ROMA FAIRY TALES TOLD BY TANTI VETA







Promovarea **DIVERSITĂŢII** ÎN CULTURĂ ȘI ARTĂ în cadrul patrimoniului cultural european



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Fairy tales told by Tanti Veta, gathered by Alina Şerban

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So where did you get your stories from?

From my mother. All the children would go to her and she would gather us around her like a mother hen.

Now...would you like to hear a story?

Thank You, Tanti Veta! Nais tuqe, Tanti Veta!



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Little Black Goat's Foot



Where are the girls, where are they?

03

nce upon a time there were a man and his wife and they had three daughters. Each daughter was all grown up and living with her husband, away from their parents. One day the wife got pregnant. But when her time to give birth came, she started feeling very sick. Increasingly sick. And she was struggling for many hours to have her baby. Some neighbors were called for help. The midwife had also been called. But the man's wife just continued to feel very, very sick.

So the man got scared and sent word for the girls to come home and be near their mother. The first daughter arrived and ran to hug her mother and be by her side. The second daughter arrived and ran to hug her mother and be by her side. The third daughter hurried as much as she could, but she was running late and arrived last. Her father became very upset:

"Get out, you Little Black Goat's Foot, get out! I called for you to come to your mother and you arrived late! Get out!"

The third daughter was saddened to hear her father's words and stood apart from everyone else.

Meanwhile, the girls' mother started feeling better. Finally, she gave birth to a little boy. Joyous for the birth of the boy and for the fact that the mother was feeling better, the parents arranged for a carriage to come and walk the daughters around town in celebration. Little Black Goat's Foot was not called since she had been sick. So two daughters went around town celebrating and enjoying the day. When suddenly, a dragon appeared out of nowhere and blew a huge smoke all over town and kidnapped the two girls.

"Where are the girls, where are they?" wondered the people in town.

04

Everybody went out looking for the girls. The father was very upset and kept looking for his daughters, but they were nowhere to be found. Little Black Goat's Foot was also very upset and kept trying to find out where her sisters were. So she kept asking around town and found out about another secret realm, under the city. It could only be accessed through a very deep pit. In this realm people and dragons lived together. She also found out that the dragon had two brothers and that the three dragon brothers had in fact planned to kidnapped all three girls and make them their wives.

And so Little Black Goat's Foot decided to descend into the pit and look for her sisters. And so she went and fought the dragons. So brave was Little Black Goat's Foot that she fought all three dragons and won. She then returned with her two sisters and took a carriage ride around town to celebrate. And the parents were very happy to have all their children together, the three girls and the new born boy. And they organized a huge festivity in town.

It was a great party. I also went there and drank and ate. We all celebrated and rejoiced. And so we always remember Little Black Goat's Foot when a girl proves to be courageous.



The Merciful Boy



You took mercy on me and you saved me and you fed me.

06

nce upon a time there was a boy. The boy's father was a shepherd and had many sheep in his care. So the boy and his mother lived comfortably. One day though the boy's father died and they were left with no sheep to look after. They became poor and life was difficult, although both the boy and his mother worked very hard.

The boy kept thinking of a way to improve their situation, every day he went into the woods and returned to sell firewood. But although he went and worked hard, they still didn't have enough money and they still didn't have enough food and they still didn't have enough to get by. The boy kept thinking of his father and how good life was when they had sheep to look after and they never missed for anything.

So one day he decided to ask his mother to go in town and borrow some money so he can buy a baby sheep, raise it and breed it and ultimately become a shepherd himself. At first his mother didn't want to go into debt, but the boy pleaded and pleaded until she went and borrowed 100 coins.

And so the boy took the money and started the journey to the fair to buy sheep. As he was walking at a crossroads he saw a group of children. They had caught a baby snake and they kept poking it with a stick.

"Stop tormenting the baby snake", pleaded the boy. "If you bring the baby snake to me and put it in my bag, I'll give you all my money."

"How much money do you have?" asked the children.

"100 coins. You can have it all if you just leave the little baby snake alone and give it to me."

"Fine, you can have the baby snake for 100 coins", agreed the children.

