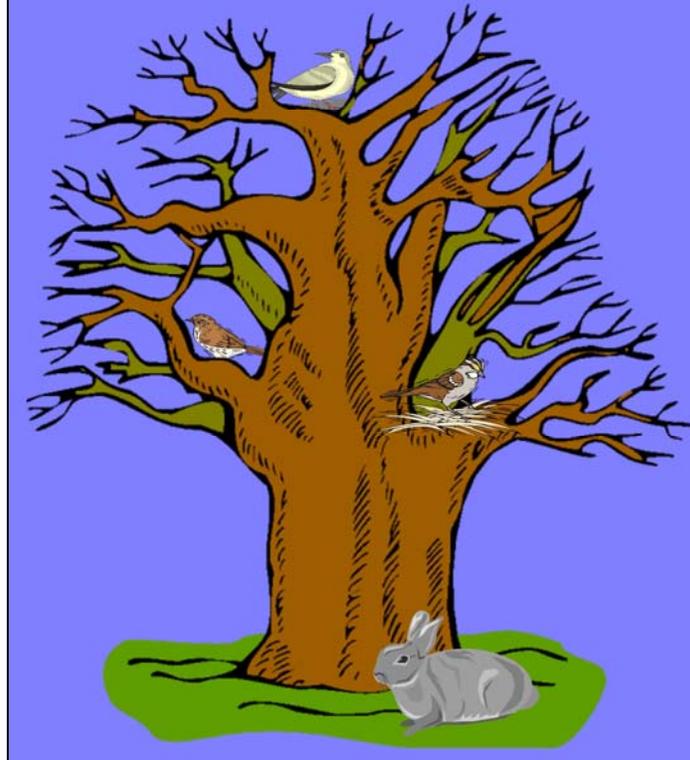


Wilde Tales



Doug Goheen

An adaptation of three fairy tales by Oscar Wilde

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

Copyright © 2005, Doug Goheen

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Wilde Tales is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all of the countries covered by the Universal Copyright Convention and countries with which the United States has bilateral copyright relations including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and all nations of the United Kingdom.

Copying or reproducing all or any part of this book in any manner is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or videotaping without written permission from the publisher.

A royalty is due for every performance of this play whether admission is charged or not. A "performance" is any presentation in which an audience of any size is admitted. The name of the author must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play. The program must also contain the following notice: "Produced by special arrangement with Big Dog Publishing Company, Sarasota, FL."

All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Big Dog Publishing Company, www.BigDogPlays.com, to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

P.O. Box 1400

TALLEHAST, FL 34270

Wilde Tales

3

For Jacob and Nathan

Wilde Tales

4

Wilde Tales was first produced by the Topeka West Players and presented to elementary schools in 2004.

Jesse Baker
Alyson Cripps
Zach Dobler
Sara Englehardt
Thad Lockard
Bryce Lowman
Mandy Marling
Katie Meyer
Lakase Perry
Brad Puderbaugh
Brian Reynolds
Drew Saylor
Melissa Schroeder
Cody Shannon
Aimee Siebert
Julie Soroko
Evan Thies
Michael Voth

Wilde Tales

CHILDREN'S. This collection features three well-known fairy tales by Oscar Wilde adapted for the stage. All three tales mix elements of fantasy and fable. In "The Nightingale and the Rose," a poor tutor must find one red rose to win a chance to dance with the princess at the ball. In "The Happy Prince," the statue of a prince comes to life and is determined to help the poor by giving away the jewels and gold that adorn him. And in "The Star-Child," a poor woodcutter rescues an infant and raises the child as his own even though he barely has enough food for his own family. These tales of self-sacrifice and love have charmed young audiences for more than a century.

Performance Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.

Setting

The Nightingale and the Rose: A garden.

The Happy Prince: Town square.

The Star-Child: Woods; the outskirts of a town.

