

Kumpulan Cerita Fabel (English)

1. Armadillo's Song

There once lived an armadillo who loved music more than anything else in the world. After every rainfall, the armadillo would drag his shell over to the large pond filled with frogs and he would listen to the big green frogs singing back and forth, back and forth to each other in the most amazing voices.

"Oh," thought the armadillo, "Oh how I wish I could sing."

The armadillo would creep to the edge of the water and watch the frogs leaping and swimming in a frantic green ballet, and they would call back and forth, back and forth in beautiful, musical tones. He loved to listen to the music they made as they spoke, though he didn't understand their words; which was just as well - for the frogs were laughing at this funny animal that wanted so badly to sing like a frog.

"Don't be ridiculous," sang the frogs as they played. "Armadillos can't sing."

Then one day a family of crickets moved into a new house near the armadillo, and he was amazed to hear them chirp and sing as merrily as the frogs. He would creep next to their house and listen and listen all day, all night for their musical sounds.

"Oh," sighed the armadillo, "Oh how I wish I could sing."

"Don't be ridiculous," sang the crickets in their dulcet tones. "Armadillos can't sing."

But the armadillo could not understand their language, and so he just sighed with longing and listened to their beautiful voices laughing at him.

Then one day a man came down the road carrying a cage full of canaries. They were chirping and fluttering and singing songs that were more beautiful even than those of the crickets and the frogs. The armadillo was entranced. He followed the man with the cage down the road as fast as his little legs would carry him, listening to the canaries singing.

"Oh," gasped the armadillo, "Oh how I wish I could sing."

Inside the cage, the canaries twittered and giggled.

"Don't be ridiculous," sang the canaries as they flapped about. "Armadillos can't sing."

The poor tired armadillo couldn't keep up with the man and the cage, and finally he fell exhausted at the door of the great wizard who lived in the area. Realizing where he was, the armadillo decided to beg a boon of the man.

Timidly, the armadillo approached the wizard, who was sitting in front of his house and said: "Great wizard, it is my deepest desire to learn to sing like the frogs and the crickets and the canaries."

The wizard's lips twitched a little in amusement, for who had ever heard of an armadillo that could sing. But he realized that the little animal was serious. He bent low to the ground and looked the creature in the eye.

"I can make you sing, little armadillo," he said. "But you do not want to pay the price, for it will mean your death."

"You mean if I die I will be able to sing?" asked the armadillo in amazement.

"Yes, this is so," said the wizard.

"Then I want to die right now!" said the armadillo. "I would do anything to be able to sing!"

The wizard and the armadillo discussed the matter for many hours, for the wizard was reluctant to take the life of such a fine armadillo. But the creature insisted, and so the wizard finally killed the armadillo, made a wonderful musical instrument from his shell, and gave it to the finest musician in the town to play.

Sometimes the musician would play his instrument by the pond where the frogs lived, and they would stare at him with big eyes and say: "Ai! Ai! The armadillo has learned to sing."

Sometimes the musician would play his instrument by the house where the crickets lived, and they would creep outside to stare at him with big eyes and say: "Ai! Ai! The armadillo has learned to sing."

And often the musician would visit the home of his friend who owned the cage full of canaries - who was also a musician - and the two men would play their instruments together while the little birds watched with fluttering wings and twittered in amazement: "Ai! Ai! The armadillo has learned to sing."

And so it was. The armadillo had learned to sing at last, and his voice was the finest in the land. But like the very best musicians in the world, the armadillo sacrificed his Life for his Art.

2. Black Dog of Hanging Hills

He smiled as he sipped at his coffee. It had been an excellent hike. He was glad his friend had recommended coming to the Hanging Hills in Connecticut; not the first place that had come to his mind when considering a vacation. But it was beautiful here. When his friend arrived tomorrow they would tackle some of the more challenging terrain.

“Did you have a nice hike?” asked the innkeeper as she refilled his cup.

“Yes indeed. I had some unexpected company,” he said with a smile.

“Really? I thought you were the only one crazy enough to go hiking in the rain,” she teased.

“It was a little black dog,” he said. “Cute fellow. Followed me all the way up the mountain and down again.”

