

KINGMAKER FAIRY TALES:

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The Knurly Witch (children's game)

Knurly Witch, Knurly Witch, leave my bones alone!
Knurly Witch, Knurly Witch, don't come in my home!
Knurly Witch, Knurly Witch, I won't drink your tea!
Knurly Witch, Knurly Witch, oh – she's got ahold of me!

At this point, the speaker acts as if being seized and dragged away, and the other children must catch up and surround the speaker while dancing and chanting "Knurly Witch, no!" until the witch stops dragging the child away. No one is quite sure of the origins of the chant, and locally children may substitute old crones or scary adults (e.g. Old Beldame).

The Misbegotten Troll (if he chooses you as a bride, makes head into a lantern) *Mothers tell this commonly to daughters.*

The misbegotten troll lives in an ancient swamp and ventures out to kidnap young maids he finds travelling alone. The misbegotten troll takes the maids back to his swamp hut and makes them his wives. When he gets hungry, he will eat one of his wives and make her skull into a lantern than he uses to travel his dark swamp at night or hangs outside his door to warn him of intruders. The misbegotten troll cannot stand the sight of a wedding ring worn by a virtuous woman. *Moral of the story: Get married early.*

The Wriggling Man (made of worms, curseD for trying to steal from the fey) *Story of city-folk greed.*

The Wriggling Man was a greedy soul from the city who one day crossed the path of a forest leshy and became magically lost. Knowing, as some people here do, that the only way to become un-lost was to turn one's clothes inside-out and wear one's shoes on the other foot, the Wriggling Man did so and found his way. The leshy, impressed at the Wriggling Man's cleverness, offered him three wishes. The Wriggling Man, in his greed, demanded he be granted the immortality of the fey, the magic of the fey, and the beauty of the fey. The leshy, bound to its word,

granted the boon, saying “as ye wish to be like me, so it shall be, times three.” The leshy turned the Wriggling Man’s body to wood, and roots went from his toes into the ground. Thus was he made eternal. The leshy then gave the Wriggling Man his magic, but being made of wood he could not speak the words. Finally, the leshy called worms from the ground to burrow into the wooden body and rot it from the inside, for the beauty of the fey is but an illusion. The worms became the Wriggling Man’s body, and now he hides his form in deep robes and cloaks as he travels these lands looking to steal magic to restore his body *and to seek out small children who don’t do their chores!*

The Nightmare Rook (ferries dark fey to this land to steal souls as you sleep, a bad nightmare, leaves the person hollow and full of evil). *Story that the truly wise know the morals of stories.*

Once upon a time a farmer who had moved from the city to start a new life came across a black-feathered rook with an injured leg. Being a kind-hearted soul, he cared for the rook despite his wife’s warning that the rook was an ill omen in the household. The rook healed and flew away, pausing to give the farmer one of its feathers. The farmer put the feather in his cap and went back to his chores. That night, he put the feather under his pillow for safekeeping. For six nights, his wife and children could not sleep for nightmares. The wife begged her husband to rid himself of the feather, for it was a dark omen. The farmer threw it into the fire. The next morning, a visiting neighbor found the family dead in their beds, faces frozen in fear. For what the farmer did not know is that the Nightmare Rook had chosen that week to ferry the souls of evil men from this land to the next world, and he would stop each night to rest on the farmer’s roof. The feather the farmer had burned was the only thing protecting him from the Nightmare Rook, and in his folly, he rid himself of it.

Kargstaad (the ice giant with 100 arms who grabs children who wander too far from home)

Kargstaad, with one arm.... (insert any phrase, the goal is to see who can rhyme the most phrases, if someone gets to 100, which no one ever does of course, the 100-armed giant Kargstaad will appear). Example:

Kargstaad, with one arm flattens a bee, Kargstaad with two arms breaks a tree, Kargstaad with three arms catches a flea, Kargstaad with four arms has some tea.... And so on. Not just a child’s game; it is played by adults in the field to pass the time while working.