Characters

The Nightingale and the Rose

(1 m, 1 f, 6 flexible)

PRINCESS
TUTOR
RED ROSE-TREE
DAISY
BUTTERFLY
NIGHTINGALE
WHITE ROSE-TREE
YELLOW ROSE-TREE

The Happy Prince

(2 m, 3 f, 15 flexible, extras)

HAPPY PRINCE
SWALLOW
MOTHER
SEAMSTRESS
CHILD
TEACHER
STUDENT 1, 2, 3
BEGGARS 1, 2
MATCHGIRL
PLAYWRIGHT
THEATER DIRECTOR
MAYOR
COUNCILORS 1, 2
FOUNDRY WORKER
ANGEL
VOICE
EXTRAS: As villagers.

The Star-Child

(4 m, 3 w, 4 flexible, extras)

WOODCUTTER

WIFE

SON

DAUGHTER

STAR-CHILD

BEGGAR WOMAN

GUARD 1, 2

OLD MAN

HARE

LEPER

EXTRAS: As villagers.

Author's Note on Costuming

In the original production, the Nightingale and the Swallow were played by actors who wore a sock puppet on their right arms. The puppets extended halfway to the elbow. The birds' beaks did not move, nor was any attempt made to mask the actor. The costumes consisted of a black pair of trousers and a long-sleeved black shirt. With a little practice, the actors were able to achieve the illusion of the birds "flying" with arm movements. The children in the audience had no problem understanding the concept.

Props/Special Effects

The Nightingale and the Rose

Banner that indicates title of the story

Nightingale song

The Happy Prince

Blanket or tarp

Column or pedestal large
enough to stand on

Sword

Desk

Papers

Matches

1 "Ruby"

2 "Sapphires"

Leaves of "gold"

Lead heart

Bells

Loud cracking sound

Swallow song

Banner that indicates title of
the story

The Star-Child

Golden cloak

Banner that indicates title of
story

Wood logs/branches

Baby doll

Wooden bucket

2 Hideous masks

2 Shields

Bowl of fruit

Tree

Piece of white gold

Piece of yellow gold

Piece of red gold

Wooden bowl

Gates to the town

Golden star that falls from
the sky

Sound of winter winds

Fake snow (optional)

Trumpets sounding

The Nightingale and the Rose

(AT RISE: A banner is unfurled to reveal the title of the tale: "The Nightingale and the Rose." The Princess enters hurriedly, followed by her Tutor. Close by underneath a bare Red Rose-Tree, are a Daisy and a Butterfly.)

TUTOR: But Princess, we have been at your lessons for less than 15 minutes!

PRINCESS: (*Petulantly.*) I don't care. I'm tired of lessons. Who wants to learn about philosophy?

TUTOR: But Princess...

PRINCESS: Besides, tomorrow night my father is giving a ball to celebrate the arrival of spring, and I shall dance until dawn. You may come, too, if you like.

TUTOR: (*Blushes.*) Well...

PRINCESS: In fact, I should like you to come.

TUTOR: And might I dance with you as well?

PRINCESS: You might, if you bring me something.

TUTOR: What shall I bring you?

PRINCESS: Only a single red rose. This afternoon, the Chamberlain's nephew brought me the most beautiful white roses. And just after he left, the Councilor's son arrived with sweet-smelling yellow roses. They are all very lovely, and the young men very fine; but it is for a single red rose that my heart yearns.

TUTOR: Only one?

PRINCESS: Only one. And if you bring it to me, then I shall dance with you at the ball. (*She kisses the Tutor on the cheek.*) Goodbye! (*She exits.*)

TUTOR: (*Aside.*) She said she would dance with me if I brought her a single red rose. But in the garden, my only rose tree has been killed by the cold of winter. (*The Nightingale flies in and perches close to the Daisy and the*

Wilde Tales

10

Butterfly.) There are no red roses in all my garden! Oh, on what little things does happiness depend. I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched.

NIGHTINGALE: (*Aside.*) Here at last is a true romantic. Night after night have I sung of him, though I know him not. Night after night, have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire, but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.

TUTOR: (*Aside.*) The King gives a ball tomorrow night, and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose, she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break.

NIGHTINGALE: (*Aside.*) Here, indeed, is true love. Surely, it is a wonderful thing—more precious than emeralds and dearer than fine opals. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.

