



Theodor Kittelsen's illustration for 'East of the Sun, West of the Moon' (1912).

Camilla Collett, 'A Walk and a Tale'

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Introduction

Camilla Collett (1813-95), Norway's first novelist, came into contact with Peter Christen Asbjørnsen in 1842, before she had published any work, while he and Jørgen Moe were compiling the second volume of their *Norske Folke-Eventyr* (*Norwegian Folktales*). Evidently she promised to send Asbjørnsen a tale she knew, and when he received it, he forwarded it to Moe.¹ Asbjørnsen and Moe were already in possession of what they considered a better form of the tale, and published 'East of the Sun and West of the Moon' instead, but Collett beat them into print, publishing her tale in two instalments under the title 'En Vandring og et Eventyr' ('A Walk and a Tale') in *Den Constitutionelle*, a daily newspaper, in January 1844.² The second volume of *Norske Folke-Eventyr* appeared in October of the same year. Collett's tale is thus the first 'East of the Sun' tale ever to have been published, an accomplishment that is rarely, if ever, noted.

Following the publication of the first volume of Asbjørnsen and Moe's *Norske Folkeeventyr* (1843), two camps had developed concerning the written language by which these ostensibly oral narratives ought to be represented. Asbjørnsen and Moe distanced themselves somewhat from the Dano-Norwegian that was the accepted written form of the language. Collett stood in the opposite camp. Word choices, morphological choices, and above all, the inclusion of Norwegian dialect in the mouths of Asbjørnsen and Moe's characters provoked a reaction from the more conservative side of civil society, which was of the opinion that the natural written form of Norwegian was closer to Danish. It is to this faction that Camilla Collett belonged, together with her husband and his circle, and despite her family connections.³ These days, it is difficult to imagine the affront the language in Asbjørnsen and Moe's first volume of folktales must have given a readership that liked to view itself in contrast to the common peasant stock, cultivated and sophisticated. Camilla Collett is famously said to have protested Asbjørnsen and Moe's usage of the vernacular '*kurompe*' (literally 'cow's bottom') instead of the more refined '*kohale*' ('cow's tail').⁴

In the present text, which may be read as an early contribution to the language debate, Collett aims an oblique blow at Asbjørnsen and Moe in her description of her *raconteuse*, at the end of the frame she gives for her tale:

But what you will soon notice is the certain measure of cultivation in her language, such as women of this kind have a habit of assuming. You will notice a certain elegance of form in her tales, and in this they are just as Norwegian as Asbjørnsen's and Moe's, where the original rawness is preserved with such admirable artistry.

It is a mild attack, which professes the Norwegianness of her *raconteuse*, Anne-Marie. But it is likely that Anne-Marie is based on Collett's former nanny, Lisbeth Maria; Collett even renamed the character Lisbeth Maria prior to republishing the text in her 1861 collection *Fortællinger* (*Stories*). Lisbeth Maria's mother, Sara 'Eventyr-Sara' Sandmark came from a Danish family, and had a broad repertoire of tales, including some from Arabic, Spanish, and French, which she had taken up through reading.⁵ She married a poor tenant farmer, and on the evenings the family went hungry, Sara told her children tales to take their minds off their plight.⁶ Collett thus claims that the tale under consideration is from about as far as it is possible to get from what Asbjørnsen and Moe would consider the Norwegian folk; however, add a white bear, et *voilà!* the tale is as Norwegian as any of theirs: 'isn't that right, Hr. Redacteur? I think that the tales in which the lovers are bears are the most national.' Jørgen Moe, the most linguistically radical of the folktale collectors,⁷ was incensed by Collett's attack, mild as it may appear to be. He penned a sharp parody of the whole text, and sent it back to the newspaper, boasting of his misdeed in a letter to Asbjørnsen. Unfortunately for Moe, Andreas Munch, the editor of *Den Constitutionelle*, was a very good friend of the Colletts, and Moe's text was rejected. It was published much, much later, when Moe's collected works were released, but its vindictive edge had by then dulled considerably.⁸