And so the boy bought the baby snake and came back home and told his mother what had happened. At first they kept the small baby snake in a jar. Whatever food they had they shared with it. After a while the snake outgrew the jar and they moved it to a barrel. Whatever food they had they shared with it. When the snake outgrew the barrel they moved it into the house. Whatever food they had they shared with it. Until the snake grew into a dragon as large as the house itself.

One day the dragon called the boy to him.

"You took mercy on me and you saved me and you fed me", said the dragon. "However, now I am all grown up and it is time for me to return to my family."

"How can you return?" asked the boy. "I don't know where your family is or how to reach your parents."

"Climb on my back and I'll fly you over there. Trust me", said the dragon.

So, on top of the dragon, the boy flew across mountains and valleys, until they reached a place where a large fire was visible on the horizon. The dragon descended and hid in a valley. He then shared with the boy that the dragon parents could be found at the large fire they were seeing. The boy was to go to them and tell them that he knows where their long lost son was. But whatever they did and however they threatened him, he was not to tell them where the son dragon was until the father relinquished the magic stone he kept under his tongue.

So the boy went to the dragon's parents and told them that he knows where their long lost son is, but they cannot know his location until they give him the magic stone. The dragons screamed and threatened him, but the boy kept silent. Until the father dragon agreed and gave him the magic stone he kept under his tongue. Only then did the boy reveal the location of their son and started the journey back home. The family of dragons was now reunited and happy. Once home, the boy told his mother about his journey. They both looked at the magic stone and wondered. Since they kept growing hungry they tried to figure out what they had to eat. Once the magic stone heard them saying they were hungry, suddenly the table was filled with pots and pans containing all kinds of delicious food. And from that day forward whatever the boy and his mother needed, the magic stone would give it to them.

I also went there and ate and drank with them and saw this magic stone.



The Wax House and the Salt House



Please woman, let me sleep under the covers with you.



nce upon a time there were an old man and an old woman that were very upset with each other. Each had their own house. The man had a salt house all for him, and the woman had a wax house only for her.

One day the woman was cooking and needed salt. When her child came back home from school she asked the child to go to the man and ask for some salt. She needed it to make polenta, this is how you cook it, in salted water. The child ran to the man to ask but the man chased him away:

"Get out of here, go to hell, I won't give you any salt!"

The second day the woman again needed salt. She needed it to make polenta, this is how you cook it, in salted water. When her child came back home from school she asked the child to go to the man and ask for some salt. The child ran to the man to ask but the man chased him away again:

"Get out of here, go to hell, I won't give you any salt!"

The third day the woman again needed salt. She needed it to make polenta, this is how you cook it, in salted water. When her child came back home from school she asked the child to go to the man and ask for some salt. The child ran to the man to ask but the man chased him away again:

"Get out of here, go to hell, I won't give you any salt!"

When the child returned rejected for a third time, the woman got upset and went outside and started praying for a huge rain to come in and melt the man's house. And a huge storm and a big rain started and destroyed the man's house. So the man now had no house. He then ran to the woman and pleaded with her:

"Please woman, let me sleep inside your house, just in the corner by the door."

But the woman was upset with him and refused and chased him with her cane. The man remained outside. The second day he again went to her.

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"Please woman, let me sleep inside your house, just in the corner by the door."

The old woman was still upset but she felt sorry for him also, so she let him in. And the old man slept in a corner by the door. But he kept getting cold and started pleading with her.

"Please woman, let me sleep at your feet, I am cold here."

But the woman was upset with him and refused and chased him with her cane. The man remained sleeping in his corner by the door. The second day he went to her again:

"Please woman, let me sleep at your feet, I am cold here."

But the woman was upset with him and refused and chased him with her cane. The man remained sleeping in his corner by the door. The third day he went to her again:

"Please woman, let me sleep at your feet, I am cold here."



The old woman was still upset but she felt sorry for him also, so she let him sleep at her feet. But he kept getting cold and still was not pleased and started pleading with her.

"Please woman, let me sleep under the covers with you."

But the woman was upset with him and refused and chased him with her cane. The man remained sleeping at her feet. The second day he went to her again:

"Please woman, let me sleep under the covers with you."

