St. Joseph in the forest

There was once on a time a mother who had three daughters, the eldest of whom was rude and wicked, the second much better, although she had her faults, but the youngest was a pious, good child. The mother was, however, so strange, that it was just the eldest daughter whom she most loved, and she could not bear the youngest. On this account, she often sent the poor girl out into the great forest in order to get rid of her, for she thought she would lose herself and never come back again. But the guardian-angel which every good child has, did not forsake her, but always brought her into the right path again. Once, however, the guardian-angel behaved as if he were not there, and the child could not find her way out of the forest again. She walked on constantly until evening came, and then she saw a tiny light burning in the distance, ran up to it at once, and came to a little hut. She knocked, the door opened, and she came to a second door, where she knocked again. An old man, who had a snow-white beard and looked venerable, opened it for her; and he was no other than St. Joseph. He said quite kindly, "Come, dear child, seat thyself on my little chair by the fire, and warm thyself; I will fetch thee clear water if thou art thirsty; but here in the forest, I have nothing for thee to eat but a couple of little roots, which thou must first scrape and boil."

St. Joseph gave her the roots. The girl scraped them clean, then she brought a piece of pancake and the bread that her mother had given her to take with her; mixed all together in a pan, and cooked herself a thick soup. When it was ready, St. Joseph said, "I am so hungry; give me some of thy food. The child was quite willing, and gave him more than she kept for herself, but God's blessing was with her, so that she was satisfied. When they had eaten, St. Joseph said, "Now we will go to bed; I have, however, only one bed, lay thyself in it. I will lie on the ground on the straw." - "No," answered she, "stay in your own bed, the straw is soft enough for me." St. Joseph, however, took the child in his arms, and carried her into the little bed, and there she said her prayers, and fell asleep. Next morning when she awoke, she wanted to say good morning to St. Joseph, but she did not see him. Then she got up and looked for him, but could not find him anywhere; at last she perceived, behind the door, a bag with money so heavy that she could just carry it, and on it was written that it was for the child who had slept there that night. On this she took the bag, bounded away with it, and got safely to her mother, and as she gave her mother all the money, she could not help being satisfied with her.

The next day, the second child also took a fancy to go into the forest. Her mother gave her a much larger piece of pancake and bread. It happened with her just as with the first child. In the evening she came to St. Joseph's little hut, who gave her roots for a thick soup. When it was ready, he likewise said to her, "I am so hungry, give me some of thy food." Then the child said, "You may have your share." Afterwards, when St. Joseph offered her his bed and wanted to lie on the straw, she replied, "No, lie down in the bed, there is plenty of room for both of us." St. Joseph took her in his arms and put her in the bed, and laid himself on the straw.

In the morning when the child awoke and looked for St. Joseph, he had vanished, but behind the door she found a little sack of money that was about as long as a hand, and on it was written that it was for the child who had slept there last night. So she took the little bag and ran home with it, and took it to her mother, but she secretly kept two pieces for herself.

The eldest daughter had by this time grown curious, and the next morning also insisted on going out into the forest. Her mother gave her pancakes with her -- as many as she wanted, and bread and cheese as well. In the evening she found St. Joseph in his little hut, just as the two others had found him. When the soup was ready and St. Joseph said, "I am so hungry, give me some of thy food," the girl answered, "Wait until I am satisfied; then if there is anything left thou shalt have it." She ate, however, nearly the whole of it, and St. Joseph had to scrape the dish. Afterwards, the good old man offered her his bed, and wanted to lie on the straw. She took it without making any opposition, laid herself down in the little bed, and left the hard straw to the white-haired man. Next morning when she awoke, St. Joseph was not to be found, but she did not trouble herself about that. She looked behind the door for a money-bag. She fancied something was lying on the ground, but as she could not very well distinguish what

it was, she stooped down, and examined it closely, but it remained hanging to her nose, and when she got up again, she saw, to her horror, that it was a second nose, which was hanging fast to her own. Then she began to scream and howl, but that did no good; she was forced to see it always on her nose, for it stretched out so far. Then she ran out and screamed without stopping till she met St. Joseph, at whose feet she fell and begged until, out of pity, he took the nose off her again, and even gave her two farthings. When she got home, her mother was standing before the door, and asked, "What hast thou had given to thee?" Then she lied and said, "A great bag of money, but I have lost it on the way." - "Lost it!" cried the mother, "oh, but we will soon find it again," and took her by the hand, and wanted to seek it with her. At first she began to cry, and did not wish to go, but at last she went. On the way, however, so many lizards and snakes broke loose on both of them, that they did not know how to save themselves. At last they stung the wicked child to death, and they stung the mother in the foot, because she had not brought her up better.

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