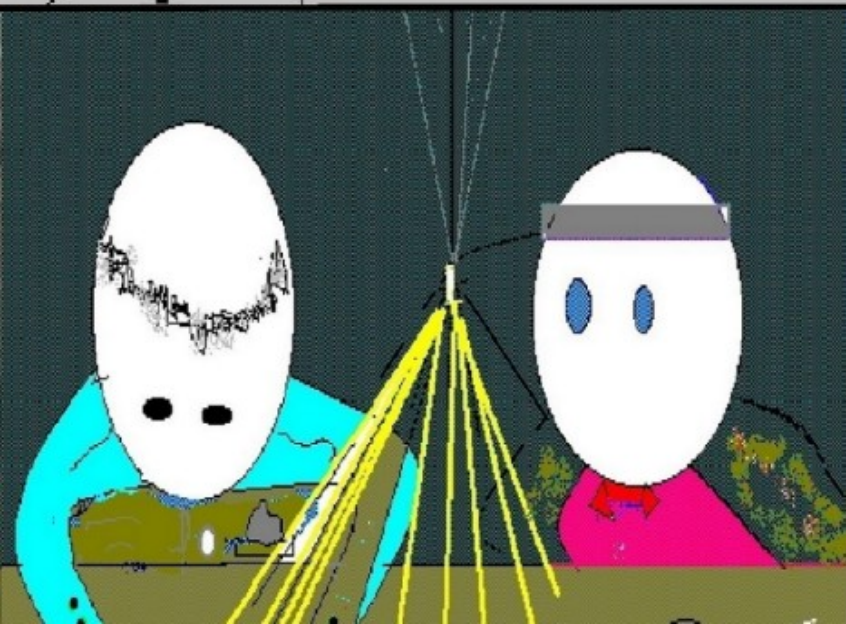
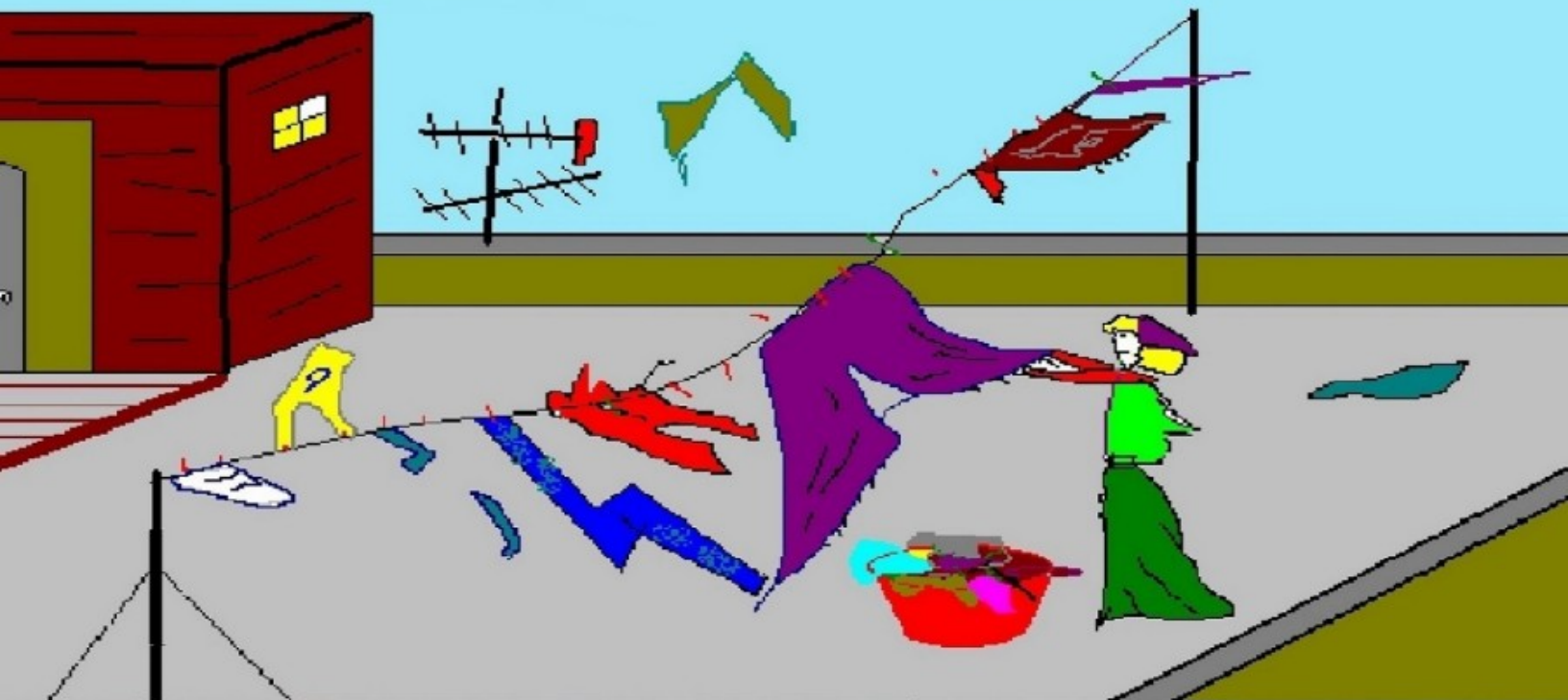