But the woman was upset with him and refused and chased him with her cane. The man remained sleeping at her feet. The third day he went to her again:

"Please woman, let me sleep under the covers with you."

The old woman got upset and decided to chase the old man outside. As he was standing outside he started praying for a great heat that would melt the old woman's house. And a great heatwave came and a strong sun and the wax house melted away.

And so they were both now without a house. They initially went and lived together with the child in a tent, in a meadow near town. Later on, they went into the woods and decided to build a house together.

I was there and I helped out. I cut some wood and I helped with the construction. And now here I am telling you their story.

The Golden Girl



This is not dirt, it is gold!



nce upon a time there were an old woman and an old man. Together they had many children they loved and cared for into adulthood. One day the old woman became pregnant again. They both felt ashamed and hid the pregnancy from their other children and the rest of the village.

They thought they were too old and too poor to have any more children. When the time for giving birth came, a little girl was born. The parents cared for her in secret and kept her away from the world.

The girl was no ordinary girl. When she smiled flowers would rise from her mouth as she was beautiful and where she walked basil plants grew in her footprints as she was lucky. Once a week her mother would bathe her and comb her hair. She was upset her daughter always appeared dirty to her and as soon as she finished washing her she would throw the bathwater in a distant corner of the yard.

But actually the bathwater was not dirty, it was filled with speckles of gold. The mother didn't see this as she was always in a hurry to give the girl her weekly bath and then hide her again away from the world.

The old man went every day to work for the local noble, to be able to provide food and other necessary things for the old woman and the little girl. One day the noble asked him why he is always so serious and worried. And the old man told him about the little girl, how they were already old and poor and felt ashamed to be the parents of such a little girl and how they kept her in her room at all times and only took her out for her weekly bath. He kept lamenting about how dirty the girl was and that she was dirty in a strange way, since after every bath her bathwater appeared to be sparkling and now a whole corner of the yard was shining. When the noble man heard this he was curious to see it and asked to accompany the old man back to his house. Once arrived at the house the noble man saw piles and piles of gold throughout the yard.

"This is not dirt, it is gold!" he exclaimed.

Upon hearing this the old man and the old woman rejoiced and ran to take the girl out of her room. And they hugged and kissed her many times. And the girl was happy and was laughing with flowers falling from her mouth and jumped and ran throughout the yard and basil started growing all over.

I was there, at the village dance, and *I* drank and rejoiced with the whole family and their beautiful and lucky girl at the village dance.



The Old Man's Daughter



By the little embers and burning coals, keep silent!

nce upon a time there were an old woman and an old man. They had two children, an older boy and a younger girl. The parents loved and cared for their children. One day the old man fell ill and died. The old woman took care of the children alone the best she could. She cared for them to be well fed, to go to school and have everything they need. However one day the old woman also fell very sick and called the boy to her deathbed:

"My boy, you are to take care of your sister, she is still very young. You have to brush and braid her hair, take her to school and pick her up from school. Be kind to her", she said.

"Of course mother, she's my sister, how could I not care for her?"

When the old woman passed away the boy and his sister were all alone in the world. The boy went to work and also cared for his sister: took her to school, picked her up from school and generally looked after her. This went on for a good while. One day the boy met a girl who fell in love with him and asked him to marry her. The boy agreed and so they all lived together: the boy, his sister and his wife. Eventually the wife got pregnant and gave birth to a little baby. They all lived together.

One day an invitation to a party arrived at their house. The boy's wife asked him to leave the two kids behind at home so they could go to the party on their own. His sister was a bit grown up by now and could look after the little baby. However, before leaving for the party, the wife secretly went and strangled the little baby, then hid what she had done by placing the baby back in the crib. Then she instructed everyone, including the boy's sister, not to disturb the sleeping baby while they were gone.

And off they went to the party. The boy's little sister kept playing in the streets with the other kids. Occasionally she would check from the distance and see that the baby appeared to still be sleeping. And she respected what was asked of her and never tried to disturb his sleep. When the two returned from the party, great pain and anger was felt in discovering the dead baby. The wife accused the little sister and told her husband it was her doing. The boy then decided to punish his sister and took her to the woods, cut off her hands and left her to die.

