

# The Twelve Brothers

You can find a translation of the Grimm's tale on this page:  
[www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk\\_files=10725&pageno=22](http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=10725&pageno=22)

*There was once a storyteller who talked to children. One day, a girl said, "The kings in your stories always want sons. I want to hear about a king who wanted to have a daughter!" So the storyteller told them about 12 brothers.*



A long time ago a king and queen had 12 sons. Life was great.

Until, suddenly, the King changed his mind about the 12 boys.

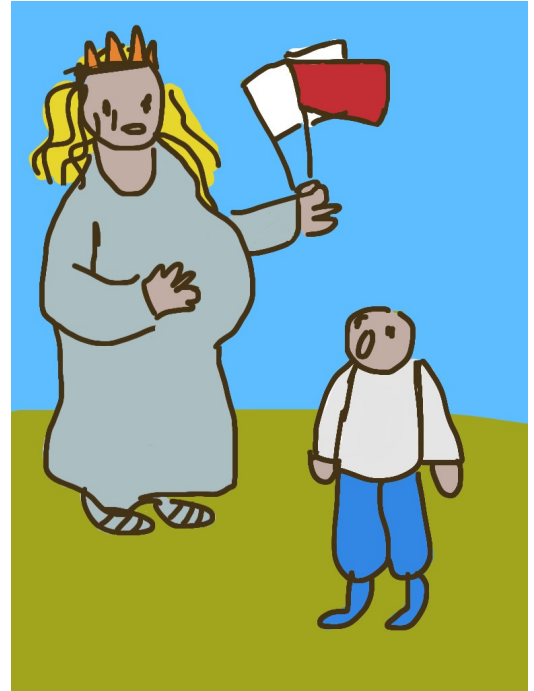
The King thought, “I would just like to have one girl instead! Then I could give her all my money and she would be very rich.”



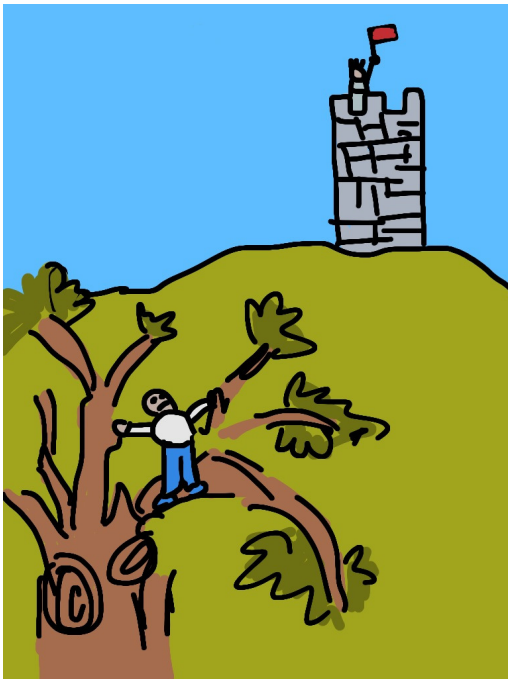
The Queen was going to have another baby. The King told her, “If it’s a girl, I am going to get rid of all the boys.” The Queen could not believe her ears. But she was very worried just in case...

The Queen made a plan.

She said to the boys,  
“Go into the forest.  
Climb a tall tree  
and keep watch.  
If the baby is a boy,  
I will put up  
a white flag.



You can come back.  
But if it's a girl, the flag will be red  
and you must hide in the forest.”



In a while, the boys  
saw a red flag.  
They knew the baby  
was a girl. It might be  
dangerous to go  
back to the castle.

The 12 brothers were very cross.  
A girl had spoilt everything.  
They made a vow:  
“We’ll hate all girls from now on.”  
So the 12 brothers walked far into  
the dark forest. They found a hut.



(The hut was under a spell but  
they didn’t know that.) The boys  
hunted for food in the forest and  
ten years went by.

The King, Queen and Princess lived very well back at the castle. The Princess was very pretty and had gold jewellery even though she was only ten.

But the Queen was often sad. She remembered her boys. The Queen wondered, "Where are my boys? What are they doing?"

Sometimes there was a day called The Great Washing. It was a lot of work. The Queen even washed 12 shirts the boys had worn ten years before.



When the Princess saw the shirts, she said, “Those little shirts are much too small for the King!”

The Queen cried and explained. “You have 12 older brothers who you have never met.”

“Well,” said the Princess, “I will go and find them.” And the next day she put the little shirts in a bag and set off. She walked the whole day. She reached the hut.





At the hut, the Princess met Ben, the youngest of her brothers.

“Where have you come from?”

Ben asked. The Princess answered, “I am from a castle by the forest. I am looking for my 12 brothers.”

And she got out the 12 little shirts and showed him. Ben hugged her. He forgot about the vow to hate all girls! He made his sister hide.

When the other boys came back, Ben made them say they wouldn't hate the first girl they met after all. And of course it was their sister!



So they all lived together in the hut and were fine. Until the day when something bad happened.

The Princess took 12 white flowers from the garden for her brothers.

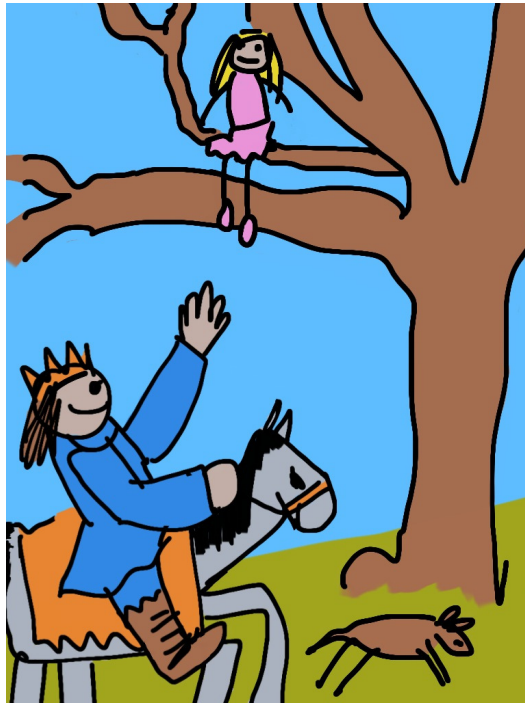
**Oh no! Her brothers changed into big, black birds and flew away. And the hut and garden went too.**



An old woman came and said,  
“Your brothers will die if you speak one word in the next seven years.”  
And, with that, the woman went.



The Princess promised herself that she'd be quiet for seven years.



One day, a young king rode into the wood. He was hunting. He saw the Princess sitting in a big tree. She didn't speak but she was very pretty. They fell in love and they got married.

Seven years had nearly passed when someone said bad things about the King's pretty wife.

There was going to be trouble.



Suddenly, her seven years of not talking were over.

**Whoosh!** her brothers came back and saved her.



So that King lived with his Queen and her 12 brothers in his big palace. They were all happy.

∞ The end ∞