He looked up from his coffee to see the innkeeper’s face had gone pale.

“A black dog?” she asked. “That’s not good.”

“Why not?”

“We have a saying around here,” she replied. “And if a man shall meet the Black Dog once, it shall be for joy; and if twice, it shall be for sorrow; and the third time, he shall die.” He laughed.

“That’s just superstition.”

“That’s what Mr. Pyncheon said. He saw the black dog twice. The second time he saw the dog, the friend he was climbing with fell to his death. And later, Mr. Pyncheon decided to climb the same mountain, and he died too. Everyone here believes he saw the dog just before he fell.”

“Nonsense. It was just a cute stray,” he said uneasily. She shrugged and took the coffee pot over to her other customers.

His friend arrived the next morning and they both laughed about the story of the black dog. They set out on their climb. About halfway up the mountain, he looked up and saw the black dog.

“There’s the dog,” he called to his friend.

And then his foot slipped and he plunged down the side of the hill, desperately grabbing at saplings and rocks, trying to halt his descent. It seemed to take forever for him to stop sliding. There was a stabbing pain in his leg. When he looked at it, his head swimming, it was bent at an odd angle. They had to send in a mountain rescue team to get him down. At the hospital, they told him his leg was broken in two places and he was very lucky it wasn’t worse.

“You know, that was a very strange fall,” said his friend uneasily. “You don’t really think it had anything to do with that black dog?”

He looked down at the cast that extended all the way up to his hip.

“I don’t know. But I don’t really want to find out. Next time, let’s go to Colorado.”

His friend agreed.

3. Brer Rabbit Falls Down the Well

One day, Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox and Brer Coon and Brer Bear and a lot of other animals decided to work together to plant a garden full of corn for roasting. They started early in the morning and raked and dug and raked some more, breaking up the hard ground so it would be ready for planting. It was a hot day, and

Brer Rabbit got tired mighty quick. But he kept toting off the brush and clearing away the debris 'cause he didn't want no one to call him lazy.

Then Brer Rabbit got an idea. "Ow!" he shouted as loudly as he could. "I got me a briar in my hand!" He waved a paw and stuck it into his mouth. The other critters told him he'd better pull out the briar and wash his hand afore it got infected. That was just what Brer Rabbit wanted to hear. He hurried off, looking for a shady spot to take a quick nap. A little ways down the road, he found an old well with a couple of buckets hanging inside it, one at the top, and one down at the bottom.

"That looks like a mighty cool place to take a nap," Brer Rabbit said, and hopped right into the bucket.

Well, Brer Rabbit was mighty heavy - much heavier than the bucket full of water laying at the bottom. When he jumped into the empty bucket, it plummeted right down to the bottom of the well. Brer Rabbit hung onto the sides for dear life as the second bucket whipped passed him, splashing water all over him on its way to the top. He had never been so scared in his life.

Brer Rabbit's bucket landed with a smack in the water and bobbed up and down. Brer Rabbit was afraid to move, in case the bucket tipped over and landed him in the water. He lay in the bottom of the bucket and shook and shivered with fright, wondering what would happen next.

Now Brer Fox had been watching Brer Rabbit all morning. He knew right away that Brer Rabbit didn't have a briar in his paw and wondered what that rascal was up to. When Brer Rabbit snuck off, Brer Fox followed him and saw him jump into the bucket and disappear down the well.

Brer Fox was puzzled. Why would Brer Rabbit go into the well? Then he thought: "I bet he has some money hidden away down

there and has gone to check up on it." Brer Fox crept up to the well, listening closely to see if he could hear anything. He didn't hear nothing. He peered down into the well, but all was dark and quiet, on account of Brer Rabbit holding so still so the bucket wouldn't tip him into the water.

Finally, Brer Fox shouted down into the well: "Brer Rabbit, what you doing down there?"

Brer Rabbit perked up at once, realizing that this might be his chance to get out of the well.

"I'm a fishing down here, Brer Fox," says he. "I thought I'd surprise everyone with a mess of fresh fish for lunch. There's some real nice fish down here."