The ideological differences between the two language camps were in fact very subtle, even at the time. When Peter Christen Asbjørnsen published his 'Fuglesang og Huldreæt' ('Birdsong and Hulder-kin') in *Den Constitutionelle* in 1843, it was mistaken as having been written by Camilla Collett.⁹ And when Camilla Collett published 'Badeliv og Fjeldliv' ('Bathing Life and Mountain Life', 1844), Jørgen Moe immediately wrote to congratulate Asbjørnsen on the improvement in his style.¹⁰ Moreover, Camilla Collett and Peter Christen Asbjørnsen appear to have subsequently enjoyed a fruitful literary partnership: Collett wrote the frame narrative for one of the texts in Asbjørnsen's solo work, *Norwegian Hulder Tales and Folk Legends*, and provided him with some of the legends in others.¹¹

Despite 'The Tale of the Abandoned Princess' falling squarely into the tale type ATU-425a (The search for the lost husband), it differs from Asbjørnsen and Moe's more familiar tale in a number of regards, both in terms of plot and language, and these may well be indicators of a tale that is more literary than 'East of the Sun and West of the Moon', though

it draws on the same source material. However, the differences may also be explained in a manner that affirms the oral origins of the text.

Collett's tale is the tale of a high-born princess whom a white bear lays claim to, whereas the bear in 'East of the Sun and West of the Moon' solicits the company of a pauper girl in exchange for provision for her family. We are thus given an indication of the tight motivation in the tale right at the beginning: the bear indebts the king by saving him in the forest; the debt is redeemed upon collection of his daughter. The same tight motivation is consistent all the way through Collett's tale, and stands in contrast to 'East of the Sun and West of the Moon'. The princess's visits home, for example, are not merely figments of homesick fancy, as they are portrayed in Asbjørnsen and Moe, but motivated by the trauma of losing a child; it would be natural for a young woman in such a predicament to seek solace with her family.

The language of Collett's tale also bears witness to a literary text, rather than a raw oral record. Although there is no 'cow's tail' present, the tale's language is consistently more refined than that of Asbjørnsen and Moe. The princess, for example, is referred to as a princess, rather than Asbjørnsen and Moe's preferred *kongsdatter* (king's daughter), the prince is *prins*, not *kongssønn* (king's son), and the witch is always *hexe* instead of the more vernacular *trollkjærring* (literally, troll-hag).

The evidence for it being a literary tale is far from compelling, however; 'The Story of the Abandoned Princess' may well have come down through the oral tradition. The appearance of the princess who falls pregnant, instead of the young pauper girl, parallels 'Kvitbjørn kong Valemon' ('White Bear King Valemon'), a tale first sketched out by Jørgen Moe in his notes to the 1871 edition of *Norske Folke-Eventyr*, and published in its own right in the 1859 edition of the tales. We may safely claim that, instead of having been refined by its author, 'The Story of the Abandoned Princess' merely stems from the strain of oral narrative that gave rise to 'Kvitbjørn kong Valemon' instead of that from which 'East of the Sun and West of the Moon' rose.

The impression of 'The Story of the Abandoned Princess' being an oral text is also strengthened if we give the *raconteuse* instead of its author the responsibility for tightening the motivation in the plot and refining the language. 'Eventyr-Sara' was used to reading tales from more developed regions of Eurasia, and it is not improbable that the sophisticated tales from these regions caused her to improve her repertoire. Also, coming from Danish stock, it is highly unlikely she told stories in any Norwegian dialect, hence their consistent, Danish-inspired language.

Whatever the truth of the matter, whether Camilla Collett manipulated a Norwegian oral text to make a point, or whether she took advantage of a text that had come to her already bearing features with which she might make a point against Asbjørnsen and Moe's editorial policies, we are left with the first published Norwegian version of the ATU-425a tale type that features a white bear, and which was published in Norway.

Camilla Collett's 'A Walk and a Tale'

(*Den Constitutionelle*, 17/18 January 1844)

Hr. Redacteur!