TUTOR: (*Aside.*) The musicians will sit in their gallery and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor. With the Chamberlain's nephew and the Councilor's son she will dance, but not with me, for I have no red rose to give her.

(The Tutor flings himself down and buries his face in his hands and starts to cry.)

DAISY: Why is he weeping?

BUTTERFLY: Why, indeed?

Wilde Tales

11

NIGHTINGALE: He is weeping for a red rose.

DAISY: For a red rose?

BUTTERFLY: How very ridiculous!

NIGHTINGALE: Not so ridiculous at all. What I sing of, he suffers. What is joy to me, to him is pain.

DAISY: What nonsense!

BUTTERFLY: *(To Nightingale.)* Now, come. Give us your beautiful song, so that we may be lulled to sleep for the night.

NIGHTINGALE: You do not understand.

(The Nightingale leaves the Daisy and the Butterfly and flies across the stage to the White Rose-Tree.)

DAISY: Well! I guess we are not so smart as she!

BUTTERFLY: No matter. I can sleep just as well without her song.

(The Daisy and Butterfly fall asleep. The Nightingale has by this time arrived at the White Rose-Tree.)

NIGHTINGALE: Give me a red rose, and I will sing you my sweetest song.

WHITE ROSE-TREE: My roses are white, as white as the foam on the sea, and whiter than the snow on the mountain.

NIGHTINGALE: But it is a red rose I must have.

WHITE ROSE-TREE: My roses were selected by the Chamberlain's nephew himself to present to the Princess on the eve of the great ball. Are they not beautiful enough for you as well?

NIGHTINGALE: Indeed they are very beautiful, but just tonight I need only one red rose.

WHITE ROSE-TREE: *(Relenting.)* Very well. Go to my brother who grows near the old stone wall, and perhaps he will give you what you want.

NIGHTINGALE: Thank you.

Wilde Tales

12

(The Nightingale flies to the Yellow Rose-Tree.)

WHITE ROSE-TREE: Silly bird. Everyone knows that white roses are the most beautiful of all.

(Nightingale arrives at Yellow Rose-Tree.)

NIGHTINGALE: Give me a red rose, and I will sing you my sweetest song.

YELLOW ROSE-TREE: My roses are yellow, as yellow as the hair of the mermaid who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow.

NIGHTINGALE: But it is a red rose I must have.

YELLOW ROSE-TREE: My roses were selected by the Councilor's son himself to present to the Princess on the eve of the great ball. Are they not sweet smelling enough for you?

NIGHTINGALE: Indeed they are very sweet smelling, but tonight I need only one red rose.

YELLOW ROSE-TREE: *(Relenting.)* Very well. Go to my brother who grows beneath the Tutor's window, and perhaps he will give you what you want.

NIGHTINGALE: Thank you.

(The Nightingale returns to the garden of the Tutor, where the Daisy, the Butterfly, and the Tutor are all sleeping.)

YELLOW ROSE-TREE: Foolish fowl! Everyone knows that yellow roses are the sweetest smelling of all.

(Nightingale approaches the Red Rose-Tree.)

NIGHTINGALE: Give me a red rose and I will sing you my sweetest song.

Wilde Tales

13

RED ROSE-TREE: My roses are red, as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and a storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year.

NIGHTINGALE: One red rose is all I want—only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it? **[End of Freeview]**

The Happy Prince

(AT RISE: Bells toll five times. A banner is unfurled to reveal the title of the story: "The Happy Prince." From SL a young mother, the Seamstress, and a small Child, enter.)

CHILD: *(Coughing.)* But Mother, you haven't bought any meat from the market.

SEAMSTRESS: We have not come to town to buy meat. I have spent the last of our money for thread, so I can finish the gown for the Mayor's wife.

CHILD: But may we not see the statue?

SEAMSTRESS: There is no time. I must have the gown finished by the next court ball. We'll see it another day.

CHILD: Mother, I am not feeling well.

SEAMSTRESS: You'll take to bed when we get home. Now, come.

(The Child continues coughing as the two exit. A Teacher and Students 1, 2, 3 enter SR. A Playwright enters SL.)

