

The Lady of the Lake

Once upon a time there lived a hard-working peasant and his wife. The two were doing well when, one year, nothing grew from what the peasant had sown, and the poor man had to borrow from his neighbours to make ends meet.

One day, what did our peasant think?

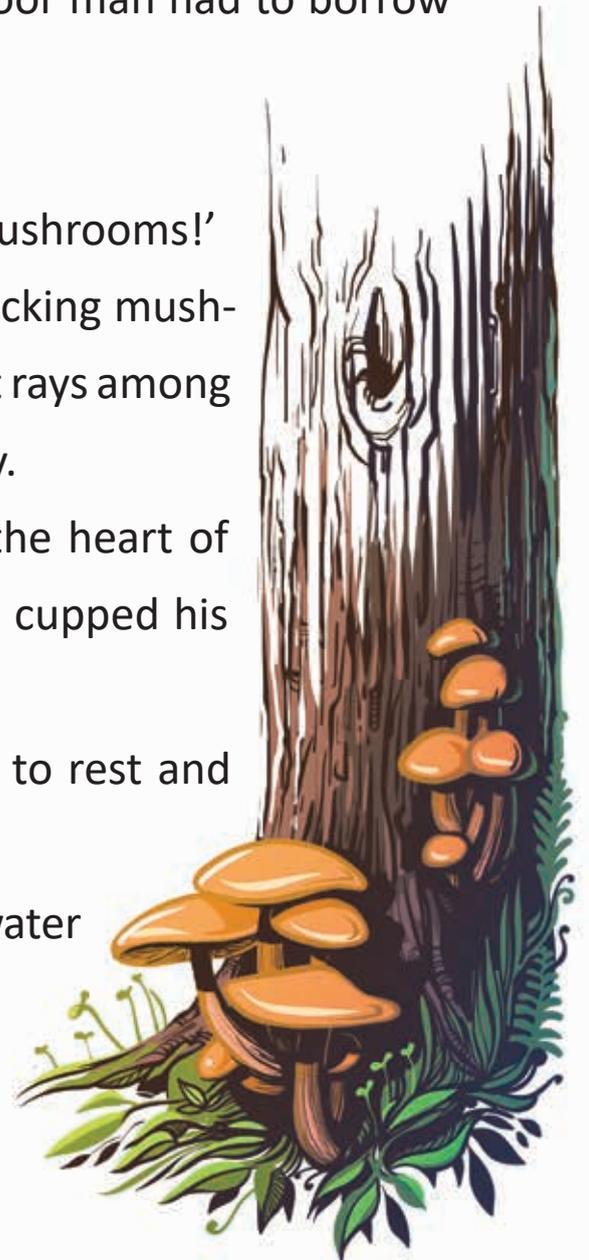
‘I should go to the woods and pick some mushrooms!’

The man took a large basket and started picking mushrooms. By noon the sun began to throw its hot rays among the tree branches and our peasant got thirsty.

He knew there was a clear water lake in the heart of the woods. Our man went on the lakeshore, cupped his hands together and drank water.

After he quenched his thirst, he sat down to rest and said slowly, as to himself:

‘Well, I’m glad I’ve drunk at least a drop of water as, of food, I still haven’t got anything to eat.’



Thinking he would go home with an empty basket, the poor man put his head in his hands and began to shed bitter tears.

While he was crying, he suddenly heard a voice:

‘Why are you crying, good man?’

He looked up and saw a woman standing on the lakeshore, right beside him. That woman was really strange. She looked like a human being, however it seemed as if she wasn’t: she had blue eyes, golden hair, but her face was transparent and her garment seemed to be made out of water.

‘Who are you?’ our man asked mostly under his breath, not knowing whether it was appropriate for him to get scared or rejoice.

‘Don’t be scared of me!’ said the woman. I am a good fairy and the lady of this lake. I won’t do you any harm. I’m ready to fulfill your every wish, but you have to give me something in return!’

‘I want to have everything I need, just like before,’ said the man, and the strange creature said in a gentle voice:

‘There will be no dearth of anything in your house, but you will have to give your firstborn!’

After saying these words, the lady of the lake vanished in thin air, and the man’s basket filled with mushrooms.



The peasant happily left home and told his wife what had happened to him.

‘Let’s take our minds off of what has happened!’ said the woman. ‘Let’s enjoy the presents received from the lady of the lake.’

Over a year, the peasant’s wife had a son. Great was the joy of the peasant and his wife, but their worry was even greater.

The boy, whom they had baptized Johann, grew up into a handsome young man. At the right age, he got married to a girl of unprecedented beauty!

Only one thing blurred everyone’s happiness: the fear that the lady of the lake would take Johann with her.

On a wonderful sunny summer day, Johann went hunting. He went to the woods and was lucky to hunt a deer.