"How many fish are there?" asked Brer Fox skeptically, sure that the rascally rabbit was really counting his gold.

"Scores and scores!" cried Brer Rabbit. "Why don't you come on down and help me carry them out?"

Well, that was the invitation Brer Fox was waiting for. He was going to go down into that well and get him some of Brer Rabbit's gold.

"How do I get down there?" asked Brer Fox.

Brer Rabbit grinned. Brer Fox was much heavier than he was. If Brer Fox jumped into the empty bucket at the top, then Brer Rabbit's bucket would go up, and Brer Fox's bucket would go down! So he said: "Jest jump into the bucket, Brer Fox."

Well, Brer Fox jumped into the empty bucket, and down it plummeted into the dark well. He passed Brer Rabbit about halfway down. Brer Rabbit was clinging to the sides of the bucket with all his might 'cause it was moving so fast. "Goodbye Brer Fox," he shouted as he rose. "Like the saying goes, some folks go

up, and some go down! You should make it to the bottom all safe and sound."

Brer Rabbit jumped out of the well and ran back to the garden patch to tell the other critters that Brer Fox was down in the well muddying up the waters. Then he danced back to the well and shouted down to Brer Fox: "There's a hunting man coming along to get a drink o' water, Brer Fox. When he hauls you up, you'd best run away as fast as you can!"

Then Brer Rabbit went back to the garden patch. When the thirsty hunter hauled up the bucket full of water, a wet and shaky Brer Fox sprang out and ran away before the hunter could grab for his gun.

An hour later, Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit were both back in the garden, digging and hauling away debris and acting like nothing had happened. Except every once in a while, Brer Fox would look sideways at Brer Rabbit and grin, and the rascally rabbit would start to laugh and laugh 'cause both of them had looked so silly plummeting up and down in that ol' dark well.

4. Freddy's Fabulous Frogs

Fabian Frogmorton stole Freddy's frog Fats on the Friday of the town of Flowerpot's Fabulous Frogs Contest. Freddy was furious. Fabian Frogmorton had cheated Freddy out of the Fabulous Frog Award last year. Fabian had fed Freddy's frog flies just before the Fast Frog Frolic, the final race in Flowerpot's Fabulous Frogs Contest. Freddy's frog had been too full to frolic, so Fabian's frog had finished first.

Freddy reported the theft to Flossie French, the teacher in charge of Flowerpot's Fabulous Frogs Contest.

"Fabian Frogmorton registered Fats as his frog." Flossie French fussed. "Can you prove Fats is your frog?"

Since Freddy couldn't prove he'd found Fats in the pond last Friday, Flossie French couldn't do anything about the theft. Freddy was frantic. He did not want Fabian to win Flowerpot's Fabulous Frogs Contest for the fourth Fall in a row.

Freddy had to find another frog. During lunch, Freddy went down to Felix Frasier's creek. Freddy was still fuming about Fabian, and he did not see the tiny frog until the frog jumped away from him. It was the highest hop, made by the teeniest frog that Freddy Friedman had ever seen!

Freddy chased the frog all the way up the bank of Felix Frasier's stream before he caught it. The frog opened its tiny mouth and croaked furiously in protest. It was the most fabulous sound Freddy had ever heard.

"You are the littlest flibbertigibbet I have ever seen!" exclaimed Freddy. "I am going to name you Flib."

Freddy hugged Flib and ran back to school to show Flib to his friends. Freddy's friends laughed when they saw Flib. They said that Freddy would never win Flowerpot's Fabulous Frogs Contest with such a tiny frog.

"Don't fret Flib," Freddy said. "You are far faster than my old frog Fats. Fabian Frogmorton will not win Flowerpot's Fabulous Frogs Contest."

Flossie French chuckled when she registered Flib the frog, but she also patted Freddy's hand sympathetically and said: "Flib is a fine frog, Freddy. Good luck."

There were three trials in Flowerpot's Fabulous Frogs Contest. The frog which won the most trials was declared the most Fabulous Frog in Flowerpot. The first contest was Foghorn

Frog, the loudest croaker. Freddy knew that Fats was a famous croaker. Fabian was sure to win.