Fairy Tales and *Pranksters*

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Translation by Ian J King



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INTRODUCTION

In this collection, I wanted to include all my writings that have to do with the world of fairy tales.

Among these, one can roughly distinguish three groups:

- Those in which one can easily find references to specific fairy tales and of which mine, often in a joking tone, can be considered an actualisation or a personal reworking;
- Those that are more original, not only in their development, but also in their subject and plot;
- Those which, in reality, take their cue and inspiration from classic and well-known fairy tale themes and then follow their own path.

The first group probably includes “Rosella” (inspired by Cinderella); “The true story of The Little Red Riding Hood (and the wolf)”; “Rosetta” (inspired by The Little Red Riding Hood); “Snow White and the Orphans” (based on Snow White); “Serena the Mermaid” (The Little Mermaid); “The Toy Soldiers and the Ballerina” (The Nutcracker). Then there is “Geppetto, the Blue Fairy and the Talking Cricket”, which in modern language could be described as a small sequel to Pinocchio.

In the second group, I would probably include: “Theodore’s Golden Dandruff”; “Baldwin and the Princess’ Toothpaste”; and the dragon tales: “Gino the Postman and the Baby Dragon” and “Paulino and the Dragon of the Black Castle”.

In the last group I would insert: “Salafino and the magic coffeepot”; “The pen genie” (perhaps more novella than fairy tale, like most of the tales in this group), inspired by Aladdin’s lamp; “The mat that could fly” which takes up the theme of flying carpets; “Story of a mannequin”, which vaguely recalls Pinocchio and the tin soldier; “Osvaldo the fisherman” which takes up the theme of talking fish. And “The Mines of Santa Claus” which, although a Christmas tale, has something to do with Hansel and Gretel and with Toy Land.

THE TRUE STORY OF THE LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful little girl with red hair and pigtails. Everyone called her Little Red Riding Hood, because she loved to go around in a little red dress with a red hood, a red skirt, red shoes, red stockings, a red vest and red panties.

One day Mummy said to her, “Go to your granny’s, take this basket and keep her company. And remember, don’t stray from the path, don’t linger and don’t talk to strangers.”

In the basket there were biscuits, a tart, strawberries and cherries, all natural and genuine products for her grandmother, who was old and often ill. She lived alone on the other side of the woods.

Little Red Riding Hood set off with her basket. It was summer and there were many flowers growing. Little Red Riding Hood began to pick one, then another and then another. In a little while she had made a nice bunch, then another and then another. And as she picked them, she sang happily and carefree:

That little bunch of flowers

That comes from the grove

That little bunch of flowers

Make sure it doesn’t get wet

I want to give it away

A suspicious character was attracted by her beautiful voice: it was a very hungry wolf and it approached her.

He was so impressed by the beauty of Little Red Riding Hood that he fell in love with her, and, despite his hunger, he tried every way he could think of, to talk to her.