You requested I send you a small sketch from my stay out here in the country, for your edification, and for that of the portion of your readers who are bound to the city: 'a small sketch about nothing, but one that resounds with cowbells and the fragrance of St John's wort and clover; as mild as nature itself, and the mind it puts us in.' Certainly easier said than done! Although, God knows, it is beautiful enough up here; the rivers Vormen and Andelven scatter their glories about themselves. My sketch must certainly be mild; there is nothing that irritates or confounds me here. Even the weather; that old scapegoat for all country misery, is behaving itself in an exemplary manner this summer, so that there is nothing to say about it. I am happy to relinquish it to the criticism of the city-*feuilleton*, so that it may – thank God! – live and thrive still for many years, to our pleasure. What I have to offer you is from the country. Thin milk, as you know, does not have many uses. But do not expect that I shall boot around on mountains and in cabins, for interesting genre scenes or views. The heat has also lent me its lethargy, so I would rather share with you, as in Birgitta's pastoral, *Recubans sub tegmine fagi*.¹²

Yes, that's right: *Recubans sub tegmine fagi*. I spend the greater part of the day dozing like a Pasha in the shade of a lovely forest. I do not seek out tales myself, but this time I have encouraged the tale to seek me out. It is precisely in my forest that I have arranged the meeting; and I invite you, *Hr. Redacteur*, to accompany me on this rendezvous. Oh, do not be afraid; it does not cost much effort. A tale could not be come by any more easily. We would both lean against a broad ridge of spruces, blowing the smoke of our cigars up into the blue air, while cousin Anne Marie, my pleasant old nanny, sits on the next tuffet, beginning 'There was once upon a time, etc.' Just come! Do you have the courage to make a little detour from there down to the river? We need no umbrellas; I know these clouds. When Our Lord will do right by us, he decorates his sky, just look! The whole dome is a single, airy silk tent in all manner of nuances of colour; and beneath it the lovely meadow rests like a slumbering beauty. The sunlight, by no means harsh, streams quietly and softly everywhere. How well this light suits the meadow! It reveals the dreamlike quality that is already hinted at in the forms of the banks and copses. Look! Down there we have the river Andelven. Seldom does the wind find its way down to it, but when it does, it gives it a new beauty; the serpent comes to life, raising all of its glittering steel scales in the sunlight, as it hurries rapidly through the valley. Today it lies dormant, as if hiding itself in the grass. Listen! We can hear voices from the closest valley, and a rustling sound as if of hay, though we see no one. These

valleys are joined to one another in an endless row, like cells, edged by the lofty forested ridge that slopes down towards the river; and upon which there is barely space for the small path we now follow. What rich diversity there is in this unbroken repetition of valley and height, what disparity in the apparent monotony! Across on the other bank, nature has been far less generous. Do you see the small enclosed patch just above the scant shrubs on the mossy ground? That patch is called The Dog Bite. The story goes that, many years ago, a man was bitten by a mad dog in this place, and that as compensation, he demanded from its owner an earthen cabin that was as big as he could mark out by throwing a stone to where each wall should stand. It is not told whether he went mad, but this dark story has given my childish imagination a lot to work with. How often I have reflected upon the end of the story! Even now I cannot walk around here without thinking about whether the man was mad, or perhaps became so before he picked up the last stone. – What do you think, *Hr. Redacteur*? Perhaps you believe that not even the dog was mad, but that the man was shrewd enough to take advantage of a small opportunity. Well then, it is certain that he didn't build any Carthage here, and that the little patch brought him a lot of toil and little joy. As it happens, the place as it stands is said to be haunted. The small boys from the closest farm always went by another way, when the twilight was too deep, so they need not go past The Dog Bite, and the old woman at the fuller's pond often assured us in the cool summer nights that she heard the dull sounds of voices and barking dogs. But you don't hear of these things any longer; in our days women at the fuller's pond are far too enlightened to believe in such things.

