


Spring 2019

## Maidens in Maizes: Johnson, Grimms, d'Aulnoy

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Maidens in Mazes:  
Johnson, Grimms, d'Aulnoy

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
*of Bard College*

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2019





Maidens  
in  
Mazes

Johnson, Griggs, & Holroyd



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## Credits

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### **Dedication**

This project is dedicated to Lucas Guajardo. You have helped me understand the importance of fighting off life's monsters and believing in fairy tales. May the gods embrace you.

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## The Bridge

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Fairy tales are my way of pursuing academics within a world of magic. Fictitious worlds adored by people for centuries. A way to reveal deep anxieties of humanity in short, imaginative terms. A way to heal some of the wounds of my characters, myself, and the young girls in Grimms. Fairy tales exist in worlds of justice, giving those who are cheated by reality a place to flourish.

For a long time I thought I could live in my own fairy tale. I thought that, if I did everything just right, my fantasy would become my reality. I imagined that as I walked through the doors of my future home, I would be transformed into a luscious forest with fairies fluttering about. I would be Alice, and my creation would be Wonderland. During the day I'd work in real life, then I'd go home to my fairy tale. I believed in my ability to exist outside of reality. After all, I spent most of my time in my head, playing imaginary games with my friends and with the trees. I had an army of companions, the neighborhood dogs. Everyday I'd sit outside and wait for the dogs to walk by with their owners so I could give them a treat. I wanted them to like me, I wanted them to join me in my fairy tale.

A year before high school I began to face my first obstacle, a monster to defeat. Anxiety. I turned my experience into a humbling origin story and told myself that in college my fantasy would begin to materialize. Each day became a waiting game. Things would fall into place, I told myself. I just had to keep waiting.

After two years of settling in to Bard, I was deferred from Written Arts. I felt defeated because I'd spent the four semesters leading up to that saying I was a tentative Written Arts

student, thinking that that was the missing piece to my tale. But the dragon slayed the heroine. I considered switching majors, giving up writing, switching schools. Writing was the only thing I wanted to do in school, and I was told I wasn't ready.

Then, as happens in fairy tales, I encountered a magical helper: a professor who wanted to be my new advisor. He gave me a deal, a way through. He walked me through academia-approved literary analysis, something necessary of my major. He instructed me on how to improve my stories, which involved using less first person and fewer inner monologues. I started to believe that the writing I wanted to do wasn't possible for a larger audience. I had to follow the templates of acceptable work, using forms rather than free writing. I no longer wrote for myself, I wrote to hold a place in literary tradition. I wrote to be accepted.

The semester of my deferral is also the semester I took my first German class. Sounds I had never heard before were being introduced to me as a way to speak. I felt panicked as a Written Arts student, and I was gaining discipline as a student of German Studies. By the end of the semester, my ability to understand a little bit of German felt like magic. I could understand something completely new, hearing words rather than random sounds, and reading sentences rather than scrambled letters.

I was beginning to see the possibility of living in a fairy tale again with the help of another language. I wasn't a defeated writing student in German. I wasn't anything in German. German Me had no anxious thoughts, because German Me didn't even know the word for stress, or worry. It felt like a loophole. I soon began to open myself up to German. I felt happier with

my mind when I thought in this foreign language. Life was simpler. Der Stuhl, der Himmel, die Tür.<sup>1</sup>

At this time my knowledge of fairy tales was limited to knowing that the Grimms were German, and that they wrote “dark” fairy tales. I knew the Disney movies, which were said to be inspired by fairy tales, and began with “Once upon a time.” I’d never actually read a Grimm’s tale until I began thinking I could write about them for this project. I knew I was drawn to fairy tales, regardless of whether or not I’d actually read one. When people asked if I had read any Grimms, I confidently said no. With my mind of fantasies and belief that magic was real, I knew that fairy tales were on my horizon.

I could not understand writing for an audience unknown, but I could imagine writing fairy tales. Tales for the sake of tales, not for anyone else. Since I couldn’t find a way to write stories deeply rooted in my reality, I wanted to write something that, on the surface, was not real at all. Something that touched on the same fears, hopes, and joys that I felt in my life and wished I could control, hidden by a world of fantasy. Fairy tales became a way for me to connect this fantasy I’d always had with my writing and my studies. They became my bridge to academia.

Reading a collection of fairy tales in a foreign language is a magical experience. Collections of letters I had never seen until three years ago could create images of triumph and despair in mein Kopf. Eine von die schönsten Erfahrungen meines Jahres.<sup>2</sup> Without German, I do not think I would have truly felt the beauty of fairy tales, because of the beauty in the Grimms’ language as well as the beauty that reading in another language provides.

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<sup>1</sup> The chair, the sky, the door.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most beautiful experiences of my year.

A year ago in the spring, I wrote a short fable called “Sahara’s Spring.” Using and altering the name of Sohara, from *Sohara’s Reise*, I wanted the story to reflect my relationship with German. Sahara, a young rabbit, had stubby ears and giant fangs. She hid these fangs from everyone, until she met a bear cub in the forest. At first, she revealed her fangs to intimidate the cub, but, having a bear as a father, he was not scared. She sprang into a bed of leaves and opened her mouth wide to allow the wind to enter, to feel free. The helpful advisor of mine noted how frightening a rabbit with fangs would be, and how my ambiguous ending allowed for the possibility of something violent to happen. This, my advisor said, made it read like a fairy tale.

I hadn’t noticed the potential for violence in my story, nor did I want to write it. In hearing my advisor’s reading, I was struck by what could have been a subconscious selection of physical details. I wanted that rabbit, who was bullied and ostracized, to have strength in her difference. I wanted her to be able to protect herself fully, if she needed to.

Hearing my advisor say this made me consider adding elements of danger into my stories, perhaps that is what they were missing. Everything I was writing was so perfect, so dream-like. It was a resemblance of the world I wished to live in. Studying the Grimms fairy tales has helped me come to terms with danger, it has helped me appreciate stories that aren’t all pleasantries and beauty.

What I didn’t know yet, was that that’s what I was missing, both on the page and in my head. The obstacles, the evil forces, the maze. What I wanted as a kid and what I was writing in my fiction was not a fairy tale at all. It was fake. It was something to escape to, without real emotions or real life. For a while I thought that was better than reality, and I wanted my stories to prove it. As I faced harder and harder conversations with my professors, I realized that that

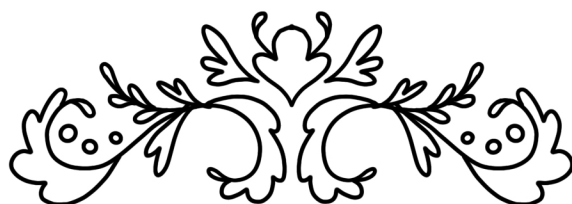
wouldn't cut it. As I put myself back together after the spring of my sophomore year, I continued to study German. I gave the Grimms gory stories a try, and I entered the world I currently live in. A real fairy tale. One with challenges, scared humans, and important helpers. One in which perseverance is everything.

My collection of fairy tales are certainly not all fairy tales. Some of them have more fantastical elements, some are more fable-like, and some are simply tales; but they all hold fairy tales as an influence. My tales were born as objects, events, or people in reality that I found myself drawn to, that felt magic. Cracking nut shells. Connecting with spirits. Seeing baked goods come into creation out of powders and liquids. Reconnecting with an old friend. The judgment free love of a dog. I began writing stories, focusing on a magical aspect of life, allowing the simplicity of the situation to shine through. The joy of childhood, the strength of emotions, the blossoming of flowers.

My experience of writing tales has been influenced by the critical work I've been doing: reading the Grimms, analyzing their language, and discovering d'Aulnoy's different approach to fairy tales. The Grimms gave me ideas, they brought me into the world of fairy tales. As I read their stories, I realized that I wasn't comfortable in their world. I wasn't comfortable because of the unspoken way that women were being treated. Girls are objectified and forced into things, while the boys go out into the world by choice and find their own meaning. I gave the women in my stories strength and intellect, making them the authority of their lives. I gave my children nice parents with real problems. I put men and women on the same field, both afraid and bold.

Alongside writing fairy tales in which I am in control, it is important that I read fairy tales in which I have no control. My reading of the Grimms, and my comparison to d'Aulnoy are meant to present my experience of reading the texts. I ran into problems when I let the Grimms take control, so my reading is taking that control back. D'Aulnoy and I had fewer issues along the road. Her work is analyzed to present an alternative, to prove that, more than a century before the Grimms, it was possible to let women speak for themselves and encourage love among characters.

Writing fairy tales gave me a space to write about my issues with life (and the Grimms) and then remedy them in magical terms. I hope that one day a story of mine will be able to remedy someone else as well. Whether or not the fairy tales within these pages have that power is up to you. I hope that those who read these stories can, at least for a moment, be transported into my world of feathers, flowers, and talking frogs.



# Part I



*Fairy Tales*





## Tart Farm

When Papa Fred realized they didn't have enough food for the pigs, he improvised. He brought scraps of food from the trash out to the pigpen.

"Sorry kids, I'll have better food for you in a few days, I promise," he said, opening his arms. Letting the banana peels, peach pits, coffee grounds, and other multi-colored mush fall on top of the kibble, he frowned.

"Daaaaddd" his daughter, Tiny, shouted from inside the house.

"In the pigpen!" Papa Fred hollered back.

Tiny was on her summer break from school. She'd be in the tenth grade in the fall. Tiny had been picking up chicken eggs and sweeping horse shit since the day she could walk. She used to love tumbling around the pigs in a giant tub while hosing them clean. The big ones would knock her over playfully, thinking she could handle the nudge like the other pigs. After the summer going in to sixth grade, Tiny didn't play with the pigs anymore. That summer, half of the pigs were sent to the butcher and she realized she'd never see them again.

"So you take them to a store where they get killed and made into ham sandwiches?" she'd asked her father, beginning to cry.

Since then, Tiny avoided spending too long in the pen. She didn't want to see her friends get sent away.

"I'm going to meet Lucy in a bit," she said to her dad from the entry to the pen.

"Okay sweetie," he replied, walking out to her. "Would you check on the pigs when you get back? I just put down some of our garbage for them to eat, and I want to make sure they're okay."

“You’re feeding them trash?!” she exclaimed.

“We can’t afford food for them right now,” her father said. He put his hand on her shoulder as they walked back to the house.

Their house was old and rustic, the back door was rotting. Their porch was scattered with herbs and plants Tiny was trying to grow.

“I have a few meetings to go to today,” her dad said, “If we’re lucky we’ll have some jobs lined up by the end of the day.” He opened the coffee maker and cleaned it out so he could use it again. “Can you pass me the coffee grounds?”

Tiny reached into their cupboard and grabbed the tin box. “Do we have any eggs?” She asked.

Papa Fred shook his head. They always ate their small share of eggs quickly after they were laid. Their hens’ eggs were magnificent. They could make the most boring dish taste like food of the gods. The two of them could eat a few of them and be full for the whole day.

Tiny grabbed a mint leaf to chew instead and said goodbye to her dad.

After seeing her friend, Tiny had barely walked through the front door when she heard shrieks coming from the farm. She grabbed the First Aid Kit and sprinted outside to see where the screams were coming from. Realizing it was the pigpen, she ran over to them and barged inside.

“What’s wrong, is everyone okay?” She asked the pigs, looking around. She hadn’t been inside the pen in months.

The yelling stopped, the pigs were all either standing up or walking around, none of them seemed to be injured, there was no blood in sight. She stood there for a while, completely confused. Had she imagined the screams?

As she looked around at the pigs, she remembered why she'd liked them so much in the past. They all seemed so content, chowing down on trash for food, lying on a pile of old hay. They rolled around in the same water they drank from. Tiny noticed one of the baby pigs looking right at her. She walked over to the pig and saw that he had a long plastic wrapper in his mouth.

He placed it on the floor when she was in front of him.

Leaning forward, she read the label, "Candy Buttons." It was her trash. She'd thrown it away earlier that day, after having it up on her wall for months.

"This wrapper is bad news," Tiny said to the pig, folding it up and putting it in her pocket. "It's from my first date with Jude."

She and Jude had only gone on a few dates, but she liked him enough to pin the wrapper onto her wall. He moved away soon after, and she hadn't heard from him since.

"Are you the one who screamed?" she asked the pig who was still standing right before her. She wished he could respond. He oinked quietly. He was the size of a guinea pig, she couldn't imagine he could scream so loud. "Maybe I'll call you Jude," she said. "Why did you scream? Something goin' on?" she asked Jude. Jude walked over to the pile of trash on top of their food. He nudged it with his nose, pushing another plastic wrapper on the ground. He looked back to Tiny and then back to the wrapper. *Is he complaining about the trash?* she asked herself.

“I know it’s gross. But we couldn’t afford enough food for all of you.” She walked over to him and bent down so she could pet him. It hurt her to say those words aloud. They couldn’t afford to feed their animals, and she wasn’t sure when they’d be able to again.

None of the other pigs seemed to care, but Jude was not eating the trash. He just stood next to Tiny, looking at her.

When her father came back home he had good news.

“There’s a baker at the Flea Market who wants to use our eggs in her cakes! And the butcher shop on the other side of town is looking for a new seller! If we’re lucky, I think things will really start looking up for us, Tiny.”

Tiny hadn’t seen her dad smile this much in years. Not since her mother had left.

“That’s great news!” she said in response, but she didn’t want to get her hopes up.

Her father began dancing around the kitchen. “We should start collecting the eggs right now! We’ll have to give the baker as many as we have by the end of the week.” He walked over to the sink to wash his hands. “Grab the crate.”

“Does that mean we won’t be able to have any of our eggs until next Monday?” she asked. It was only Tuesday.

Her dad said no, but that they could make muffins that evening to try to make up for it. The two of them walked outside and into the shabby chicken coop.

“One day we’ll fix up this old place,” Papa said, picking up some fallen pieces of wood.

They walked around the coop, lifting up hay in search for eggs. The chickens followed them around, expecting food. “How many eggs do they really need?” Tiny asked, not wanting to lose so many.

“Do you know Grandma Gretel, the bakery stand?” he asked. It was the most popular bakery within a three town radius, and they made special treats for the market on Sunday.

“They’re for Grandma Gretel?!” Tiny was no longer upset. She couldn’t wait to see what Gretel’s granddaughter, who now owned the shop, would be able to do with their eggs.

While collecting his last egg, Papa Fred noticed one of the hen’s looking thinner than usual. She hadn’t had eggs in a few weeks, and now Fred was worried. Three of the other hens were already sick.

“Things really are looking up for us!” Tiny shouted as she pulled a huge egg out of the corner of the coop. “Do you think this has a bunch of tiny eggs in it like the last time?”

“I would assume so,” her dad replied, “but we still have to give it to Grandma Gretel. The woman asked us to deliver whatever we had as soon as Wednesday, and then go back every day until Saturday.”

“Can they be chocolate chip muffins?” Tiny asked, thinking about the treat her father had promised her.

Two of their fourteen eggs were bad. Tomorrow they’d hopefully get half as many. Since the market was on Sunday, they still stood a chance at being able to supply a good amount for the bakery.

By Saturday, they had sold forty-nine eggs to the baker.

“Thank you so much,” the young baker said. “Grandma always said you had perfect eggs. I’m looking forward to seeing how everything turns out tomorrow. You will come by, won’t you?”

When Sunday came around, the sun was shining and the wind was just right. It was a beautiful day, and Papa Fred was excited to get out of bed.

There was a long line for Grandma Gretel’s cinnamon twists and almond croissants, it went by six other vendors. People sold baskets, soap, fruit, the usual Sunday market assortment. The majority of Papa Fred’s eggs had been used in their lemon pound cake. When the baker saw Fred walking over, she asked her customer to wait and ran out to give him a hug.

“What do you *feed* those hens of yours, Fred?” Her smile was so big it looked like her teeth were trying to escape her mouth. She ran back inside and grabbed a cake she’d made especially for him. It was a lemon loaf with a lavender glaze. “I used that huge egg you sold to me for this one. There were four yolks in that thing! I wanted to make sure you got to eat them.”

Papa Fred accepted the gift, and thanked her. “I’m glad they met your standards.” He smiled.

The baker shook her head, “Met! Ha! They blew my standards to the moon and back!” She thanked him and went back to her stand, her customers were getting antsy.

“Let me know what you think of the cake!” she shouted to him.

Tiny was already up when her dad returned home.

“That big boy had four yolks in it!” he said, setting the cake down. “The woman so kindly put them into this cake for us.”

“Let’s eat it! Let’s eat it!” Tiny said, grabbing forks and hurrying over to the table.

“It does look good, doesn’t it?” her dad asked.

The cake was glistening in the morning light. The lavender glaze shimmered.

“It looks like there are tiny stars inside of it,” Tiny said.

The two of them took a bite at the same time.

“Holy,” Papa Fred said.

“Heaven,” said Tiny.

The glaze coated their mouths as their teeth bit into the perfectly golden crust. Then the tart lemon painted their tongues and the sweet cake filled their whole bodies with joy. For a moment Papa Fred wondered if they’d put alcohol in the batter, because his stomach felt warm and joyful.

“I hope we can sell to them every week.” Tiny said, after a long moment of silence.

“This cake is magical,” her dad said, sitting down. His stomach felt full, even though the cake was all he ate that day.

After they’d each had a piece, Papa Fred got up from the table and went to check on the pigs. When he returned, Tiny was still sitting at the table, in awe of the delicious gift before her. Papa Fred couldn’t stop himself from complaining about a newborn pig that wasn’t eating enough.

Tiny rolled her eyes, upset that her dad was ruining her blissful breakfast. But as he kept complaining, she realized he was talking about Jude.

“Can you blame him?” she decided to chime in, “We’ve been feeding them leftover trash!”

“They’re pigs, Tiny! Their bodies were meant to eat trash!” he said loudly.



She didn't reply. Her dad was frustrated, and there wasn't anything to say. She asked him if he wanted another piece of cake.

"No, I'm alright. I'm going to check on Tallie, see if she's doing any better." Their cow, Tallie, had given birth a few weeks ago and wasn't recovering well. Her calf was already set up to be purchased as soon as he was healthy enough.

Sitting at the table and admiring the cake, Tiny had an idea. She thought that maybe she could cheer Jude up with some cake, help him get his appetite back.

She cut off a small piece and went out to see him.

"You've got to start eating more, little guy," she said, walking over to him. "Daddy's not happy with you and he'll probably sell you if you don't start eating again."

As soon as he set eyes on the cake, he gobbled it up and made a happy squeak. Then he squealed again. His small stomach started to grow before Tiny's eyes. She put her hand out to his stomach to make sure she wasn't imagining things.

"Jude!" She shouted, "You're growing!" She was so excited she ran back inside and grabbed the rest of the cake.

Setting it on the floor, she gestured for Jude to dig in.

Dig in he did. And with each bite, his young tummy began to expand. He was growing bigger and bigger, filling up like a balloon. His stubby legs could hardly hold him up as he finished the last few bites of cake. The same look of joy that she and her dad experienced appeared on his face. He had tripled in size, and his weight seemed to tire him out. He plopped down on the floor and drifted to sleep. Tiny was in awe of what had happened. She felt proud, she got Jude to eat when her dad couldn't.

“Tiny, where is the cake!” she heard her dad shout from inside the house.

Running back in, she explained how she’d given a small piece to the pig, and since it made him fatter, she had him eat it all.

“Eat it all?! That cake wasn’t for the pigs! It was for us!” He stormed away and headed toward the pigpen. “This pig better be fatter than Mayor Tum’s wallet!”

When he walked in, he saw the plump little guy laying on the floor. He was the size of a full grown pig. “Look at that! This little guy is ginormous!”

Tiny walked in, smiling, “I told you!” she walked over to Jude and bent down next to him. She was so happy to see him sleeping with a smile on his face. His belly was warm and she set her hand on it.

“I’ll go call the butcher!” Papa Fred exclaimed, “Time to bring home the bacon!” He chuckled to himself and walked out.

Tiny sat down. She didn’t realize that by getting him to eat she was digging his grave.

Jude looked so peaceful as he rested. She didn’t know what to do.

“I’m so sorry,” was all she said.

Her father drove the truck over to the pen. He came into the room, beaming.

“Giving him that cake was a brilliant idea, Tiny,” he kissed her head. “Let’s celebrate tonight!”

He rolled the little loaf with legs onto a dolly. Being rolled around, Jude up from his nap.

Tiny said nothing to her dad, she just looked Jude in the eyes.

He still looked happy. He didn't know why Papa Fred was wheeling him away, he was full of magic cake. When he was rolling into the trunk of the car and Tiny began to cry, Jude screamed. Trying to run out of the car, his weak legs kept bending beneath him.

“What do you want for dinner tonight?” Papa shouted with joy, “Is macaroni and cheese still your favorite?” He asked, and shut the car door.

## The Ghost of the Chrysanthemums

### 1

The sun wasn't shining in Annabelle's room as it usually did, so she woke late to a foggy, grey day. She thought of her father saying, "Fog happens when the air is really humid. It becomes as light as a feather and the water particles on the grass can't help but want to join." Changing out of her nightgown, Annabelle wished she could join the air too. Walking over to her window, she put her finger on the small L engraved on the windowsill as she looked outside. The country was beautiful in the fall. The leaves were beginning to change, colors of purple and red crept onto the trees. She wanted to be like water and float into the sky, be fanned by the leaves.

As she left her house she began to hum an old song. Slipping into the fog, she felt as though she was entering a cloud. The air was warm and humid, like her father said. She took off her cream scarf and held it in front of her. She began to dance, following her scarf as she pulled it through the fog. Her short brown hair bounced as she moved, and she felt weightless.

