

How children played slaughter with each other

I

In a city named Franecker, located in West Friesland, some young boys and girls between the ages of five and six happened to be playing with one another. They chose one boy to play a butcher, another boy to play was to be a cook, and a third boy was to be a pig. Then they chose one girl to be a cook and another girl her assistant. The assistant was to catch the blood of the pig in a little bowl so they could make sausages. As agreed, the butcher now fell upon the little boy playing the pig, threw him to the ground, and slit his throat open with a knife, while the assistant cook caught the blood in her little bowl. A councilman was walking nearby and saw this wretched act. He immediately took the butcher with him and led him into the house of the mayor, who instantly summoned the entire council. They deliberated about this incident and did not know what they should do to the boy, for they realized it had all been part of a children's game. One of the councilmen, an old wise man, advised the chief judge to take a beautiful red apple in one hand and a Rhenish gulden in the other. Then he was to call the boy and stretch out his hands to him. If the boy took the apple, he was to be set free. If he took the gulden, he was to be killed. The judge took the wise man's advice, and the boy grabbed the apple with a laugh. Thus he was set free without any punishment.

II

There once was a father who slaughtered a pig, and his children saw that. In the afternoon, when they began playing, one child said to the other, "you be the little pig, and I'll be the butcher." He then took a shiny knife and slit his little brother's throat. Their mother was upstairs in a room bathing another child, and when she heard the cries of her son, she immediately ran downstairs. Upon seeing what had happened, she took the knife out of her son's throat and was so enraged that she stabbed the heart of the other boy, who had been playing the butcher. Then she quickly ran back to the room to tend to her child in the bathtub, but while she was gone, he had drowned in the tub. Now the woman became so frightened and desperate that she did not allow the neighbors to comfort her and finally hung herself. When her husband came back from the fields and saw everything, he became so despondent

that he died soon after.

* * *