The girl felt enormous sorrow. All alone in the woods, she survived but struggled every day. One day the emperor's son came hunting through the woods. And when he saw the girl he fell in love with her. So he took her with him. When the empress saw the girl her son had brought home, a girl without hands, she became very angry and asked him to chase her away. But her son loved the girl and refused:

"Mother, if you chase her away, you chase me away. I will care for *her and make sure we have everything we need.*"

The empress didn't want to lose her son, so she kept silent. After a while the young woman got pregnant. The boy received orders to go to war. Upon finding this out the girl felt very sad and worried, and wondered how she will manage with everything without him. But the boy reassured her and told her his mother would care for her. And so he left to join the army and the young woman was left alone with her mother-in-law. When her time to give birth came, she had a baby boy. However, the empress wanted nothing to do with them and decided to chase them away.

The young woman was left alone on the road with her baby. She was upset and filled with sorrow. As she was walking on the road she wandered into a magic field. In the middle of the field there was a well. The girl put the baby down in the grass and went to try and get some water. She felt thirsty and she kept circling the well, trying to find a few drops of water. And as soon as she approached the well and its water, her hands grew back. And when she turned towards the baby she saw him healthy and grown up.

And so the young woman became very happy and hugged her child. And she kissed him and started telling him her life story: how her parents died, how she was alone with her brother, how she was accused of killing her brother's baby and taken to the woods, how her brother cut off her hands, how the emperor's son found her and how she had been chased away. 19

The child listened and laughed. And laughing and walking together they ended up at a magic farm with an announcement at the gate:

Travelers Whoever passes through Is free to come inside and have a meal

The woman was very happy since she found a place her child could eat. Inside everybody was nice to both of them and cared for the baby. And as she sat there two soldiers passed by. Seeing her alone with a child they asked about her story. She didn't want to say anything, but the child started telling her entire life story.

"By the little embers and burning coals, keep silent!" the girl whispered in the child's ear. But the child laughed and kept retelling her story.

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"By the little embers and burning coals, keep silent!" the girl whispered in the child's ear. But the child laughed and kept retelling her story.

And as soon as the child finished the story the two soldiers revealed themselves. And one was her brother and the other one was her husband. They both begged forgiveness for not taking better care of her. And they all lived happily ever after since then and the child grew happy and full of laughter.

And I was there when the story was told, and now I'm sharing it with you. And that's the truth.



Three Sisters



If you marry me, I'll give you two twin children!

nce upon a time there were three sisters. The sisters were all grown up and of the proper age to get married. They spent their days walking around the village and enjoying themselves. One day an emperor's son arrived.

And seeing the three sisters he liked them all and asked them which one he should marry.

"If you marry me, you will be rich, I'll get you a big beautiful villa", said the first girl.

"I don't need that, I have plenty of riches", said the emperor's son.

"If you marry me, you'll eat the best food and I'll put salt in your food", said the second girl.

"I don't need that, I have plenty of salt", said the emperor's son.

"If you marry me, I'll give you two twin children", said the third girl.

"I'll marry you then, if you give me two children."

And so the emperor's son married the third sister. After a while she got pregnant. When the time came she had two twins, a girl and a boy. However, the empress didn't like her daughter-in-law and ordered a servant to switch the two children with two puppy dogs. Then she told the servant to take the children out into the woods and kill them. The servant took pity on the children and didn't have the heart to kill them, but left them alone in the woods. The empress then told everybody that the woman had given birth to two puppies and gave orders for her to be buried from the waist down at the palace's gate. Then she placed an announcement that whoever passed the gate was to spit on the woman

who had given birth to dogs.

The children were all alone in the woods. The boy looked after his sister and everyday he would go get food. The girl lived in a tree-house they had both built. And God was on their side and helped them live. Every night God would turn into an old man and appeared and talked to the girl.