The contestants stood up front with their frogs. Freddy's friends cheered for Flib from the fringes of the crowd. Fabian Frogmorton laughed scornfully when he saw Freddy's frog Flib.

When it was his turn, Fabian pinched Fats really hard to make him croak. Fats bellowed loudly in pain. Then Flib opened his little mouth and croaked so loud Freddy clapped his hands to his ears.

"Flib wins the Foghorn Frog Contest," Flossie French said. Freddy's friends cheered and shouted from the fringes of the crowd.

"That's not fair!" Fabian whined.

The second contest was the Frog Long Jump. Freddy had seen how far Flib could jump. Freddy was sure Flib would win. Freddy and Flib lined up with the other contestants. Each contestant urged his frog to leap as far as it could. Flossie French measured the frog's first jump. Freddy and Flib came just before Fabian and Fats. Freddy's friends cheered and chanted as Flib jumped farther than the other frogs. When Flossie French had her back turned, Fabian Frogmorton stepped on Fats. Fats croaked in pain and leapt away from Fabian. Fats jumped even farther than Flib.

"Fats is the winner!" said Flossie French.

Freddy's friends booed.

The final trial was the Fast Frog Frolic. The contestants and their frogs lined up. Flossie French fired the gun and all the frogs jumped in surprise and began hopping in all directions.

"Go Flib, go Flib!" chanted Freddy's friends. While Flib hopped fast and furiously, Fats sat at the starting line and wouldn't move. Fabian fussed and fumed. Finally, he kicked Fats. This time, Flossie French saw Fabian cheating and disqualified him from the race.

To Freddy's delight, Flib crossed the finish line first.

"Flib is the winner of Flowerpot's Fabulous Frog Contest!" cried Flossie French.

Everyone cheered wildly. Fabian howled in fury and threw Fats on the ground in disgust.

Flossie French presented Freddy with "Flowerpot's Fabulous Frog" award. Then Flossie French picked up Fats and handed him to Freddy.

"Freddy, here is Fats." said Flossie French. "You have two fabulous frogs. Take good care of them."

"I will," Freddy promised.

Freddy took Flib and Fats over to Felix Frasier's Stream and set them free. Flib and Fats floated near the lily pads and peeked out at Freddy.

"Have a good year," Freddy said to his fabulous frogs. "See you next Fall!"

Then Freddy went home to show his family his hard-won Fabulous Frog Award, while Fabian lurked in the shadows and fumed.

5. Mrs. Chory's Chickens

"Chick, chick, chick," called Carol Chory as she chucked corn onto the ground. Chickens popped out of the hen house and

scurried into the yard. Charlie Chicken strutted to Carol Chory's side.

"Something new, Charlie," cried Carol, "Here is some caramel corn." She gave Charlie a handful. Charlie Chicken scratched at the caramel corn, then took a chunk and swallowed quickly. Carol Chory chuckled and went inside.

Beside Charlie, a hen began to choke on the caramel corn. She flapped about the coop in a frenzy. Soon chickens were choking and flapping all over the chicken coop. Charlie swallowed another chunk of caramel corn. The corn got caught in his throat. Charlie Chicken choked and flapped out of the coop and into Cobb street.

Charlie Chicken bumped blindly into Karl Kramer's cart full of chocolate-covered cherries and flopped inside. To Karl's consternation, the cart began to tilt. Suddenly the cart full of chocolate-covered cherries began rolling down Cobb Hill. Karl gave a shout and chased the cart. Charlie Chicken choked and flapped among the chocolate-covered cherries.

Kristel Cramdon screamed when she saw Karl's cart full of chocolate-covered cherries careening down Cobb Hill with Charlie Chicken's white wings flapping frantically at the front.

"Look out!" called Karl.

As the cart rolled past Kristel, a loose piece of board hooked into her cream-colored coulats and ripped them right off. Kristel gasped and tried to cover her polka-dotted bloomers, just as Karl Kramer crashed into her.