The river here turns off suddenly in a different direction; the terrain becomes more difficult and more densely overgrown; the deciduous vegetation stops abruptly in the dark fir trees. How dark and cool it is here! The path clings to edge of the cliffs, and winds with scant hold; the river foams below. What a transition! Where now is its quiet, flowery path? The farther we follow it, the wilder and less restrained it runs. The old, crooked birches on the slope stand quite placidly by this trivial transition. A couple of them stretch their long green arms as a warning towards it, *das sind die Muhmen und die Basen*.¹³ – But it flees past uneasily, driven by its longing, its yearning, and staunchly resisting any consideration. But here the river Vormen comes behind the ridges, racing from the north: proud, authoritative, and widely travelled, and calling to it with a loud voice; and the Andelven believes it is for its sake that the Vormen has come this long way, and it hurries to leave its familiar, flowery banks to reach its powerful suitor. The poor thing! *Und die Muhmen und die Basen*¹⁴ have noticed it, and they take leave of their wits, flapping their moss-covered heads. Here by the falls their reunion is already close, but then a long, steep forested ridge hurries, as it were, to force itself in between them. This unexpected hindrance has broken its courage, and it slows its pace a little, and glides quietly and resignedly along between the tame banks. An embarrassed, public engagement! And the small tenants' cabins with their white chimneys haughtily observe them.

Now we will soon be in our forest. We find ourselves now upon the slope of this merciless tongue of land that has deferred the union of our rivers. It comprises a long peninsula, and is quite overgrown with dense, overshadowing forest; one would hardly guess what manner of limited terrain one stood in, had not the odd arch opened up down towards the river, first to one side, then to the other. What gives this forest its special appeal is the deep peace and solitude that reigns, while the hustle and bustle of the day surrounds us on every side. Down in the valley the saw- and flour mills hum and thrum, but all the humming, this confusing sound, is broken, muted, and impotent against the asylum of our forest, and disappears in the rustling of the spruces. Once in a while there is a noise in the thicket; a curious cow lifts its head, but lowers it just as quickly into the undergrowth again. The unfortunate animals must sometimes pay dearly for the beauty of this location; it happens that they charge down into ravines and clay banks. Some of them, whose inclination is too strong towards the Romantic and bold, have to have a board tied before their eyes, so that they remain upon the smooth, even road. There is a wonderful arrangement of such boards, *Hr. Redacteur*; they may with a good result also be used on other brows. In this small place we would rest and wait for our *raconteuse*, who will arrive shortly. The sun has come out beneath the edge of the clouds, and it sends a glowing ray of copper between the low trunks. The light bounces around in there, as if the elves were playing 'golden apple' with it. Isn't it as lovely here as in a fairy tale, and especially as in 'The Tale of the Abandoned Princess'? Be quiet now, and you shall see her coming, walking on her search for her fleeing lover. Tired and mournful, she will sleep in this place, and the legendary hoard of elves will flock around her, dry her cheeks and whisper comforting things in her ears, yes perhaps they will tell her where her beloved is. Do you know the pretty tale of the abandoned princess, *Hr. Redacteur*? Oh, certainly it is *eine alte Geschichte*,¹⁵ but the strange thing is that she finds him again here! I knew this legend in my childhood, but now I no longer remember the beginning or the end. Good! *Optata venisti!*¹⁶ there we have it! Well, not the princess herself, but one who knows well of her fate.

"Anne Marie ... tell! ... Good day, Anne Marie! Quickly! Tell us the prettiest tale you know; you know, the one I loved so much, when I was small!"

"Oh, you must mean the one about the parson who never knew when Sunday came ..."

"No, no; for God's sake not that one!"

"Well, now I know which one you mean. The one about the sexton who stole the parson's pork ..."

"Oh, Anne Marie, have you the heart to speak to me of sextons who stole pork at this spot? Don't you remember the one about the king's daughter who searched for her sweetheart?"

"Well, God bless me, I remember it well ... by your leave, do you wish to hear it with a bear or a wolf?"