She made her way to an old bridge about half a mile off. She heard that fifty years ago a river flowed under the bridge. The bridge wasn't used by anyone anymore. It was small, only able to hold a few people at a time. Now that the wood was rotting, Annabelle became nervous standing on it. She walked onto it anyway, and took a deep breath. There was a crumbling sound beneath her, and she leapt off. Annabelle preferred sitting by the bridge, on the grass, and imagining a child running across it into her mother's arms. She pictured two lovebirds sitting on the other side of the river, sharing a bottle of wine. One of them would ask if the other wanted to go for a swim, and the two of them would decide to come back at night when no one could see. She'd never done it, but since high school she had always wanted to.

She looked down at her feet, deciding she'd rather take her shoes off and be chilly than keep them on. She noticed a new patch of flowers growing beside her favorite spot by the bridge. Lilies and chrysanthemums. The lilies bloomed months prior, but now the chrysanthemums were blossoming. Annabelle walked over, enjoying the way the grass felt more dry than the air, and knelt beside the flowerbed. Her green linen pants blended in among the flower stems, and she could feel the remaining water on the grass dampening her knees. Smelling the flowers, she discovered their earthy aroma and smiled. She hoped they'd smell sweet, but this smell was authentic. The petals were so large that the flowerbed looked like it was covered in colors. Soft blankets of pink, orange, and white.

It would have been lovely, sitting in the fog next to the flowers, if the river were still there. She closed her eyes to imagine it.

## 2

Out of the flowerbed, Annabelle noticed two particular chrysanthemums. One of them was a light peach color, the other was a crisp white. Peach was her favorite color. She put her fingers around the end of the chrysanthemum and thought about how nice it would look next to her bed. She tugged at it lightly, breaking the stem in half. She raised it to her face to get a better look at the shade. She wondered how the flower supported itself with such a heavy top. Then a man appeared, beyond the flower in her hand, in the center of the dried-up river.

Her eyes opened wide, "Hello?" she asked. Her heart beat faster.

The man was wearing a military uniform. Annabelle recognized the grouping of feathers on his hat, making her think that it might be Italian. Why was he in New York? As she studied the clothing, his body flickered in and out. She gripped the flower tighter and didn't know what

to do. She was too scared to move. She'd never ran into anyone on this path before. Looking back at him, she saw that his uniform, along with the feathers, were soaking wet.

The man looked at her. At first he looked confused, but then his eyes softened. She regained her breath the longer he remained completely still. Since the man wasn't saying anything, she stayed quiet. She looked around, thinking about running away, but the man didn't look harmful, and she found him handsome.

"Are you okay?" she asked him, mustering up courage. Again she was answered with silence. She looked at him for a long time, and he at her. If he was going to hurt her, she thought, he would have done something by now. His body flickered again. "Are you a ghost?" she asked this time. 'The bridge is haunted,' she thought immediately.

Standing up, she took a step towards him. As soon as her foot hit the ground before her, he disappeared. Vanishing into the fog. She ran to where he was standing and looked around. The grass didn't look stepped on. The weeds were still standing. She looked back at where she was sitting, right next to the flowers. Even they looked ghostly in the fog.

3

Annabelle went back the next day, and this time she brought a towel with her to give to the man. The sky was clear, the sun was out. Annabelle thought it was the perfect day to see a ghost.

Pulling at one of the flowers, she waited for him to appear.

"Buongiorno," she greeted him as soon as she saw him. She'd memorized his uniform and checked to see if she was right, if he was Italian.

The ghost seemed to understand this. He nodded his head, and slowly raised his arm to point to the flower she was holding. He touched a pocket on his jacket, and, looking startled, he inspected his hand. Annabelle thought he may be hurt. He looked back up at Annabelle and squinted at the chrysanthemums.

Annabelle's plucking the flowers brought him back momentarily. The moment after the flower was plucked, and held above the flowerbed, he was able to come back .

“Good afternoon, miss,” he said slowly, with a thick accent. “My name is Corporal Leo De Luca.”

Annabelle sat down on the still damp grass and looked at him, attentive.

“Are you a–angel?” he stuttered.

“No, I am not an angel,” she said to him, apologetic, “I’m a human.”

“Ah.” he said, puzzled. “Nice to meet you...” he replied, waiting for her name.

“Annabelle,” she said.

He nodded. “Leo,” he replied.

Annabelle smiled, looking at Leo nervously.

“I’m an Italian officer, I came to New York to meet my fiancé’s family. I met her just a year ago, in Florence. She lived right over there,” he pointed in the direction of Annabelle’s house. She wondered if it was the same one.

“What happened to you?” she asked.

He cleared his throat, “One of Isabella’s ex-lovers came looking for us when we were on a walk. He was angry with her. They were together before she came to Italy. He’s the one who

stabbed me, right here, in my chest,” he put his hand on the large dent in his body. “So I must be...” he stopped.

“Dead?” Annabelle asked. He said yes.

“Those flowers,” he continued, “the crisantemi, they were for her. Isabella’s favorite flower. To me they have always been death flowers, but she sees the warm sun in them. I was to plant them outside of her window, so they would grow when I returned to Italy.” He looked sad, talking about his death flowers. “The seeds were right here,” he put his hand on his wound, “I never got to plant them for her.”

The petals on the flower in Annabelle’s hand began to droop. Leo took off his hat and placed it over his heart. Seeing this, Annabelle couldn’t help but step closer to him. She wanted to comfort him. But as soon as the flower moved with her, he disappeared. She moved back to the flowerbed. She tried to replant the chrysanthemum, but he didn’t return. She tore another out of the ground and looked up, and once more he was standing as he was before, hat on his chest.

“Please, stay,” she said to him. She wanted to hear more of his story. She enjoyed the company.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Annabella,” he said. Tears began to form in his eyes, “Isabella...” he said this time. The flower slipped from Annabelle’s grip when she saw that he was crying.

Once more he disappeared. This time she walked over to where he stood. She sat down, defeated. She put her towel on the ground for him, and set the flower on top. She rested her hand on the grass, but what she felt was wet and slippery. She looked down and discovered a feather just like the ones on Leo’s hat. She picked up the feather and held it next to the chrysanthemum.



The chrysanthemum suddenly perked up as if it were still alive, and she took it back into her hand.

## 4

That weekend, Annabelle went to the market. She went to the market to buy chrysanthemum seeds for Leo. The feather hadn't left her side since she picked it up. She was worried that if she left it somewhere it would disappear.

After buying some bread and a bit of fruit for the week, she wandered over to the plants. She touched one of the hanging plants to watch it rock back and forth, and then, by accident, she pricked her finger on a cactus.

"Can I help you?" a voice said from behind the buckets of flowers.

"I'm looking for chrysanthemums," she replied, admiring the cactus' flowers.

The man walked around the flowers to her.

"Ah, chrysanthemums are a lovely flower. Are you looking for seeds or stems?" He asked with a slight accent.

"Seeds," Annabelle said as she turned around to face him.

The man had long, shoulder length hair, and dirt on the side of his face. She noticed his beaded necklace with bunches of feathers.

"The seeds are right over here," the man replied, but Annabelle did not hear.

She was staring at his necklace, whose feathers looked just like the one she had from Leo's hat.

"Excuse me," she said, "where did you get that necklace?"

"I'm afraid it's a very long story," he replied. He walked her over to a table full of seeds.

“Oh, I see,” she said.

He turned around to look at her and saw her sad face.

“My great grandpa wore a hat with feathers just like these. He was in the military.” He said to her, handing her a packet of seeds.

“Was he Italian?” she asked.

He was taken by surprise, “He was!” he exclaimed, smiling at her.

“I have a feather just like them,” she said, and went into her pocket.

She held the feather out to him.

“Wow.” He looked at her, curious. “Are you Italian, too?” he asked.

She said no, and they walked to the cash register.

“Then where did you get this feather?” he asked.

She told him it was a long story, and smirked.

“What’s the name of your shop?” Annabelle asked him, looking around.

It didn’t have a name, but he handed her one of his business cards.

“Marco De Luca Florist,” the card read.

She looked back at him. “De Luca?” she asked.

“Sì,” he replied, and handed her the flower seeds.



### **Juniper's Dream**

Juniper, the youngest and only girl of five, wakes up each day to her brothers arguing over breakfast and their mother intervening.

“Hugh, sit back down and finish your orange juice! Kenneth said he only had two pancakes.”

Juniper would wait to go into the kitchen after all of the boys had finished, and she would eat breakfast with her mother.

“Any good dreams today?” her mother would ask, and she'd recall as many details as she could remember. They would have a couple minutes of peace before the youngest boy, Johnny, ran into the kitchen in tears. Johnny was six, only a year older than Juniper, and every other morning one of the older boys would run into him while getting ready. He and Juniper tended to cry a lot more than the older boys, who would yell and throw fits.

One day, Juniper went back into her room, sat on her bed, and began to draw out her favorite dream. She drew the sunny apartment with purple and green velvet furniture. She was sitting at a golden table full of pastries and fruits. Her mother in the dream had big curly hair, and she sat next to Juniper, wanting to know how breakfast was.

There were no words in Juniper's dream. Everyone interacted with facial or bodily expressions. Her dream mother tilted her head to the side, raised her eyebrows, and looked back and forth between Juniper and the pastries. Juniper drew herself with a big smile and wide eyes. She was happy. Her silent dream was the only one she didn't tell her mom about. It felt wrong to put it into words.

There was a knock on her bedroom door. “Juni, I’m going to the store, do you want to come?” her mom said.

Juniper shut her sketchbook and put on shoes.

That night, she had her favorite dream again. This time she was baking a cake with her mom for family friends who were coming to visit. When the cake was ready, the oven turned itself off, and the sweet aroma filled the room so they knew it was done. The sound of the door knocker sent her mom to let the company in. Her brothers filed into the kitchen pushing one another and moving their mouths, but Juniper wasn’t the slightest bit bothered, because they couldn’t talk. She started making the icing and soon the sound of the electric mixer droned out the shuffling of feet. She scraped down the sides of the mixing bowl, and watched as the liquid began to mix with the powder. A cloud of sugar began to form beneath her. The sugar tumbled around, slowly pressing into the melted butter.

The cake tasted like sweet lavender and honeydew, better than anything she’d ever had in real life. One of the guests pulled out a violin, walked into the living room and began to play. After a few moments of musical bliss, Juniper heard her alarm clock through the violin. She immediately sat up in her bed, startled, and reached for her sketchbook. She drew the violin and the cake with a lilac background.

She went to school with headphones in and began to imagine that everyone around her was silent. Juniper did this for weeks and became obsessed with drowning out the sound of people with her imagination. Some days in class she wouldn’t hear the teacher call on her if they didn’t point and look directly at her.

One day, she asked her mom if they could make cupcakes. She wanted to replicate the ones from her dream, and her dad had taken her brothers out for a few hours. Her mother put on her favorite Sinatra album, and they started baking. As Juniper poured the lavender extract into the mix, glitter came pouring out. They poured half of the mix into the tins and set them in the oven. Her mother whipped up the frosting while Juniper danced around the kitchen.

“Can you bring me the powdered sugar?” her mom asked. Juniper grabbed it from the cupboard and it sprinkled through the air. A cloud of sugar floated into the air around her mom as she mixed the frosting. “Maybe you should take a nap after the first batch is ready? We have an early morning tomorrow and I want to make sure you get enough rest.” Juniper agreed, smiling at the thought of eating one of the cupcakes and dozing into her dream.

As the smell of lavender filled the kitchen, Juniper ran over to the oven and waited for her mom to open it.

“Let them cool at least a few moments,” her mom said, “Or else the frosting will fall right off.” Juniper waited, in silence, watching the cupcakes cool down. Her mom went into the cupboard to grab some sprinkles; they looked like mini pearls. As soon as three minutes had passed, she took two cupcakes out of the tin and let Juniper frost them. She swirled the knife around the frosting, creating a perfectly layered look. Her mother sprinkled the pearls on top, and they each took one.

As Juniper bit into the cupcake, her heart filled with joy. She was instantly transported into her dream. She gobbled the cupcake down, quickly frosted another, and hurried to her bedroom.

“Sweet dreams,” her mother called after her, happy to see her daughter excited to nap.

Juniper laid down in her bed for a few minutes before falling asleep, and before long she was back in her silent dream, holding the very cupcake she brought to her room. Her dream mom knocked on her door, carrying a plate of the same cupcakes. Her mom's eyebrows raised, and she gestured at the cupcake in Juniper's hand. Juniper shrugged, because she herself wasn't sure how she was still holding the cupcake. She gave it to her dream mom and took one of the new cupcakes off of the plate. As she bit into it, the tart flavor of lemon attacked her taste buds. Looking up at her mom in disgust, who was smiling down at her, she felt bad for not enjoying it. She took another bite, and this time it was even sweeter than she had remembered.

Her real mother brought a glass of milk into Juniper's room, but she wasn't in bed. The cupcake she'd brought to her room, however, was sitting perfectly on her sheets in the exact spot Juniper slept.

## Damned Love

When Lily was a few months old her family began to make arrangements for her baptism. Her parents decided to fly out to Lansing, Michigan and celebrate her baptism with the whole family. Her grandfather's brother, Liam Mackenzie, was a priest in the neighborhood her mother grew up in. Jacob asked his brother if he would baptise his granddaughter. His brother couldn't refuse, after all, what was one more baptism in his busy weekend? Lily's grandmother, Laurie, began making arrangements as soon as Father Mackenzie agreed. He was beginning to feel quite good about the baptism, because it gave him a reason to see more of Laurie. Liam Mackenzie had been in love with his brother's wife since high school. He and Laurie were best friends until she was introduced to his brother. He was so crushed when Laurie spent so much time with his brother that he applied to the Seminary. After being accepted, he decided to enroll and never to tell Laurie about his feelings for her.

On the day of Lily's baptism, Father Mackenzie looked down at her face as she was held over the baptistry. She had her grandpa's eyes, bright and green and glistening at the sight of an unfamiliar face. Father Mackenzie muttered under his breath, "Damn my brother." He began to pour the water over her forehead, "I baptise you in the name of the Father," he declared, as the baby shut her eyes, "and of the son," he whispered again, unable to stifle the jealousy within him, "Damn every man this child loves," he looked up, meeting Laurie's eyes, "and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." The organ began to play, and everyone rejoiced as the holy water consecrated every one of the Father's words.

Soon after her baptism, Lily's grandfather became ill and passed away, the curse was settling in. By the time Lily was seven, she learned what it meant to truly love her parents, and



only a few days later, her father passed away too. He had a heart attack in the middle of the night and died immediately after. The reason behind it was a mystery to the family, and when Lily's great uncle heard about the death, he remembered what he had said on the day of her baptism. Guilt and gratification fought for a place in his heart.

Growing up without a father or other siblings, Lily spent most of her time with women. Most of her teachers and friends were women, and she didn't notice this at first, but as soon as she'd developed a small crush on a boy in middle school she began to wonder if there was something wrong with her. She'd never had guy friends.

"There's nothing wrong with you," her mother said, "boys are immature and it's good that you've learned that at such a young age." Lily appreciated hearing this, but it did not comfort her.

Lily didn't know how to talk to her crush. She'd look at him in class, but whenever they were in a group of people she looked at everyone else instead. She decided it was best not embarrass herself, so she avoided talking to him.

The first boy she really liked was in University. One day after her history class, a red headed boy named Quentin came up to her and introduced himself. As she reached his outstretched hand, static electricity went through her and shocked him. He jumped a little, but immediately regained his cool. She apologized immediately, told him her name, and hurried out of the classroom. A cute boy had never introduced himself to her before, and now that one did and she accidentally shocked him, she hoped no one would do it again.

After their next history class, Quentin went back over to her seat and asked if she wanted to get coffee. She could tell he wouldn't take no for an answer, so she agreed, making sure she

was always far enough away for them to not touch. The two of them started spending a lot of time together, and after a few months, Lily forgot about her fear of shocking him. They started dating, and everything was going well. Quentin was nice and charming, he found Lily incredibly attractive, and after getting to know her he wanted to go everywhere with her. They made a good couple. They went from hanging out every once in a while to practically living at one another's dorms. They watched movies together, read poems out loud to one another, learned how to cook together. One night, after Lily had picked Quentin up after getting into a fight with his parents, he told her he loved her. She said it back, but she wasn't sure if she meant it.

They kept in touch that whole summer. Quentin had to work, and Lily was taking extra classes. When they saw one another for the first time in months, Lily began to cry.

"I missed you so much," she said to him as she swung her arms around his neck.

"I missed you too, Lily. I love you."

She pulled back, looked him in the eyes, and said it back, "I love you too."

This time she knew she meant it. When she called her mom to tell her, her mom began talking about her great uncle, "You know, he said something really strange the other day about you. He asked if you had any boyfriends, and then said something about how hard it must be for you without a father. I stopped talking to him shortly after that, it gave me the heebie jeebies."

"Uncle Liam is weird. Sometimes I think he spends too much time with God." Lily replied.

A few days later, Quentin got into a cycling accident. A truck was backing into a parking spot as he was riding by, and he rode right into their blind spot as they reversed. By the time Lily

got to the hospital he was dead. Bursting into tears, she cursed everything. She cursed God, her great uncle, Quentin's ghost.

She took that year off of school. After Quentin's death she felt like she'd lost a part of her. She stopped eating, she didn't talk to her friends, after a few days she wasn't sure how to wake up each morning. When she returned to school a year and a half later, she decided to throw herself into her studies. She switched to pre-med, she wanted to save lives. After graduating, she moved to Argentina to work as a nurse. She'd received an offer from their diagnostic department, and since everywhere she went reminded her of Quentin, or of how lonely her mother must be without her dad, she moved right away. She woke up at six am every day for the next three years.

One day she got a call from her grandmother. "Sweetie, I have to tell you something."

Lily asked what it was, and ensured her grandma that she could tell her.

"Your grandfather's brother, Liam, seems to think he cursed you at your baptism. He has been having a difficult time with his spirituality lately, and in a moment of weakness he confessed to me. I'm not sure exactly what it entails, or if there is a way to reverse it. But I'm worried it had something to do with your father's death, and it's possible that..." she didn't continue.

"Quentin," Lily said, moving over to sit down, "He killed Quentin."

"I'm going to talk to him again, force some answers out of him." Her grandmother said, then she apologized to her granddaughter. She told her that she was strong and intelligent and that her whole family was proud of her, then she hung up.

That day an old lady was admitted to the hospital after having a stroke. She had a heart condition, and she had been managing it since an accident she had a year prior. The hospital was

short-staffed that day, so Lily had to do rounds. After looking over the woman's chart, Lily walked into the room.

The lady lying on the bed was wrapping a brightly colored scarf around her head.

"Hello, Ms. Luna, how are you doing today?" Lily said.

Ms. Luna continued wrapping her scarf, and looked briefly at Lily before saying, "My dear, there will come a time when you decide that your life is not someone else's to control and you will have to make a grave decision. Do not hesitate to make it." She asked for Lily's hand in her raspy voice, "I am fine. My heart is just aging too fast."

Lily looked at the woman, she seemed fine, as if she knew this hospital visit was coming.

Ms. Luna let go of Lily's hand, "He is right. The man who hurt you. But you have the power to change it."

Lily looked at the woman, puzzled. "Excuse me?" she asked. She'd spoken to plenty of unwell people in her time there, but none of them said something that was relevant to her life.

"Are you talking about my great uncle? The priest?"

"That I can't be sure of, my dear. But you must not be afraid."

"Miss," Lily said, "If you don't mind, I need to check your vitals," and she walked over to the monitor besides the bed. She shook her head, trying to forget the words she had just been told.

"Mama, are you okay?" A man hurried into the room, "They said you had a stroke?"

Lily did not look up from the chart, and the old woman told her son what happened.

"Are you her doctor?" the man asked Lily. His voice was deep and reassuring, even though Lily could tell he was nervous.

“I’m her nurse,” Lily said, looking up from the chart. The man was tall, and had strong brown eyes.

“Lily will be a great help,” the woman said.

Lily was shocked. She hadn’t introduced herself to the old woman yet.

“I’m Raúl,” the man said, reaching out his hand.

Static electricity immediately shocked the man’s hand, just like it did Quentin. She looked back at the old woman.

The woman smiled at Lily, but said nothing.

The old woman and Raúl stayed in the hospital for a week. Halfway through, the woman’s doctor asked Lily what she thought of the psychic.

“The what?” she asked.

“Lady Luna, she’s a psychic. Hasn’t she said anything odd to you?”

Lily laughed. “Oh yes, she has. Do you believe in this psychic thing?”

The doctor grinned, “Well, typically no, but Lady Luna has predicted quite a number of things in my life.”

As Raúl and his mother were packing up to leave, his mother asked multiple questions about at-home treatments and her medicine routine. After Lily tried a few times to explain it, Raúl asked if she could come to their house once a week to check up on his mother. Thinking of what the doctor had said, she agreed, hoping that she could learn something from the old woman.

She began to visit the Luna’s once a week. They would make dinner together, talk about the old woman’s health, and Lily would tell them wild hospital stories. She began to really enjoy

seeing the Luna's, and as soon as Raúl began to talk about the work he did as a translator she became more interested in talking to him. Sometimes the old lady pretended to be sick or tired when Lily came over so that the two of them would spend time together without her. Lady Luna would look at Lily and smile, "Don't forget, strength is everything, my dear," and retreat to her room.