The cart continued its calamitous path down the hill, cream-colored coulats flapping at the rear and Charlie Chicken choking and flapping at the front. It cruised under the ladder on which Ken stood cleaning his chimney. The ladder collapsed and Ken landed face-first among the cartons of chocolate-covered cherries.

Charlie Chicken flapped frantically in fright as Ken gave muffled cries from underneath the cherries. Kristel Cramdon's cream-colored coulats fluttered in the wind and the cart full of chocolate-covered cherries continued to roll down Cobb Hill toward the center of Coon Falls.

Policeman Chad Charles leapt into Chin's China Shoppe to avoid the cart. He crashed into Chin and they fell to the floor, crushing most of Chin's china.

The cart took a short cut through Carla Cutler's courtyard and caught her laundry line, full of frilly pink underwear, on one of its upward planks. Kris Kringle, Carla Cutler's charcoal-colored miniature collie jumped aboard the cart when he smelled the chocolate-covered cherries.

Kris Kringle took a bite out of Ken's nose before discovering it wasn't a chocolate-covered cherry. Ken clouted Kris Kringle and blotted his nose with Carla Cutler's pink underwear. In the front of the cart, Charlie Chicken continued choking and flapping as the cart cruised into Cobb Court at the center of Coon Falls and crashed into Cami's Custard Stand.

Kris Kringle landed in a vat of chocolate custard. Ken splashed into the Coon Court fountain, as the chocolate-covered cherries cascaded all over the square. Carla Cutler's frilly pink underwear showered upon Cami's customers and Charlie Chicken crashed

onto the ground. The caramel corn came flying out of Charlie's throat and rolled into a storm grate.

Charlie Chicken was annoyed by the rucus. He ruffled his feathers and went home. Charlie strutted past Cami's Custard Stand, where Cami was shouting at Ken about her underwear-strewn customers. He strolled passed the chocolate-covered Kris Kringle, who was licking custard off of his charcoal-colored fur. He went by a red-faced Carla Cutler, on her way to collect her collie and her frilly pink underwear. He flapped around Chin's China Shoppe where Chin was chucking china at Policeman Charles. Finally, he edged around the polka-dotted-bloomer clad Kristel Cramdon, who was clobbering Karl Kramer with her handbag and strutted into his yard.

Mrs. Chory's chickens had flopped in feathered heaps all over the yard, gasping heavily. The caramel corn lay uneaten on the ground. Carol Chory came out of the house. "How did you like the caramel corn, Charlie?" she asked. Charlie Chicken gave an indignant sqwawk and marched back into the chicken coop.

6. Rabbit Plays Tug-of-War

Now Rabbit had a favorite place on the river where he always went to drink water. It was on a bend in the river, and two Snakes lived there, one on the upper side of the bend and one on the lower. Rabbit soon learned that neither of the Snakes knew that the other Snake lived there.

Ho, ho, ho, thought Rabbit. I am going to have a bit of fun!

Rabbit went to the Snake that lived on the upper bend of the river. "I am a very strong Rabbit," he told the Snake. "I bet I can pull you right out of the water."

"I bet you can't!" said the Snake, who was very strong indeed.

"I will go get a grape vine," said Rabbit. "You will pull one end and I will pull the other. "If I pull you out of the water, I win the contest. If you pull me into the water, then I win."

The Snake on the upper bend agreed. Then Rabbit went to the Snake on the lower bend and made the same deal. He told both Snakes that he would be standing out of sight on top of the river bank and would give a whoop when he was in place and ready to start the contest. Both Snakes were pleased with the arrangement. They were sure they would win against such a feeble little Rabbit.

Rabbit took a long grape vine and strung it across the wide bend in the river. He handed one end to the first Snake and the other end to the second Snake. Then he gave a loud whoop from the middle of the river bank and the two Snakes started tugging and pulling with all their might.

"That Rabbit is really strong," thought the Snake on the upper bank. He would tug and tug and the vine would come a little closer to him and then he would nearly be pulled out of the water.

"My, Rabbit is much stronger than he appears," thought the Snake on the lower bank after he was almost hurled out of the water by an extra strong pull from up the river.

Rabbit sat on the bank above both Snakes and laughed and laughed. The Snakes heard him laughing and realized that they had been fooled. Letting go of the rope, they swam to the middle of the bend and met each other for the first time.