STUDENT 1: Where is it? Where is it?

STUDENT 2: It's five o'clock. *(To Teacher.)* You said it would be here at five o'clock!

TEACHER: Patience, girls. We must have patience.

STUDENT 3: But I want to see the statue!

TEACHER: You will see the statue soon enough. Now, let's review our math lesson while we're waiting.

(The Students groan as the Teacher begins reviewing. From SL, Beggar Boys 1, 2 are huddled with a Match Girl trying to keep warm. One of the boys approaches the Playwright.)

Wilde Tales

15

BEGGAR BOY 1: Please, sir. (*Referring to Match Girl.*) Could you spare a coin for the girl?

BEGGAR BOY 2: She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled.

PLAYWRIGHT: Poor girl. She is crying. Would that I had a coin to give her. But I am only a poor playwright.

(Theater Director enters.)

THEATER DIRECTOR: (*To Playwright.*) What? Complaining of your poverty again?

PLAYWRIGHT: (*Surprised.*) Director! I was only...

THEATER DIRECTOR: Should you not be at home finishing the play you promised me by week's end?

PLAYWRIGHT: I only broke from my writing for a moment to come and see the statue. Besides, it grows so cold in my attic, and there is no fire in the grate.

THEATER DIRECTOR: Nor will there be a fire until you earn your keep and finish my play. Perseverance, boy. Perseverance!

PLAYWRIGHT: Yes, Director.

(Theater Director approaches the Beggar Boys and the Match Girl.)

THEATER DIRECTOR: And what are you shabby little children up to?

MATCH GIRL: I've lost my matches in the gutter, sir, and I...

THEATER DIRECTOR: Yes, yes. Move along now. We must make way for the Happy Prince, and we can't have any little street urchins to detract from the unveiling of the statue. (*The Beggar Boys and the Match Girl exit. The Theater Director turns his attention back to the Playwright, glaring at him.*) Well?

(The Playwright exits hurriedly. The Mayor, the Councilors 1, 2, and the Foundry Worker, enter. The Foundry Worker carries the statue of the Happy Prince.)

Wilde Tales

16

COUNCILOR 1: Make way! Make way!

COUNCILOR 2: The Happy Prince has arrived!

(The Foundry Worker sets the "statue" CS.)

STUDENT 3: Look! Here it is!

TEACHER: You see, my girls. I told you it would come.

(Students 1, 2, 3, the Teacher, and the Theater Director gather round the statue, which is flanked by Councilor 1 and the Mayor on one side and Councilor 2 and the Foundry Worker on the other.)

COUNCILOR 1: Citizens! Citizens, attention please.

COUNCILOR 2: The Mayor is ready to speak.

(Mayor steps forward.)

MAYOR: My friends, the hour has arrived for all of us to witness the unveiling of the Happy Prince. The Foundry Worker has forged our statue over many months. Now, we place him here today at the entrance to our fair town to ward away any misery that may befall us.

(The Mayor gestures for the Foundry Worker to unveil the statue. He removes the statue's covering, revealing the Happy Prince resting atop a small column. He has two bright blue sapphires for his eyes, and a large red ruby glows on the hilt of his sword. All react with admiring gasps of wonder.)

FOUNDRY WORKER: *(Points.)* Note the Prince's sapphire eyes and the red ruby adorning his sword hilt.

COUNCILOR 1: He is as beautiful as a weathercock.

COUNCILOR 2: Only not quite so useful.

FOUNDRY WORKER: And he is gilded with thin leaves of fine gold.

Wilde Tales

17

STUDENT 3: The Happy Prince is so lovely.

STUDENT 2: He looks just like an angel.

TEACHER: How do you know? You have never seen one.

STUDENT 1: Ah, but we have, in our dreams.

MAYOR: The Happy Prince is indeed a fitting statue to grace the entrance to our fair town. Look at him! He never dreams of crying for anything, but shuts out misery for us and for all who travel here. Join with me to show our gratitude to our gifted Foundry Worker for his marvelous creation of the Happy Prince. *(All applaud.)* And now, before the cold sets in, let us retire to the banquet hall to celebrate this glorious day.

