

THE TWO BASKETS

By Hans Christian Andersen

Adapted for The Ten Minute Tutor by: Debra Treloar

Far, far away, in an old pine forest, lived a woman who had both a daughter called Violet and a step-daughter called Rosie. The mother had given her own daughter Violet, all that she wanted, so she grew up to be mean and selfish.



Rosie, the step-daughter, had spent her childhood working hard, keeping the house clean and tidy. She was loved by all the neighbours for her kindness and her hard work. As the years went by the mother treated Rosie, worse than ever. She was always looking for an excuse to yell at her.

One day, the mother sent both girls to sit on the edge of their well to spin thread.

"You had better be careful," said the mother, "because the one who breaks the thread first, shall be thrown to the bottom of the well." Of course, she made sure that her own daughter's yarn was fine and strong. Poor Rosie only had some weak coarse yarn, which no one else would even think of using.

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All of a sudden, Rosie's thread snapped and the mother, who had been watching from behind a door, grabbed Rosie and threw her into the well.



"That is the end of you!" she said. But she was wrong, for it was just the beginning. **Down, down, down** went Rosie until at last her feet hit the ground and she found herself in a pretty green field. Although Rosie was quite alone, she felt happier than she had ever been.

Rosie stood up and walked until she came to an old broken fence. It was so old, it needed the vine that climbed all over it, to stop it from falling down. Rosie looked for a place where she could safely climb over the fence. But before she could move, a voice cried out from the fence:

"Please do not hurt me, my child. I am so, so old", said the fence, "and I do not have much longer to live."

Rosie answered, "I will not hurt you." She saw a spot where the vine was not as thick and she jumped carefully over it.

"May all go well with you," said the fence. Rosie smiled and walked on.

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After a while Rosie was very thirsty. She saw a cow with a milk-bucket hanging from her horn.

"Milk me and drink as much as you like, young lady," said the cow. "Please don't spill any on the ground and don't hurt me."

"No, I will not hurt you," answered Rosie.

Rosie sat down and milked until the bucket was nearly full.

Then she drank it all except for a little drop at the bottom.

The cow said, "Now throw any milk that is left over on my hooves, then hang the bucket back on my horns again".

Rosie did as she was asked and kissed the cow on her head as she went on her way.

It was getting late and it would soon be dark.

"Where shall I spend the night?" thought Rosie, looking around. Then she saw a very old lady leaning against a gate, which she had not seen before. "Good evening," said Rosie.

The old lady answered, "Good evening, my child. I wish everyone were as polite as you. What are you looking for?"

"I am looking for a place to stay the night," replied Rosie.

The lady smiled and said, "Then stay a little while and comb my hair. You can tell me all the things that you can do."

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"With pleasure" answered Rosie. Rosie began combing the old lady's hair, which was long and white.



After half an hour had gone by, the old woman said, "As you did not mind combing my hair, I will show you where you can stay and work." So Rosie thanked her and set out for a farm close by where she could work for the farmer's wife and milk cows and plant corn.

The next day, Rosie got up early and went into the dairy. "You must be hungry," said Rosie, patting each cow in turn. Rosie got some hay from the barn and while they were eating it, she swept out the dairy and lay clean straw on the floor. The cows were so happy, they stood very still while she sat on her stool and milked them.

When Rosie had finished milking and was going to get up, she saw a whole line of cats. They were black and white, tabby and ginger. In one voice they all cried, "We are very thirsty, please give us some milk!"

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"Dear little pussy cats, of course I will give you some," said Rosie. She went into the dairy, followed by all the cats and gave each one a bowl full of milk. The cats were so happy, they purred.

The farmer's wife was also happy with Rosie's work. She paid her more money and treated her like her own daughter.

One day, Rosie was asked by the farmer's wife to come into the kitchen. "I want you to take this sieve to the well and fill it with water. Then bring it back home to me without spilling one drop on the way."



Rosie's heart sank, as she knew it was impossible to carry water in a sieve. She did not say a word and took the sieve down to the well. Leaning over the side of the well, Rosie filled it to the top. But as soon as she lifted it up, all the water ran out of the holes. **Again and again** she tried, but not a drop would stay in the sieve. Rosie was about to give up when a flock of birds flew down from the sky. "Ashes! Ashes!" they twittered.

