

# MOTHER HOLLE

## A Tale from Germany

Long ago in a small German village lived a widow and her two daughters. One of the girls was kind and hard working. The other was lazy and mean.

One day as the hard working daughter was spinning near their well; she pricked her finger on the spindle. As she leaned over the well to clean her blood off of the spindle, it fell into the water below. The poor girl was beside herself with worry. She needed the spindle, so she jumped into the well after it.

Instead of drowning in the well, the girl found herself in the middle of a beautiful meadow. She was surprised by a sound coming from nearby. It was a cry for help. The girl rushed over to the sound and discovered an oven cooking a loaf of bread. The cry for help was coming from the bread that wanted out of the hot oven. Since she had such a kind soul, the girl reached in and took the loaf of bread out of the hot, hot oven. She then continued on her way.

Soon the girl came to an apple tree that was so laden with fruit that its branches touched the ground. It asked her to pick

some of its apples and lighten its load. As you can imagine, the good, kind girl did as she was asked. She then continued on her way.

Next the girl came upon a brook that was clogged up by a large bunch of leaves and sticks. It begged the girl to clear the debris so its water could, once again, flow smoothly. Of course the girl did as she was asked, even if she did get muddy in the process. Once done, the girl continued on her way.

Soon the girl came upon a small cottage in the woods. There she found an old woman who asked the girl to help her shake out some feather pillows and sweep her floors. The girl could not refuse, so she did as asked. The woman was Mother Holle and, in thanks, she fed the girl a hearty meal then gave her a soft bed to sleep on. This routine continued for several days before the girl became homesick and asked if she could leave. Mother Holle told the girl that she could leave whenever she wished. She also told the girl that she would be rewarded for her kindness.

Mother Holle gave the girl her spindle and ushered her out the back door. The girl was surprised to find herself very close to her own home. As she walked toward her house, a gentle rain began to fall. As the water drops touched the girl, they turned to gold. By the time the girl reached her doorway, she was

laden with gold. Her mother and sister were very surprised. They asked her where she had been and how she got all that gold. The girl told them what happened and her greedy sister decided to get some gold for herself.

Because of her unkind nature, the girl pricked their cat to get blood for the spindle. She then threw the spindle down the well and jumped in after it. Like her sister, the unkind girl found herself in a beautiful meadow. She heard a cry for help nearby. Because she did not want to get burned from the oven, this girl did not take the loaf of bread out of the hot oven when it asked her to. Instead she continued on her way.

The unkind girl soon came upon the apple tree that was laden with fruit. When it asked her to pick some apples to lighten its load, the girl picked just one, which she ate then and there. The girl then continued on her way.

Next the unkind daughter came upon the brook, which was clogged up with leaves and sticks. It asked the girl for help so its water could flow smoothly again. Because she did not want to get muddy, the unkind girl refused. Instead, she continued on her way.

Soon the girl came upon Mother Holle's cottage in the woods. There she saw the old woman who asked her to shake out her feather pillows and sweep her floors. Wanting gold, the girl

agreed to do these tasks. On her first day there, the girl did a fairly decent job. As the days passed, she did less and less. Eventually, she said she was homesick and asked to be released from her chores. Mother Holle agreed to let the girl go. She gave the girl her spindle and some catnip for the poor cat. She ushered the unkind girl out of her back door and told her she would be rewarded for her behavior.

Once out of Mother Holle’s back door, the girl found herself very close to her own home. As she walked toward her house, a gentle rain began to fall. As the water drops touched the girl, they turned to tar. By the time the unkind girl reached her doorway, she was full of black, sticky, ugly tar. Her mother and sister did their best to clean the girl up but it was no use. Because the unkind girl did not mend her ways, the tar stuck to her for the rest of her life. So, be kind to others as your actions will be paid back to you as is deserved.

\*Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the tale “Mother Holle” found in, Wonder tales from around the world, by Heather Forest. Illustrations by David Boston. Little Rock: August House Publishers, Inc., c1995, pp. 35-40.