Jabberwock (credit CS Lewis for original poem, below)

A gnome lad who so wanted to visit the fae world misspent his youth searching for such a way instead of learning a trade. One day, he was searching for the source of a river, for he had spent his mother's coin for a false rumor that magical portals existed where a river begins. On his way, he saw a curious sight. A green-bearded man with a face much like a frog was rowing his way up the river riding on a log. The curious gnome lad asked the old man his business, and the old man replied "ye may call me grandfather, and for the tobacco in your pipe, I shall tell ye where ye may find thy portal." The gnome lad was surprised that the old man should know his business, not realizing he had found Vodyanoi, and thought it a small price for he had so little tobacco left. The old man told him to dump the tobacco in the river, and the lad did so. The old man said to him "walk into the river and say the words 'beware the Jabberwock, my son, the jaws that bite, the claws that catch.'" The lad put the tobacco into the river and did as he was told, saying the words. The old man told him to walk further, until the water reached his chin, and recite the words "the Jabberwock, with eyes of flame." The lad did so, even though the water was close to his lips. The old man told him to walk further and say the words "the vorpal blade went snicker-snack." The lad complained, for if he walked further into the river, he should surely be underwater! The old man asked if he wanted to find the fae world or not. The lad so wanted to find the world, and he did as bade. And that was the last he was ever heard from. *Moral of the story: a fool chasing the clouds sees not the pitfalls before him. Also, don't make deals with the fae, for they seek to trick you. A wise man would have asked to make Vodyanoi tell him how to find the portal instead of blinding walking into a river over his head. However, some children, wise to these stories, have argued perhaps Vodyanoi did keep his word and perhaps the gnome lad found his otherworld, for he was never seen again, a much happier ending.*

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,

Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burred as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.

Domovoi (credit the internet)

Every house has a House spirit, a bearded little man who lives under the stove. If you build a new house or move, invite the domovoi in by sacrificing a hen and then bury in the courtyard the first slice of bread cut for the first meal. Say the words: “our supporter, come into the new house to eat bread and to obey your new master.”

Never leave out cutlery or food other than leftovers of your evening meal, for it will tempt a domovoi to use them for unclean purposes. Never invite another who is not your spouse into your bed, for it will tempt the domovoi to see your spouse in unclean ways. Keep them happy and the house will be prosperous. You will recognize their happiness when you wake up with hair plaited, or shoes mended, or a fire averted. A lazy owner with dirty house risks spoiled milk, broken objects, and even being suffocated while sleeping.

Leshy (credit story to WRS Ralston, 1887, changes made for modernizing language and shorten)

One day, without permission of her parents, a priest's daughter went strolling in the forest and vanished for 3 years. One day, a hunter from her village and his dog chanced across a peasant in the forest sitting on a log. The peasant was plaiting a shoe and saying with a menacing gesture to the moon, “shine, shine, O bright moon!” The hunter thought “how comes it that the peasant looks young, but his hair is as grey as a badger?” He only thought these words, but the other replied as if guessing what he meant. “Grey am I, being the grandfather of devils!”

Then the hunter guessed that before him was no mere peasant, but a Leshy. He

fired his bow into the gut of the Leshy, which dragged itself into the thickets. The hunter turned his shirt backwards for protection, then ordered his dog to track the Leshy. The dog led the hunter to a hut, wherein the Leshy lay dead. Beside was a damsel, naked as the day she was born, who exclaimed amid bitter tears “who now will give me food and drink?”

When the hunter asked, the damsel knew not her name or from where she came. When the hunter asked, she replied her clothing had worn out long ago, but she was always safe from cold and snow. In truth, she had been carried off by the Leshy, who took her senses, and made her live in his hut.

The hunter took her out of the forest, cutting marks on the trees to find his way back. When they reached the village, the priest and his wife saw their daughter and rejoiced. But the girl gazed and just blinked, understanding nothing. After a time she came to her senses, and the hunter was rewarded with good things.

The villagers and hunter went in search of the hut of the Leshy, and long did they wander the forest, but neither the hut nor the Leshy they found.

Moral of the story: don't leave your village, and bravery is to be prized.

Some say the Leshy protects the forest and can change into anything it wants. If it feels ill, it will lure you to its home and tickle you to death, or confuse you and make you lost in the forest. If you suspect you have met a Leshy, turn your clothes backwards and put your shoes on the wrong feet, then sing the words “sheep's mug, sheep's wool” over and over until it leaves. If it gets his hand on a child, it will replace it with a fey being. If it gets his hand on an adult, they go to its realm and return addled, never quite right. If you respect the Leshy by only taking what you need from the forest, it may protect your livestock.