She and Raúl began to develop feelings for one another, but decided not to say anything. They both knew it was unprofessional. When they were at the house together they focused their attention on the old woman. But soon after they started going to the store together, then they started meeting up on lunch breaks. Raúl began sopping by the hospital with coffee when Lily worked the nights shifts.

"You have been a great help to my mother," he said, "we are incredibly grateful."

"It's my pleasure. Your mother seems to be doing really well, and it's been nice getting to know the two of you."

One night, after they had dinner together, the two of them went on a walk. They had been discussing staying up to see the sun rise, and Lily had asked him if he wanted to stay over, "We could head over to the mountains at four."

"I don't know if I should," Raúl said.

"Why not?" she asked, unsure why he was reluctant. They had been spending more and more time together since she met him and his mother at the hospital a year prior.

"Because," he said, hesitant to give a reason.

"Lily," he said, "I'm quite attracted to you, but you are taking care of my mother. I worry I would be an interference."

“Raúl,” she said slowly, “I...” she looked at the cross that was in front of them, at the entrance to a church. She read the sign: La Iglesia de San Antonio de Padua. Remembering what her grandmother said about her baptism, she thought about her grandfather, her dad, and Quentin.

“Yes?” Raúl asked, waiting for her to continue.

Lily didn't say anything when a woman ran by them, yelling out something in incoherent Spanish. She was relieved to have a distraction.

“¿Estás bien?” Raúl asked, “¿Señorita?”

They tried to get her to stop and talk to them, but she kept running.

They saw a figure running towards them and then they heard a gunshot. There was a man chasing the woman. Lily pulled Raúl out of the way, but Raúl jumped in front of the man when he had caught up to them. The man held his gun up and was about to shoot again. Lily ran to the man, tackling him from the side. She would not have another man she loved die. He pulled the trigger as he was being pushed to the ground, and the bullet flew right by Raúl. It hit the cross outside of the Church.

The man beneath her body was trying to get out from under her grip. Raúl ran over and grabbed his legs.

“Raúl,” Lily said, looking back at the cross. She was so afraid that Raúl would be shot, but he wasn't. The bullet hit cement. The siren of a police car began to near, and within seconds a car was pulling over right besides them.

Raúl looked back at Lily, a smile came over his face.

“Let's stay up and see the sunrise,” he said.

### Tonya's Story

Dogs carry with them every experience of their owner. This is how our eyes become so pure, and our minds so full of wisdom. Humans cannot see the wisdom, but they can feel it. Dogs can sense how true the people around them are. This is what draws us to little kids, and vice versa. This is why when Tonya found me, behind the AutoZone, and she looked scared for her life, I ran to her.

I scared her at first, probably because I'm a big dog, and I haven't had a haircut in a while. She stood still, and I stopped running when I was a few feet away from her.

"Bark!" I said to her. She didn't respond. Slowly, she brought her hand towards me. I walked over to it, placing my chin in her palm. Her eyes were wide open, and she was breathing heavily. She scratched my chin, and I was very happy.

An officer of some kind came running out from the building. "Hey!" he shouted, "Don't move!"

"We've gotta go," she said to me. I was shocked to hear her say 'we.' Her voice was soft, soft but hard. She spoke with urgency.

"Ruff," I replied.

Then we ran.

She couldn't keep up with me, so I slowed down after a little while.

"Bark bark?!" I asked her. I didn't know where we were going, but she didn't seem to know either. We ran for a while. Past the strip mall, over towards a forest, then we ran alongside the trees until we came across a bridge. We lost the officer among the trees. I drank some of the



water from a creek. The human didn't. Humans never drink water with me—I still don't know why.

“Do you have an owner?” she asked me.

“Owww,” I answered. This she seemed to understand.

“Do you want to stay with me?” she asked next. She looked disheveled and a bit unorganized, but I could tell she was honest.

I jumped over to her in excitement, but she flinched with fear, so I stopped.

She knelt down and opened up her arms, “Come here,” she said.

I obeyed happily.

“I'm going to name you Ranger. Do you like that name?”

I'd never had a name before. I was a stray dog ever since I escaped the Ring. They didn't name the fighting dogs, but the Ring Leader's daughter, Juliette, would call me “Dodo,” because I'm part Dalmatian. I don't know what the other part of me is, no one seems to know. German shepherd is the most common guess.

“I'm Tonya,” she said to me, and continued petting me. I licked her hand.

“I'm a stray too,” she said. She left home when she was 14 and has been traveling around working dead-end jobs since, she told me. I don't know what a “dead-end” job is, but it sounds dangerous. I think fighting in the Ring is dead-end.

We went to her house that night. Tonya lived in a tiny shed of a townhouse, it was what she called a “Transition Home.” She said that she doesn't pay any fees, because it's a Transition Home.

“Ranger, why can’t I get a job?” she said as she walked in the door. I didn’t have an answer, but I walked up to her and put my chin on her knee and that seemed satisfactory.

Looking at her sad face, I remembered a trick I learned in the Ring.

“Bark!” I said. I started pawing at her hand. I could make her money!

“What? What is it?” She asked nervously.

The next morning, I left the house before she was up. The sunrise wakes me up everyday.

I drank some water from the soup dish she’d made into my water bowl and head out the door in the back. Down the street was a huge dumpster. This was a good thing, because the trick I learned in the Ring involves turning trash into gold. I picked up a large garbage bag and dragged it into our backyard. I knew I had to hurry and do this while Tonya was asleep, because she’d probably get rid of me if I brought trash home.

The trash was really pungent, I wanted to bury my nose in it. I restrained myself, digging a hole in our unkempt, dry grass. I dug two other holes on each side, like I’d been instructed. “These holes are for your offerings,” I remember Rik saying. You had to bury two nice things on each side of the trash for the Ground Gods to come, in order to receive gold in exchange for the trash.

Rik learned about the Ground Gods one night when he was howling at the moon. A rabbit came out of its hole and asked him to quiet down. He was looking for a way out, he told the tiny creature. The rabbit told him about the Ground Gods, “They live beneath us in the Earth,” it said. They would give him gold or other precious metals in return for something the human’s treasure.

Juliette, the Ring Leader’s daughter, would steal watches and coins from the people who watched us fight. She didn’t like seeing us have to attack one another, so after everyone left

she'd find Rik, dump out her pockets full of stolen goods, and tell him to distribute them to the fighting dogs. Rik liked to bury his treasures far away, and one morning, after burying two rings in just the right place, he sniffed out about twenty pieces of gold where one of the dogs had buried a torn-up costume and leash.

It took us weeks to figure out that trash needed to be put between the treasures. The Ground Gods wanted to trade our trash for gold. We never figured out why, but we went along with it. I decided to run away after a few exchanges. Rik was the only one I told. I knew that if I found a human to take care of me, the Ground Gods would help me take care of them.

I ran back inside, knocking over a candle to get the silver stand. Then I tiptoed into Tonya's room. She didn't have many nice things, but I noticed a collection of fancy pins, I think she called them "brochiz." She awoke when her jewelry box fell onto the floor. She began to sit up, but I was able to grab a pin and get out of there before she got out of bed.

"Raangerr!" she yelled out, "You better not have taken something!!"

I ran back to my digging sight. By the time she found me I had buried the candlestick and the fancy pin in the two holes besides the trash hole, and was pretending to be playing with a twig. Hiding things from humans was second nature in the Dog Ring. They took all types of dogs off the streets, from shelters, some they even lifted from loving families. We all learned not to trust the Ring Leaders or lead them anywhere.

Tonya seemed convinced that I was smart enough not to steal something valuable, and after playing fetch for a few minutes, we went on a walk.

"You know, the post office said I could get paid if the two of us delivered papers."

"Bark Bark!" I exclaimed. I loved throwing things.

“Great,” she said, “I’ll get back to them today.”

The next day I woke up more excited than ever. I hadn’t been able to dig up treasure since I was a fighter. People don’t really leave shiny, expensive objects lying around. I ran into the backyard and dug first into the offering holes. They were empty. I couldn’t stop myself from tunneling into the ground, I dug like I smelled a cooked steak a foot under the dirt. I shoveled my paws deep into the rearranged soil. My tail was wagging like crazy, and as soon as my paw hit something solid, I howled for joy.

Tonya came running out of the house, asking if something was wrong. I kept digging. The dirt was crumbling apart beneath my paws, revealing more gold than I’d ever dug up before. There were all different shapes too. Balls, bricks, and even bells that jingled as I moved faster. Now standing over me, Tonya kept repeating my name, “Ranger... Ranger.... What is this? Ranger? What..”

She sat down on the grass and as soon as I had finished pulling the pieces of gold out with my mouth. Panting, I looked over at her. “What did you do?” she rubbed her head, “Are these.. real?”

I nudged a few pieces her way, and sat down in front of her.

“Oh, Ranger,” she said, putting her hand on my head.

A drop of water fell onto my nose. When I looked up, Tonya was crying.



## Sink

When Bella went to sleep one night, she immediately sank into the same sea as the night before.

In that dream, everyone was exiting a ship with their things. They'd reached their destination, but Bella was still searching for her bag. She remembered from her dream that she'd put her bag on the edge of the boat, thinking it would be safe. When she'd gone to retrieve it, it wasn't there. "I'll be right back," she said to her friends the night before, and dove into the ocean. She'd been swimming around in the same dream for three days now, unsure how to dream of something else—if she'd ever dream of something else.

Every time she let out oxygen, she worried she would run out. She never did. She swam left and right, squinting her eyes in search of her bag. She was certain that finding it was the way out of this dream. By this point, she knew her vacation would be over by the time she swam back up to surface, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that she lost her bag, and she couldn't find it anywhere. It had her clothes, her hats, her makeup. It was a forest green, with little circles full of different flowers. She bought it second-hand years prior, and she was proud of that.

As she swam deeper, the habitat began to change. She wasn't sure how deep to swim, how far her bag could have sunk. She didn't know how long she'd been underwater, she was too disoriented to keep track.

Darker, creepier fish were swimming around her. She became nervous. 'Can I die in my own dream?' she asked herself.

A puffer fish approached her. It was about the size of her hand. Its fins were glowing in the water. She stopped swimming and began to tread in place.

“Can I help you?” the fish asked.

She blinked for a few seconds, did she just understand a fish?

She didn’t open her mouth for fear that her lungs would fill with water, so she nodded her head.

“Are you looking for something?” the fish asked.

She nodded again.

“What does it look like?”

Making a gesture of holding a bag, she looked at the fish with eagerness. “I lost my bag,” she tried to say, but the water morphed her words. “I bluhh-blub-blub,” the sea translated. Moving her hands around, she tried to explain the size and shape of the bag. It was a weekend bag. The Puffer swam around her hands, trying to understand. The bag was three times the size of the young fish.

“What?” the fish asked, “I can’t understand.”

“Bluh-ubb-ub.” Bella shook her arms in frustration. She went back to drawing the bag in the water with her hands.

“Do you think this thing sank?” The Puffer asked.

Bella shrugged. She wasn’t sure what she thought, if the bag was even in the water, if she had even lost it at the start of the week. Since she’d been underwater for a long time, she assumed her bag was what she was supposed to find there.

“Okay,” the Puffer replied, “I can help you look for it, if you’d like. I haven’t got anything else to do.” The Puffer’s scales moved, revealing a dark green body. The same green as

Bella's bag. She began pointing to her skin, excited. The fish didn't understand. The more Bella looked at her fins, the more the Puffer looked like her bag.

"There's a slight current from the big boat up there, so maybe it went this way," the Puffer said, swimming to the left. Bella had no idea which direction she was swimming anymore, so she followed blindly.

She watched as the fish swam effortlessly forward. Her body gliding through the water, fins fluttering softly alongside her. Why was this fish helping her?

Bella swam faster in order to be next to her, to show her appreciation for the help.

"I've never met a person who's lost something," the fish said, "most people down here are looking for entertainment, or to discover something on their machines."

Bella nodded in understanding, smiling out of embarrassment. No one else was as emotionally attached to their things to search the ocean for it, apparently.

"Do you live nearby?" The Puffer asked, interrupting her thought.

She shook her head no, then she pointed at the fish, wanting to ask the same question.

"Me?" The fish asked, confused. Bella nodded yes. "I'm not really sure. I think so. I can't seem to remember much anymore. All I remember is waking up the other day, and here I was."

Bella put out her hand, and ran her finger through the water an inch away from the fish, petting her from afar. The Puffer wiggled her tail. "I don't really know what I'm doing here," the fish continued, "I can't figure it out."

Bella smiled, "Mia-booo" her words of agreement sounded out. She then pointed to herself, and nodded.



“You seem like a nice human,” the Puffer said, swimming towards Bella to get a closer look, “A lot of people just stare at us and put us in nets.”

Bella tried to wiggle her legs left and right, like the fish did. This made the Puffer smile.

“I hope we find what you’re looking for,” the fish said.

## Nutcracker

Georgie reached his hand out to his Grandmother, holding a round, beige nut from the bowl she'd set out inches away from her nose.

"What's this one?" he asked her.

Still washing the dishes, she said, "That's a walnut."

"What!?" Georgie exclaimed, "How did I not know that?" He was embarrassed. Walnuts are his favorite.

His Mother walked up from the basement, finishing up what sounded like an exhausting phone call. "Mom," she said to Georgie's Grandmother, "remember when I talked to you about the burden of being strong?" She walked over to the kitchen, glanced at her son inspecting the bowl of nuts, and walked to the other side of her Mother.

"Is that what you call it when people are rude to you because you won't overreact and throw a fit?" the Grandmother replied. A few days beforehand, Georgie's mother, Karen, complained to his Grandmother about how she feels like she has to put up with more because she does not openly show her feelings, putting herself at a disadvantage in which people assume she doesn't have them. So people treat her carelessly, like an indestructible toy.

Georgie tried opening a hazelnut by banging it on the counter.

"I'm just tired," Karen said, "of being treated like this."

"Some people don't understand that what they say affects other people, they're too focussed on themselves," his Grandmother said to his Mom. Georgie, for one, didn't understand what his Mom was talking about. He took the bowl of nuts and sat down on the sofa.

His Mother didn't say anything in response. She took a glass from the pile of newly cleaned dishes and filled it to the brim with lukewarm water.

"But you know me," his Grandma continued, "I tell people how I feel. I react emotionally, and eventually people stop."

"Reacting emotionally isn't me. I just wish people were more aware of what they said." She grabbed her purse and said she was going to the store. "Julian didn't pack enough socks," and she left.

Georgie discovered a nut he hadn't seen before. He was waiting for his Mom to leave, so he could have his Grandmother's attention.

"Have you ever cracked one open?" his Grandmother asked, relieved to see his excited little face.

He shook his head no, and then asked what the nut he was holding was. "I tried cracking one on the counter but it was too hard."

"Brazil nut," she said instantly. He was amazed at her ability. She pulled open a drawer and handed him a tool. It had two straight legs and was connected by a metal loop at the end.

"You need a nutcracker," his Grandmother said.

As he looked at the mysterious tool, images of gumdrops and dancing ballerinas filled his mind. He'd never held a nutcracker that wasn't a wooden soldier before.

"Go get the bowl and we'll crack some open," his Grandmother said.

Georgie hurried to the sofa and grabbed a hold of the bowl. There were a lot left, and Georgie was excited. He studied his Grandmother's hands as she cracked open the brazil nut. It shattered under the pressure like a juiced lemon.

He asked if he could crack open a walnut. He picked up the now familiar shape and put it between the metal bars. His Grandmother had to push his hands together on the nutcracker because he wasn't strong enough. Picking off the scraps of shell, he put the light brown nut into his mouth.

It tasted dryer and more bland than the nuts he was used to, but he was so happy to crack it himself that he didn't mind.

"We used to eat nuts like this all the time," his Grandmother explained. "It was a snack." Everyone would sit around the table cracking nuts and making conversation.

Georgie imagined his Grandma as a kid, walking around outside and picking nuts off of trees. He picked up an almond next and asked what it was. He thought it had the same shape as an almond, but he wanted to be sure.

"Your Grandpa loved almonds," Grandma said.

His Grandfather died three years ago, when he was six. He never got to know much about his Grandfather, but he liked almonds too, so he smiled.

"Mommy doesn't like nuts," he remarked sadly. His Grandmother frowned. She thought about the conversation she had just had with her daughter.

"More for us!" She exclaimed, cracking open the almond and popping it into her mouth.

Georgie looked at the nuts and closed his eyes. He wanted to select a walnut by feel.

"What are you doing?" his Grandmother asked. He told her his plan.

Selecting a nut, he lifted it up, "Is this one? Wait—no—" he set the nut back, "don't tell me." His Grandmother chuckled. It was a walnut.

“What if you try to guess by taste?” his Grandmother asked, thinking it would be easier, “I’ll crack one open and give it to you so you can guess what it is.”

Georgie liked the sound of that game.

His Grandmother selected a chestnut, she thought it’d be easy.

She clamped the two legs of the nutcracker together and cracked it open.

When she placed it in his hand, he immediately knew that it wasn’t a walnut. It was too round. He took a bite, “Definitely not a walnut.” He asked for another.

His Grandmother handed him an almond. That one he knew. She opened a pecan and a walnut and handed them both to Georgie. He confidently said there was one of each, but he wasn’t sure which was which. He couldn’t remember which one was traditionally bigger. The one in his left hand had more grooves, but as soon as he had an idea he second guessed himself. “I think this one’s the walnut,” he said, moving his right hand.

“Why don’t you try one.”

He agreed, placing the one with more grooves in his mouth. He pushed it back to his molars and thought to himself, ‘Please know what it is.’

His Grandmother looked at him with amazement. She hadn’t seen Georgie this concentrated on anything before. A smile crept onto his face as his jaw closed.

“This is my favorite nut,” he said, “This is a walnut.”

## With the Trees

### 1

A squirrel from Tacoma told me that people have fireplaces that don't even use wood anymore. I haven't figured out how, but I sure as hell believe it. As soon as humans learned that we burn well in fires, their opinion of us changed. I wonder what's going to happen now, if they stop burning us. I've heard it's much worse in other places, the deforestation. A lot of the people in these parts are quite good to us. They go on hikes, climb rocks, put most of their trash into bins.

Even the kids have changed a lot. Young ones used to run around all day, building with sticks and collecting rocks. They'd play with us, climb up our trunks, hang from the highest branch they could reach. Sometimes they'd carve letters into our skin, which always tickles. I have E+H engraved on my trunk from about ten years ago, and the year 64 engraved much higher up. Kids haven't written on me since. They don't play outside as much.

Months ago I heard that a few distant relatives of mine were chopped down on Mercer Island because they were "blocking the view." They were great Cedars, hundreds of years old, even older than me.

"We are the view," the Cedars sang into the wind as the humans' sliced into their bark.

"We are the view," their cries rang through the city. I heard them from across the waters.

"We are the view," everyone began to cry.

Firs, Alders, Pines, we all cried.

We are the view.

## 2

The number 64 was written on me by a little girl who used to live in the neighborhood. Her name was Lenny. She would come by almost every day when she was a small one. The last time I saw her she was a teenager. She was crying, saying how she didn't want to move. "High school is bad enough already," she sobbed, kicking the twigs that had fallen off my branches. She slapped her hands against my trunk until they turned red. Tears fell onto my roots. I was sad for her. I grabbed as much warmth as I could from the sun and sent it down to my trunk. I wanted to comfort her. I liked having Little Lenny around.

Little Lenny would play imaginary games with me. She was a good Witch, the Witch of the Woods, protecting the forest. And I was the Wise Pine.

"Oh, Wise Pine," she'd say, "I've tried to fight off the clouds today, but they've outnumbered me. But don't worry, Mr. Rabbit has promised to help me keep the forest safe throughout the storm."

She'd march around the area while she made these Reports. Waving her arms for dramatic effect. Zapping away unwanted visitors with a wand as she imagined them approaching.

She made herself a seating area out of wood and stones, placing vines and shrubbery around it for decoration. She'd ask us questions while studying our trunks. She knew when we were dehydrated and she'd bring buckets of water from home, trying to help. She patted our skin where she saw animal marks. She collected our fallen leaves and put them in a notebook. She was the smartest human I've ever met. Neighborhood trees were jealous of us for having such a bright resident.

Little Lenny was one of us. She took care of us, kept us company. She taught me about humans, and we taught her about trees.

“I just wish my parents understood,” she said to me as a teenager. “I like it here.”





## Bandana

Diana collected the bandanas poking out of various drawers and shelves in her room. The thought of wearing them around her neck in high school made her laugh. “Diana Bandana,” her friends used to call her. She didn’t wear them anymore, so she decided to put them in the Give-Away pile. As she came across a red one, she thought of Lukas. He had left it at her childhood home years ago, and she kept it ever since.

Lukas was her brother Ezra’s best friend growing up. He would come over every week, sometimes even everyday, after school. When they were young, they would spend their days exploring the forests nearby.

“Let’s go this way,” Lukas shouted, pushing branches away. He had a red bandana tied around his head, a part of his expedition look. It was late afternoon, and the three of them had been venturing since noon.

“Ahroooo,” her brother howled.

“Wolves howl at night, dummy,” she said. Lukas laughed.

As they were moving into unknown territory, Diana got distracted studying the vines for poison ivy. She was always afraid of getting poison ivy; even though—as far as she knew—it didn’t grow in those forests. Ticks were a larger risk, but she wouldn’t realize that until after she found one on herself years later.

The boys kept walking in between trees and she soon lost sight of them. They were far from the street and she wasn’t sure what to do. She wasn’t afraid of being lost, she was afraid of losing her brother and Lukas. There was a tree nearby with low hanging branches. She decided to climb it.