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Rosie looked at them for a moment then ran back to the kitchen and filled the sieve with ashes. Once again she dipped the sieve into the well, and guess what! This time not a drop of water fell!

"Here is the sieve," called Rosie, as she ran to the room where the farmer's wife was sitting.

"You are very smart or someone with magic has helped you." But Rosie kept quiet and the farmer's wife did not ask her any more questions.

Then one day, the farmer's wife said, "I have something more for you to do. Here are two balls of wool. One is white and the other is black. You must wash them in the river till the black one turns white and the white one turns black." Rosie took them to the river and washed hard for many hours, but as hard as she tried, they did not change at all. She was about to give up when she heard the rush of wings through the air and on every branch of the trees, sat a bird.

"Black to the east and white to the west!" they all sang. Rosie tried again. Picking up the black wool, she stood facing the east and dipping it in the river. In an instant it was as white as snow. Then turning to the west, she held the white wool in the water and it turned as black as a crow. Rosie smiled up at the birds as they flew swiftly away.

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At the sight of the wool the farmer's wife was lost for words. When she asked Rosie who had helped her, she got no reply. Rosie was afraid of getting her little friends into trouble.

Then one day, the farmer's wife came into the kitchen and said, "There is one more test you must do and if you pass, you will not have to do any more. Here are the balls of wool you washed. Weave them into a cloth that is as smooth as a king's robe, before it gets dark tonight."

When Rosie began to weave she found that the wool tangled and broke all the time.

"Oh no, I will never do it!" cried Rosie. Just then the door opened and the line of cats entered the room. They jumped on the loom, and wove so fast, that in a very short time, the cloth was fit for any king to wear. Rosie was so happy that she gave each cat a kiss on their head as they left the room one by one.



"Who has made you so wise?" asked the farmer's wife. Rosie only smiled and did not answer.

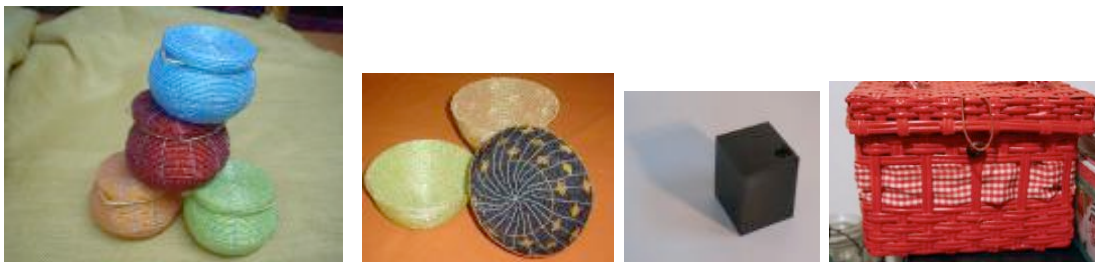
After a year, the farmer's wife told Rosie that she was free to go home but she hoped that she might stay with her.

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Rosie said gently, "I have been very happy here and thank you for being so kind to me, but I have a step-sister and a step-mother, and I must be with them again."

The farmer's wife looked at her for a moment, and then said, "Well, as you have worked so hard for me, I will give you a reward. Go upstairs and you will find many baskets. Choose the one you like best, but do not open it until you have put it in the place where you wish it to stay."

Rosie went upstairs and as soon as she got there, she saw all the cats waiting for her. They followed her one by one, to the room, which was filled with all sorts of baskets.



Rosie did not know which one to choose and went from one to the other, when she heard the cats say, "Choose the black! Choose the black!" The cats helped her look in all the corners, until she saw a black box that was so small and so black, she nearly missed it.



"This is the one I like best," said Rosie, carrying it down the stairs and out of the house. The farmer's wife smiled and they said good-bye.

Rosie set off, saying good-bye to the cows, the cats and the birds. They were all sad she was leaving.



She walked on and on until she was back home. When she entered the house, her step-mother and her step-sister, Violet, stared at her as if they had seen a ghost.

Rosie told them where she had been and that apart from her money, she had brought home a little basket, which she would like to set up in her bedroom.

"Give me the money and take your ugly little black box to the out-house" cried the step-mother in anger. Rosie was so scared, she hurried away, hugging her little basket to her chest.

The out-house was very dirty, as no one had been near it since Rosie had fallen down the well.

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Rosie scrubbed and swept until it was clean again and then she placed the little black basket on a small shelf in the corner.

