

# **The Twin Hunchbacks**

**Old Hungarian Fairy Tales, #3**

**by Baroness Emmuska Orczy, 1865-1947**

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ONCE upon a time, long, very long ago, in the midst of Fairyland, there stood an extensive forest, so large that it would take many, many days to walk across it; in fact, it was an enchanted forest, for all night it was the haunt of all the little fairies in the neighbourhood. They would skip and dance there all night long, and far into the next day; but the moment the noonday sun streamed down upon them, they would all run away and go to bed inside the water lilies and pink lotus, and leave fairy rings on the grass to mark the place of their nightly revels.

There was a lovely glade in this forest, with a large pond in the middle, and tall dark trees around, which was a specially favoured spot with all the fairies and elves of the forest. Three little fairies particularly there were, who used to come here every morning at sunrise and enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. They were especially fond of a dance they had invented, which consisted in holding hands and twirling round, singing all the while, "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!"

Well, one day a little hunchback woodcutter, who was out very early in the morning gathering chopsticks, suddenly came upon the lovely glade, and there, before him, he saw the three little fairies dancing in a ring, laughing and singing, "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!" so merrily, that he threw down his bundle of faggots, and joined in their dance and their song with great energy. He danced so amazingly, and amused them so much by turning back somersaults, that they thought it the greatest pity in the world that so brisk a little man should be spoilt by having a great hump on his back; so they took some water from the pond in little golden cups, and each fairy emptied her own tiny vessel on the hunchback, singing the while, "Go away, ugly hump!" Then they again joined hands, and danced round him till his hunch had quite disappeared; whereupon he romped more gaily than before, and was so glad and merry he could hardly sing "Humpty Dumpty!" any more for laughing. After that he kissed each of the fairies, and ran home as fast as his little legs would carry him, singing all the way "Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!" springing in the air, and jumping over every obstacle — so glad was he to have got rid of his ugly hump.

Now this little hunchback had a twin brother just as ugly and deformed as he had been himself, and when the now straightened little man came in at the cottage door his brother was very much astonished to see him skipping about without his hunch, and he naturally asked how he had managed to get rid of his ugly deformity.

"Oh," said the woodcutter, "it happened in a very curious way. I was out chopping sticks very early this morning in the woods, when I suddenly saw three dear little fairies before me, dancing in a ring, and singing *Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!* They were tripping it so merrily that the desire seized me to join in their dance, so I boldly took them by the hand and joined in the ring, singing with them *Humpty, Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!*

"They seemed to like this very much, for when they got tired of dancing they took some water from the pond, and pouring it over my back, they sang *Go away, go away, ugly hunch!* and sure enough my ugly hunch has gone."

The twin brother was very much surprised at the strange story he had just heard. Naturally enough he did not quite care about being known as the "hunchback woodcutter" whilst his brother looked so erect and handsome. In fact, he was not only jealous of his brother, but most anxious to be as good looking. He therefore thought the best plan would be to at once seek out the fairies and get them to be as kind and as useful to him as they had been to his brother. He therefore started off at a run for the enchanted glade, determined to get rid of his hump as his brother had done; unfortunately he was so afraid of being too late,

that he ran himself quite out of breath, and was tired out by the time he reached the three little fairies, who were dancing and singing as gaily as ever. The poor little fellow could neither sing nor dance, and had not sufficient breath left to cut a caper or turn a back somersault; this disappointed the little fairies very much. Presently they all joined hands, taking the little hunchback with them, and began their special dance, singing “Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!” but he got so confused and giddy from turning round so fast, that instead of singing “Humpty Dumpty! Humpty Dumpty!” as the little fairies did, he would add—in his efforts to please them— “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall!” and kept on saying “Sat on a wall, sat on a wall!” which so annoyed the fairies, that when they took the water out of the pond in their little golden cups, and poured it over his back, instead of singing “Go away, ugly hump!” they sang “Hunch, get twice as big as before!” which it did immediately, and was then such a terrible size that it was frightful to look at, and so heavy that he had to crawl on his hands and knees all the way home.