Putting one foot on the space where the trunk divided in two, she hoisted herself up. In the distance she could see her travel companions. Her plan worked. She saw Lukas say something to her brother, turn around, and then quickly start walking back to her. She stayed up in the tree, it made her feel strong, being able to see so far.

Her brother spotted her in the tree and waved.

“We’ve come back for you,” Lukas shouted.

When the two of them arrived, Diana climbed down the tree and asked to try on the bandana. It was sweaty and creased from its rectangular fold. She wore it the rest of the way. When they finally returned home, she handed it back to him. He set it on the table and left without taking it with him.

Diana took the red bandana with her to college, as it had become a part of her collection. When she saw Lukas over the break he was still wearing a red bandana, just as he did as a boy. She visited him in his new house, the one his family moved into only two years before. He’d gone in and out of school since he graduated high school. Now it seemed he wouldn’t be going back. Since she hadn’t seen him or his family for seven years, they had a lot to catch up on. Even though plenty had changed—they lost pets, changed schools, moved into a new house after their father died—Diana still felt like she knew them. Like she’d only gone a few months without seeing them.

Growing up with Lukas and getting to know his family, she felt closer to them than she did to most of her good friends. Maybe it’s because they knew her family and her childhood home, but Diana couldn’t help but think about how much Lukas felt like family. How he could

become family, further down the line. As she talked to his mother about acupuncture and yoga, she thought about how she would make a great mother-in-law. She wanted her to be her mother-in-law. But she was not that close to Lukas, and she had never been close to him in any romantic sense. At least, not in reality.

Throwing the other bandanas into her Give-Away pile, she lifted the red bandana to her head and closed her eyes. She wrapped it around her head like a blindfold. Somewhere, she read that if you concentrate on someone hard enough, they can sense it.

“Lukas,” she said aloud, “Are you there? Can you hear me?” At first she felt a little ridiculous, but she continued anyway. She wanted to be with him.

She thought about when they said goodbye only a few weeks earlier. How they hugged three times before walking away.

“Don’t be a stranger,” he had said, as he pulled away.

She turned towards her car. “I won’t,” she remembered saying.

“I won’t,” she repeated aloud to herself now, sitting on her bed.

A quiet rumbling entered the room, and she began to breathe deeper.

“Lukas?” she kept repeating to herself.

She felt sunlight behind her eyelids. Puzzled, she took off the blindfold to see what was going on, where the light had come from. As soon as she took it off she found herself in the middle of a forest. It felt familiar, like the ones she and her brother would explore with Lukas, black oak and hickory trees at every turn, ivy plastered on the grass, the trunks, claiming territory, but it looked different. The colors were stronger, red maple trees a deeper red, the sun

was brighter, samaras on the ground were the same color as the leaves. The red seeds startled her, but the eeriness was outweighed by the comfort she felt standing there. It was like the trees she used to play with in elementary school were there, remembering her. She called out Lukas' name without moving, unsure where she was or how she got there. The feeling of familiarity kept her from feeling panic. She was confused, but she wasn't afraid.

No one replied. She stepped forward, leaves beneath her crumbled. There were no animals in sight, no people around. "Lukas?" she repeated. Where was she? Had she gotten to Lukas? Did he send her there?

She put the bandana back over her eyes, shut them, and thought about being back in her apartment. After a few moments of nothing happening, she took another deep breath. She closed her eyelids tighter and concentrated. Then she heard rumbling again. The sound reminded her of being in a room with a clothes dryer. The noise stopped, the light was gone, and she prayed that she was back in her room.

Pulling down the bandana, she opened her eyes. She was right, she was back home. A minute had passed, but everything else looked the same. She lay back on her bed and reached for her phone. She brought up Lukas' contact and pressed Call. The call immediately went to voicemail. Without leaving a message she hung up.

Grabbing the bandana from around her neck, she brought it back over her eyes and shut them closed.

## Meringue Drops

Timothy fell in love with baking at the age of seven, when he visited his Grandmother for Christmas. She woke up early and by the time he rose in the morning there would be one cake in the oven and a tray of uncooked cookies sitting on the counter. He saw the joy his Grandmother got from baking, and became accustomed to eating handfuls of sugary treats each winter. She would send boxes of old tins filled to the brim with peanut brittle, seven layer bars, and peanut butter balls. He was certain that he inherited the Baker family sweet tooth.

He started helping his mom bake cookies at the age of five. She was a stress baker, and during the most busy weeks at work he would hear her rummaging around in the kitchen in the middle of the night. Pulling out the oven drawer, pushing metals pans around. She'd wake up at four a.m., unable to sleep, and head to the kitchen.

When he discovered the Food Network on TV, there was nothing he liked more than watching baking shows, using the commercial breaks to do his school work.

One of the many nights in eighth grade when he couldn't sleep, he went downstairs and pulled out a recipe for meringue cookies. He had always loved getting meringues from the store. Popping one in his mouth and letting it melt between his cheeks.

"Meringues are tricky," his mother told him earlier that day. "You have to make the batter just right."

He'd tried once before to make meringues with one of his friends from school, but since they had no parchment paper he used wax paper. The wax paper began smoking after being in the oven for only a few minutes. After that, he asked his mom to pick up the right kind of paper at the store so he'd be ready for the next time.

That night he would be successful, he could feel it. He cracked the eggs one at a time, passing the yolk back and forth between the shell, just like his mother had shown him.

Plop. The last of the egg whites slid right off of the yolk into the metal bowl.

Watching as the mixer turned this off-white goo into bubbles, he patiently waited for the whites to grow bigger. It was like watching water create mountains. He sprinkled sugar into the mixture, waiting until the whites formed soft peaks. He learned this trick from TV.

A smile crept onto his face as he felt success creeping nearer. Stiff peaks were on the horizon.

After a few moments, the mixture was fluffy enough to fold with a spatula. He pulled out the cookie sheets and lined them with parchment paper.

Scooping spoonfuls onto the sheets, Tim carefully pushed the mixture off the spoon, so the top of each meringue came to a point and dropped over.

“You’re going to be perfect,” he said aloud.

He sat on the floor before the oven, watching the meringue harden until they were ready. This was a long endeavor, since they needed forty minutes to bake. Tim poured himself a glass of milk, grabbed a pillow from the sofa in the living room, and took a seat before the oven.

The oven door had a panel of small circles one could see through, distorting the view only slightly. The uncooked meringues looked like they were from an old cooking show, with the dark filter on top of pixelated images.

For the first few minutes not much happened. It was past midnight, but Tim was wide awake.

“Come on little guys, you can do this,” he said to the meringues.

It must have been perfect timing, because a few seconds after he said that he saw the meringues begin to rise at the base.

“And my mom didn’t think I could do it,” he said after a few more minutes, tilting his head up to the second floor. “But look at you guys, you’re doing great!”

He placed his hand on the glass door, and left it there for a few minutes. A noise came from upstairs, his mom must have woken up.

“Oh no,” he said to the meringues, “I hope we didn’t wake her.”

When the meringues were halfway done his mom came walking down the stairs.

“Are you making something?” she asked, without a remnant of sleep in her voice.

“Yeah,” he replied, his face glued to the oven, “meringues.”

“Say, ‘Hi, mom,’” he said to the cookies. There was silence.

She shook her head, “Why do you talk to the desserts, Timmy?”

Everytime he made something he talked to it. Everytime he talked to it, his mom made a remark.

“Because they listen,” he replied, defensive.

She poured herself a glass of water and picked up the newspaper on the counter. His mother began doing a Sudoku puzzle. Tim stayed put.

As he pulled the baking sheets out of the oven, the meringues shook independently of the pan. At first he thought they must still be cooking, but once he set the sheet on the stove one of the meringues wiggled right off of the parchment paper, hitting the side of the pan. He opened his eyes wider.

“Hi mom!” a choir of voices sang from the pan.



In awe, Tim smiled at his creation.

His mother slowly sat the newspaper on the table. "Did you say something?" she asked.

Tim smiled, waving his hand at the little meringues before him. They had each grown a sprinkle sized eyeball. "Nope, I didn't say anything."

"We knew you'd bake us perfectly," a low voice said, coming from the back of the tray.

"Yeah!" A pitchy voice added, "Thanks for watching us grow!"

His mother walked over to the oven and looked down at the baking sheet.

"I need to go back to bed," she said, and walked away.

"Goodniiiight!" A few of the meringues sang out to her. She walked quicker.

"My name's Tim, but you can call me Timmy," he reached his finger onto the pan. He gently tapped the top of each of the meringues, and they took turns greeting him.

He grabbed his glass of milk and sat down at the table his mother had left.

"Are you going to eat us?" The one with the deep voice asked.

Tim walked over to the oven, and brought the tray back to the table with him. Looking at each of the meringues, he saw that they had all come to life in the oven.

"I don't know," he replied. "I don't want to kill you."

The meringue that had moved around the pan rolled over to him. It had a sweet, feminine voice, "It won't hurt, when you eat us."

"*If* you eat us," the meringue with the deep voice chimed in.

Tim lifted one of the quiet ones and held it before his face.

"Go ahead," it said, "Don't be afraid."

He looked at the whole tray with anxiety, but their eyes looked up at him kindly. He put the meringue into his mouth and chewed. Vanilla burst into his taste buds as the meringue crumbled between his teeth. It was delicious. A huge smile came onto his face, and the little meringues began to cheer. As he swallowed it, a feeling of warmth and comfort went down his throat.

“See,” the female voice replied, “We told you we were perfect.”

He picked up another and ate it. Tim was beaming, the cookies were just what he needed.

“How can you guys talk?” He asked, after finishing his second meringue.

“You talked to us and kept us company,” said the deep voice.

The female voice continued, “And we had to return the favor.”

“Wow,” said Timothy, sitting back in his chair. “I’ve always wanted someone to talk to when I can’t sleep.”



## Perish

Lucy lifted the cross on her necklace, revealing irritated red skin. She'd been given the necklace in the fifth grade by her Parish. They gave one to every young girl before entering middle school.

"The cross will help guide you as you enter maturation," Father Augustine said to her and her peers.

Years before, the Parish Priests had gathered to talk about how to ensure the purity and chastity of their children. One of them had heard about magically blessed necklaces that were guaranteed to protect the purity of young girls.

"Order them right away!" Father Augustine exclaimed, "We can start the distribution at the next celebration of the First Communion."

The Priests believed that if they could help guide the girls away from sin, the boys would follow by example.

Lucy's cross necklace fit perfectly and hadn't caused her any trouble, until one day, when she was in the fifth grade. Her friend Daniel was telling her a story when he grabbed her hand,

"Feel how fast my heart is beating," he said, placing her hand atop his uniform. He was looking at her intensely, recalling the story of when he got into a car accident with his dad.

Lucy's heart began to beat faster, the warmth of his chest heating her hand. She felt as though she could explode with compassion, but as she looked into his familiar brown eyes, she felt something more. Something she hadn't felt before. Unable to figure out what it was, her attention quickly shifted to her necklace, which was heating up on her skin. She took her hand away from his chest.

“It’s okay,” she said, focusing back on him, “You weren’t hurt.”

“Ouch!” She exclaimed. “My necklace is burning.” She grabbed her necklace, which was now burning hot, to hold it away from her chest.

“What?” He asked, concerned. “Are you okay?”

As she stared down at the golden chain, no longer thinking about her friend, it began to cool off. “Yeah, I’m okay.”

A few months later, Lucy had some friends over to watch Bridget Jones Diary. The group of girls began to squeal when Bridget and Daniel began kissing, and once again Lucy’s cross began to heat up. Her friend, Charlotte, who was a member of the same Parish, grabbed her necklace right away. Lucy was confused, was Charlotte’s necklace burning her skin too? Lucy was no longer watching the movie, but staring at her necklace, then back at Charlotte.

When the movie was over she went to sit down next to Charlotte, pointing out when she grabbed her cross.

“Sometimes the metal gets too hot,” Charlotte said, “it’s happened to me a few times.”

“It happens to me too. Do you know why?”

“No, no idea,” Charlotte replied, unconcerned, “I just grab it so it doesn’t hurt my skin. It cools down eventually.”

After entering the sixth grade, Lucy experienced more and more moments like this. She told her brother, who was a freshman in high school, about it one afternoon.

“It happens when you’re talking to boys?” He asked.

“Yeah, and sometimes when I watch movies.”

He picked the cross up from her neck, noticing the mark on her skin.

“Oh fuck,” he said. “That must hurt. I don’t know what it is, maybe it’s cursed or something... Or God’s punishing you,” he joked. “Why don’t you just take it off?”

Lucy said how she didn’t want to explain why she wasn’t wearing it to their mom, if she were to ask. Her brother told her their mom wouldn’t care, and reached for the necklace again.

“Here, I can take it off for you. Then you can blame it on me or something.”

She was thankful for him, especially because her friend Charlotte wasn’t helpful. She and her brother often complained to one another about their religion teachers, snuck out of Church to kill time, and wrote jokes on the hymn pamphlets. She trusted him. Then she wondered if he was right, if she was being punished for something.

That week during religion class she compiled her notes, the Examination of Conscience, and a list of the Ten Commandments. Having a list of nearly all sinful acts, she went through her notes. She hadn’t disobeyed the Lord according to what was said in class. Then she looked at the Ten Commandments. She did curse sometimes, saying ‘God damnit’ occasionally, and she coveted some of her friends’ clothes—was that it? She wrote those two down.

The next day she took a look at the Examination of Conscience. The list was long. The school passed them out each morning of Confession, which happened every month. She skimmed it:

Abortion, masturbation, homosexual acts, sex before marriage, wishing poorly on someone, watching porn, anger, drugs, committing a crime.

Her head began to ache. She wasn’t sure if she thanked God enough, or if thinking one of her friends was cute was considered lustful thinking, or an impure thought. She wrote those down too.

That day during recess she went to the chapel and knelt down,

“God, please forgive me for all of my sins. Forgive me for not knowing what I’ve done wrong. Forgive me for not thanking you enough, and thank you, for watching over me.” Then she recited a Hail Mary, placing her hand on the necklace which she now kept in her pocket.

Later that week Daniel came over to her house. They worked on their math homework until dinner was ready. Her dad was still at work, so the two of them ate with her mother.

Halfway through dinner, Daniel noticed that Lucy was looking for the water container, so he grabbed it for her. As he poured some in her glass, he playfully spilled a little on her hand, sending a cold chill through her body.

“Sorry,” he said jokingly, and began patting her hand with his napkin. She smiled. Her body became warmer, and she thought about the day he put her hand on his chest. The mark on her bare skin began to burn, even though the necklace was in her pocket.

“God damnit!” She shouted.

“Language!” Her mother shouted back.

“What’s wrong?” Daniel asked.

She bent her neck, looking down at her skin. The faint marking of the cross looked irritated.

“What’s that?” her mom asked, seeing a blotch of red on her daughter’s skin.

“Nothing,” Lucy instantly replied.

## Maze

The crank on the popcorn maker became difficult to turn. That means it's ready, all of the kernels had popped. Pam turned off the stove and pulled out another brown bag. The counter was full of little brown bags filled with popcorn. Individual pieces were scattered across the counter and falling onto the floor. Buttery popcorn, salty popcorn, cheesy popcorn, pepper popcorn, and soon also kettle corn. She'd been making popcorn for the past hour because she needed to keep herself occupied. Her college graduation was in 13 hours. Her parents would be by at eight in the morning to take her out to breakfast, and in six days she'll have to move out of her first apartment where she's been living for the past two years.

Emptying the popcorn into the bag, she takes it over to the couch to take a break. After eating a few pieces, she hears a rattling in the popcorn popper.

"Oh god," Pam says, standing up and walking back over to the stove. She thinks she must've broken the Whirley Pop Maker she got for Christmas.

She unlatches the lid of her popcorn maker and lifts it up carefully, holding it by the cranking handle.

The head of a young woman rises out of the bowl, the rest of her body appears beneath it.

"Dear, could you give me a hand?"

Pam stares back at her in shock.

"Sweetheart," the beautiful woman says, in a sing-song tone, "I know you are scared, and I'll explain everything as soon as I get out of this bowl."

Pam gives her a hand and helps lift her head out of the big metal bowl.



“Am I hallucinating? I’ve been waiting for the day I hallucinate something. Oh god,” her breath begins to shorten, “I’m losing my mind.”

The woman’s weight pushes Pam to the floor. While still holding the Corn Woman by the hand, she falls with Pam out of the bowl, her whole body coming with.

The woman quickly stands up and brushes the popcorn crumbs off of her popcorn colored clothing. She reaches back into the bowl, and pulls out a necklace made of golden kernels.

“I’m Marie Maize,” the woman says, handing Pam, who is still on the floor, the necklace. The woman speaks with confidence and tranquility.

Pam takes the necklace, surprised to be able to touch it.

“Am I going crazy?” Pam repeats herself.

“My friend,” Marie Maize says, “You are not hallucinating, even though many people who you tell about this will suggest otherwise.”

“Okay..” Pam said, getting up slowly, not letting Marie Maize leave her sight. “What can I do for you, Marie Maize?”

“You musn’t worry about me,” the woman replied, “I come from the corn fields, and I’m here to help you.”

Pam could not believe her senses, but Marie Maize seemed genuine. Eyeing her up and down, she decided to go along with it.

“Okay, Marie, what are you here to help me with?”

Marie Maize, walking towards the couch, took some of the kettle corn from Pam’s bag and began to eat it. “I’m here to bring you on a journey. If you put that necklace on we can head there now.”

Pam shrugged, bringing the necklace over her head and placing it around her neck. ‘Why not?’ she thought to herself, ‘It’s better than filling my kitchen with popcorn.’ Marie Maize lifted her hand and snapped. At the snap of her fingers the air around them began to pop like popcorn kernels. A cloud of smoke appeared, delivering them to their destination.

As the smoke faded, Marie Maize gave Pam a hug and said, “This is your journey, and you must go on it alone. No matter what path you take, you will get to where you need to be. Remember, the corn is here to help you, let it be your guide.” She vanished into the ground.

Pam was standing on a strip of paved land amidst a corn field. She took a deep breath. Ever since her mother told her a story of a group of kids getting lost in a corn field it had become a fear of hers. She put her hand on the kernel necklace and decided she most certainly was losing her mind.

The sun was high in the sky, it looked like she’d have the whole day to find her way out.

“I hope I don’t miss graduation,” she said, and began walking.

At the end of the first path, she stopped. The path split into two, and she does not know which way to go. A stalk of corn on each side of the break began rattling. No one is around to help her, so she walks up to the rattling corn.

“Um..” she begins to say, leaning into the ear of corn, “Hello?”

She sees a split at the top of the ear, it continues to rattle, not responding to her hello. Reaching a hand forward, she begins to peel away the layers of husk. The rattling becomes quieter, she keeps peeling. When she reaches the end, in place of corn there is an image. She sees what looks like a newspaper headquarters. There are people running about, handing one another papers, placing them side by side under a printed headline.

‘What?’ Pam thinks, ‘What is this?’

She walks over to the other stalk of corn, which remains rattling. She peels this one quicker. At the center is an office with people sitting around a table, holding up what looks like a novel. She can faintly make out the words “Publishing House” on a screen behind one of the people.

“Holy kernel..” she says aloud. “Publishing or newspaper? Is that how I pick which direction to go?”

She takes a step back, takes hold of her new necklace, and nods. She thanks Marie Maize in her head, she’s going to help her figure something out.

It didn’t take Pam long to walk back to the newspaper stalk of corn. She walked down that path, surrounded by huge stalks of corn.

What Pam didn’t know was that each rattling stalk of corn was adjusting based on her previous decision in order to present her with the most beneficial paths. Before long she was at the next break in corn. Again the corn rattled as she approached. This time, one of the ears presented an empty apartment, and the other presented an apartment with a dog running around.

Pam smiled, taking a right, she knew she wanted a pet.

As she tried to find her way out of the corn maze, new images presented themselves at every turn. The sun had only moved slightly, so she began to relax a bit. She’d be back in no time. Some turns were easy, with only one way to go. These turns still had rattling corn, but their images were always positive. A group of friends making dinner, someone opening the door for someone. These made her smile, and walk excitedly down the path. A few times when the path

divided she had to pick between cities and towns. She walked away from Washington, D.C. and in the direction of New York City.

‘What am I thinking, I don’t want to be in New York. Not without a job!’ She thought after taking a few steps, so she turned around and ran towards the D.C. path. This realization was a big deal, and she felt relieved knowing which choice she’d make, if the opportunity arose.

“Marie Maize,” she yelled into the empty field, “I don’t know what I’m doing out here, but I think it’s helping!”

Pam continued her journey, bracing the corn kernel necklace when she became nervous. While she was pretty certain that whatever path she took wouldn’t end up being her path in life, she worried that there was a “right way” out of the maze.

She walked away from the classroom, and towards a group of people working outside. She’d been walking through the maze for what felt like an hour when she became tired of the journey. But luckily for her, her frustration made decisions easier.

“Nope I don’t want to work for the government,” she said, talking aloud without noticing, walking a little slower but with more pride.

“Fuck Hollywood,” she walked away from a film studio.

Seattle? London? Teaching? The decisions began to overwhelm her.

“I don’t know!!” She shouted, when she was only a few turns from the end. As soon as she took a break, she sat down and began to cry. These were the decisions she was actively trying to avoid making.

After a minute by herself, Marie Maize appeared to her once more. This time, she walked right up to Pam and embraced her.

“What’s wrong?” She asked, her words soothing to hear.

“There are too many things I want to do. Too many problems I want to fix.”