Oh, what a pretty basket you have,

What are you doing with it?

Oh, what a pretty basket you have,

Give it to me!

But Little Red Riding Hood answered:

No, no, no. I won’t give it to you, because mother doesn’t want me to.

No, no, no. I won’t give it to you, because mother won’t let me to.

And again, the wolf peeped into the basket and saw all the goodies:

Oh, what beautiful biscuits you have,

What are you doing with them?

Oh, what beautiful biscuits you have,

Give them to me!

But Little Red Riding Hood said:

No, no, no. I won't give them to you, because Mummy doesn't want me to.

No, no, no. I won't give them to you, because mother won't let me to.

But the wolf, albeit politely, insisted:

Oh, what a beautiful tart you have,

What are you doing with it?

Oh, what a beautiful tart you have,

what will you do with it, give it to me!

No, no, no. I won't give it to you, because mother doesn't want me to.

No, no, no. I won't give it to you, because mother won't let me to.

And again:

Oh what beautiful strawberries you have,

What will you do with them?

Oh what beautiful strawberries you have,

Give them to me!

No, no, no. I won't give them to you because mother doesn't want me to.

No, no, no. I won't give them to you because mother won't let me to.

And then:

Oh, what nice cherries you have,

What will you do with them?

Oh, what nice cherries you have,

Give them to me!

No, no, no. I won't give them to you, because mother doesn't want me to.

No, no, no. I won't give them to you, because mother won't let me to.

And finally:

Oh, what pretty bouquets you have,

What will you do with them?

Oh, what pretty bouquets you have,

Give them to me!

No, no, no. I won't give them to you, because mother doesn't want me to.

No, no, no. I won't give them to you, because mother won't let me to.

Finally, Little Red Riding Hood was getting annoyed, and so she added:

“Go away, you big bad wolf. I have to take this stuff to my grandmother, who is old and sick and lives on the other side of the wood. You will have none of it. Now, go away and don't let me see you again!”

The wolf went away with his tail between his legs, and he was still hungry; but as Little Red Riding Hood lingered to pick more flowers, he went quickly to her grandmother's house.

Knock knock, the wolf tapped on her door.

“Who is it?”

“It's the doctor,” replied the wolf, disguising his voice.

“The doctor? And why have you come?”

“Because I heard your feet are hurting, if I'm not wrong.”

“Foot pain? Coming to think of it, you know you're right? My feet do hurt. I almost forgot about that. But I wouldn't have allowed myself to bother you, just because of a little foot pain.”

After a while, again the wolf knocked on the door... *Knock knock*.

“Who is it?”

“It's the doctor,” the wolf replied, again disguising his voice.

“The doctor? And why have you come?”

“Because I heard you have a headache.”

“Headache? Coming to think of it, you know you're right? I do have an annoying headache. But I wouldn't have allowed myself to bother you, just because of a little foot ache, or a little headache.”

After a while the wolf knocked on the door again, *Knock knock*.

“Who is it?”

“It's the doctor,” the wolf replied, still disguising his voice.

“The doctor? And why have you come?”

“For your stomach ache.”

“Stomach ache? You're quite right! I really do have a terrible stomach ache. You were right to come; this stomach ache is unbearable. And I also have a headache and a foot ache. Come in, come in. I've been waiting for you.”

And the old lady got out of bed and went to open the door for him.

“Doctor! What a mess you’ve made of yourself,” said the grandmother, who clearly had some sight problems. “You look so worn out!”

“You know how it is, with all these visits. I haven’t had time to eat, since this morning.”

“Come, come, I’ll offer you something.” And with a slow pace and a limp from the pain in her feet, she lead him to the kitchen.

“Would you like some biscuits? They are good and homemade, you know! From time to time my daughter or my granddaughter, who are both so dear, bring them to me. Please, take some. Take some.”

And the wolf – at first discreetly, one at a time; then all at once, seeing that the grandmother wasn’t looking – spat them out of his mouth.

“I hope you enjoyed them. Take as many as you like, because they’re not good for my stomach ache, and soon they’ll be bringing me more. And try some of this tart, which is genuine and home made by my daughter. Have a taste, have a taste.”