Likho (credit WRS Ralston, 1887, changes to modernize and shorten)

Two good men, a tailor and a blacksmith, set out on a quest to seek out evil which neither of them had met before. They walked and walked until they reached a dark forest. They walked and walked until they found a large cottage. It was night and they had nowhere to go, so they decided to stay in the cottage. Inside, all was bare and squalid, and nobody was there. They sat down and presently a tall woman, lank, crooked, with only one eye came in. “Visitors,” she exclaimed, “a good day to you!” The men replied “good day grandmother. We’ve come to pass the night under your roof.”

“Very good! I shall have something to sup upon,” she replied. They were greatly terrified for they had found Likho. She lit the stove and cut the throat of the tailor, trussed him, and put him in the oven to eat. When she finished eating the tailor, the Smith thought how to save his life. He offered to forge anything for the crone. She thought for awhile and asked him to forge her an eye.

The blacksmith agreed on the condition that she allowed herself to be bound, for he would need to hammer the eye in. She fetched a cord and he bound her with it. He then took an awl, heated it red-hot, and without hesitation hammered it into her good eye. Likho did not die. Instead, she broke the cord and sat down at the entrance to the cottage, saying “ah villain, you shan’t get away from me now!” The smith again was in an evil plight and sat thinking “what’s to be done?”

By and by, the sheep came home from afield and the crone let them in for the night. In the morning, she got up to let them out. The smith turned his sheep skin jacket inside out so the wool was outside, then crept out like a sheep. She felt each one and shoved the smith out too. As soon as she had, the smith stood and cried “farewell Likho! I have suffered much evil at your hands. Now, you can do nothing to me!”

“You haven’t escaped yet!” she cried and gave chase. The smith ran until he saw a golden-handled hatchet stuck in a tree. He felt a strong desire to seize it, but once he did his hand stuck fast. What was to be done! He looked behind and there was Likho, coming after him and crying “there you are villain! You’ve not got off yet!”

The smith pulled out a small knife from his pocket and began hacking at his stuck hand. He cut it off and ran back to his village. He showed everyone his arm as proof he had seen Likho, evil, at last, and never again left his village.

Polevik (credit the internet)

Male or female deformed dwarf with grass for hair, different colored eyes, always dressed in white and usually riding horses. Active at noon and known to kill anyone sleeping in the fields by riding over them with horses. They will harass others during hottest days by pulling hair and attempt to lead their children away to get lost in cornfields. Sometimes, they hide in your grain fields to be harvested. Once in your shed, it will poison your crops. Always look for the dark purple of its blood in your grain.

They can be appeased with 2 eggs, a crow, a toad, and a rooster placed in a ditch when no one is looking.

Rusalka

I have heard this story from the lips of three good women, so I know it to be true. Many years ago there was a man named Jakob Goodman who was to be married to a woman loyal and honorable. His wife-to-be went to the river of her village during the Green Week and beseeched the spirits to give her a blessed union and great fertility. Being a poor woman of little means, she left upon the shore her only possession of worth: a fine comb of silver.

Before the wedding, Jakob Goodman became lustful for the sister of his betrothed. He went to meet her by the river for a rendezvous by the light of the full moon and away from prying eyes. When he arrived at the river, he saw not the sister of his betrothed but instead a naked young maid of unearthly beauty, with hair of darkest red, half-immersed in the river. Immediately, her hair reminded Jakob Goodman of his transgression, for all know red is the color of sin. The maid turned to him, unabashed by her nakedness, and he knew she was not of these lands. She rose from the waters and carried in her arms the sister of his betrothed, and to the hair of the sister she applied a comb of silver. She said nothing, and Jakob was sorely afraid, for before him was Rusalka, spirit of a woman murdered by a lover. Within her green eyes he saw his fault, and he was prepared to drown himself in the river.

The Rusalka held up her hand, and Jakob knew the price of his lustful sin had been paid. He wept for his transgression and returned to the village where he swore before the Stones that he would always be faithful to his betrothed and honor her. That Spring, Jakob was married, and that year the crops of the village were plentiful and the rains gentle, and all in the village prospered.

Female water spirits of pregnant women drowned by lovers, suicide, or unwanted babies. They typically drown impure men by luring them to a river with song or their beauty. The man would die below the waters inhaling a kiss of water. Once a year, during the Green Week, they are at their strongest and leave the rivers to dance in the trees, bringing moisture to crops. Swimming is forbidden during this week for anyone may be dragged to their death below the waters. Some with special combs can leave the rivers during other times and cause mischief to men who have impure hearts. Some will help poor people who leave an offering on the river of something dear to them.