“Hm, I don't know . . . a bear perhaps.” Isn't that right, *Hr. Redacteur*? I think that the tales in which the lovers are bears are the most national.

While Anne Marie takes out her knitting and sits herself down on a sawn-off tree trunk to collect her thoughts, we walk on a couple of paces farther. I would like to familiarise you with this figure, who on my signal has let herself come so promptly and willingly, as if she might be the spirit of the lamp or the ring. I see you don't know what you should do with her; her outward appearance is far from strange. It would pain me to think you had you expected one of those inspired, wrinkled witches who have become stereotypes. Not because these Meg-Merilises,¹⁷ even through they have lost their credit in novels, take the liberty to re-sketch reality; our *raconteuse* is not like that, though. She is, unfortunately, not old; she reads neither cards nor coffee; she cannot even bewitch. What may be remarkable about her I shall tell you another time, if you like. I like to tramp up to her cabin once a year, which you can catch a glimpse of up in the distant copse. But what you will soon notice is the certain measure of cultivation in her language, such as women of this kind have a habit of assuming. You will notice a certain elegance of form in her tales, and in this they are just as Norwegian as Asbjørnsen's and Moe's, where the original rawness is preserved with such admirable artistry. I see our Scheherazade is tugging impatiently at her stockings, which means she is ready.

The Story of the Abandoned Princess

There was once upon a time a king who had three daughters. One day when he was out hunting, he followed a hart for such a distance that he simply lost all trace of his servants; and no matter how he searched for a road or a path, by degrees he came deeper into the wild forest. It grew ever darker and darker in there, and there was neither house nor shelter to see. At length he grew quite disheartened, and sat down upon a tuffet, sorrowful and weary, and prepared himself for death.

But then there was a commotion in the bushes, and a great white bear rushed out, straight towards him. The poor king was so weak that he could not rouse himself to face the bear, and so he remained sitting, waiting for it to kill him. But instead, the bear sat on its haunches before him and said: “Do not be afraid of me; I shall do you no harm. On the contrary, I shall put you on the right road again, if you promise to give the youngest of your three daughters into my power.” The king wondered well enough about what a bear would with his daughter, but finally he promised. Then the bear said: “Get up on to my back now, and hold fast to my coat.” And now they went forth over stump and stone, until the king could again see the approach to the king's farm. “This day in a year, I shall come to fetch your daughter;” said the bear, before it went back into the forest. From that day the king was quiet and sorrowful. He often thought on what he had promised the bear, and he dreaded the time when he would have to fulfil his promise.

Now the year was already over; it was the evening of the last day, and the king half-expected, half-hoped that the bear wouldn't be so careful to remember the day. But suddenly a carriage, covered in gold and silver, arrived at the king's farm, and remained by the door. The king had no heart to send his youngest daughter, who was his dearest, but commanded the eldest to go down and get into the carriage. But the carriage didn't move from the spot. Then he commanded the next-eldest to go down, but still it stood there. Finally he had to steel himself, and send the youngest, and straightway the carriage took her away. And her sisters and the king and the queen wept and mourned.

But the carriage flew along with the princess, day and night, until finally it stopped outside a great castle. She stepped out and went in. Never before had she seen such splendour and wealth; everything was of pure gold and crystal. One chamber was more splendid than the other, but there was no life to see anywhere. Anyone may understand that the princess had no mind for all this glory; she sat down away in a corner, and her thoughts dwelt on her father's king's farm, and on her parents, and her sisters, whom she feared she would never see again.

