she is looking out of the attic window."

The bridegroom looked up. Seeing the decorated skull, he thought it was his bride, and he waved a friendly greeting to her.

After he and all his guests had gone into the house, the bride's brothers and relatives arrived. They had been sent to rescue her. After closing up all the doors of the house so that no one could escape, they set it afire, and the sorcerer, together with his gang, all burned to death.