

*LAUGHING EYE AND WEEPING EYE, OR  
THE LIMPING FOX*

(SERVIAN STORY)

ONCE upon a time there lived a man whose right eye always smiled, and whose left eye always cried; and this man had three sons, two of them very clever, and the third very stupid. Now these three sons were very curious about the peculiarity of their father's eyes, and as they could not puzzle out the reason for themselves, they determined to ask their father why he did not have eyes like other people.

So the eldest of the three went one day into his father's room and put the question straight out; but, instead of answering, the man flew into a fearful rage, and sprang at him with a knife. The young fellow ran away in a terrible fright, and took refuge with his brothers, who were awaiting anxiously the result of the interview.

'You had better go yourselves,' was all the reply they got, 'and see if you will fare any better.'

Upon hearing this, the second son entered his father's room, only to be treated in the same manner as his brother; and back he came telling the youngest, the fool of the family, that it was his turn to try his luck.

Then the youngest son marched boldly up to his father and said to him, 'My brothers would not let me know what answer you had given to their question. But

now, do tell me why your right eye always laughs and your left eye always weeps.'

As before, the father grew purple with fury, and rushed forwards with his knife. But the simpleton did not stir a step; he knew that he had really nothing to fear from his father.

'Ah, now I see who is my true son,' exclaimed the old man; 'the others are mere cowards. And as you have shown me that you are brave, I will satisfy your curiosity. My right eye laughs because I am glad to have a son like you; my left eye weeps because a precious treasure has been stolen from me. I had in my garden a vine that yielded a tun of wine every hour—someone has managed to steal it, so I weep its loss.'

The simpleton returned to his brothers and told them of their father's loss, and they all made up their minds to set out at once in search of the vine. They travelled together till they came to some cross roads, and there they parted, the two elder ones taking one road, and the simpleton the other.

'Thank goodness we have got rid of that idiot,' exclaimed the two elder. 'Now let us have some breakfast.' And they sat down by the roadside and began to eat.

They had only half finished, when a lame fox came out of a wood and begged them to give him something to eat. But they jumped up and chased him off with their sticks, and the poor fox limped away on his three pads. As he ran he reached the spot where the youngest son was getting out the food he had brought with him, and the fox asked him for a crust of bread. The simpleton had not very much for himself, but he gladly gave half of his meal to the hungry fox.

'Where are you going, brother?' said the fox, when he had finished his share of the bread; and the young man told him the story of his father and the wonderful vine.



LIMPING-FOX-ADVISES  
THE-SIMPLETON-TO  
KEEP-THE-GOLDEN  
GIRL-HIMSELF.

‘Dear me, how lucky!’ said the fox. ‘I know what has become of it. Follow me!’ So they went on till they came to the gate of a large garden.

‘You will find here the vine that you are seeking, but it will not be at all easy to get it. You must listen carefully to what I am going to say. Before you reach the vine you will have to pass twelve outposts, each consisting of two guards. If you see these guards looking straight at you, go on without fear, for they are asleep. But if their eyes are shut then beware, for they are wide awake. If you once get to the vine, you will find two shovels, one of wood and the other of iron. Be sure not to take the iron one; it will make a noise and rouse the guards, and then you are lost.’

The young man got safely through the garden without any adventures till he came to the vine which yielded a tun of wine an hour. But he thought he should find it impossible to dig the hard earth with only a wooden shovel, so picked up the iron one instead. The noise it made soon awakened the guards. They seized the poor simpleton and carried him to their master.

‘Why do you try to steal my vine?’ demanded he; ‘and how did you manage to get past the guards?’

‘The vine is not yours; it belongs to my father, and if you will not give it to me now, I will return and get it somehow.’

‘You shall have the vine if you will bring me in exchange an apple off the golden apple-tree that flowers every twenty-four hours, and bears fruit of gold.’ So saying, he gave orders that the simpleton should be released, and this done, the youth hurried off to consult the fox.

‘Now you see,’ observed the fox, ‘this comes of not following my advice. However, I will help you to get the golden apple. It grows in a garden that you will easily recognise from my description. Near the apple-tree are two poles, one of gold, the other of wood.

Take the wooden pole, and you will be able to reach the apple.'

Master Simpleton listened carefully to all that was told him, and after crossing the garden, and escaping as before from the men who were watching it, soon arrived at the apple-tree. But he was so dazzled by the sight of the beautiful golden fruit, that he quite forgot all that the fox had said. He seized the golden pole, and struck the branch a sounding blow. The guards at once awoke, and conducted him to their master. Then the simpleton had to tell his story.

'I will give you the golden apple,' said the owner of the garden, 'if you will bring me in exchange a horse which can go round the world in four-and-twenty hours.' And the young man departed, and went to find the fox.

This time the fox was really angry, and no wonder.

'If you had listened to me, you would have been home with your father by this time. However I am willing to help you once more. Go into the forest, and you will find the horse with two halters round his neck. One is of gold, the other of hempen. Lead him by the hempen halter, or else the horse will begin to neigh, and will waken the guards. Then all is over with you.'

So Master Simpleton searched till he found the horse, and was struck dumb at its beauty.

'What!' he said to himself, 'put the hempen halter on an animal like that? Not I, indeed!'

Then the horse neighed loudly; the guards seized our young friend and conducted him before their master.

'I will give you the golden horse,' said he, 'if you will bring me in exchange a golden maiden who has never yet seen either sun or moon.'

'But if I am to bring you the golden maiden you must lend me first the golden steed with which to seek for her.'

'Ah,' replied the owner of the golden horse, 'but who will undertake that you will ever come back?'

'I swear on the head of my father,' answered the young man, 'that I will bring back either the maiden or the horse.' And he went away to consult the fox.

Now, the fox who was always patient and charitable to other people's faults, led him to the entrance of a deep grotto, where stood a maiden all of gold, and beautiful as the day. He placed her on his horse and prepared to mount.

'Are you not sorry,' said the fox, 'to give such a lovely maiden in exchange for a horse? Yet you are bound to do it, for you have sworn by the head of your father. But perhaps I could manage to take her place. So saying, the fox transformed himself into another golden maiden, so like the first that hardly anyone could tell the difference between them.

The simpleton took her straight to the owner of the horse, who was enchanted with her.

And the young man got back his father's vine and married the *real* golden maiden into the bargain.