The wolf didn’t let her say it twice. In no time at all, all the pie ended up keeping company with the biscuits.

“I really wouldn’t know what else to offer you. I’ve got some good fruit, especially strawberries and cherries” she said, opening the larder door; and the wolf, in no time at all, took the opportunity to swallow what he found in there too.

“I’m very sorry, but I don’t think I have anything else to offer you, dear doctor,” said Grandma, opening the door of the almost empty refrigerator; and in a moment the wolf, who was just behind her, emptied it out again, completely.

“Ah, that’s what I could give you, a nice fresh egg. You’ll see, it’ll put you right back on your feet.” And so she opened the kitchen door and went out into the chicken coop. The wolf followed her and while she picked up a fresh egg to offer him, he ate a whole hen in one gulp. Now, he thought, he felt full.

“Here, taste how good this is,” said the granny, offering him the egg in a cup. The wolf naturally did not refuse it, but soon regretted it.

Everything he had swallowed began to turn over in his stomach, giving him an unbearable stomach ache and pain.

“Get me a doctor, please,” he managed to say with difficulty.

“Of course I thought you were a doctor! I certainly wouldn’t presume to call another one. What’s wrong with you? Do you feel ill? Come, come, lie down on the couch. Of course, this doesn’t look good for a doctor. But who can I call? You know, as well as I do, that there are no other doctors for miles around.”

“Even a vet will do,” said the wolf before he lost consciousness.

Just then, Little Red Riding Hood arrived with her basket. Grandma, worried about the doctor’s illness, asked for help and Little Red Riding Hood reassured her. “Don’t worry... I’ll take care of this, you’ll see,” she said, having already thought of how to deal with the wolf’s nuisance. She went to call a hunter who lived nearby, who everyone knew was an unscrupulous poacher and whose house was full of hunting trophies; but perhaps, he was still missing the head of a wild wolf.

When she and the hunter (with the rifle) returned to grandmother’s, the wolf was recovering.

Poor wolf! He was dreaming of Little Red Riding Hood, putting on his head a wreath of fragrant flowers which had been picked and woven by herself; and the vet, holding a long bottle to his mouth, saying

“Now you will see that all your pains will cease for good.”

Poor wolf! Didn’t even realise that the bottle was actually a rifle, and the vet was a fierce hunter.

The poor grandmother, also, was disorientated and confused by the shot and did not understand why there was so much blood. She thought to hold her fresh egg responsible for the bloody scene.

The wolf, quick smart, had his belly cut open with a knife, and the poor little hen jumped out of it, still alive and jumping around. She could have continued to make fresh eggs for the grandmother for a long time, except that she didn’t eat them anymore. She was so shocked by what she had seen happen to the doctor... pardon me, the wolf. However, Grandma never called the doctor again, and she lived a long life, continuing to receive baskets from her daughter and granddaughter.

From that day on, they visited her less and less, and Little Red Riding Hood only visited her by bicycle, until they put her Grandmother in a home.

The moral of the story is this: even if you are a terrible, cheating, unscrupulous wolf in life... never trust too much in what appears to be innocent, naive and defenceless little girls, especially if they have red pigtails.

SERENA THE MERMAID

The calm sea, the mild evening and the full moon had attracted not only a handsome red-haired boy named Aldo, but also other fishing enthusiasts to the rocks, equipped with rods and appropriate gear.

“Are you fishing?” Aldo had been there for a while when he heard this question addressed to him.

“Can’t you see it?” he replied dryly, without looking. But then, seeing who had spoken to him, he smiled and tried to be more polite.

“Or at least I’m trying to. If you want to know whether I’ve caught anything so far, the answer is no, not yet.”

The two didn’t know each other. Her light coloured and very long hair was almost to her waist, and it was quite shiny, almost like silk. So, in the moonlight, it was difficult to tell what colour it actually was, but her eyes were distinctly between blue and aquamarine, and they shone like two precious stones. She was like a vision. ‘Maybe I’m dreaming?’ Aldo thought to himself.