Finally she went to bed, weeping because she was so alone. But as soon as it had grown properly dark, someone came into the chamber, with clamour and alarm. They grunted and snorted, and the princess thought that her final hour had come. But instead, a mild voice said to her: "Do not be afraid of me, my gorgeous princess; I will you well. Feel welcome in my castle. Everything that is here shall be yours, if only you shall obey me. You are from this moment my heart's desire. Each evening I shall come to you, and each morning I shall leave again. But never ask me whence I have come, or whither I am going, and never try to look upon my face, lest great calamity fall upon you." And each evening, when it was dark, just as he had said to her, he came into her chamber, snorting noisily, and she thought she heard something soft fall to the floor. And each morning, as the day was dawning, he hurried out. And when the princess then got up and ran to the window, she saw no one; but in the twilight, away upon the mountain, she thought she caught a glimpse of a white bear, which went off so that the snow and the branches flew. Then she wept again, for she was so alone, and none of the castle's glories, nor its costly games and diversions, would amuse her. She longed for the evening again; and as the time approached at which her heart's desire should come home, her mind grew easier.

A year passed in this manner, and then she gave birth to a prince. She could hardly wait for the evening, for she was yearning so to tell her heart's desire of the child. And she waited and waited, but he didn't come. Finally a dog came running quickly through the door, took the child, and ran away with it. The princess sobbed and wrung her hands, but it did no good.

Time passed, but she grew worse rather than better. So her heart's desire said to her, one night: "Why do you grieve so? Tell me what you want, and I will fulfil your desire, whatever it may be."

"Huff," replied the princess, "I long for my parents and my sisters; give me leave to travel home, and I shall be glad again."

He didn't think well of this request, but he said instead: "Since I have said it, you may go. But before you do, you must promise me one thing: do not follow your mother's advice; listen only to what your father says." The princess promised this, and went.

There was great joy upon everyone at her father's castle; she had to recount everything of what had happened to her since she had travelled away in the gilded carriage. But when she finally said how difficult it was that she never got to see her heart's desire, the queen her mother said: "Here is a small bit of candle; light it one night while he sleeps, and look upon him."

But the king disliked this advice, and said: "Have patience, and I am sure you will get to see him." And the princess remembered what she had promised, and determined not to do as her mother had said.

After a year she gave birth to another prince. But that evening her heart's desire was away again, and when evening fell, a wolf came and took the child. She grieved like last time, and not even her darling could console her, before he had promised to fulfil whatever she desired.

"Huff," said the princess, "I have lost my two children, and am always alone; let me visit my parents."

Then he was displeased, but he said: "Since I have promised it, then go; but remember to obey your father, and not your mother."

This time, too, her mother gave her advice to light a candle on him, but her father bade her be patient, and when she returned, she did as he had advised her.

The third time, the princess gave birth to a daughter; and this time a foul dragon came and took the child. She grieved even more than she had on either of the previous occasions, and when her heart's desire eventually promised to fulfil whatever she asked for, she said: "I have lost my three children, and you may I never see; let me go home to my parents."

Then he was mightily affected, but he said: "You might have desired anything else of me! But mind what your father admonishes you!"

And the princess went, and received the same advice from her parents. But this time, she could not restrain herself. The first evening, when she had returned home, she got up, when she felt that her darling was asleep, lighted the candle that her mother had given her, and saw ... the most gorgeous prince that anyone has ever beheld with their eyes, lying by her side. And beside the bed lay the form of a white bear.

Aghast, she was so unfortunate as to spill a drop of warm tallow upon his chest, and immediately he awoke. "Ack! What have you done?" he cried. "Had you but restrained yourself this time, then I would have been saved! Now everything is over, and you shall not see me any more." And immediately he turned into a great white bear. The princess sobbed, and fell to her knees, pleading humbly that he would take her along. "Then sit upon my back," said the bear, "but hurry," and already it was so wild that it could hardly control itself.

The princess sat on his back, and now they set off, over land and strand, over mark and forest and deepest valley, with neither pause nor rest. Then she saw, far away, something glimmering, as if it were a small star. "What is it that shines?" she asked.

"There away lives my eldest sister," replied the bear, "and there too is your eldest child. Go up thither, and have her send me a morsel to sate my hunger, so that I don't eat you. And come back immediately, or I shall set off without you."

She did as the bear would have her, and went to its sister. And she soon sent a morsel; but for her she laid a magnificent table, spread with the most gorgeous dishes, and bade her eat. The princess refused, but howsoever she hurried, the bear was already snorting in wrath when she returned.