Vodyanoi (credit internet)

Naked old man with frog face, green beard, covered in algae and muck. Has a fish tail and eyes that burn like coals. Rides non-salt waters on a rotted log. Called the “grandfather” by locals, who blame him for drownings. He stores the souls of the drowned in teapots. Fisherman seek his dominion over fish by putting his favorite pastime – tobacco – in the water while saying “Here’s your tobacco Lord Vodnik (Vodyanoi), now give me a fish.”

Yallery Brown (credit MC Balfour 1891 changes to modernize and shorten)

Once upon a time, a young farmhand named Tom Tiver chanced across a curious little man no bigger than a babe but with a long beard wrapped around his body and wizened face. He had bright black eyes and skin as brown as the earth could be. The little man was trapped under a stone, which Tom Tiver promptly lifted. The little man said “My thanks! I now be a good friend of Tom Tiver.” Tom thought not of how the little man knew his name and instead asked if he might know the other’s name. The little man thought for a bit then said “Yallery Brown thou mayst call me. Yallery Brown, Tom Tiver’s friend.”

He then offered to reward Tom. “I’m in a hurry but tell me quickly, what wilt thou have? A wife? The finest lass in town I can give thee. Riches? I’ll give thee as much gold as thou can carry? Help with thy work? Only say the word.”

Tom scratched his head. “A wife I have no hankering for as they’re but bothersome bodies. Gold to carry may be nice, but truly I cannot abide work, and if thou wilt give me a helpin’ hand...”

The little man stopped him as quick as lightning. “I’ll help thee on one condition. Thou can never thank me or thou will never see me again.” He stamped his tiny foot and blew a dandelion in Tom’s face. Tom awoke the next day in his bed, not knowing how he arrived.

Tom set to his chores, but there were none to do! The horses were seen to, the stables cleaned, everything in its proper lace, and he’d nothing to do but sit with his hands in his pockets. And so, it went on day after day, all the work done by Yallery Brown and better than Tom could have done himself. If his master gave him more work, Tom sat down but the work did itself and in no time.

At first, this was mighty fine for Tom, but by and by if work was done for Tom, it was undone for other lads. If his buckets were filled, theirs were upset. If his tools

were sharpened, theirs were blunted. Day in and day out, 'twas the same. The lads came to see Tom's work was being done for him without hands, and they carried these tales to the master.

Tom could do nothing himself. The brooms would not stay in his hand. The plow ran away from him. The hoe kept out of his grip. He thought he'd do his own work so Yallery Brown would leave him and his neighbors alone, but he could not. At last Tom's master sacked him. Tom felt bad, for 'twas a good place he must leave and good pay. He was fair mad with Yallery Brown and shook his fist in the air screaming for Yallery Brown. You'd scarce believe it, but the little man appeared with his wrinkled face and wicked glinting black eyes. Tom was in a rage and said "Look here, I'll thank thee to leave me alone. I want none of thy help."

The horrid thing broke into a screeching laugh and pointed its brown finger at Tom. "Ho, ho, Tom! Thou thanked me, and I told thee not to do so!" Tom yelled but the thing only laughed and screeched and mocked. "Tom my lad," it said, "I'll tell thee summat. True's true I'll never help thee again and thou will never see me again after today, but I never said that I'd leave thee alone, Tom, and I never will! I was nice and safe under the stone, Tom, and could do no harm, but thou let me out and can't put me back in. I would have been thy friend and worked for thee if thou had been wise, but since thou are a born fool, I'll give thee no more than a born fool's luck."

He began to sing and dance around Tom, saying:

'Work as thou will
Thou'lt never do well;
Work as thou mayst
Thou'lt never gain grist;
For harm and mischance and Yallery Brown
Thou'st let out thyself from under the stone.'

From thereon, Tom's work always went wrong, and 'twas all Yallery Brown's doing. All his children died, his crops rotted, the beasts never fattened, and nothing ever did well with him till he was dead.

Even after, at the funeral words were heard said at the grave with a snicker:

'Work as thou will
Thou'lt never do well;
Work as thou mayst
Thou'lt never gain grist;
For harm and mischance and Yallery Brown
Thou'st let out thyself from under the stone.'