Brothers Grimm

# The Three Little Men In The Wood

Once upon a time there lived a man, whose wife had died; and a woman, also, who had lost her husband: and this man and this woman had each a daughter. These two maidens were friendly with each other, and used to walk together, and one day they came by the widow's house. Then the widow said to the man's daughter, "Do you hear, tell your father I wish to marry him, and you shall every morning wash in milk and drink wine, but my daughter shall wash in water and drink water." So the girl went home and told her father what the woman had said, and he replied, "What shall I do? Marriage is a comfort, but it is also a torment." At last, as he could come to no conclusion, he drew off his boot and said: "Take this boot, which has a hole in the sole, and go with it out of doors and hang it on the great nail and then pour water into it. If it holds the water, I will again take a wife; but if it runs through, I will not have her." The girl did as he bid her, but the water drew the hole together and the boot became full to overflowing. So she told her father how it had happened, and he, getting up, saw it was quite true; and going to the widow he settled the matter, and the wedding was celebrated. The next morning, when the two girls arose, milk to wash in and wine to drink were set for the man's daughter, but only water, both for washing and drinking, for the woman's daughter. The second morning, water for washing and drinking stood before both the man's daughter and the woman's; and on the third morning, water to wash in and water to drink were set before the man's daughter, and milk to wash in and wine to drink before the woman's daughter, and so it continued. Soon the woman conceived a deadly hatred for her step-daughter, and knew not how to behave badly enough to her from day to day. She was envious, too, because her step-daughter was beautiful and lovely, and her own daughter was ugly and hateful. Once, in the winter-time, when the river was frozen as hard as a stone, and hill and valley were covered with snow, the woman made a cloak of paper, and called the maiden to her and said, "Put on this cloak, and go away into the wood to fetch me a little basketful of strawberries, for I have a wish for some." "Mercy on us!" said the maiden, "in winter there are no strawberries growing; the ground is frozen, and the snow, too, has covered everything. And why must I go in that paper cloak? It is so cold out of doors that it freezes one's breath even, and if the wind does not blow off this cloak, the thorns will tear it from my body." "Will you dare to contradict me?" said the step-mother. "Make haste off, and let me not see you again until you have found me a basket of strawberries." Then she gave her a small piece of dry bread, saying, "On that you must subsist the whole day." But she thought—out of doors she will be frozen and starved, so that my eyes will never see her again! So the girl did as she was told, and put on the paper cloak, and went away with the basket. Far and near there was nothing but snow, and not a green blade was to be seen. When she came to the forest she discovered a little cottage, out of which three little Dwarfs were peeping. The girl wished them good morning, and knocked gently at the door. They called her in, and entering the room, she sat down on a bench by the fire to warm herself, and eat her breakfast. The Dwarfs called out, "Give us some of it!" "Willingly," she replied, and, dividing her bread in two, she gave them half. They asked, "What do you here in the forest, in the winter-time, in this thin cloak?" "Ah!" she answered, "I must, seek a basketful of strawberries, and I dare not return home until I can take them with me." When she had eaten her bread, they gave her a broom, saying, "Sweep away the snow with this from the back door." But when she was gone out of doors the three Dwarfs said one to another, "What shall we give her, because she is so gentle and good, and has shared her bread with us?" Then said the first, "I grant to her that she shall become more beautiful every day." The second said, "I grant that a piece of gold shall fall out of her mouth for every word she speaks." The third said, "I grant that a King shall come and make her his bride." Meanwhile, the girl had done as the Dwarf had bidden her, and had swept away the snow from behind the house. And what do you think she found there? Actually, ripe strawberries! which came quite red and sweet up under the snow. So filling her basket in great glee, she thanked the little men and gave them each her hand, and then ran home to take her step-mother what she wished for. As she went in and said "Good evening," a piece of gold fell from her mouth. Thereupon she related what had happened to her in the forest; but at every word she spoke a piece of gold fell, so that the whole floor was covered. "Just see her arrogance," said the step-sister, "to throw away money in that way!" but in her heart she was jealous, and wished to go into the forest, too, to seek strawberries. Her mother said, "No, my dear daughter; it is too cold, you will be frozen!" but as her girl let her have no peace, she at last consented, and made her a beautiful