“Fishing like that doesn’t seem to require much skill, or courage,” she said. “But if you do it out of necessity, because you’re as hungry as, or more hungry than they are... They’re biting because they’re hungry, you should know that. They’re just trying to get today’s dinner, poor things.”

“No, I don’t do it out of necessity, but for fun. Fishing relaxes me” he replied.

“What strange ways you have for relaxing. Me, I sing to relax, or maybe take a nice bath and a swim. Preferably with a wonderful full moon like this one... and maybe together with a nice, red-haired boy – I love red-haired boys!”

She began to sing as she started to enter the water. She had a sweet, harmonious and beautiful voice. Aldo became even more convinced that he was dreaming.

“Do you want to try it too, to find if it relaxes you?” she asked. “And by the way, please get that hook out of the water so it doesn’t get caught on my legs.”

Aldo stood still at first, almost in a trance. But then the girl’s song and words had induced him to leave the rod. He was already in his swimming

costume and followed her into the sea. He didn't feel cold, and he seemed to move slowly, almost as if walking along in a dream.

She kept singing and moved through the water as if she were in her natural element.

"What is your name? And where do you live?" he asked her.

"My name is Serena. I'm from here, I was born and raised here, that's why I swim so well. You, on the other hand, are you on holiday? I don't think I've seen you before."

"Yes. I live in the town. But I wouldn't mind moving to a seaside resort, if I had the chance. I like the sea very much."

"Now, let me show you what I think fishing should be like."

Serena plunged into the water where she stood and stayed there for a long time, perhaps more than a minute. In that time, Aldo saw first the surface of the sea ripple, and then dark shadows dart quickly along the bottom. Finally, Serena surfaced, holding a fish in each hand, one smaller and the other, larger.

"See?" she said. And then she dropped the fish back into the water. "Skill and courage. But it's only a game. Because now they have to go and eat, and I'm not hungry."

"You're awesome!" exclaimed Aldo in amazement.

"In this way it seems to me like a fair and fun contest, on equal terms. Would you enjoy it if a rope came out of the sea and dragged you under the water, just because some fish wanted to relax?"

Aldo did not bite at the provocation, and Serena resumed singing.

So, they spent some time in the water. A thick cloud had begun to obstruct the moon's rays, which made it darker; but not so dark that they could not distinguish in the distance, punctual as ever, the evening passage of the large ferry boat bound for the islands.

"It's getting late, I have to get home" said Serena.

"Where do you live? Can I drive you back? Will I see you tomorrow?" Aldo asked her.

"Maybe. It depends... it depends on the clouds..." Serena didn't say anything else before she jumped back into the water. And she was so fast, swimming underwater. And because it was too dark now, Aldo could not, as

was his intention, follow her with his eyes and figure out which way she was heading.

At the same time, the following evening, Aldo went to the same rock hoping to meet Serena again. He had his fishing equipment with him, but did not use it. He looked here and there, hoping that she would arrive. He also wanted to understand where she was coming from, so he could look for her during the day. But again, her arrival took him by surprise.

Suddenly, from behind him, there was her sweet singing, as if she had materialised from nowhere.

“Are you fishing again tonight?” Serena asked him.

“No,” he replied. “It’s just to make our rock look busy, and to keep the other fishermen away.”

They sat looking at the moon. He contemplated Serena, who was even more beautiful than the moon, and listened to her singing. This time it was a little melancholy and in a foreign, mysterious language.

“What language is that?” he asked her.

“It is the language of the fish,” she replied, smiling. “I warn them that there are fishermen about. They say this song keeps the fish away... but it attracts the boys!”

It was true, Aldo thought. He found her so beautiful that he couldn’t take his eyes off her.

Who knows how long they stayed like that. Until again, in the distance, was the ferry passing by. Aldo imagined what would happen, and took her hand. But she said...

“It’s time for me to go. But if you want to, we’ll meet again.”

“Yes,” he replied.

When she got up to leave, he wanted to get up too; but Serena prevented him, putting her hands on his shoulders.

“Please don’t follow me. Not today. Not even with your eyes, like you did yesterday. Do you promise?”

“But... ”

“If you want to, one of these days I’ll take you to my house. Would you like that?”

He nodded.

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