One day word arrived at the palace that the royal stallions refused to drink water from the spring in the woods. Hearing that, the emperor went to investigate. And once in the woods he could see the girl hiding in the tree house. Her presence was scaring the horses away and they refused to drink any water. The emperor ordered the girl to come down from the tree, but the girl didn't want to leave without her brother. The emperor again ordered the girl to come down from the tree, but the girl didn't want to leave without her brother. For the third time the emperor repeated the order.

It is then that God disguised as an old man appeared to the girl and told her what to do: *wait for her brother, take a bottle of perfume with her and once at the palace gate to sprinkle perfume on her mother and tell everybody their story.*

Meanwhile her brother returned home to her. And so they both got into the royal carriage and left for the palace. Once at the palace gate they went and poured perfume on their mother, their mother whom everybody would spit upon when passing by. Then the girl started telling their story. How their father had married their mother. How their mother gave birth to them and how the empress chased them away. And how they had been on their own and now had returned to tell the truth. Everybody listened and sided with the children and the reunited family had a party.

And I was there and rejoiced with them.

The Priest's Daughter



You gave me away to somebody I did not want. You did not listen to me. nce upon a time there was this priest that had a daughter. The daughter was well-behaved and always played with her best friend. They were always together, knitting and talking. Slowly but steadily, the girls grew up. One day the priest received an order to leave for a few days. He left his daughter alone with her friend. During the evening twelve thieves entered the house. The priest daughter's friend got scared and ran. But the priest's daughter welcomed the thieves:

"Welcome, please, let me give you food and drinks", said the girl. She was a brave, brave girl. And the thieves started partying and eating and drinking. At some point during the evening, they ran out of wine. The girl offered to go to the wine cellar and get more. Once down in the cellar she hid behind the door and got her sword out.

After a while the captain of the thieves noticed the girl was not coming back.

"Go and check on that girl and our drinks", he told one of his thieves.

So the first thief went down into the cellar and as soon as he stepped through the door the girl cut his head off with her sword.

After a while the captain of the thieves noticed the girl and his man were not coming back.

"Go and check on that girl and our drinks", he told to another one of his thieves.

So the second thief went down into the cellar and as soon as he stepped through the door the girl cut his head off with her sword.

After a while the captain of the thieves noticed the girl and his man were not coming back

"Go and check on that girl and our drinks", he told to yet another one of his thieves.

So the third thief went down into the cellar and as soon as he stepped through the door the girl cut his head off with her sword.

After another while the captain of the thieves noticed the girl and his man were not coming back. And so he kept sending his thieves down in the cellar. And the priest's daughter cut their heads off, one by one. Until the thief captain was left alone. Angry, he assumed all his men had gone down and gotten drunk on the wine. So he went down himself. The young woman hit him with her sword, but didn't manage to kill him, only made a big wound on his face.

And so the thief captain ran away.

The young woman kept silent about what had happened and told nobody. After a while the captain thief came back and asked for the priest to give him his daughter's hand in marriage. The priest agreed and went to tell his daughter. The young woman had recognized the man due to his scar and refused. But her father would not listen and wanted her to be married. The woman pleaded for her father to listen to her wishes, but he refused.

So the woman obeyed and left with the captain thief.



Once arrived at his house, the captain thief planned to kill her. Since the woman understood this she ran away. And she ran and she ran, with the captain thief and his men following her. Until she reached a crossroads and twelve wagons filled with hay. So she hid in the last one. The thief captain reached the road and ordered his men to turn over and search the wagons. They turned over and searched the first wagon, the woman was not there. They turned over and searched the second wagon, the woman was not there. They turned over and searched the third wagon, the woman was not there. And so on, until eleven wagons laid turned over on the road. Reaching the last wagon the men were tired and upset and the thief captain let the wagon pass.

"We turned over eleven wagons, we are tired. The woman is not here, we lost her", he said.

And so the young woman stayed hidden in hay until she reached her father's house. Once back in his house, she hugged him, kissed him and told him:

"I didn't want to argue with you father, but I suffered. You gave me away to somebody I did not want. You did not listen to me."

And the woman told her father everything she had been through and how she had defeated all the thieves by herself.

I was also there and heard her story and *I* kept the secret of the dead thieves in the cellar until today.

THE END



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