Both Snakes were angry with Rabbit for making them look foolish. They agreed that Rabbit could no longer drink from his favorite place on the river bend where they lived. In spite of his protests, they sent Rabbit away and would not let him come down to the

riverbank anymore. So whenever Rabbit grew thirsty, he had to turn himself into a faun in order to get a drink from the river.

After that, Rabbit decided not to play any more jokes on Snakes.

7. Rainbow Crow

It was so cold. Snow fell constantly, and ice formed over all the waters. The animals had never seen snow before. At first, it was a novelty, something to play in. But the cold increased tenfold, and they began to worry. The little animals were being buried in the snow drifts and the larger animals could hardly walk because the snow was so deep. Soon, all would perish if something were not done.

"We must send a messenger to Kijiamuh Ka'ong, the Creator Who Creates By Thinking What Will Be," said Wise Owl. "We must ask him to think the world warm again so that Spirit Snow will leave us in peace."

The animals were pleased with this plan. They began to debate among themselves, trying to decide who to send up to the Creator. Wise Owl could not see well during the daylight, so he could not go. Coyote was easily distracted and like playing tricks, so he could not be trusted. Turtle was steady and stable, but he crawled too slowly. Finally, Rainbow Crow, the most beautiful of all the birds with shimmering feathers of rainbow hues and an enchanting singing voice, was chosen to go to Kijiamuh Ka'ong.

It was an arduous journey, three days up and up into the heavens, passed the trees and clouds, beyond the sun and the moon, and even above all the stars. He was buffeted by winds and had no place to rest, but he carried bravely on until he reached Heaven. When Rainbow Crow reached the Holy Place,

he called out to the Creator, but received no answer. The Creator was too busy thinking up what would be to notice even the most beautiful of birds. So Rainbow Crow began to sing his most beautiful song.

The Creator was drawn from his thoughts by the lovely sound, and came to see which bird was making it. He greeted Rainbow Crow kindly and asked what gift he could give the noble bird in exchange for his song. Rainbow Crow asked the Creator to unthink the snow, so that the animals of Earth would not be buried and freeze to death. But the Creator told Rainbow Crow that the snow and the ice had spirits of their own and could not be destroyed.

"What shall we do then?" asked the Rainbow Crow. "We will all freeze or smother under the snow."

"You will not freeze," the Creator reassured him, "For I will think of Fire, something that will warm all creatures during the cold times."

The Creator stuck a stick into the blazing hot sun. The end blazed with a bright, glowing fire which burned brightly and gave off heat. "This is Fire," he told Rainbow Crow, handing him the cool end of the stick. "You must hurry to Earth as fast as you can fly before the stick burns up."

Rainbow Crow nodded his thanks to the Creator and flew as fast as he could go. It was a three-day trip to Heaven, and he was worried that the Fire would burn out before he reached the Earth. The stick was large and heavy, but the fire kept Rainbow Crow warm as he descended from Heaven down to the bright path of the stars. Then the Fire grew hot as it came closer to Rainbow Crow's feathers. As he flew passed the Sun, his tail caught on fire, turning the shimmering beautiful feathers black. By the time he flew passed the Moon, his whole body was black with soot from the hot Fire. When he plunged into the Sky and flew through the

clouds, the smoke got into his throat, strangling his beautiful singing voice.

By the time Rainbow Crow landed among the freezing-cold animals of Earth, he was black as tar and could only Caw instead of sing. He delivered the fire to the animals, and they melted the snow and warmed themselves, rescuing the littlest animals from the snow drifts where they lay buried.

It was a time of rejoicing, for Tindeh - Fire - had come to Earth. But Rainbow Crow sat apart, saddened by his dull, ugly feathers and his rasping voice. Then he felt the touch of wind on his face. He looked up and saw the Creator Who Creates By Thinking What Will Be walking toward him.

"Do not be sad, Rainbow Crow," the Creator said. "All animals will honor you for the sacrifice you made for them. And when the people come, they will not hunt you, for I have made your flesh taste of smoke so that it is no good to eat and your black feathers and hoarse voice will prevent man from putting you into a cage to sing for him. You will be free."