(All exit, with Student 3 hanging back slightly to touch the statue in wonder. She scampers off, leaving the stage empty for a few moments. Then, from the back of the theater, a Swallow flies in. She is quite fatigued.)

SWALLOW: Ah, my wings grow so tired. Where shall I put up? *(Seeing the statue.)* There! I will put up there. It is a fine position, with plenty of fresh air. *(She settles between the feet of the Happy Prince.)* I have a golden bedroom in which to rest for the night. *(As she puts her head under her wing, a large drop of water falls on her. She sits up.)* What a curious thing! There is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining! *(Another drop falls.)* What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off? I must look for a good chimney pot. *(She gets up to fly away when a third drop of water falls. She looks up into the face of the Happy Prince.)* Why...who are you?

HAPPY PRINCE: I am the Happy Prince.

SWALLOW: Why are you weeping then? You have quite drenched me.

HAPPY PRINCE: When I was alive and had a human heart, I did not know what tears were, for where I lived sorrow was not allowed to enter. In the daytime, I played with my

companions in the garden, and in the evening, I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, for everything about me was so beautiful. I was called the Happy Prince; and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead, they have set me up here, and I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city. Though my heart is made of lead, I cannot choose but weep.

SWALLOW: Lead! Are you not made of solid gold?

HAPPY PRINCE: Only my exterior is gilded.

SWALLOW: Oh.

(As the Happy Prince describes the following sight, the Seamstress and her Child enter and take their places.)

HAPPY PRINCE: Far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She sews a satin gown for the Mayor's wife to wear at the next court ball. On a mat in the corner of the room, her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and he is hungry. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Little Swallow, will you not take her the ruby out of my sword hilt? My feet are fastened to the pedestal, and I cannot move.

SWALLOW: I am waited for in Egypt. My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the lotus flowers. Soon, they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great king.

HAPPY PRINCE: Little Swallow, will you not stay with me and be my messenger? The boy is so hungry and the mother so sad.

SWALLOW: It is very cold here, but I will stay with you for a little while and be your messenger.

Wilde Tales

19

(The Swallow plucks out the ruby from the sword hilt and flies around, finally alighting near the poor house of the Seamstress and her Child. The Seamstress is comforting her Child, who is tossing feverishly. Finally, he subsides. She returns to her sewing, exhausted.)

SEAMSTRESS: *(Despairing.)* What are we to do? What are we to do?

(She begins to cry and soon falls asleep from fatigue. The Swallow quietly approaches her and gently drops the ruby from her beak next to the Seamstress. The Swallow then flies round the Child, fanning his forehead with her wings. After a few moments, the Swallow flies away, lightly singing. Soon thereafter, the Seamstress stirs. She sits up and notices the ruby. She picks it up and stares at the jewel in awe. She then hears the Child awakening and goes to him.)

CHILD: Mother, how cool I feel. I must be getting better!

SEAMSTRESS: Come, child. We're going back to town.

CHILD: Have you run out of thread again?

SEAMSTRESS: No, my dear. We're going to town to buy some meat.

(The Seamstress takes the hand of her Child and they exit. The Swallow has now flown back to the Happy Prince.)

SWALLOW: I'm back. I found the poor house and the woman and her child.

HAPPY PRINCE: And you left them the ruby?

SWALLOW: I did. It is curious, but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold.

HAPPY PRINCE: That is because you have done a good deed.

SWALLOW: Hmmm. Well, have you any commissions for Egypt? I must start my journey now.

Wilde Tales

20

(Again, as the following description occurs, the Playwright enters and takes his place at his desk.)

HAPPY PRINCE: Little Swallow, far away across the city, I see a young man in an attic. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the theater, but he is too cold to write anymore.

There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint.

SWALLOW: But I am waited for in Egypt.

HAPPY PRINCE: Can you not stay with me a little while longer and be my messenger?

SWALLOW: *(Thinking.)* I will stay with you a bit more. Shall I take him another ruby?

HAPPY PRINCE: Alas! I have no ruby now. My eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought from India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweler, and buy firewood, and finish his play.

