The Lantern

A TALE FROM GERMANY

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a little girl. Through the dark streets she carried her little lantern and happily enjoyed its shine.

Wheeh! came the wind and blew with might!

It snuffed out the candle—blew out the light!

"Who can light my lantern again?" She looked all around, there was no one to be found.

A hedgehog scampered along the path. "Oh, dear hedgehog," asked the girl, "the wind blew out my candle. Who can light my lantern again?"

"Cannot tell you, ask the bear. Cannot stay—home to my children I must go."

The girl walked on. A big brown bear came tramping along. "Oh, dear Bear," said the girl, "the wind blew out my candle. Do you know who can light it again?"

The bear shook his furry head. "Cannot tell you. Ask the fox. I'm tired and sleepy and need to rest."

Next came the fox, sneaking through the pass. "What are you doing here in the woods?" he said to the girl. "Go back to your home. You are chasing away my mouse."

The girl sat on a stone and cried. “Is there no one who will help me?” The stars heard her crying and said, “To Father Sun next do go. Father Sun is the one who’ll know.”

The girl took new courage and went on. Finally she came to a small hut. In the hut sat an old woman at her spinning wheel. The girl opened the door and asked the kind woman, “Do you know the way to the sun? Will you come with me?” “Oh no!” said the old woman, “I must turn the wheel and spin, spin, spin a fine, fine thread. But sit awhile with me, you still have a long way to go.” The girl sat and rested. After she had rested, she took her lantern and went on.

And again she came to a small hut; in it sat an old cobbler, hammering his shoes. “Good day, dear Cobbler. Do you know the way to the sun? Will you go with me?”

“Oh no!” replied the cobbler. “I have to patch many more shoes. But rest a little while with me; you still have a long way to go.” The girl sat and rested. And when she had rested, she took her lantern and again went on.

At last she saw a tall mountain in the distance. “There the sun must live,” she thought to herself and ran as fast as a deer. Near the mountain she saw a small boy playing with his ball. “Come with me, “called the girl, “I am going to Father Sun!” But the boy wanted to play with his ball and went skipping over the meadow.

So the girl continued on her path alone. Higher and higher up the mountain she went. When she got to the top, she did not see Father Sun. “I shall wait here until he comes,” she thought, and sat down on the ground and was soon fast asleep.

But Father Sun had been watching the little girl all day. As evening came,

Father Sun came down and lit the lantern. When the girl awoke, she saw the light shining in her lantern. “Oh! My lantern is shining again!” she cried out. She jumped to her feet and went happily back down the path.

Again she met the little boy. “I lost my ball and cannot find it anywhere,” he said. “I will light your way,” said the girl, and with her help the ball was found. The boy thanked her and skipped away.

The girl kept walking down into the valley until she came to the cobbler’s shop. Sad, the cobbler was sitting in his shop. “My fire went out. Now my hands are cold and stiff from the cold and I cannot patch the shoes any more.” “I will light your fire again”, cried the girl. The cobbler warmed his hands and again could busily hammer and sew.

On went the girl through the forest. She came to the old woman’s hut. “My light is burnt out,” said the old woman. “I have not been able to spin for a long time.” “I will light it for you,” said the girl happily. The old woman went back to her spinning wheel and spun, spun, spun a fine, fine thread.

At last the girl came onto the open field and all the animals awoke from the light of her lantern. The fox sniffed and blinked into the light. The big old bear growled and grumbled and hid deeper in his winter’s den. Curious, the hedgehog came along. “What a big firefly you have!” The little girl laughed and bid him goodnight.

Happily the girl returned home, singing the song:

Glimmer, lantern, glimmer, little stars a-shimmer,
Over meadow, moor and dale,
Flitter, flutter, elfin veil.
Peewitt, peewitt, tick-a-tick-a tick, roucou, roucou.