fur cloak to put on; she also gave her buttered bread and cooked meat to eat on her way. The girl went into the forest and came straight to the little cottage. The three Dwarfs were peeping out again, but she did not greet them; and, stumbling on without looking at them, or speaking, she entered the room, and, seating herself by the fire, began to eat the bread and butter and meat. "Give us some of that," exclaimed the Dwarfs; but she answered, "I have not got enough for myself, so how can I give any away?" When she had finished they said, "You have a broom there, go and sweep the back door clean." "Oh, sweep it yourself," she replied; "I am not your servant." When she saw that they would not give her anything she went out at the door, and the three Dwarfs said to each other, "What shall we give her? She is so ill-behaved, and has such a bad and envious disposition, that nobody can wish well to her." The first said, "I grant that she becomes more ugly every day." The second said, "I grant that at every word she speaks a toad shall spring out of her mouth." The third said, "I grant that she shall die a miserable death." Meanwhile the girl had been looking for strawberries out of doors, but as she could find none she went home very peevish. When she opened her mouth to tell her mother what had happened to her in the forest, a toad jumped out of her mouth at each word, so that every one fled away from her in horror. The step-mother was now still more vexed, and was always thinking how she could do the most harm to her husband's daughter, who every day became more beautiful. At last she took a kettle, set it on the fire, and boiled a net therein. When it was sodden she hung it on the shoulder of the poor girl, and gave her an axe, that she might go upon the frozen pond and cut a hole in the ice to drag the net. She obeyed, and went away and cut an ice-hole; and while she was cutting, an elegant carriage came by, in which the King sat. The carriage stopped, and the King asked, "My child, who are you? and what do you here?" "I am a poor girl, and am dragging a net," said she. Then the King pitied her, and saw how beautiful she was, and said, "Will you go with me?" "Yes, indeed, with all my heart," she replied, for she was glad to get out of the sight of her mother and sister. So she was handed into the carriage, and driven away with the King; and as soon as they arrived at his castle the wedding was celebrated with great splendor, as the Dwarfs had granted to the maiden. After a year the young Queen bore a son; and when the step-mother heard of her great good fortune, she came to the castle with her daughter, and behaved as if she had come on a visit. But one day when the King had gone out, and no one was present, this bad woman seized the Queen by the head, and her daughter caught hold of her feet, and raising her out of bed, they threw her out of the window into the river which ran past. Then, laying her ugly daughter in the bed, the old woman covered her up, even over her head; and when the King came back he wished to speak to his wife, but the old woman exclaimed, "Softly! softly! do not go near her; she is lying in a beautiful sleep, and must be kept quiet to-day." The King, not thinking of an evil design, came again the next morning the first thing; and when he spoke to his wife, and she answered, a toad sprang out of her mouth at every word, as a piece of gold had done before. So he asked what had happened, and the old woman said, "That is produced by her weakness, she will soon lose it again." But in the night the kitchen-boy saw a Duck swimming through the brook, and the Duck asked: "King, King, what are you doing? Are you sleeping, or are you waking?" And as he gave no answer, the Duck said: "What are my guests a-doing?" Then the boy answered: "They all sleep sound." And she asked him: "How fares my child?" And he replied: "In his cradle he sleeps." Then she came up in the form of the Queen to the cradle, and gave the child drink, shook up his bed, and covered him up, and then swam away again as a duck through the brook. The second night she came again; and on the third she said to the kitchen-boy, "Go and tell the King to take his sword, and swing it thrice over me, on the threshold." Then the boy ran and told the King, who came with his sword, and swung it thrice over the Duck; and at the third time his bride stood before him, bright, living, and healthful, as she had been before. Now the King was in great happiness, but he hid the Queen in a chamber until the Sunday when the child was to be christened; and when all was finished he asked, "What ought to be done to one who takes another out of a bed and throws her into the river?" "Nothing could be more proper," said the old woman, "than to put such a one into a cask, stuck round with nails, and to roll it down the hill into the water." Then the King said, "You have spoken your own sentence"; and ordering a cask to be fetched, he caused the old woman and her daughter to be put into it, and the bottom nailed up. Then the cask was rolled down the hill until it fell into the water.

## http://www.fairytales247.com/catalog/fairy-tale/all-authors/brothers-grimm/skazka-the-three-little-men-in-the-wood-1662/