"Now I may open it," she said to herself and she raised the lid.



She was almost blinded by the light that burst upon her. No one would have guessed that the little black box could have held crowns, necklaces and things made of pretty stones. They shone so brightly that the step-mother, Violet, and all the neighbours came running to see if the house was on fire! With everyone watching Rosie's step-mother could not steal the jewels for herself, so she made a plan to get another one just like it or perhaps an even richer one.

She told her own daughter, Violet to sit on the edge of the well, and then pushed her in, just as she had done to Rosie. Just as before, the pretty green field was at the bottom.

Violet walked the same path that Rosie had walked and she saw the same things that Rosie had seen.

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But... when the fence asked her not to hurt it, she laughed rudely, and pushed some of it over, so she could get through more easily.

When Violet had milked the cow, she drank as much as she could. Then she threw the rest on the grass and kicked the bucket to bits. Violet never heard any of them say, "You will pay for doing this to me!"

Later when she saw the old lady leaning against the gate, she walked by her without saying a word.

"Don't you have manners in your village?" asked the old lady.

"I can't stop and talk. I'm in a hurry," said Violet. "It is getting late, and I have to find a place to stay."

"Please stop and comb my hair for me," said the old lady, "and I will help you to find a place."

"Comb your hair! I have more important things to do!" Violet shouted, shutting the gate in the old lady's face and she went on her way. Again Violet did not hear the words, "You will pay for doing this to me!"

Violet arrived at the farm, and was asked to look after the cows and plant the corn as Rosie had. But Violet only did her work when someone was watching.

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Most of the time the dairy was dirty and the cows were hungry. Every one said they had never seen such thin cows or such poor milk.

As for the cats, she chased them away and did not give them enough milk, so they did not have enough energy to chase the rats and mice away. When the birds came to beg for some corn, violet threw her shoes at them, until they flew away to the trees in fright.

One day the farmer's wife called Violet to her.

"Every thing I have given you to do has been done badly," she said, "But I will give you another chancee. Take this sieve to the well, and fill it with water, then make sure you bring it back without spilling a drop."

Violet took the sieve to the well as Rosie had done, but no little birds came to help her and after dipping it in the well two or three times, she brought it back empty.

"I thought as much," said the farmer's wife angrily.

After a while the farmer's wife sent for Violet again and gave her the black and white yarn to wash in the river.

But there were no birds to tell her the secret of how the black would turn white, and the white, black, so she bought them back as they were.

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This time the farmer's wife shook her head in disgust, but Violet didn't care.

Three weeks later her third test came, and the yarn was given to her to spin, just as it had been given to Rosie.



There was no line of cats in the room to weave fine cloth and so at sunset Violet only came back with handfuls of dirty, tangled wool.

"It seems you cannot do anything!" said the farmer's wife and she left Violet alone.

When the year was up, Violet went to the farmer's wife to tell her that she wanted to go home. "You did not do anything I have asked of you, so you may go," said the farmer's wife. "Still, I will give you some payment. Go upstairs and choose one of the baskets. Make sure that you do not open it until you put it where you wish it to stay."

This was what Violet had been hoping for and she ran as fast as she could up the stairs. Again there were the baskets of many sizes and colours to choose from, but no line of cats to

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help her. Violet spotted a little black basket in the corner, just like the one Rosie had brought home, but she left it there.

"If there were so many jewels in that little black basket, this big red basket will hold twice as many," Violet said to herself. She snatched it up and sped off down the road, without even saying thank you or good-bye to any one.

"Come and see what I have brought home!" cried Violet, as she burst into the cottage holding the big red basket in both hands. Violet searched for a place for it to go, as her mother smiled greedily as the basket was so much bigger than Rosie's had been.



"It will look best here, no, here," she said, setting it first on one table and then on another. "I know, let's put it in the guest bedroom." So Violet and her mother carried it proudly upstairs and put it on the shelf where they opened the basket.

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As soon as the lid was opened a bright light leapt out just as before, but it was not from the shine of beautiful jewels, but from hot burning flames. The flames darted along the walls and burnt up the cottage and all that was in it, as well as, the step-mother and Violet.



As the bright light lit up the sky, all the neighbours rushed to see what it was, but they were too late. Only the out-house was left standing, and in spite of being rich, that is where Rosie lived happily for the rest of her days.

The End



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