Then the Creator pointed to Rainbow Crow's black feathers. Before his eyes, Rainbow Crow saw the dull feathers become shiny and inside each one, he could see all the colors of the rainbow. "This will remind everyone who sees you of the service you have been to your people," he said, "and the sacrifice you made that saved them all."

And so shall it ever be.

8. The Black Cat's Message

I came home late one night after work and found my wife Ethel puttering about the kitchen with a big yellow cat at her heels.

“And who is this?” I asked jovially.

“This is our new cat,” said Ethel, giving me a hug and a kiss to welcome me home. “She just appeared at the kitchen door and wanted to come in. None of the neighbors know where she came from, so I guess she’s ours. It will be nice to have some company around the house.”

I bent down and scratched the yellow cat under the chin. She purred and stretched.

“Well, I think our income can stretch far enough to feed three,” I said.

My son had taken over my job at the mercantile and my wife and I were enjoying a leisurely old age. I liked to keep busy though, and so I spent a few hours every day cutting and hauling wood to be used at the mill.

I went out to milk the cow, and when I came back in, Ethel gave the cat some cream in a saucer.

We sat on the porch after dinner, and the cat sat with us.

“You are a very nice kitty,” I said to her. She purred loudly.

“Donald,” Ethel said. She sounded worried. I turned to look at her. “The neighbors acted rather oddly when I told them about the cat. They seemed to think she was a ghost or a witch of some sort, transformed into a cat. They told me to get rid of her.”

“A witch?” I asked, and laughed heartily. “Are you a witch, little cat?”

The cat yawned and stretched. Reluctantly, Ethel started to laugh with me. It seemed such a ludicrous notion. We sat watching the beautiful sunset, and then took ourselves to bed.

The cat quickly became an essential part of our

household. She would purr us awake each morning, and would beg for cream when I brought in the morning's milking. She followed Ethel around supervising her work during the day and would sit by the fire at night while we read aloud.

The days became shorter as autumn approached, and often I would work until nearly sunset, cutting and hauling wood. One night in October, I didn't finish hauling my last load until dusk. As soon as I had piled the last log, I started down the road, hoping to get home before dark since I had not brought a lantern with me. I rounded a corner and saw a group of black cats standing in the middle of the road. They were nearly invisible in the growing dark.

As I drew nearer, I saw that they were carrying a stretcher between them. I stopped and rubbed my eyes. That was impossible. When I looked again, the stretcher was still there, and there was a little dead cat lying on it.

I was astonished. *It must be a trick of the light*, I thought. Then one of the cats called out, "Sir, please tell Aunt Kan that Polly Grundy is dead."

My mouth dropped open in shock. I shook my head hard, not believing my ears. *How ridiculous*, I thought. *Cats don't talk*.

I hurried past the little group, carefully looking the other way. *I must be working too hard*, I thought. But I couldn't help wondering who Aunt Kan might be. And why did the cat want me to tell her Polly Grundy was dead? Was Polly Grundy the cat on the stretcher?

Suddenly, I was confronted by a small black cat. It was standing directly in front of me. I stopped and looked down at it. It looked back at me with large green eyes that seemed to

glow in the fading light.

“I have a message for Aunt Kan,” the cat said. “Tell her that Polly Grundy is dead.”

The cat stalked passed me and went to join the other cats grouped around the stretcher.

I was completely nonplussed. This was getting very spooky. Talking cats and a dead Polly Grundy. And who was Aunt Kan? I hurried away as fast as I could walk. Around me, the woods were getting darker and darker. I did not want to stay in that wood with a group of talking cats. Not that I really believed the cats had spoken. It was all a strange, waking dream brought on by too much work.

Behind me, the cats gave a strange shriek and called out together: “Old man! Tell Aunt Kan that Polly Grundy is dead!”

I’d had enough. I sprinted for home as fast as I could go, and didn’t stop until I had reached the safety of my porch. I paused to catch my breath. I did not want to explain to Ethel that I was seeing and hearing impossible things. She would dose me with castor oil and call the doctor.