Marie Maize looked at her and held out her hand. Cooked corn of different colors lay resting in her palm.

“Eat some, they’ll help calm you down.”

“Are they psychedelic? I don’t want a psychedelic.” She took a few deep breaths, subsiding her tears. She worried the strange corn lady was going to drug her.

“No, I know you wouldn’t want that. They’re sweet corn, they’re good for the nervous system. To help you keep going.”

She took one of the pieces and put it in her mouth. It was sweet. She took another. After eating a few of them, she felt better. Her mind settled down and she stood up, brushing her hair out of her face. She didn’t have to do everything right now, just one thing.

“Can you stay with me? Till I finish?” She asked her Marie, who she now saw as her fairy godmother.

Marie Maize nodded.

They walked to the last turn.

The ears of corn rattled like usual, and after peeling them back, the husks turned to gold. “You can keep those, if you’d like,” Marie Maize said from behind her. Pam tore one off. The corn presented two beautiful cities. One was cloudy, with fast street cars and tons of people. It looked a bit like Berlin. The other was sunny Los Angeles; there was a long lane of cars, with a view of the beach. Pam looked over at Marie Maize.

“Ich weiß es nicht,”<sup>3</sup> Pam said, “Should I stay in America?”

Marie smiled at her and assured her that this wasn’t a decision for life. “I’m here to help you, remember. Not to make things worse. Remember, the corn can help you, if you let it.”

Pam laughed a little, nervously. She put her hand onto the ear of corn and closed her eyes. “My mom used to say that whenever you leave a place, make sure to leave it better than you found it.”

She walked over to the image of Berlin and grabbed onto its stem. The stem was cold, she nodded in agreement. Then she went back over to the other stalk, Los Angeles, and looked at the path ahead of her.

The stalks of corn all began to rattle, and the kernels popped out of each ear, floating into the air as popcorn.

“Time to go home,” Marie Maize said, and the field filled with popcorn.

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<sup>3</sup> “I don’t know.”



### **Celia the Frog**

Celia is a Coqui frog whose home is the Yunque Forest. Hiding from the day visitors, she likes to spend most of her time in a little body of water besides a trail. Multiples of people walk by, and she swims under a leaf to go unseen. Luckily for her, most visitors don't slow down to take a closer look at the pond. It's too close to the entrance for the hikers to take a moment and appreciate the water.

Nearly every day, she tries to sing, but it doesn't work. She lets out a small croak instead. No one replies, the other Coquis around her are not talkative. Many of them come out for only a few hours each day and rarely say more than a simple "hello." The other frogs talk, but unless they're close to her she can't understand them well.

Today, another Coqui from far away replies to her pathetic noise, "Whee-whoew"

Celia does not recognize the voice, but she hops with joy. Someone heard her!

"Where are you calling from?" she yells out, successfully.

"Atop a mossy Monra stone," the friendly voice replies.

People walk by Celia's pond speaking loudly and taking pictures. She cannot wait for them to be gone. She tries to ask her fellow frog more questions, but her voice does not let her.

"Singing is for men," her mom used to say. She waits a while, wanting all of the people to leave.

"Wheehh-" she yells, quieter this time. Celia felt lonely in her new habitat, she desperately wanted a friend. The other Coqui does not respond.

"Kakarakaakak" A group of frogs near her begin to chatter in simultaneity.

"Karakakaraak" One of the other frogs seem to say.



Celia hops over to the soil. She wants to bury her face in the dirt to drown out the frogs. She wasn't sure what they were saying, but she assumed it wasn't very important, if they all spoke at once. It was a ritual of sorts for these frogs, making the same clattering noises each day. Celia's ears were repulsed by their clanking.

The Coquis had beautiful voices, and when they sang it was soft and harmonious. Celia didn't know what kind of frogs the others were, with their large bodies and red spots. Each time they sang Celia thought their vocal cords were being stepped on, until she remembered that they are different frogs, and that's how they always sound.

After she hopped further away from the family of frogs she heard the familiar voice of her distant Coqui.

"Wheeehwheew" His song blows through the trees. This time she noticed the direction it came from. The voice wasn't across the human path, it was in the other direction, across the pond. The voice began to sound again, "I'm in the forest. Are you by the water?"

"Weeeep!" Celia replies so quickly she needs to take a deep breath, her voice aches. "By the human trail!" she yells out as best she can.

"Human trail?" The distant frog, Felipe, replies, "I haven't seen any humans."

Celia was astonished at what she heard. How had her friend never seen the humans? What paradise their life must be. "Humans walk through our forest every day," she whispers into the wind.

"Whurrrrr" The other Coqui says, exclaiming his shock. Amazement and fear are translated in the noise he makes. "Whhuurrrrr"

“Could I see a human today, if I get to this pond quick enough?” the Coqui asks, then he sings, “Whueehwheew”

“They leave before sunset.” Celia said, smiling. She hopes she’ll meet her new friend soon.

“Okay! Can you call to me every once in a while, so I can orient myself?”

This time, all she can let out is a chirp.

He sings out his signature call, “Buuuurrrreee.”

“I’m coming! Don’t let the humans leave until I arrive!” he yells, hopping as far as he could. Celia laughed, looking up at the wooden planks set out for the visiting peoples. ‘Humans would never listen to a frog,’ she says to herself.

Felipe was excited to be going on an adventure. He’d never left his family habitat before. He had always heard stories about humans stomping on frogs, eating frogs, kids catching them to keep as pets; but he had no idea humans walked around his homeland every day.

Every few minutes he would cry out, “Whueeh-wheeeew,” stressing different parts of it each time. Sometimes he made the noise from further back in his body, sometimes he would call, “Wheh-wheew-wheew-wheh” adding riffs, vibrating his air sac.

Celia decided to leap into the water, hoping her splashes would be louder than her voice.

Within half an hour, Felipe had reached the end of the pond.

Grasping for enough air, he sings, “Buuuurrrreee. I’ve found the pond.” Immediately after he spoke, he saw the head of a beautiful frog perk up from across the pond. She was standing upright, facing the wooden path.

When Celia finally found him from afar, she opened her mouth wide and tried to sing, “Whewew” with great force, but nothing came out.

Felipe leaps into the water, and before she knew it he was right before her. He is a dark jade, and only slightly larger than she. He moved his nose to right beside her face and sings quietly, “Whee”

Celia whispers back, imitating his signature noise, “Buurrieee.”

He smiles at her imitation. He likes the way his call sounds as a whisper.

Hearing humans, Celia hops backwards. “People are coming!” she exclaims.

Felipe jumps in place. “Whee-whoew,” he sings to the people.

Celia began walking over to a big stone, where she could see the human path clearly.

Felipe follows.

Two young women, breathing deeply, took long strides along the path.

“Look at that!” Felipe says as his jaw drops. Their legs are so long and straight. They have tiny balls of hair on top of their heads.

One of the women closed her eyes momentarily, she was listening to the frogs.

“Whueew-wheew,” Felipe sings loudly.

The woman stops walking and presses her lips together.

“What is she doing?” Celia asked, frightened. The woman was only a few feet away from them.

“Whoooo,” The woman began to whistle. Then she shook her head, “Wheee.” She opened her eyes and began walking again. “Wheeeh-wheoww,” the woman whistles. She is

pitchier, she does not quite hit the right notes. She whistles up before going low in the second noise, Felipe sings low then high.

Celia looks at Felipe in shock, worried this means something. Worried he is actually communicating with the human.

“Try yours,” he says to Celia.

She refuses.

“Come on,” he looks at her, “Please.”

“Wheeh-whee—” Celia tries to sing reluctantly. She wants to join the conversation, but her voice cracks at the attempt.

The woman stops walking again, this time she is directly before the frogs. She doesn’t look for them, and Celia finds comfort in this.

“Whueeh-wheeeew,” Felipe sings, proudly.

The human replies, almost exactly, “Wheeh-wheeeew.” The woman looks satisfied with herself.

Felipe continues to sing, “Wheeeeweweee” in excitement.

Upon hearing this, the human immediately shakes her head and continues walking. She wonders if she upset them.

Celia and Felipe begin talking about what just happened. Celia is amazed with Felipe.

“She understood you,” she says to Felipe.

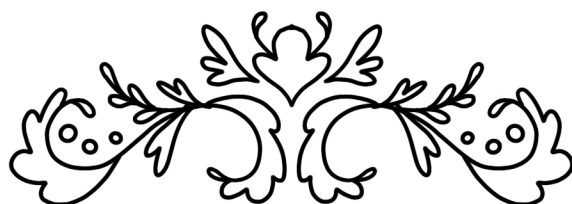
His eyes widen, “We just talked to a human. The first human I’ve ever seen!” He sings quietly, smiling, “Buurrieee.”

“*You* just talked to a human,” she corrects him.

“My name’s Felipe,” he says, protruding his air sac without making a noise.

“Eeeeouuuu” Felipe’s voice begins to flutter, “eeouu”

“I’m Celia,” she says, introducing herself. She tries to mimic his song, but utters only an airy screech.



# Part II



*Analyses*



### Destiny Within or Purification Without

*“Let a woman learn in silence with full submission.”*  
– 1 Timothy 2:11<sup>4</sup>

The Grimms fairy tales have been circulating since 1812. That is over two hundred years of female punishment and male redemption being read, taught, and explored within their texts. While there are many other elements to their tales, these are the ones that I find the most concerning. These are the elements that I still see being reproduced in literature and society today, and that I know firsthand have the power to shape people’s minds. The edits made to the original 1810 and 1812 collections of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* turned characters, specifically Marienkind, who were once deceitful misbehavers into godless sinners by 1857. Women are stripped of their agency (as well as their clothing and body parts) so that they can be redeemed and purified. Without agency, these girls have no way of changing how they are seen. This prevents the girls from being able to purify *themselves*, implying that they are either incapable of self purification, because of their perceived status of being less than a man, or that they are beyond self reparation, requiring the intervention of an authority.

Jack Zipes’ book *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* speaks to this. Zipes states that, women were linked to the potentially uncontrollable natural instincts, and, as the image of the innocent, naive child susceptible to wild natural forces arose, the necessity to control and shelter children became more pronounced. (22)

More than the controlling of children, fairy tales such as the Grimms “Our Lady’s Child,” “The Girl without Hands,” “Thousandfurs,” “King Thrushbeard,” and “Cinderella” (to name a few) also control women.

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<sup>4</sup> Bible Gateway.



Madame Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy does, however, offer the fairy tale tradition a less patriarchal perspective in which female agency is both present and cultivated, in her stories like "Princess Belle-Etoile and Prince Cheri." Madame d'Aulnoy published this story in 1698, over 100 years before the Grimms tales (d'Aulnoy 229). That being said, the sheer popularity of the Grimms, being next to the Lutheran Bible in "most widely distributed literary work of German origin," (Spiegel Online) is concerning when looking at how their stories depict and control the majority of their female characters.

Young girls in Grimms fairy tales, specifically the tales this project looks at, "The Girl Without Hands" or "Das Mädchen ohne Hände," as well as "Our Lady's Child" or "Marienkind," are controlled through various forms of punishment: they are frequently objectified, zoomorphized, physically mutilated, stripped of their agency, and forced into submission. Women are referred to as impure, sinful, and animal-like. Even the purest of them is demeaned both by the other characters and the language itself. In addition to this, they are frequently referred to by their beauty alone, placing their worth on their appearance. This is also a form of objectification and a stripping of agency. Objectification and degradation is a form of narrative punishment in which women are punished simply for being women. As if they have some inherent impurity due to their physical sex. This is a way to separate their identity from their bodies, a metaphorical mutilation, displacing the sin from the sinner, allowing the sinner to be purified later. Without being in explicit control of their lives, the young girls of these tales are stripped of their agency and forced into a (not always necessary) process of purification and redemption.

Zipes discussed the social intent of fairy tales, saying, “The fairy tales were cultivated to assure that young people would be properly groomed for their social functions” (14). Some of the social functions of girls, based on the two Grimms tales addressed in this work, are obedience, religious piety, submission, and purity. The gendered treatment of the characters, as well as their fate, are two things agreed upon by Zipes and Ruth B. Bottigheimer. Bottigheimer sees Christianity as an influence and motivation behind the Grimms. In her book *Grimm’s Bad Girls & Bold Boys*, she makes a stronger argument than Zipes about the presence of Christianity in the Grimms. Part II of this project provides clear evidence of the existence of Christianity in both tales.

Bottigheimer notes in detail Wilhelm Grimm’s addition of “ethicoreligious vocabulary,” in “Our Lady’s Child,” which, she says, “depersonalized the heroine and intensified her suffering and isolation” (87). My analyses supports her reading of the text, revealing more examples of the new vocabulary, like the addition of the word “sin,” in the 1857 edition. In the case of a tale like “Marienkind,” the punishment does not come from an evil stepmother or a man, the punishment comes from the Christian ideal for women: the Virgin Mary. The details in “Our Lady’s Child” that the Grimms changed from the 1810 version serve as evidence of Mary’s role as a moral judge rather than a female figure.

The intention of the Grimms writing tales with the presence of morality and religious influence is not known, but one inevitable result of doing so is presented in Zipes’ statement that many fairy tales, “operate ideologically to indoctrinate children so that they will conform to dominant social standards” (18). This indoctrination of children into conformity is one of the main aspects that drew me to analyze the Grimms. I find the telling of stories with such a poor

treatment of women to children to be greatly unnerving. This project brings to light some of the more grim aspects of the Grimms: the patriarchal authorities, submissive girls, and unfair punishment of women within the tales are only a few that Part II addresses.

In order to fully purify women in the tales, they must be exposed for their impurities. This is where objectification and physical mutilation come into play. The female body, while frequently described in terms of its beauty or ugliness in the tales is, in Christianity, a source of temptation and sin. In order to control this sin, they are sexualized, making them into objects in which their bodies are no longer in their possession. The mutilation of the body is an attempt at removing what is impure, while simultaneously punishing the host of the impurity in order to be renewed. While Bottigheimer was addressing the story of “Our Lady’s Child” when she writes,

restoration for a woman requires suffering and persecution—here mutilation, exile, and isolation—in contrast to the restoration of male royalty, which follows not sufferings but adventures, (150)

the same aspects of suffering, mutilation, exile, and isolation, can also be seen in “The Girl without Hands.”

Zipes’ statement that “women are incidental to the fates of the male characters whereas males endow the lives of females with purpose” (26), supports this argument. In stripping women of agency, they become subordinate to outside forces, dependent on fate and any male power around them. This makes women into vessels of their impurities rather than humans with imperfections. In regards to ‘beauty and the beast’ tales, Zipes says,

the original female bringer of salvation could only find her own ‘true’ salvation by sacrificing herself to a man in his house or castle, symbolical of submission to patriarchal rule. (34)

“Das Mädchen ohne Hände” is a perfect example of submitting to patriarchal rule, because the young girl is forced to obey others in order to survive.

The need to obey others is also touched upon in Bottigheimer’s remark that,

for girls and women personal goodness alone is not sufficient to avert the extreme suffering; only when immaculate and unassailable virtue is coupled with extreme isolation and penury can a female figure qualify for reward. (150)

This extreme isolation, which is clear in both Grimms stories, is another method of removing the girls’ agency. This idea of personal goodness being insufficient is a key element of my analysis. Even the young girls’ punishment and suffering comes from outside forces, causing them to be reliant on the intervention of other people or forces in order to reach redemption. These girls are passive agents in their own purification.

It is important to note the possible intentions for such treatment of women and young girls. Both Zipes and Bottigheimer have their own hypotheses. Zipes writes that,

men sought to rationalize their fear of women, sexuality, and equality by establishing regulations that deprived women and other oppressed groups of self-expression and independence. (37)

Bottigheimer explains a similarly troubling treatment of women as sinners by using, “an interpretation of the original woman [Eve] as the introducer of sin to the world and as the instrument of Adam’s fall from grace” (94), to explain why women are frequently put in a state of punishment within the Grimms.

My attempt at finding a motivation for the mutilations and suffering of these girls, in addition to a desire to control what some men fear, is the goal of ultimate religious purification. At the end of each Grimms tale focusing on young girls, the girls become purified or redeemed in some way. This purification often comes from God, after their redemption/salvation comes

from a different, Christ-like, male figure. This Christian God, who recognizes the mutilation and suffering as a form of penance, thus absolves the women of their inherent sin. Purification is a form of rebirth and renewal in order to socialize and assimilate the young girls in Grimms.

The first essay in Part II addresses the Grimms tale “Marienkind” in both its 1810 and 1857 renditions. Taking a close look at the edits and new vocabulary between the two texts presents a clear image of the Christianity and patriarchy influencing the Grimms.

## Eternally Stained

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“Marienkind,” or “Our Lady’s Child,” is a fairy tale originally recorded by the Grimms and published in their first collection of written fairy tales from oral sources: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Die handschriftliche Urfassung von 1810*. The 1810 tale of “Marienkind” underwent many changes in the editing process and when published again in the 1857 edition contained stronger punishment, objectification, and Christian content. Bottigheimer noted some of these changes in her chapter “Prohibitions, Transgressions, and Punishments.” She wrote:

Editorial alterations in edition after edition loaded the text of “Our Lady’s Child” with an ethicoreligious vocabulary. Between 1807 and 1810, the tale underwent considerable change. The plot remained constant, but shifts in vocabulary and motivation depersonalized the heroine and intensified her suffering and isolation. The consistent direction of editorial change... all indicate a well-honed gender-differentiated design for substituting compliant for obstinate behavior in his young female readership. (Bottigheimer 87)

Where the addition of “ethicoreligious” language and “obstinate behavior” can be seen in “Marienkind,” there was also a subtraction of the language given to the relationship between the Virgin Mary and the child, as well as the humanity of Mary. The 1810 tale began with multiple details about the Virgin Mary appearing to the Carpenter:

Da stand auf einmal eine schöne Frau vor ihm, ein heller Glanz leuchtete um ihr Gesicht, sie trug eine Krone von lauter Sternen, und ihr Kleid war himmelblau mit silbernen Sternen besät. Sie sprach zu ihm: ich bin die Jungfrau Maria, ich weiß das du dein Kindlein nicht ernähren kannst, bring es zu mir her, ich will es mit mir nehmen und seine Mutter seyn. (Grimm 58)

The Virgin Mary is described along with her crown and dress. This gives a physical description of her, allowing for her to be more clearly seen. She is not only a pretty »schöne Frau« but her face actually glistens before him »ein heller Glanz leuchtete um ihr Gesicht.« Her face shines

with light, highlighting Mary as divine intervention. In this description the Virgin Mary is a woman with beauty, a halo, and a luminous dress.

The 1857, or (as Bottigheimer states) the Wilhelm Grimm edition of *Marienkind* has a less personable Mary. She is described on behalf of the morality her presence implies, and the religious institution she represents:

wie er da Holz hackte, stand auf einmal eine schöne, große Frau vor ihm, die hatte eine Krone von leuchtenden Sternen auf dem Haupt und sprach zu ihm: »Ich bin die Jungfrau Maria, die Mutter des Christkindleins – du bist arm und dürftig, bring mir dein Kind, ich will es mit mir nehmen, seine Mutter sein und für es sorgen.« (21)

The original Mary stated how she knew that the Carpenter is not able to care for »ernähren kann« his child. In the 1857 edition, she is blunt: »du bist arm und dürftig.« Using the word »dürftig« here has the demeaning connotations of: meager, miserable, feeble. It seems to speak more to the man's personhood than his financial situation. The bright luster »heller Glanz« from 1810 has been transferred to a description of the stars on her crown, and the rich word of »Glanz« has been removed. Her dress seems to have no more importance. The two things that are added about Mary, however, are that she is not only pretty, but also big »groß.« The meaning here is unclear: is Mary physically large? Or is it a comment on how she is great? It may very well have to do with her sanctity, which is brought into the text when she introduces herself as »die Mutter des Christkindleins.« This seems redundant, because it is clear that she is »Jungfrau Maria.« The use of the diminutive for Christ, and the fact that she is the mother of the baby Christ, rather than the man, is also interesting.

This specific inclusion of Christianity by the Grimms, as well as a stress on the Virgin Mary's greatness, makes her larger than life. She is also less friendly, being blunt and demanding, and is given fewer feminine descriptors, like her clothes and glowing face. Her face

is no longer as important as her crown. The addition of »Christkindlein« is what gives her authority as a religious figure, but it also makes evident that her authority only exists in relation to a man (or, more specifically, a baby boy). Precisely this defeminizing and dehumanization of Mary points to the separation of the woman's body from herself. This also sets up the new role the Virgin Mary plays in this tale. What began in 1810 as a religious female authority figure is stripped of her more effeminate qualities, so that what remains by 1857 is a religious authority figure that complements Christian ideals.

The first interaction of the two is recounted in the 1810 version as:

Anfangs fürchtete es sich wie es die glänzende Frau sah, aber bald ging es zu ihr und faßte sie an der Hand. (58)

This fear that quickly turns to hand-holding between the young girl and the Virgin Mary is sweet, and it shows a relationship forming between the two. This moment is removed in the 1857 text, drawing attention away from the bond between the child and Mary. A distance is created in the 1857 edition, which begins with Mary's formal and unusual introduction of herself as the mother of Christ Child.

In the 1810 version, before the child fears Mary, the father obeys her: "lief [eilig] der Holzhacker nach Haus und führte das Kind in den Wald," (58) meaning he lead or carried »führen« the child. This is altered slightly in the 1857 edition where it says,

Der Holzhacker gehorchte, holte sein Kind und übergab es der Jungfrau Maria, die nahm es mit sich hinauf in den Himmel. (21)

In both texts Mary takes the child up into the sky, however; in the 1857 version, it is noted that the father obeyed »gehorchte«, emphasizing the religious authority, and fetches his kid. The changing of the word »führen« or lead, to »übergeben« or give/hand over, takes the action away



from the child, and gives all of the agency to the male figure. He gives up his child, handing the young girl over to the Virgin Mary the same way one gives »geben« a gift.