SWALLOW: Dear Prince, I cannot do that.

HAPPY PRINCE: Little Swallow, do as I command you.

(With hesitation, the Swallow plucks out the eye of the Happy Prince. She then flies away, ultimately alighting at the attic of the Playwright. Soon, the Theater Director enters.)

[End of Freeview]

The Star-Child

Scene 1

(AT RISE: A banner is unfurled revealing the title of the third tale: "The Star-Child." There is a small bundle wrapped in a gold cloak. The Woodcutter enters from the back of the theater, making his way home on a bitter cold night after gathering wood. He slips on some ice and falls.)

WOODCUTTER: Ahh! More ice! I fear I have lost my way in this snowstorm. How tempting it is to lie down and rest, but the snow is cruel to those who lie in her arms. Good Saint Martin watch over me and all the other travelers on this bitter night. *(Rises and begins to gather wood.)* Onward. Onward to my warm little home, where my wife awaits, and my beloved son and daughter. *(He plods forward with great effort. As he nears the stage, he spies a bright golden star falling from the sky.)* Why, by Saint Martin now, there fell a golden star from the sky. *(Staring.)* There! It has sunk there behind that clump of willow trees. *(He hastens to the bundle wrapped in the gold cloak. Dropping his wood, he kneels down by the bundle.)* It is a golden treasure fallen from the sky. *(He unwraps the bundle to discover an infant asleep in the folds of the cloak. He lifts it out.)* What's this? An infant child! Oh, this is a bitter ending to my hope, nor have I any good fortune, for what doth a child profit a man? I must leave it here and go my way, seeing that I am a poor man and have my own children whose bread I may not give another. *(The Woodcutter starts to leave but is overcome with guilt. He stops and thinks. He turns back to stare at the bundle.)* No. It is an evil thing to leave the child to perish here in the snow. *(Approaches the infant.)* Though I am as poor as you are, and have many mouths to feed, and but little in the pot, I will

bring you home with me and my wife shall take care of you. *(The Woodcutter tenderly wraps the infant in the gold cloak and continues home. The sounds of winter winds indicate a passage of time. He continues on, barely able to progress in his exhausted state. Finally sees a light ahead.)* Holy Saint Martin! Can it be? Yes, yes it is my house up ahead. *(Picks up speed and calls out.)* My wife! I am home! I am home!

(The Woodcutter's Wife appears and runs to meet her husband. She embraces him.)

WIFE: My husband! I feared I may never see you again. I thought you were lost in the snow.

WOODCUTTER: Good Saint Martin guided me home. I have brought with me something I found in the forest.

WIFE: What is it? Show it to me, for the house is bare and we have need of many things. *(The Woodcutter presents the bundle to his Wife, who unfolds the cloak excitedly. She sees the child and is stunned.)* It is a baby.

WOODCUTTER: Nay, not a baby, but a Star-Child. As I walked along, not knowing which way to turn in the snow, there fell from heaven a very bright and beautiful star. It slipped down the side of the sky, passing other stars in its course. I approached, hoping I may say, for a crock of gold that our troubles may be ended.

WIFE: It is a changeling. Have we not children enough of our own, that you must bring another to sit by the hearth? And who knows if it will not bring us bad fortune? How shall we tend it?

WOODCUTTER: But to leave the child perish in the snow...

WIFE: Our own children lack bread. How shall we feed the child of another? Who cares for us? Who gives us food?

WOODCUTTER: Why, nature cares for the sparrows and feeds them.

Wilde Tales

23

WIFE: Do not the sparrows die of hunger in the winter? Is it not winter now? *(Pause.)* Come inside and close the door. There comes a bitter wind into the house, and I am cold.

WOODCUTTER: Comes there not always a bitter wind into a house where a heart is hard?

(The Woodcutter's Wife stops in her tracks. She comes back to her husband, stares at him for several moments, and then embraces him.)

WIFE: Forgive me.

(The Woodcutter places the child in her arms, which she tenderly kisses before going into the house. The woodcutter follows her. Blackout.)

[End of Freeview]