When I was sufficiently composed, I went into the house and tried to act normally. I should have known it wouldn’t work. Ethel and I had been married for thirty years, and she knew me inside and out. She didn’t say anything until after I’d finished the chores. Then she sat me down in front of the fire and brought me my supper. After I’d take a few bites and started to relax, she said, “Tell me all about it, Donald.”

“I don’t want to worry you,” I said, reluctant to talk about what I had seen and heard on the way home.

The yellow cat was lying by the fire. She looked up when she

heard my voice, and came to sit by my chair. I offered her a morsel of food, which she accepted daintily.

“I’ll worry more if you don’t tell me,” said Ethel.

“I think maybe something is wrong with my brain,” I said slowly. “While I was walking home, I thought I saw a group of black cats carrying a stretcher with a dead cat on it. Then I thought I heard the cats talking to me. They asked me to tell Aunt Kan that Polly Grundy was dead.”

The yellow cat leapt up onto the window sill. “Polly Grundy is dead?” she cried. “Then I am the Queen of the Witches!”

She switched her tail and the window flew open with a bang. The yellow cat leapt through it and disappeared into the night, never to return.

Ethel had to dump an entire bucket of water over my head to revive me from my faint.

“The good news,” she told me when I sat up, dripping and swearing because the water was ice cold, “is that you have nothing wrong with your brain. The bad news is that our cat has just left us to become the Queen of the Witches. We’ll have to get another cat.”

“Oh no,” I said immediately. “I’ve had enough of cats.”

We got a dog.

9. The Jersey Devil and the Dog

It was a week of pandemonium! In January of 1909, the Jersey Devil emerged from the Pine Barrens and began terrorizing the local communities, both in New Jersey and in Pennsylvania. Devil hunts failed to catch the flying creature, which danced on rooftops, stalked small animals, and frightened the good people of

the area with its unexpected appearances in their yards and businesses. The newspapers carried the reports along with sketches of the unusual creature.

Mrs. Sorbinski, a resident of South Camden, followed the stories of the Jersey Devil with skepticism tempered with fear. She wasn't sure if a creature that resembled a dragon, with a head like a horse, a snake-like body and bat's wings could possibly exist. It seemed a lot of hokum to her, although several prominent people claimed to have encountered the critter.

Toward the end of the week, Mrs. Sorbinski discovered the truth about the Jersey Devil the hard way. Hearing a commotion in her yard, she hurried outside with a broom in hand. She was concerned for the safety of her dog-and with good reason. The pet, which had been left outside, was in the claws of a beast which resembled a dragon, with a head like a horse, a snake-like body and bat's wings. It was the Jersey Devil. Mrs. Sorbinski valiantly flailed at the Devil with her broom, trying to make the creature let go of her beloved pet. Upset by the stinging blows of the broom, the strange creature released the dog. Then it flew right at her. Mrs. Sorbinski was terrified. The attack had come so unexpectedly that she had no time to move. At the last second, the Jersey Devil veered away and sailed over the fence.

Relief unfroze her muscles. Grabbing up her dog, Mrs. Sorbinski screamed in panic and shock as she carried her pet indoors and phoned for help. Patrolmen Crouch and Cunningham were dispatched to the house. As they strove to calm Mrs. Sorbinski and the gathered neighbors, the officers heard piercing screeches from the standpipe in Kaighn Hill. The officers ran to the location. Silhouetted against the sky was a large creature which resembled a dragon, with a head like a horse, a snake-like body and bat's wings. The Jersey Devil was still in town!

The officers emptied their revolvers in vain at the creature, but their bullets did not faze the creature. It stretched up and up into the darkened sky as if it mocked them, ignoring the clamor of the patrolmen and the crowd. Finally, the creature flapped its large wings and flew lazily away into the night.

For two more days, the Jersey Devil continued to plague the area. Then it disappeared as suddenly as it had come. No one knew why it had emerged from the Pine Barrens, or why it so suddenly stopped its foraging. But everyone, especially Mrs. Sorbinski and her dog, was relieved that the Jersey Devil was gone.