The addition of Christianity in “Marienkind” continues with the story. Apostles and sin are two significant additions to the story, making it particular to Christianity, therefore introducing the chance for it to be read with the Christian ideals this analysis addresses.

Beginning with Mary prohibiting the entrance to the thirteenth door, the 1810 story has Mary speaking to the girl:

du darfst alle Thüren des Himmels aufschließen und hinein gehn, nur in eine einzige nicht, die dieser kleine Schlüssel aufschließt; darauf ging sie weg und lies das Kind allein. Dieses nahm die Schlüssel, offnete jeden Tag eine andere Thür und freute sich wie es die schönen himmlischen Wohnungen all erblickte. Endlich hatte es alle Thüren aufgeschloßen, nur die verbotene war noch übrig: lange wollte es nicht endlich aber konnte es seiner Neugierde nicht widerstehn. Es nahm den kleinen Schlüssel und schloß die Thüre auf, da erblickte es in unbeschreiblichem Glanz und Herrlichkeit die Dreifaltigkeit sitzen. Geschwind machte es die Thüre wieder zu, aber sein Herz war voller Angst, die immer zunahm und ihm keine Ruh mehr ließ. (58-59)

Mary says that she is allowed to unlock all of the doors in Heaven, except for one. Saying no more, Mary goes on her journey. With each day the young girl opens a new room, making for both a nice image but also presenting the small child with some restraint and structure in regard to her exploration. Alas, the kid is unable to resist her curiosity: »aber konnte es seine Neugierde nicht widerstehn.« What she sees is the Trinity »Dreifaltigkeit,« an explicitly Christian entity.

The kid then quickly »geschwind« shuts the door and has fear in her heart.

The 1857 version of the story enhances Mary’s forbidding tone. This detail, as noted earlier, has a Christian hue to it: prohibition. The scene starts again with Mary speaking directly to the child:

aber die dreizehnte, wozu dieser kleine Schlüssel gehört, die ist dir verboten. Hüte dich, daß du sie nicht aufschließt, sonst wirst du unglücklich!« Das Mädchen versprach, gehorsam zu sein (21)

Mary used the word “forbidden” »verboten« saying that opening the door will make her unhappy »unglücklich.« The phrase, »sonst wirst du unglücklich« means “otherwise you will be unhappy.” “Unglücklich” can also mean “miserable” or “unlucky.” This sentence reads as a threat in which Mary nearly promises the girl that she will be unhappy, for an unknown duration of time, if she disobeys the Holy Mother. She does not say that the girl will be punished or will have to repent for her sin; rather, she assumes the emotional effect that the deed will result in. This displays Mary’s absolute authority in the situation. She has authority over the girl’s wellbeing. Luckily, the young girl knows how to submit to Christian society: she promises to be obedient »gehorsam.« This word means not only “obedient,” but also “submissive,” therefore bringing forth the image of dominance over the girl. This dominance belongs to the Virgin Mary as well as Christian society.

Of course the young girl in the 1857 edition is still tempted and deviant:

und als nun die Jungfrau Maria weg war, fing es an und besah die Wohnungen des Himmelreichs: Jeden Tag schloß es eine auf, bis die zwölfte herum waren. In jeder aber saß ein Apostel und war von großem Glanz umgeben, und es freute sich über all die Pracht und Herrlichkeit, und die Englein, die es immer begleiteten, freuten sich mit ihm. Nun war die verbotene Tür allein noch übrig; da empfand es eine große Lust zu wissen, was dahinter verborgen wäre, und sprach zu den Englein: »Ganz aufmachen will ich sie nicht und will auch nicht hineingehen, aber ich will sie aufschließen, damit wir ein wenig durch den Ritz sehen.« – »Ach nein«, sagten die Englein, »das wäre Sünde – die Jungfrau Maria hat’s verboten, und es könnte leicht dein Unglück werden.« (21)

The 1857 Grimms-incorporated angels refer to the »Unglück« Mary mentioned when they tell the girl she would be committing a sin. This sin of hers is referred to three other times in the 1857 version of the tale, as opposed to not at all in the 1810 version. The child does not say

anything to the Virgin Mary in the 1810 version, there is no promise of obedience which will later be broken. What was previously written as the child's curiosity »Neugierde« (1810) is now her »Lust zu wissen« (1857) which seems to refer to Eve and the fruit of knowledge. In "Trial and Temptation" in the Book of James, temptation is credited to one's own desire, or »Lust«:

wenn er von seiner eigenen Lust gereizt und gelockt wird. Darnach, wenn die Lust empfangen hat, gebiert sie die Sünde. (*Luther 1912, Jakobus. 1. 14-15*)

This specific wording does not only allude to the Bible, it also brings in a sexualized version of curiosity: passion, lust. She is lustful in her desire to know that which is concealed »verborgen.« Bottigheimer also notes how the language of »besah die Wohnungen des Himmelreichs« is "directly borrowed from John 14:2" (86) in the Bible, giving even more evidence of the influence of Christianity within the 1857 edition of the tale. The significance given to the girl's sin, her desire, and its consequences points to what is often presented as a female's tendency towards sin and rash behavior.

Zipes mentions the existence of this prejudice in his book when he talks about women being linked to "uncontrollable natural instincts" (22). This prejudice is embedded into this fairy tale through the dramatization of the girl's sin as well as the derogatory way she is written about. The inclusion of this heavily revised fairy tale in a book of stories for children can be seen as an attempt "to control and shelter" (22) its readers by extensively punishing and degrading a girl for giving into natural instincts, like curiosity and denial.

In addition to the Biblical and sexual underpinnings in the edited version of the tale, there is the inclusion of her talking to the angels about opening the doors. In the 1810 text, the angels are not involved in the matter. Yet in the 1857 version, the angels chaperone »begleiten« the child as she opens each door. This is a kid who cannot be left to venture out alone, presumably

incapable of self restraint. Having her discuss this with angels adds an element of premeditation as well as another moment of disobedience. This addition stands out because it is the angels who first introduce the notion of sin into the text.

The chaperoning of the angels plays a key role as the scene continues in the 1857 text:

Da schwieg es still, aber die Begierde in seinem Herzen schwieg nicht still, sondern nagte und pickte ordentlich daran und ließ ihm keine Ruhe. Und als die Englein einmal alle hinausgegangen waren, dachte es: Nun bin ich ganz allein und könnte hineingucken; es weiß es ja niemand, wenn ich's tue. (21-22)

Once more lust makes an appearance as »Begierde,« which means “desire” and “eagerness.”

This desire becomes quite active, as it gnaws »nagte« and pecks »pickte« at her. Here she becomes a sort of devious character—one with an animalistic badness picking at her insides, which is inflicted by her lust for knowledge and the desire in her heart. This means that she is instinctively driven and susceptible to straying from a righteous path. When she's finally alone, she thinks about how no one would know when she does it. This is the only thought of hers before she takes out the key, puts the key in the lock, and turns it:

Es suchte den Schlüssel heraus, und als es ihn in der Hand hielt, steckte es ihn auch in das Schloß, und als es ihn hineingesteckt hatte, drehte es auch um. Da sprang die Türe auf, und es sah die Dreieinigkeit im Feuer und Glanz sitzen. Es blieb ein Weilchen stehen und betrachtete alles mit Erstaunen, dann rührte es ein wenig mit dem Finger an den Glanz, da ward der Finger ganz golden. Als bald empfand es eine gewaltige Angst, schlug die Türe heftig zu und lief fort. Die Angst wollte auch nicht wieder weichen, es mochte anfangen, was es wollte, und das Herz klopfte in einem fort und wollte nicht ruhig werden; auch das Gold blieb an dem Finger und ging nicht ab, es mochte waschen und reiben, soviel es wollte. (22)

The Grimms extensively explain the everyday action of unlocking a door. This builds tension while drawing attention to the “sinful” deed itself. The door then springs open »sprang auf.« In the 1810 version, she was not there for a while »weilchen« but rather she opened the door, as opposed to the door springing open itself, and then shuts it soon after. In this edited version, she

waits so long that she puts her finger on the splendor, permanently tainting herself with golden evidence of sin, before she fiercely »heftig« slams »schlug« the door shut. She shuts the door only after she becomes afraid. Both texts write of her fear and her unsettled beating heart.

One of the most peculiar 1857 additions to this scene is this golden finger which she cannot get clean, as much as she wants to. The Grimms have made it so that this young girl is literally stained by her sin; never to be, or look, the same again. There is also an addition of Apostles to each Heavenly room, giving it an authentically Christian context. These Apostles are described with the »Glanz« splendor that is missing from the 1857 introduction of Mary, taking a descriptor of glory from the woman and accrediting it to the male Apostles.

This story paints quite a merciless God, similar to the God of Genesis who marks Cain for life after murdering his brother. The likely eternal damnation of betraying the Virgin Mary is not enough punishment for the Grimms, so they give her a golden finger to visually set her apart from everyone else who has pure, untainted digits. The description of how she washes and rubs »waschen und reiben« her tainted finger is reminiscent of another bold and deviant female character: Lady Macbeth, whose famous monologue involves a mental breakdown in the process of trying to clean her hands of the blood of King Duncan. Similarly to Marienkind, physical mutilation is not Lady Macbeth's only punishment.

Mary then returns, discovers that the child is lying, and sends her back down to Earth. This moment is quite similar to Adam and Eve's fall from grace. In the 1810 text, this moment is written: "es verfiel in einen tiefen Schlaf, und die Jungfrau trug es herab auf die Erde" (59), nothing dramatic, the child is carried »trug« back to Earth. This moment is depicted a bit differently in the 1857 edition. Mary tells her that she is no longer worthy to be in Heaven and

then, “Da versank das Mädchen in einen tiefen Schlaf, und als es erwachte, lag es unten auf der Erde, mitten in einer Wildnis” (22). She does not fall into »verfiel« a deep sleep, but rather sinks »versinken« into one. There is no carrying of the child to earth, she simply wakes up “down on the Earth,” »unten auf der Erde.« This is another moment in which the relationship between the two women is removed from the 1857 tale.

The image of sinking into a sleep and going down to Earth has much to do with a downward motion, one similar perhaps to sinking into the underworld, Hell. This seems to echo Judas’ expulsion from Heaven. The child is alone, alone in the middle of the wilderness »Wildnis.« The description of this wilderness is another 1857 Grimms-incorporated theme, and it represents the isolation of the female as punishment for her sin.

This wilderness is referred to in the 1857 version as »die Einöde,« “In der Einöde, in welche es eingeschlossen war” (22) which translates roughly to, “a solitary wasteland.” Deadness and bleakness are also words brought about by the noun, “Öde.” This image of where the child lies is much more dreary and lonely than the descriptions used in the 1810 tale. The physical location of the wilderness the child is in does not have much detail in the 1810 version. There is “einem hohen Baum, rings war dichtes Gebüsch und kein Ausweg zu finden” (59), there is no action, only description. The enhanced punishment of 1857 fits well within the overly moral and merciless Christian ideal. She is given nothing, sacrificing more than indulgences, and any attempt at escaping will only hurt her more.

A key example of her unjust punishments is the stripping of her voice. In the 1810 version, this loss is only noted when the King, who saves her, asks a question to which it says, “aber das Mädchen konnte ihm nicht antworten und sah ihn nur mitleidig an” (59). The “pitiful,”

or “compassionate,” »mitleidig« girl remains unable to answer him. The Grimms give this muteness a much bigger role in the 1857 text. After sinking down into the wilderness, the 1857 edition says,

Es wollte rufen, aber es konnte keinen Laut hervorbringen. Es sprang auf und wollte fortlaufen, aber wo es sich hinwendete, immer ward es von dichten Dornhecken zurückgehalten (22).

The thick bushes from before, now have thorns »Dornhecken.« Another addition is that the girl wants to yell, but can bring out »hervorbringen« no sound. She wants to run away, but is held back »zurückgehalten« by thorns. Her attempt at yelling adds a greater emphasis to her voice being taken from her than the 1810 version presents with her inability to answer the King. The 1857 version has her trying to do things and being unable to, this portrays the revocation of action that the girl is punished by. The removal of her agency.

There are two more sentences that the Grimms added to the 1810 text. Both state more explicit and drastic circumstances than are in the 1810 version. The first change is “wenn Schnee und Eis kamen, so kroch es wie ein armes Tierchen in die Blätter, daß es nicht fror,” (23) which includes the simile in which the young girl is said to be like a small, poor animal. While the 1810 tale has the same scene: “Als der Herbst anbrach, sammelte es all die Blätter die vom Baum fielen, und trug sie in die Höhle, in welcher es schlief” (59) it is not explicitly said that she is like an animal. Stating it directly results in a zoomorphication, and potentially a demonization, of the character. The simile itself is a punishment for her sin, because now she has practically become an animal. The 1857 version of the sentence also takes more of the agency away from the girl. In the 1810 version, she is collecting leaves and carrying them, actively making a source for heat. In the edited 1857 version, she only crawls into the leaves that are already there. When giving the

girl little agency over her life, punishing her beyond what can be considered just, and equating her to an animal, it seems clear that she is being used to represent something much greater than a sinful little girl. She has become a cautionary tale for an unjust society.

Equating a young girl to an animal is certainly a form of belittlement. That is why the scene that follows, in which she is stripped of clothing and found by a man in this Einöde, is even more powerful. Powerful in the sense that it is powerfully demeaning. The 1810 version of the scene goes:

Eben war der Frühling angekommen, und die Zweige begannen grün zu werden, als es aus der Höhle heraus ging und sich in die Sonne vor den Baum setzte. Seine goldenen Haare hingen lang herunter bis zu dem dunkelrothen Sammetkleide, das es auch im Himmel getragen hatte. Und so saß es still in unbeschreiblicher Schönheit, als der König des Lands durch die Wildniß geritten kam. (59)

In the 1810 version, the young girl is wearing a dark red velvet dress beneath her long golden locks. This passage states that she wore the same dress in Heaven, although the only reference to her clothing in Heaven has it being gold: “dort erhielt es goldene Kleider” (58). The moment in which her golden clothing becomes a dark red velvet dress is unclear. The dark red color demonizes the child, while the red and the velvet allows for it to be seen in a sexual manner. Her »unbeschreibliche Schönheit« is also not mentioned earlier in the text. This moment, in which a King comes into the picture, is the first in which her beauty is mentioned. Her beauty is only relevant in the eyes or presence of a man. This also takes agency away from the girl, it takes her beauty and places it before the King because only he can make use of it.

This severe objectification remains in the 1857 edition. The 1857 edition, however, does not include a dark red dress—potentially to rid it of the sexual undertones. The Grimms



undertones of 1857 are more subtle yet stronger. In the 1857 tale, the girl is covered *only* by her hair:

Einmal, als die Bäume wieder in frischem Grün standen, jagte der König des Landes in dem Wald und verfolgte ein Reh, und weil es in das Gebüsch geflohen war, das den Waldplatz einschloß, stieg er vom Pferd, riß das Gestrüpp auseinander und hieb sich mit seinem Schwert einen Weg. Als er endlich hindurchgedrungen war, sah er unter dem Baum ein wunderschönes Mädchen sitzen, das saß da und war von seinem goldenen Haar bis zu den Fußzehen bedeckt. (23)

The Grimms add quite a bit about the King hunting a deer and following it into the bushes in the 1857 edition. There are details given about him dismounting his horse and then tearing the thickets apart and slicing them with his sword. It is a very manly endeavor: the King cuts through the wilderness with his sword. Why the King uses a sword for hunting deer brings into question the role of the sword in this scene. The phallic implication of the King's sword cutting through the wilderness is evident. The aggressive language used around the action should also be noted. He breaks/rips »riß« the thickets, and, following the lead of his sword, strikes himself »hieb« a way in. The King showcases his manliness in juxtaposition to the girl's helplessness. As he finally gets through, or rather, penetrates, »hindurchgedrungen« the wilderness, he sees a beautiful girl »ein wunderschönes Mädchen.« Here the girl has really returned to nature (hopefully absolving her of her sins) by being clothed with nothing but her natural hair. She is not referred to as "the" girl, because here she is secondary to the entrance of the King. His entrance can also be seen as a scene of salvation, where his power and might bring him to the sinful maiden.

The role and life of the girl changes after being carried away by the King. She becomes Queen and has three children. After giving birth to each one, the Virgin Mary comes down to ask

her about her sin, if she opened the thirteenth door. Each time the Queen answers no, and Mary takes away her child. In the 1857 version, Mary says,

Willst du die Wahrheit sagen und gestehen, daß du die verbotene Tür aufgeschlossen hast, so will ich deinen Mund öffnen und dir die Sprache wiedergeben: verharrst du aber in der Sünde und leugnest hartnäckig, so nehm ich dein neugebornes Kind mit mir. (23)

She mentions the words sin »Sünde« and deny »leugnen,« which she had previously not done.

She also calls the Queen stubborn »hartnäckig.« In comparison to the 1810 version, Mary says much more and is less kind. In the 1810 version, Mary says,

Sieh' du bist doch nicht glücklich du kannst nicht sprechen, gestehe mir, daß du die Thüre geöffnet hast, oder ich nehme dein Kind mit mir. (60)

Here Mary mentions the Queen's happiness, another appeal to her personhood that is erased. The

1857 text has Mary explicitly say how she will open the Queen's mouth and return her speech.

This intensifies the less dramatic moment of the 1810 version. When Mary returns two more times in the 1810 tale, her words are not quoted, but either paraphrased or it is stated that, "Alles ist wie das vorige mal" (60). This makes each time Mary appears to her less dramatic, because there are no extra details given. The 1857 Grimms-incorporated dialogue between Mary and the Queen sheds more light onto the sin and denial of the Queen. In the 1857 version, when Mary visits for the last time, she brings the Queen into Heaven to see her kids. This addition makes the Queen seem all the more stubborn, because even after seeing her kids for the first time in years, she denies what she did and remains in sin. For some readers this may seem shocking, because one of the most basic female drives (other than a tendency towards sinful instincts) is the protection of and closeness to their own children. The woman here has fallen so far from her traditional path that even her own children cannot pull her back.

It takes the Queen being bound to a post and set above a burning fire to repent and confess her sin. The details in this scene also represent the style of changes the Grimms made in the 1857 edition. While the 1857 text follows the 1810 version in having her sent to be burned at the stake »Scheiterhaufen,« the 1857 scene is more dramatized. The 1810 tale reads:

Schon stand die Königin auf dem Holz, wieder in das dunkelrothe Kleid gekleidet, und ihre goldenen Haare aufgelöst, da wurde ihr Herz bewegt und sie dachte: o wie gern wollte ich jetzt alles gestehn. Da thät sich ein Glanz vom Himmel, und die Jungfrau Maria kam daher gegangen in ihrer Pracht, sie trug ein kleines Kind auf ihrem Arm, zwei größere an ihren Seiten. Sie trat zu der Königin und sprach: also willst du bekennen, daß du die verbotene Thüre geöffnet hast. Sie antwortete: ja, da gab ihr Maria die Kinder zurück, die Königin behielt die Sprache und lebte lang in großer Freude. (60)

Again she wears the dark red dress, and her golden hair is disheveled »aufgelöst«—arguably a sexual scene (and certainly a sexist description) focusing on her hair and dress at her execution. This dark red dress demonizes her once more, putting her in the color of the Devil. This woman's sin has apparently gone so far that she is related to the Devil, and yet she only has to think about how she'd like to confess to everything before a shimmer appears in the sky, bringing Mary down in all of her glory »Pracht.« It took the Queen a simple »ja« to be freed from her muteness, receive her children back, and live a long life in great delight »großer Freude.« It is pretty remarkable that at the end, she only had to say "yes" to be absolved of her wrongdoing.

The Grimms brothers must have noticed how easy it was for the Queen in the end, because the 1857 version gives her a bigger, less sexy, show:

Das Holz wurde zusammengetragen, und als sie an einen Pfahl festgebunden war und das Feuer ringsumher zu brennen anfang, da schmolz das harte Eis des Stolzes, und ihr Herz ward von Reue bewegt, und sie dachte: Könnt ich nur noch vor meinem Tode gestehen, daß ich die Tür geöffnet habe; da kam ihr die Stimme, daß sie laut ausrief: »Ja, Maria, ich habe es getan!« Und alsbald fing der Himmel an zu regnen und löschte die Feuerflammen, und über ihr brach ein Licht hervor, und die Jungfrau Maria kam herab und hatte die beiden Söhnlein zu ihren Seiten und das neugeborne Töchterlein auf dem Arm. Sie sprach freundlich zu ihr: »Wer seine Sünde bereut und eingesteht, dem ist sie

vergeben«, und reichte ihr die drei Kinder, löste ihr die Zunge und gab ihr Glück für das ganze Leben. (24-25)

Here, the moment when she repents does not happen until she has been strapped »festgebunden« to a pole and the fire begins to burn around her. This forces her hard ice of pride »harte Eis des Stolzes« to melt around her heart. This melting about her heart of pride is new to the 1857 version. Where she was stubborn »hartnäckig« she is now guilty of pride, adding another sin to her character where there was none. Once again it is the thought that sparks the confession, but this time, Mary does not enter immediately. Mary waits until the Queen regains her voice in order to yell out loudly »laut ausrief.« This makes her confession both incredibly public and much more dramatic than the single »ja« from before. This is the only time in which her voice is returned to her without Mary's presence. Giving the Queen her voice before Mary asks her about her sin puts a stronger emphasis on her confession. After this incredibly public confession, the sky begins to rain, a logical, and 1857 Grimms added, explanation for how she avoided being burned. Then there was a light, »Licht« quite similar, but not as magical as, the luster »Glanz« of the 1810 version, which brought Mary down with the children.