Now they set off again, over land and strand, over mark and forest and deepest valley, with neither pause nor rest, until the princess could see, far away, something that shone like a moon. And when she asked what it was, the bear growled: "There away lives my next-eldest sister, and there too is your next-eldest child. Go up thither and have her send me two morsels. But come back immediately, if you want to come along."

And now things went as they had previously; the bear's sister spread a table for her and promised to show her the child if she would stay to eat. She could hardly bring herself to leave, but when she came down again to the bear, he was snorting in rage, and said: "Had you not come by now, then I would have left, and you wouldn't have seen me again." And she could hardly manage to climb on to its back, so tall it stood.

And they set off once again, over land and strand, over mark and forest and deepest valley, night and day, with neither pause nor rest, until the princess saw, far away, something that shone like a sun. And when she this time asked what it was, the bear said: "There away lives my youngest sister, and there too is your youngest child. Go up thither and bid her send me three morsels, for I suffer so from hunger. But hurry now more than before."

And things went as they had previously; the bear's sister laid the table, and bade her stay, and promised to show her her child. She was already standing on the steps to leave, but then she heard a child crying. She could not restrain herself now; she would go in to bless it. But even though she hurried so much that a little bird that had come up from the mark to light on the roof when she went in, had not yet reached it when she came out, the bear had already gone, when she came down into the forest. And she could see it snorting away, far off upon a mountain.

She ran as far as she could, meaning to catch up with him, but this didn't last for long, for she could not see it any longer. And she walked and walked, for she wanted to reach it, even if she should walk to the end of the world.

At length she came to a tall glass mountain, where there were neither holds nor cracks that she could put her foot into. There she had to stop. As she stood there, wringing her hands in desperation, an old wife came to her. "What are you weeping for, my child?" said the wife. The princess told her everything, and asked her for help. "Do not weep," said the

wife, "perhaps I can help you. Here is a bag of bones. Take them one by one, and lay them up the glass mountain until you get across it. And when you have come across, you should desire to go into service in the first house you arrive at." So the princess took the bag, and each bone she laid down became a step in the mountain.

Eventually she came to a gate. She knocked, and an ugly foul witch came out. "What do you want?" said the troll, harshly and wickedly to her.

"I want to go into service here," said the princess.

"Come in so that I may see if you are good for anything," said the witch. And when she had come in, she gave her a basket of black wool. "Wash this wool until it is white," she said. "If you cannot do it, then I shall kill you." The princess began to wash it, but it did no good; she washed until her fingers were sore, but the wool remained just as black.

Then came a stranger to her, whom she immediately understood was a prince, even though she had never seen him before, and said: "If you call me your heart's desire, then I shall help you."

"Huff! No," said the princess, "I have had one who is my heart's desire, but I shall never see him again." When the prince heard this, he appeared to have pity on her; he lightly touched the wool, and immediately it turned as white as snow.

The princess went to the witch with it, and when the witch saw it, she grew mean and said: "You have not suckled this at your own breast!" And with that she gave her a large chest, saying: "Take this to my sister, who lives at the next farm. But mind that you do not open it on the way."

The princess took the chest and went, but when she had come into the forest, she felt a terrible desire to look upon what there was in it. She sat down upon a tuffet and thought: "I will only look a little upon it." But she had hardly opened it a little before a mass of snakes and toads crawled out. They crawled south and north and east and west, and disappeared from her sight. In horror, she struck her hands together; but gone they remained.

Then the prince came to her again, and again he asked for her love, but she replied in the same manner as before. And again he appeared to feel pity for her; he took the chest, and hardly had he opened it before all the snakes and toads came crawling and hopping from the north and south and east and west, and slipped back into the chest. The prince closed it, saying: "Even though you will not obey my will, I shall give you some good advice. Here is a scarf and a piece of meat," and he taught her what she should do with them.

