

## **“Brother and Sister”**

A fairytale collected by Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm  
in the early 1800s in Germany, and retold by Eric Miller

Once upon a time, there was a man who lived in a forest area. He made his living by cutting down trees and selling the wood. This man had a daughter. Their home was run by a cook, because the woodsman's wife had died.

One day when the man was walking in the woods, he heard a baby's cry from the upper branches of a tree. The man climbed up the tree and found on one of the branches, in a bird's nest, a baby boy!

How had the baby boy come to be there? A woman carrying her infant son had been walking in the forest. She had become very tired, and had sat down to rest. Still holding her child, she had fallen asleep. Birds had come and lifted the child by the cloth that had been wrapped around him. The birds took the child away some distance, high up into a tree, where they placed him in a nest. You can imagine the woman's anguish when she awoke and found her child missing. She looked all about, but she could not find him.

The woodsman, up in the tree, did not know all of this. He just thought, "I will take this boy home and raise him with my daughter." So the woodsman carefully lifted up the boy child, and took him home, and the boy and girl were raised together.

One day, the little girl saw the cook heating a very large kettle of water. The little girl asked her, "Why are you heating such a large kettle of water?"

The Cook replied, "Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes," said the girl.

The Cook said, "I am boiling this water, then I am going to put your little brother inside the kettle. We'll boil him, cut him up, and eat him."

The girl was shocked and horrified, but she did not express this to the Cook. She just said, "Ok," and backed away. Then she ran to her brother and said to him, "The Cook is planning to kill you! Quick! We need to run away!"

So the little girl and her younger brother set off, running across the grassy meadow in front of their house. But before they could reach the woods, the Cook saw them, through the kitchen window. She immediately told the man who assisted her, "Go and get those two children, and bring them back here!"

The man ran after the two children. The older sister saw that he was catching up with them. So she stopped running, and her younger brother stopped also. She said to her younger brother, "I'll never leave you, if you never leave me."

Her younger brother replied, "Don't worry, I'll never leave you."

Then she said to him, "You turn yourself into a rosebush, and I'll turn myself into a rose." And they did so!

The man approached -- but he could not see the boy and girl. All he saw of note was a rosebush, with a very beautiful rose on it. He tried to pick the rose -- but his finger brushed against a thorn on the rosebush and he was cut a little, so he gave up on the idea of picking the rose. He just walked back to the house and said to the Cook, "I could not find them."

The Cook replied, "Didn't you see a rosebush and a rose? Didn't you know that that was the boy and the girl? Now hurry, go again, and this time really get them and bring them!"

The man ran in the direction the children had gone. Meanwhile, the girl and boy had turned back into themselves, and were running away again. They had reached the woods, but the older sister saw again that the man was gaining on them. So once again she stopped, and her younger brother stopped, and she said to him, "I'll never leave you, if you never leave me."

Her younger brother again replied, "Don't worry, I'll never leave you."

Then she said to him, "You turn yourself into a church, and I'll turn myself into the cross hanging at the altar." And they did so!

The man approached, and was doubly amazed -- to not see the children, and to see a church where he had never noticed one before. But as he was a humble person, he entered the church and quietly prayed for a minute or two. Then he returned to the Cook.

"I could not find the boy and girl," he said to the Cook. "But I did find a church."

"You fool!", the Cook exclaimed. "How could you not have known that that church was the boy and that cross was the girl? For goodness sake! Well, it seems like I am going to have to go and do the job myself." And off the Cook went.

The girl and boy had turned back into themselves, and were running away once again. But the girl saw the Cook approaching, and a final time she stopped and said to her younger brother, "I'll never leave you, if you never leave me."

And her younger brother replied, "Don't worry, I'll never leave you."

Then she said to him, "You turn yourself into a pond, and I'll turn myself into a duck." And they did so!

The Cook came to the pond, and immediately recognised that it was really the boy in disguise. The Cook knelt down and began to drink the water -- she was going to drink the whole pond and then grab the duck. But the duck quickly swam over to the Cook, grabbed the Cook's neck in her beak, and pulled the Cook into the pond, and the Cook had to drown.

Then the girl and boy turned back into themselves, and headed home to see their father.

You might not be surprised to learn that on the way home, they came across the boy's mother, who for the past three years had been faithfully searching for her lost son. The boy's mother was overjoyed to be re-united with her son, just as he was delighted to be re-united with his mother, and all three proceeded to the woodsman's house. When the woodsman returned from work and heard the whole story, he also shared the mother's and son's joy. Some time later the woman and the woodsman married, and all lived happily ever after.