This time, when Mary speaks, she is friendly »freundlich,« and, although it says she is speaking to the Queen, she seems to be speaking to everyone—the reader included—when she says, “Whoever repents and confesses to their sin is forgiven,” »Wer seine Sünde bereut und eingesteht, dem ist sie vergeben.« This blatant moral, while avoiding any direct dialogue between the two women, brings “Marienkind” to a close. Ending on a moral given by the Virgin Mary herself shifts the tone of the tale to its being a cautionary tale. A tale about women's dangerous desire to sin and the most effective way to punish them for it.

Another tale in which the main female character is punished tremendously is “Das Mädchen ohne Hände.” In this text, which the next essay addresses, the young girl does not commit a sin or do anything morally wrong. The girl in “The Girl without Hands” is punished for no reason. This offers as both a contrast to “Marienkind” and support of the argument that the girls in Grimms are unfairly treated, punished, and presented.

## In God's Hands

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“Das Mädchen ohne Hände,” or “The Girl without Hands,” does not appear in *Die handschriftliche Urfassung von 1810*, however, it does appear in their first volume *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* published in 1812. “Das Mädchen ohne Hände” is a story with some of the most blatantly unjust female mutilation, and one of the most devout and pure female characters. This tale, along with many of the Grimms fairy tales, were told across the world in different variations. A Xhosa storyteller, Mrs. Nongenile Masithatu Zenani, told the story “A Father Cuts Off His Daughter's Arms,” in which a daughter refuses her father’s sexual advances, resulting in him cutting off her arms (Snyder 1). The Grimms tale does not have a predatory father, but instead a predatory Devil.

The first thing we learn about the main character, the daughter of the Miller, in the 1857 tale is that she is pretty and pious,

Die Müllerstochter war ein schönes und frommes Mädchen und lebte die drei Jahre in Gottesfurcht und ohne Sünde. (Grimm 122)

Not only pretty and pious, the young girl also lives in fear of God. A fear out of respect for and reverence to God. This fear, »Gottesfurcht« is meant to be a good thing, because it means that she is religious and obedient. The girl is painted in a positive light from a Christian perspective from the very beginning of this tale.

As the day approaches for the Devil to come to get her, she does something very unique: “da wusch es sich rein und machte mit Kreide einen Kranz um sich” (122). She washes herself clean »rein« and draws a chalk circle »Kranz« around herself. »Rein« also means “pure.” The word »Kranz« can also mean wreath, which has its own religious context, but a circle seems to

be the better translation here. Why does she draw a circle around herself? The circle could be meant to keep the Devil out, but if she knew he would not be able to come near her because of her cleanliness, why also draw a protective circle?

The Devil then tells her father that he must take water away from her so that she cannot wash herself. It is the cleanliness provided by water that prevents him from having power over her: “denn sonst habe ich keine Gewalt über sie” (122). The father does this, yet she still cleans herself. She cleans her hands with her tears: “Aber sie hatte auf ihre Hände geweint, und sie waren ganz rein” (122). Once more this cleaning makes her pure »rein« and it is this purity which protects her. The verb form of “waren” is plural, referring to her hands as the pure objects. This makes the girl’s identity reliant on the status of her hands.

The next step the Devil takes is quite vicious. He says to the father, “Hau ihr die Hände ab, sonst kann ich ihr nichts anhaben” (122), telling him to cut off her hands, “Hände.” The word »anhaben« translates to “to wear” or “to have on.” This idiomatic phrase can also mean “to hurt,” “to touch,” or “to damage” someone or something. There is an objectifying possession, and potentially even a mutilation, implied within the language here.

The father had the option to give himself up to the Devil, but out of fear he obeys him and cuts off his daughter’s hands instead:

Mein Kind, wenn ich dir nicht beide Hände abhaue, so führt mich der Teufel fort, und in der Angst hab’ ich es ihm versprochen. Hilf mir doch in meiner Not und verzeihe mir, was ich Böses an dir tue. (122-123)

The father seems to value himself more than his daughter. In his cowardice, he asks his daughter to help him in *his* distress »Not« and asks for her forgiveness. This is ironic because his daughter is the one who will suffer the most, and yet he expresses his difficulty with the task.

A father sacrificing his child happens a few times in the Bible, specifically with Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was proving his devotion to God. When put besides that story, the Miller is proving his devotion to the Devil. A man like that would certainly not be praised in a moral and Christian society, and so the father figure in this story does not play the role of a Jesus-like figure, or even a close Apostle. This role of the father is peculiar because it is his obedience to another male authority that determines his daughter's fate. The father's obedience here is similar to the Carpenter father in "Marienkind," who obeyed the Virgin Mary's request for his child. Where in "Marienkind" the father was helping his daughter who he could not support, the father in "Das Mädchen ohne Hände" is following the requests of the Devil.

Unlike the Miller himself, his daughter is strong when presented with her father's distress: "Lieber Vater," she answers, "macht mit mir, was ihr wollt, ich bin Euer Kind" (123). Here she uses the plural, informal "you" two times. This was common in speaking to elders or royalty. In the first "ihr" it seems that she refers to her father and the Devil; however, when she says "Euer Kind" it is more likely that she is referencing her two parents. The capitalization of "Euer" stands out, because, while it was common at the time, it is not necessary. When being read today, the sentence can sound like she is talking to royalty, "Eure Majestät," as though she is obeying her father like a king. This is a cordial and selfless obedience to her parents, promoting an almost martyr-like character. This obedience is an example of the societal functions of kids that Zipes says is "cultivated" in fairy tales (14).

The girl lays her hands down and lets her father cut them. The sentence itself is quite delicate, "Darauf legte sie beide Hände hin und ließ sie sich abhauen" (123). The cutting off of the hands is not narrated, it is shown only in this sentence. The chopping off of a young, innocent



girl's hands is left out of the tale, as if it is irrelevant. This exclusion of the event undermines the pain and sacrifice that the girl endures out of obedience to her father. While her pain is undermined, her purity is stressed again and again.

When the Devil comes around once more, he discovers that she is still pure,

Der Teufel kam zum dritten Mal, aber sie hatte so lange und so viel auf die Stümpfe geweint, daß sie doch ganz rein waren. Da mußte er weichen und hatte alles Recht auf sie verloren. (123)

Her "Reinheit," or purity, never eludes her or her hands. It is her purity that saves her from being taken by the Devil. She has sacrificed her hands and is still untouchable. The text says that the Devil must yield, »weichen« and has lost all rights to her, »hatte alles Recht auf sie verloren.« This implies that he had a right to her to begin with, and once more makes her an object and a commodity. This "right" to her was given to the Devil by the father at the beginning, when he promised the Devil whatever was behind his mill.

Her amputated arms are described as stumps »Stümpfe« which furthers the objectification of her body, describing what were once her hands as inhuman objects. This also paints the unpleasant image of her having tree trunks as arms. While it is common to call amputated body parts stumps, it is nonetheless degrading, making her plant-like and less human. From the beginning of the tale, the girl belongs to someone else. Even in her purity, she belongs to another: God. The Devil has no power over her because her pious tears ran over her stumps for hands, making her pure again. Even when she is freed from the men conspiring to cut off her hands, she is still obedient to God, and it is only this obedience and piety that saves her.

After having her hands chopped off, crying on them once more, and unintentionally outsmarting the Devil, the girl leaves her father and ventures out. It is significant that it is not

only her piety, but her tears, that save her. She has to suffer emotionally in order to remain pure. Before venturing out, a description is given on how she ties her arms behind her back, “Darauf ließ sie sich die verstümmelten Arme auf den Rücken binden” (123). This is yet another disturbing aspect to the tale. For an unknown reason, the girl has her arms bound behind her; “Ließ” implies that someone else did this to her. Since this does not seem to be the most productive response to stumps for arms, its use in the text only strengthens the image of a submissive, helpless girl. She becomes physically restrained after being mutilated, enslaved by circumstance within a patriarchal universe.

By nighttime the girl discovers a royal garden. After seeing fruit inside of the garden, she gets onto her knees and asks “Gott den Herrn” for help. It is as if she found the Garden of Eden. The usage of the Father, »den Herrn« in addition to »Gott« brings the patriarchal role of men into the picture. God then sends her an angel, who makes a floodgate in the water for her to walk through. She goes up to a pear tree, accompanied by the angel, and eats a pear with her mouth. The description of this event makes her sound like a rare animal, “Da trat sie hinzu und aß eine mit dem Munde vom Baume ab, ihren Hunger zu stillen, aber nicht mehr” (123). Here the importance of her bound arms plays a significant role in making her stand out. She has to bite off and eat a pear with her mouth alone, like a savage animal, not using hands. While this can be seen as resourcefulness, the situation turns her into a spectacle. The sentence goes on to say how she eats one pear, to satiate »stillen« her hunger, but she does not eat more. This is most likely because she is pious, only taking what she absolutely needs. The word »stillen« itself also means “to breastfeed.” Using such a word in reference to the girl brings forth not only the idea of motherhood, but it also presents her as animal, or baby-like, breastfeeding from the pear tree.

She is further zoomorphized a few lines down in the sentence, “Als sie die Birne gegessen hatte, war sie gesättigt und ging und versteckte sich in das Gebüsch” (123). She hides in a bush, like a rabbit or small animal. Not only is this degrading and dehumanizing, but it creates a whole show around her situation. She is first commodified by the Devil, and then she is zoomorphized by the narrator. As the text continues, she goes back to being objectified.

The next form of objectification of the girl comes about in the same scene when a gardener notices her,

Der Gärtner sah es mit an, weil aber der Engel dabeistand, fürchtete er sich und meinte, das Mädchen wäre ein Geist, schwieg still und getraute nicht zu rufen oder den Geist anzureden (123).

The gardener’s gaze, as well as the odd situation, makes the scene a bit sexual. A girl is restricted and hungry, tugging a pear with just her mouth, and eating the beautiful fruit. The gardener believes that she is a spirit, and the next morning recounts the events to the King. The King hears this and then says that he will watch with the gardener the next day, as if she is an object of entertainment. That night, the King brings a priest to speak to the spirit, and the three of them sit under the tree and wait attentively for the show to begin: “Alle drei setzen sich unter den Baum und gaben acht” (124). This is an example of the presence of the male gaze in the Grimms. Even the language used to describe the scene, which is the tragic reality of the young girl, is written to entertain. This entertainment surfaces from a possession of the situation, making the girl into an object for these men’s pleasure. This is a form of giving agency to the men, who then make the girl into a nighttime show.

The three men are waiting in the night when the girl crawls »kriecht« out of the bush. This sounds as if she is on all fours, like an animal. She eats one pear with her mouth as the three

men watch. The image is odd, comedic, and it becomes increasingly sexual. The King, a seemingly powerful and strong male, a priest, brought along to speak with the spirit (but presumably also able to commit an exorcism), and a lucky gardener whose night shifts just got a whole lot more interesting all watch a young girl eat off of a tree in the dark.

This scene depicts a moral girl who is deprived and punished although she committed no sin. This punishment could be influenced by the ascetic Christian ideal, in which being pious is not good enough. One must be put into extreme circumstances in order for their faith to really be challenged. This idea is similar to Bottigheimer's awareness of personal intent not being enough to save women; and the need for outside, male, intervention (150).

The brave priest addresses the girl, inquiring whether she comes from God or the world, to which she says that she is a poor human, "Ich bin kein Geist, sondern ein armer Mensch, von allen verlassen, nur von Gott nicht" (124). She says that she is abandoned by all but God, instead of explaining how she left her abusive father, which makes her appear more helpless than she is. It's important to note that, just as her purity was mentioned each time the Devil came to take her, she includes how she has not been abandoned by God. She speaks of her humanity and her piety. This lets the men know that she is pure and pious, and not a godless, handless monster.

The King seems to be quite taken by the tied-up pear-thief, for he says, "Wenn du von aller Welt verlassen bist, so will ich dich nicht verlassen" (124) Which is an incredibly kind thing to say, given that he knows nothing about her. She said she has been abandoned by all but God, and this outstanding King says that he will not abandon her. While it is unlikely that the pure, handless girl is being equated to Christ, it is true that in the Gospel according to Mark, Christ's last words were, "Mein Gott, mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen?" (*Luther Bibel 1912*,

Markus. 15.34). This means that the King will be the only one, other than God, to not abandon her.

As far as first impressions go, the King seems to be quite the upstanding Christian. He not only brings a priest with him that night, but he lets the girl into his house out of the goodness of his heart. His selfless, Christ-like, quality gives men a much better reputation than the selfish, cowardly father. The King is a gentleman, and he becomes the saving male intervention.

The heroic King takes the handless Maiden inside of his royal palace:

Er nahm sie mit sich in sein königliches Schloß, und weil sie so schön und fromm war, liebte er sie von Herzen, ließ ihr silberne Hände machen und nahm sie zu seiner Gemahlin. (124)

Once more the girl is described as »schön und fromm,« and this time, it causes the King to love her. Out of his love for her he has silver hands made. In helping her replace her mutated hands, he is placing a piece of his property (the hands) onto her. This is a form of possession camouflaged by kindness. This possession is further depicted in him immediately taking her »nehmen sie« as his wife. As we later learn, these new hands of hers become what the King recognizes her by—his item made of silver.

Since they are married and the girl is now a Queen, the King must look over his land while his wife gives birth to their child. The Devil, being the other main male character, enters the scene again. The Devil intercepts the letters the King's mother sends to her son, and changes it. He then claims that the Queen gave birth to a Changeling, »Wechselbalg,« which is an unwanted and devilish fairy-child who has been put in the place of a human child. The reply of the King is swapped out for a demand in which he asks his mother to get rid of his wife: "sie [die Mutter] sollten die Königin mit ihrem Kinde töten." (124) The Devil sends another in which the

Devil, disguised as the King, asks for the tongue and eyes of the Queen to be kept as proof of the new Queen's death. Once more the Devil asks for a part of the Queen's body, but luckily the mother of the King kills a doe instead. The Devil's demand forces the Queen out of her home yet again. The King's mother says to her, "Geh mit deinem Kinde in die weite Welt hinein und komm nie wieder zurück" (124). And once more, we see the unfortunate woman go into the wilderness to fend for herself.

Instead of her arms, this time she binds her child to her back. When she is in the wilderness she kneels down again to pray. And once more, "der Engel des Herrn" helps her. She is brought to a house with a plate reading, "Hier wohnt ein jeder frei" (125). The "schneeweiße Jungfrau" welcomes them in, breastfeeds the child, and sets him in a bed. The Queen is now referred to as "die arme Frau" instead of the Queen, making her not only less than a Queen but less than an average woman. The snow-white Virgin Angel explains that she was sent by God, and the three of them live together for seven years. The number seven is an important number in Christianity, one reason being that the world is said to be created in seven days. The seventh day is the Sabbath, and for this woman and her child, their seventh year with the Virgin Angel is also important.

During these seven years they were fed, and "durch Gottes Gnade wegen ihrer Frömmigkeit wuchsen ihr die abgehauenen Hände wieder" (125). The hands that were cut off by her biological father were given back to her by her Eternal Father. They grew back through "God's grace," »Gottes Gnade« because of her "piety" »Frömmigkeit,« in a similar way to how her tears purified her. Her piety moved God to give her new hands. The power to heal and to help

remains in the hands of God. This is a Christian perspective in which only God can say when one has suffered enough and deserves to be rewarded.

The King returns home looking for his wife and child. His mother blames him for the injustice done to the two innocent »unschuldige« souls, and his temporary sadness is his punishment. When his mother tells him the truth, he decides to go looking for them:

Ich will gehen, so weit der Himmel blau ist, und nicht essen und trinken, bis ich meine liebe Frau und mein Kind wiedergefunden habe, wenn sie nicht in der Zeit umgekommen oder Hungers gestorben sind. (125)

His self-inflicted punishment is to not eat or drink until he finds them, if they have not perished or died of hunger. This is not quite a fair trade, but it is a form of penance. This he manages to do, for seven years, because God sustains »erhält« him.

God takes care of him, our upstanding Christian, and then he comes across the little house. Inside, he finds his wife and child, and after the woman introduces their child, »Schmerzenreich« which roughly means “Abundant Sorrow,” the King tries to recognize his wife by her hands, “Und er sah ihre lebendige Hände und sprach: »Meine Frau hatte silberne Hände.«” This seems to be the woman’s most important feature, since it is the only thing that men recognize her by. It is his piece of expensive property that signifies who she is in the eyes of her husband. This is an extreme case of dehumanization in which the woman’s identity can only materialize through pieces of metal.

The Queen then replies in her defense:

»Die natürlichen Hände hat mir der gnädige Gott wieder wachsen lassen«; und der Engel ging in die Kammer, holte die silbernen Hände und zeigte sie ihm. Da sah er erst gewiß, daß es seine liebe Frau und sein liebes Kind war... (126)

She gives full credit to the merciful God who lets »läßt« her hands grow back. The Angel then brilliantly goes into the room to retrieve the silver hands. Without the hands, it seems, the man would have no way of knowing if she was telling the truth. So, in the end, it is her mutilation that saves her. Well, her mutilation, her piety, and the grace of God.

In this tale, good comes from unimaginable suffering. Readers can rejoice in knowing that the Devil-tempting girl can still be saved, through tears, mutilation, and God. Mutilation was key to her salvation. It even brought her a son. Throughout the story she remained pious and devoted, despite all of her turmoil. Without God's help it's likely that she would have died in the forest, if not the first time then certainly the second.

The saving intervention comes from the King and from God. The girl was punished until her salvation, thus promoting ceaseless piety and obedience. As Zipes argues, fear is a main method of moral storytelling. Promoting submission by cultivating "...feelings of shame and... anxiety in children when they did not conform" (22). This fairy tale tells the story of a child who conformed to a relentlessly pious lifestyle and was still not safe from the Devil. This both reinforces and dismisses the idea of scaring children into conformity. The dismissal of this idea comes from the girl's religious purity; because her purity never eludes her, she never strays from religious conformity. "Das Mädchen ohne Hände" cannot be a cautionary tale because she does not disobey someone. She is punished and mutilated by the Devil, as well as objectified and dehumanized by the narrator, with no justification.

Throwing caution, as well as stereotypes to the wind, the following author, Madame d'Aulnoy, tells the story of a young girl in a different way. She wrote, "Princess Belle-Etoile and Prince Cheri," over 100 years before the Grimms. Her fairy tale did not come from an earlier



collection of recorded stories. This may be the reason why the patriarchy of the Grimms is replaced by the matriarchy of an old, all-powerful fairy.

## The Enlightened Star

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When reading Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy’s story “Princess Belle-Etoile and Prince Cheri,” one may be struck by its progressiveness. After learning that it was originally published in 1698, over 100 years before the Grimms compilation of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, one may be shocked. The amount of female power and agency is remarkable. Especially when comparing this tale to the Grimms, “Princess Belle-Etoile and Prince Cheri” exists in a mostly matriarchal society. While d’Aulnoy originally wrote this tale in French, I will be analyzing an English translation by Jack Zipes. The women's agency in this tale is based on self-reflection and awareness, emotions, generosity, and love. A woman, specifically an old woman, is the Fairy who watches over the characters. The gods and fate are frequently referred to, and, due to the Greek depiction of the three fates, and the frequent references to mythology within this fairy tale, it is fair to say that these powers are also governed by the feminine. This text of d’Aulnoy proves that not all fairy tales involve male heroes and dominance. This story provides a stark contrast to the two Grimms tales analyzed earlier, and I hope that it instills a new hope for fairy tales, a hope that I began to lose as I read the Grimms over and over. Let’s take a close look at some of these moments to see the different role of women, one in which their agency is cultivated.

The grandmother of the main characters: Princess Belle Etoile, her two brothers, and Prince Cheri (her cousin), cooks for an old Fairy. This generous deed results in the Fairy granting the daughters of the woman wishes. They all wish to marry noblemen who come across their path, including a King and his brother, thus resulting in the birth of the main children. The mother/Queen of the King tells her lady-in-waiting, Feintise, to kill these children, because she

believes they are not worthy of joining her family. Feintise fails to do so, resulting in the children being raised by a pirate and his wife until they go out in discovery of their origin. They rediscover their family, but the Queen-mother again has Feintise try to get rid of them. After a series of attempts, and the help of the old Fairy, the children's truth is revealed, Belle-Etoile marries her cousin Prince Cheri, and the evil women are punished.

The main female character, Princess Belle-Etoile, first exhibits her agency over her own mind. After her cousin Cheri shares that he would not be king if it meant being separated from her, and then hearing her two brothers say that they would be okay to leave her for position of king, the young girl reflects on this. "When she was alone she thought about these different ways of loving, and she found her own feelings matched theirs exactly" (237). Princess Belle-Etoile's feelings for Cheri come to her naturally, and are not forced upon her or controlled by another. Her ability to reflect and question points to both her agency and her intelligence, showing her capability of thinking and being alone. She was able to inquire from the men in her family, draw her own conclusions from their answers, and then think about her own relationship to each of them.