The princess went now to the farm; but when she should go through the gate, it closed quickly, as if it would crush her. Swiftly she pressed the headscarf into the jamb and said: "Crush this, and not me," and the gate did so. When she came into the farm, a large dog approached her, and she threw the meat to it and said: "Devour this, and not me," and the dog began to eat it. When she had come in to the witch who lived here, who was even uglier than her sister, she was bidden to sit down, whereupon the witch boiled a sausage, laid it before her hands, and bade her eat. But the princess guarded herself well against this,

and threw the sausage under the table. When the witch came in again, she asked: "Have you eaten?"

"Here I am beneath the table!" said the sausage.

"Ho, ho," said the witch, putting it back in front of her.

This time the princess threw it behind the bench, but the sausage said once more where it was.

"If you despise my food once more, I shall chase you out to the dog," said the witch.

This time the princess took it and stuck it in her bosom. When the witch came in, the sausage said: "Here I am in her bosom."

"If you are in her bosom, then you will come into her bowels," said the witch, thinking she had eaten it. And she let her go.

When the witch she served saw that she had escaped all the wicked snares, she said bitterly: "You have not suckled this at your own breast!" And she began to study some new evil.

In the evening, when she sat at the table with the prince (who was there at the farm), she gave the princess a wax candle, and said: "You shall light us; hold this!" and the princess did so. But the candle burned shorter and shorter, and she couldn't let it go, for her fingers had grown as if they were stiff.

"Huff, I am burning myself!" she cried.

Then the prince went to her and said: "If you will call me your heart's desire, then I shall help you."

"No," replied the princess, "you know I have a heart's desire." And the candle burned. "Huff, I am burning myself!" screamed the princess again.

"If you will call me your heart's desire," said the prince.

"Ack, no," she replied. And the candle burned down. Then she could not hold out any longer ... and then it was as if scales fell from her eyes, and she recognised the voice of her heart's desire. "So help me, then, my heart's desire!" she cried.

And when the witch heard this, she burst in wrath.

Then the prince was saved for ever, and now he told how this witch had enchanted him, and had turned him into a bear. Only at night, and when he was at the witch's farm, did the form of the bear fall off him, but before the dawn, or when he left her farm, then he turned into a wild animal that had to run around in the forest and kill everything he came across, until he found one who could lift the bewitchment. They gathered together all the gold and silver there was at the witch's, and left for the prince's castle. On the way they fetched their children to them, and they lived thereafter in gladness and love. And when her father died, he inherited the kingdom. Snip, snap, snout, here the tale's out.

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Simon Hughes

Notes

1. Moe's letter back to Asbjørnsen is how we know of the transaction (Ellisiv Steen, *Diktning og virkelighet: en studie i Camilla Colletts forfatterskap* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1947), 185).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Camilla Collett was born Jacobine Camilla Wergeland, daughter of Nicolai Wergeland, a signatory of the Norwegian Constitution in 1814, and thus a proponent of independence from Denmark; and sister of Norway's leading Romanticist, Henrik Wergeland, who stood against Sweden's at times violent attempts to suppress the annual celebration of the Constitution.
4. Truls Gjesfens, *Peter Christen Asbjørnsen: diger og folksæl* (Oslo: Andresen and Butenschøn, 2001), 122.
5. Gjesfens, *Peter Christen Asbjørnsen*, 158.
6. Steen, *Diktning og virkelighet*, 188.
7. Steen, *Diktning og virkelighet*, 183.
8. Gjesfens, *Peter Christen Asbjørnsen*, 158ff.
9. Steen, *Diktning og virkelighet*, 184.
10. Steen, *Diktning og virkelighet*, 190f.
11. Gjesfens, *Peter Christen Asbjørnsen*, 165.
12. Latin: 'reclining beneath the beech canopy'.
13. German: 'these are the aunt and the cousin'.
14. German: 'And the aunt and the cousin'.
15. German: 'an old story'.
16. Latin: '[what you] wished for [has] come'.
17. Meg Merrilies is a cunning Gypsy who appears in Walter Scott's 1815 novel, *Guy Mannering, or The Astrologer*.