While at first it may appear that Belle-Etoile is susceptible to the lies of Feintise, the Queen-mother's lady-in-waiting, and the promise of superficial gains, it must be noted that the Princess does not ask anyone to go out and procure the mystical objects for her. Belle-Etoile rather expresses her desire for them, while remaining aware of the risk they require. The Princess says how she cannot live without the dancing water (247) but she then tells her cousin, Cheri, not to go in search for it.

I'd rather renounce all the advantages of beauty. I'd much rather be frightful than risk such a precious life. I beg you not to think about the dancing water anymore. Indeed, if I have any power over you, I forbid you to go. (247)

It is interesting that she says, "if I have any power over you," meaning that love can be seen as powerful. Prince Cheri, however, does not listen to her. He acts out of his free-will, "so that I may have the pleasure of being the first to obey you" (247). This he does out of his own pleasure. The event is misleading, as one can easily think that he is doing this for Belle-Etoile, but even he remains conscious of his motivation, "the pleasure of being the first to obey you."

This event shows the agency of thought and the intelligence of the girl Belle-Etoile. This is something that is not present in the Grimms. D'Aulnoy does not give this agency just to the young girl, but she also gives it to Cheri in the form of his agency of action, he is able to disobey his cousin.

There is little growth of Prince Cheri's character throughout the text. He cares only for his cousin, not taking into account the extreme danger he puts himself in, or the effect his actions have on others. In the Grimms, the young men who go out on voyages frequently learn something and return smarter or more successful. This is not the case with Cheri. His lack of growth is tied to his inability to see how he impacts those around him. The author seems to have given him just as much general intelligence as the other characters, but in comparison to Belle-Etoile, Cheri is immature.

The Princess, while still susceptible to wanting the powers of the objects, appears to grow mentally as a character. Her brother, Petit-Soleil finds her crying after Feintise tempts her with the singing apple, the second object Feintise uses as an attempt to get rid of the children. She refuses to tell him why she is crying because she is so "ashamed of herself." (251) She is

ashamed to be crying because her desire for the singing apple is strong, even though she knows how dangerous Feintise's "advice" is. This level of self-awareness is not present in the other characters of the story. Later, on the same page, the narrator of the story even steps back and makes a sarcastic remark about Prince Cheri and his priorities: "Tears came to her eyes, and she left the table weeping. Belle-Etoile weeping! You gods, what unhappiness for Cheri!" This sort of dramatic language, stepping away from objective narration, is not common of the text, causing this moment to stand out. In the moments when the Princess weeps out of shame, making her the most emotional character, it is noted that her unhappiness causes *Cheri* pain. The irony comes from his "unhappiness" being a result of seeing his cousin cry, a moment in which his feelings are not his own, but are rather an extension of Belle-Etoile.

This portrayal of Cheri as a character whose emotions are dependent on the Princess can be further seen as he goes out to find the singing apple for his cousin. "Dark as the night was, he rode at random, not in the least knowing where to find the singing apple" (251), Cheri acts impulsively, with no plan or knowledge to create one. He is a fool in love, with thoughts that revolve only around pleasing Belle-Etoile. This portrayal of the masculine figure being the fool, the directionless, the subservient, is one element that makes "Princess Belle-Etoile and Prince Cheri" a nontraditional fairy tale. In the context of Grimms fairy tales, where the agency of women is stripped away and lies in the power of men and male-dominated forces, such an emotion-driven male character like Cheri displaces men from their typical role in fairy tales.

Princess Belle-Etoile becomes sick after her cousin leaves in search for the last item, the little green bird. Her sickness is observed by the physicians, "she was being destroyed by a deep melancholy," and after being asked why she was sick she says that, "she acknowledged that she

reproached herself night and day for causing Cheri to depart and that she felt she would die if she did not hear some tidings of him” (257). Here her self-awareness leads to self-reproach, and her emotions take over her physical wellbeing. Emotions are not usually a centerpiece in the fairy tale tradition, nor are they in French Courtly society. The way d’Aulnoy gives emotions such an important role is another fascinating and progressive aspect to the story. Its progressiveness comes from the promotion of listening to and acting on one’s emotions, which works alongside the elevation of women within the story. This begs the question of whether the presence and value placed on emotions, such as love, are caused by a matriarchal, or feminine, telling of the story.

Despite compassion, love, and generosity dominating the personal drives in the text, remnants of a patriarchal society can still be found. The King has the most authority over other characters, the boy cousin goes out into the wild, the princess is tempted by materiality. With this framework, the scene in which Belle-Etoile goes out herself to find her cousin and brothers in search for the green bird is quite interesting. This acts as commentary on both her awareness of her surroundings as well as the role of women in society not being one of an adventurer.

“She then dressed herself in male attire, believing she would be less exposed to danger in traveling disguised like this than if she roamed the world as an adventurer of her own sex” (258). The young girl in this text is so aware of her situation as a female that she intentionally disguises herself as a man in order to be safe. This speaks both to the inequality of women and men as travelers at that time as well as the progressiveness of d’Aulnoy’s tale. In her dressing as a man in order to save her family, the story falls back on patriarchal ideals. However, Belle-Etoile’s strategic character helps shift this power to the female. This act is one of both patriarchal and

matriarchal influence. The young girl knows that in order to get what she wants, in order to save her family, she has to pretend to be a man. In giving the Princess full awareness of the limitations of her gender, as well as the ability to act on this knowledge, d'Aulnoy supports the education and empowerment of the young girl in her tale. This sort of independent and enlightened female is not seen within the Grimms. In fact, in "Das Mädchen ohne Hände," the young girl's dependence and devotion to God gets her into trouble, making her even more reliant on the men around her. Belle-Etoile is not reliant on the men around her, as they are the ones in need of rescuing. She quite literally becomes her own hero when she dresses as a man and goes out to save her family.

Although dressed like a man, Belle-Etoile is still the female savior of her brothers and cousin. The Fairy appears as a dove, a sign of peace, once more, and gives the Princess instructions which she follows precisely. The other woman in the scene, the Fairy, is smart enough to recognize Belle-Etoile. The dove notes that it recognizes the girl despite her disguise, whereas the family she grew up with are not as sharp, because they "did not recognize her at all" (259). She removes her armor only after setting her family and the three hundred knights free. She saves them while masked as a man. This scene plays with the trope of men as savior because she looks like a man, is acting like a man, but is in fact the young Princess.

The men then call her "the liberator of kings," making an allusion to Christ, the king of kings and messiah. In this scene, Belle-Etoile is not only the heroine but the redeemer, the Christ figure. The young girl rescues hundreds of men and restores their agency. All of the men she saves promise to accompany her, to which she reacts as the honorable heroine she is, "though the laws of chivalry might give her a right over the freedom that she had just restored to them, she

would not think of taking advantage of it” (259). d’Aulnoy had the opportunity to say that Belle-Etoile turned the men down, but instead the narrator has the girl acknowledge the social law that gives her authority over them. This social law of chivalry usually works in the benefit of knights, who are men, but d’Aulnoy uses chivalry to the advantage of a woman. The wording of, “she would not think of taking advantage of it,” says a lot about Belle-Etoile’s character. This wording implies that she did not even consider taking the men’s freedom from them. This strengthens the girl’s enlightened decision, while her selflessness shines light on the laws of chivalry and the power it typically holds against the benefit of women. Belle-Etoile does not need a man, nor man’s law of chivalry to be freed. She is never held captive in the tale, but her male relatives are.

Had Belle-Etoile requested that the knights accompany her home, she would have been acting as chivalry permits. By doing so, she would have been acting like many of the men in similar stories. Perhaps it is because she is not a man, or because d’Aulnoy did not want her to act like one, that she restores freedom to these three hundred men. She acts in a way that is more socially aware than the men who surround her because, in this tale, it is Belle-Etoile who is enlightened on the inequalities of gender. This moment brings the reader to a similar consciousness surrounding the inequalities of gender and the laws of chivalry.

This nontraditional approach to justice can also be seen at the end of the story, when it comes time to punish the Queen-mother and Feintise. The discussion of punishment begins,

there is no telling what he [the King] would have done to them if indignation had been his only counsel! The tempest of his rage was beginning to subside when the generous queen, his children, and Cheri implored him to satisfy himself by punishing them more for the sake of an example than for severity. (262-263)

It is the man, who throughout the story submits to emotions, who wants to punish these women the harshest. The other characters involved, like Queen Blondine, who arguably suffered the



most, stop him from doing so. Their punishment is one of punishment to set an example, not for the sake of punishment or personal revenge. This notion of punishment is quite different from that in other fairy tales, most notably the Grimms tales this project addresses. This exemplary punishment can be seen as an act of compassion, especially because it came from the request of his wife and kids, which orients it more towards a feminine than masculine trait. This influence of feminine compassion can also be used to explain Belle-Etoile's selfless act of freeing the knights.

While Belle-Etoile exhibits acts of free-will and has a mind of her own, the real governing powers of this tale are the old Fairy and fate/fortune. There are many moments throughout the text in which these fates are referred to:

“After all the wealth we've amassed thanks to these dear children, the only wish I have left is to discover their origins.”

“We must leave it up to the gods,” Corsine said, “They've given them to us, and they'll no doubt clear up the mystery in their own good time.” (239)

In the end, however, it is not the “gods” that reveal their identity, it is the intervention of the old Fairy as well as the willpower of Belle-Etoile and her relatives. Without the help of the old Fairy, it is unlikely that the kids would have survived Feintise's elaborate tricks. While the characters' efforts are surely significant, they are not necessarily governing forces.

The intervention of the old Fairy begins after the mother feeds the old woman for free at the beginning of the text. This deed is another act of female compassion and generosity, and it is the catalyst for the whole tale. If the children needed the help of the Fairy, but she did not feel indebted to their family, they may not have received her help. This makes the generosity of their grandmother a pivotal aspect of the story. It is unclear whether the Fairy's following deeds are

simply returning the kindness done to her, or if she is also governed by another force—one in which magical intervention is assumed as necessary.

The granddaughter of the kind mother is Princess Belle-Etoile, whose first act of kindness to the Fairy occurs when the Princess saves the Fairy from being sacrificed on the ship. The Fairy takes on the form of a dove, in order to give guidance to the children at sea. The male children, however, find the dove and want to sacrifice it as an offering to the gods. This moment is significant because the dove is going to help the children, but they want to use the dove to receive assistance from the gods. What they do not know is that the Fairy is comparable to a god, and if they had killed the dove they would have killed their chance at survival. The Fairy, a female character, plays the role of a god. She is the only character with unquestionable authority and power. The presence of a matriarchal power and a heroine like Belle-Etoile is certainly the opposite of a male-dominated patriarchy.

When the Princess saves the dove, she is acutely aware of the service she is doing for the animal, “and if some day I should need you, please don’t forget the kindness I’ve shown you” (242). In this Belle-Etoile uses her free-will in saving the dove, and then exercises her keen mind in asking that the dove do a favor for her in return.

The Fairy also appears as a siren in the same scene. She tells the kids to let the boat go where it wants and get off where it stops (242). In this it is not clear whether the siren, who is the Fairy in another disguise, actively guides the ship to protect them, or if this is a natural result of the winds. Is the Fairy intervening to ensure the success of these kids? Or is she only forecasting what was destined for them? If this is destiny, the children cannot truly have control over their

lives. This is where the tale seems to draw a distinction between control over one's life, or destiny, and control over one's actions.

As the tale continues, and the children need more help, the Fairy appears as a dove to Prince Cheri on his first expedition. She says, "This is not the first time I've received crucial help from your family. Now I'm delighted to be in a position to be of service to you" (248). This statement claims that the old Fairy is working only out of a sense of indebtedness, and not as an intervening god. She is only intervening after one of the characters provides her assistance, at least creating the illusion that the characters have control over their destiny.

These good deeds are never put in question, and it is possible that this is due to the sense of etiquette and manners valued by courtly society. The children's obedience to and cooperation with the Fairy also exhibit courtly manners. These courtly manners present within this text also support Zips reading of indoctrinating children through fairy tales (14).

The line between the old Fairy acting out of indebtedness resulting from reciprocity or the sheer duty of destiny, is blurry throughout the text. When Prince Cheri happens across the injured dove the second time he goes out into the world, the dove says to him, "you were destined to save my life, and in return, I am to do you a great favor" (251). This, the dove says clearly, is the work of destiny, not free-will or coincidence.

The Fairy is arguably the most powerful character in this fairy tale. Nevertheless, the other women in the story are still more strong and capable than the majority of women in the Grimms tales. A significant woman who needs control over everything and will go to violent means to attain it is the Queen-mother. The Queen-mother ordered her lady-in-waiting to get rid of the Princess, her brothers, and Prince Cheri rather than doing it herself. This act of delegating

authority is what saves the children's lives. The Queen-mother's delegation of authority can either be seen as an expression of power, or one of weakness. It is possible that the Queen-mother did not want to kill the children herself, for one reason or another. She may have known that she would not go through with it, that she is not as evil nor as strong as she claims.

When Feintise, the Queen-mother's lady-in-waiting, was instructed to kill the children, she "was so struck by their beauty" (255) that she could not bring herself to kill them. In this scene she acts both out of free-will to have her own ideas and free-will over her actions, regardless of the Queen-mother's command. It is the "extraordinary appearance" and the "illustrious blood" of the kids that saves them, implying that the value of their lives is solely reliant on their unknown heritage and their appearance.

The kids awe-inspiring beauty does not have the same effect on the cruel Queen-mother. When the children return from the deadly excursions Feintise sent them on, they arrive at the King's second wedding. The Queen-mother throws a very uncourtly and uncivilized fit, shouting at her son the King, "So now we have these nice little brats with their rare items!... I don't want these petty strangers, apparently the dregs of society, abusing your credulity" (261). Not only does the Queen-mother call them "brats" and "the dregs of society," but she accuses the King of being gullible, or "credulous." She says this, knowing that they are in fact his own kids and his nephew, revealing only her pettiness and lack of temperament. She reacts in this vulgar way in front of every guest of the wedding, ironically damaging her already poor reputation, which she is trying to protect in demolishing kids of an unknown familial standing.

In the above seen, the Queen proves to have an issue similar to that of her son: being unable to control her emotions. As a woman of such a high position, d'Aulnoy's portrayal of the

Queen-mother only makes the young Belle-Etoile appear significantly more level-headed.

“Belle-Etoile” is arguably the strongest character, making this story both remarkable and nearly the opposite of a Grimms tale, like “Marienkind.” Where in the Grimms young girls are punished for curiosity and independence, Belle-Etoile succeeds as a result of these characteristics.

The men in “Belle-Etoile” are less noteworthy, and certainly less bright, than the women. The King in “Princess Belle-Etoile” does not have much independent agency. He, similarly to Prince Cheri, is subject to his emotions. After being under the control of an unknown power earlier in the tale, he falls in love with Blondine: “I certainly don’t know what power’s influencing me, but I won’t leave this house until I’ve married the beautiful Blondine” (231). Later on, after his evil mother swaps the puppies out for his children, it is the influence of his mother that leads to his wife being banished, “the queen-mother put him under so much pressure that he finally decided to banish the innocent queen” (235). He does not act out of his own authority, but rather the authority of his mother, or the authority of his feelings.

The Queen-mother’s desire to control, as well as the King’s desire to obey his mother, can also be seen and analyzed towards the end of the tale. This is most evident when the Queen-mother persuades him to re-marry. At the first mention of re-marrying, the story goes, “she [the Queen] renewed her attempts to persuade the king to marry again and pressured him so strongly that at last he decided to marry a princess of his own family” (259). The Queen-mother persuades and pressures her son, and she succeeds. The recounting of this event changes, as the gentleman waiting for the children’s return tells them the story of the King. He says that,

he loved her [Blondine] dearly; that he had spent fifteen years without listening to any proposal of marriage, but that the queen-mother and her subjects had urged him strongly to remarry; that he finally decided to marry a princess of the royal blood. (260)

Here it is a male character who brings up the King's love. The King is presented as loyal because of his refusal to listen to proposals of marriage. The inclusion of the Queen-mother's subjects in the "urging" of him to re-marry is an interesting addition because they were not mentioned at first. The first mention was in a paragraph about the Queen-mother, so naturally she was at the center of it. Yet here, as his story is being told by his subject, the King seems stronger, succumbing only to the pressure of *many* people around him.

At the event of the King's second marriage, a marriage out of compliance and obligation to his mother, the wording is stronger still. The King is shown "distressed" at the sight of his ex-wife Blondine eating with her dogs. His obedience to his mother is so strong that, "he had decided to oblige his mother as much as possible, and since it was she who was forcing him to re-marry, he left her in charge of everything." (261) Here the verb "forcing" is used in reference to the Queen-mother. This may be to reinforce the truth, which seems to grow more intense with each retelling of the events. It can also be an act of dramatization of the paragraph in which the Queen-mother is being presented as a deceitful woman.

It is hard to say clearly that the King succumbs to his mother, because words like "pressured him so strongly," "urged him strongly," and then "forcing him to re-marry," take away his agency and places the decision in the arms of the Queen-mother. While the lack of agency of the King as well as the immense power and control of his mother supports a non-patriarchal theme, it does not necessarily support a reading of the fairy tale as a feminist story promoting equality. In regard to it being a matriarchal tale, the crudeness of the Queen-mother must be taken into account. The Queen-mother does not hold traditionally female values. She embodies pride and tradition, two things which are often seen as masculine. In this situation,

deceit and pressure wins over love and loyalty. In the end, however, love does win; but it only wins because of the influence of the Fairy and the cooperation of the children. It is complexities like this that make “Princess Belle-Etoile and Prince Cheri” such a fascinating story, because while it may have some overarching themes and influences, it cannot be pigeon-holed.

It is this rejection of pre-existing ideologies that makes d’Aulnoy’s writing so unique and quite different from the Grimms. The text is non-patriarchal and non-traditional in that it gives women a large amount of agency and authority. It is the women, specifically Princess Belle-Etoile and the old Fairy who prove to be the most self-sufficient and capable characters in the text. The existence of governing forces residing in the hands of women is another aspect that makes “Princess Belle-Etoile and Prince Cheri” a progressive and female-heavy text. All of these specificities stand out in contrast to the Grimms stories “Das Mädchen ohne Hände” and “Marienkind” and offer d’Aulnoy’s story as an alternative, more progressive, fairy tale.

*Epilogue*

*Nachwort*



Stück für Stück, baue ich den Raum im Kopf—den Wohnraum der Geschichte. Wenn ich eine deutsche Geschichte lese, muss ich daran arbeiten, sie zu verstehen. Ich muss gedanklich viel tun, damit ich die Szene bauen kann. Die Charaktere, die Möbel, die Dekorationen. Dann, nachdem ich gelesen habe, kann ich kreativ sein. Kann ich die Federführung übernehmen. Ich gehe ins Haus zurück, ich setze mich auf ein Sofa, und ich denke über die Geschichte nach. Was passiert? Was sagen die Leute? Woran denke ich? Was würde ich machen, wenn ich im Plot wäre? Da fangen meine Märchen und meine Analysen an. Nun, da ich in einer Märchenwelt bin, kann ich schaffen. Ich schaffe mein eigenes Märchen. Ich schreibe meine Geschichte.

Ein Märchen ist, was lebendig in der Fantasie ist. Ein wirkliches Leben in einem unwirklichen Lebensraum—wo Angst eine Stiefmutter ist, und Freude eine junge Frau. Wo Sorgen von außen kommen und Macht von innen.

Meine Charaktere bin ich, aber klüger, mutiger; weil sie sowohl mich und sich selbst haben. Weil sie in einem Märchen leben. Sie warten, geduldig, während ich ihr Leben schreibe. Sie können gehen, nur so weit, wie ich es mir vorstellen kann. Und wenn ich keine Ahnungen habe, haben sie nichts. Wenn ich viele Ideen habe, haben sie zu viele.

*Es ist ein Seiltanz, zwischen mir und meiner Vorstellungskraft.* Während ich den Rahmen abstecke, erlebe ich auch das Leben meiner Charaktere. Ich lebe sowohl innerhalb als auch außerhalb von ihnen. Trage viele Hüte, spiele viele Rollen. Als Schreiberin, nachdem ich die Geschichte geschrieben habe, bin ich mir der Andeutungen und Folgerungen bewußt. Wenn ich schreibe, bin ich sowohl die Figur als auch die Leserin, ungewiss, wie die Geschichte verläuft. Ich bin die lebende Gestalt. Ich atme Märchen. Federführend und nicht federführend, zusammen.

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With and without control, together. I breathe the fairy tale. I am its living form. As I write, I am both the character and the reader, unsure how the story goes. As the writer, after I have written the story, I am aware of the implications and consequences. Wearing many hats, playing many roles. I live both inside and outside of them. While I set the scene, I also experience the lives of my characters. *It is a balancing act, between myself and my imagination.*

When I have many ideas, my characters have too much. And when I have no ideas, they have nothing. They can go, only as far as I can imagine. They wait, patiently, as I write their lives. Because they live in a fairy tale. My characters are me, but more clever, more brave; because they have both me and themselves.

Where worries come from outside, and strength from within. A real life in an unreal living space—where fear is a step mother, and joy a young girl. A fairy tale is what lives in fantasy.

I write my story. I create my own fairy tale. Now that I am in a fairy tale world, I can create. That is where my fairy tales and my analyses begin. What would I do, if I were in the plot? What did I think about it? What did the people say? What happened? I go back to the house, I sit on a sofa, and I think about the story. I can take control. Then, after I have read, I can be creative. The characters, the furniture, the decorations. I have to do a lot mentally, so I can build the scene. When I read a German story, I have to work in order to understand it. Piece by piece, I build the room in my head—the living room of the story.



*The End*

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