

# Molly Whuppie and The Double-faced Giant

Flora Annie Steel

Once upon a time there was a man and his wife who were not over rich. And they had so many children that they couldn't find meat for them; so, as the three youngest were girls, they just took them out to the forest one day, and left them there to fend for themselves as best they might.

Now the two eldest were just ordinary girls, so they cried a bit and felt afraid; but the youngest, whose name was Molly Whuppie, was bold, so she counselled her sisters not to despair, but to try and find some house where they might get a night's lodging. So they set off through the forest, and journeyed, and journeyed, and journeyed, but never a house did they see. It began to grow dark, her sisters were faint with hunger, and even Molly Whuppie began to think of supper. At last in the distance they saw a great big light, and made for it. Now when they drew near they saw that it came from a huge window in a huge house.

"It will be a giant's house," said the two elder girls, trembling with fright.

"If there were two giants in it I mean to have my supper," quoth Molly Whuppie, and knocked at a huge door, as bold as brass. It was opened by the giant's wife, who shook her head when Molly Whuppie asked for victuals and a night's lodging.

"You wouldn't thank me for it," she said, "for my man is a giant, and when he comes home he will kill you of a certainty."

"But if you give us supper at once," says Molly craftily, "we shall have finished it before the giant comes home; for we are very sharp-set."

Now the giant's wife was not unkindly; besides, her three daughters, who were just of an age with Molly and her sisters, tugged at her skirts well pleased; so she took the girls in, set them by the fire, and gave them each a bowl of bread and milk. But they had hardly begun to gobble it up before the door burst open, and a fearful giant strode in saying:

"Fee-fi-fo-fum,

I smell the smell of some earthly one."

"Don't put yourself about, my dear," said the giant's wife, trying to make the best of it. "See for yourself. They are only three poor little girlies like our girlies. They were cold and hungry so I gave them some supper; but they have promised to go away as soon as they have finished. Now

be a good giant and don't touch them. They've eaten of our salt, so don't you be at fault!"

Now this giant was not at all a straightforward giant. He was a double-faced giant. So he only said,

"Umph!"

and remarked that as they had come, they had better stay all night, since they could easily sleep with his three daughters. And after he had had his supper he made himself quite pleasant, and plaited chains of straw for the little strangers to wear round their necks, to match the gold chains his daughters wore. Then he wished them all pleasant dreams and sent them to bed.

Dear me! He was a double-faced giant!

But Molly Whuppie, the youngest of the three girls, was not only bold, she was clever. So when she was in bed, instead of going to sleep like the others, she lay awake and thought, and thought, and thought; until at last she up ever so softly, took off her own and her sisters' straw chains, put them round the neck of the ogre's daughters, and placed their gold chains round her own and her sisters' necks.

And even then she did not go to sleep, but lay still and waited to see if she was wise; and she was! For in the very middle of the night, when everybody else was dead asleep and it was pitch dark, in comes the giant, all stealthy, feels for the straw chains, twists them tight round the wearers' necks, half strangles his daughters, drags them on to the floor, and beats them till they were quite dead; so, all stealthy and satisfied, goes back to his own bed, thinking he had been very clever.

But he was no match, you see, for Molly Whuppie; for she at once roused her sisters, bade them be quiet, and follow her. Then she slipped out of the giant's house and ran, and ran, and ran until the dawn broke and they found themselves before another great house. It was surrounded by a wide deep moat, which was spanned by a drawbridge. But the drawbridge was up. However, beside it hung a Single-Hair rope over which any one very light-footed could cross.

Now Molly's sisters were feared to try it; besides, they said that for aught they knew the house might be another giant's house, and they had best keep away.

"Taste and try," says Molly Whuppie, laughing, and was over the Bridge of a Single Hair before you could say knife. And, after all, it was not a giant's house but a King's castle. Now it so happened that the very giant whom Molly had tricked was the terror of the whole country-side, and it was to gain safety from him that the drawbridge was kept up, and the

Bridge of a Single Hair had been made. So when the sentry heard Molly Whuppie's tale, he took her to the King and said:

"My lord! Here is a girlie who has tricked the giant!"

Then the King when he had heard the story said, "You are a clever girl, Molly Whuppie, and you managed very well; but if you could manage still better and steal the giant's sword, in which part of his strength lies, I will give your eldest sister in marriage to my eldest son."

Well! Molly Whuppie thought this would be a very good downsit for her sister, so she said she would try.

So that evening, all alone, she ran across the Bridge of One Hair, and ran and ran till she came to the giant's house. The sun was just setting, and shone on it so beautifully that Molly Whuppie thought it looked like a castle in Spain, and could hardly believe that such a dreadful, double-faced giant lived within. However, she knew he did; so she slipped into the house unbeknownst, stole up to the giant's room, and crept in behind the bed. By and by the giant came home, ate a huge supper, and came crashing up the stairs to his bed. But Molly kept very still and held her breath. So after a time he fell asleep, and soon he began to snore. Then Molly crept out from under the bed, ever so softly, and crept up the bed-clothes, and crept past his great snoring face, and laid hold of the sword that hung above it. But alas! as she jumped from the bed in a hurry, the sword rattled in the scabbard. The noise woke the giant, and up he jumped and ran after Molly, who ran as she had never run before, carrying the sword over her shoulder. And he ran, and she ran, and they both ran, until they came to the Bridge of One Hair. Then she fled over it light-footed, balancing the sword, but he couldn't. So he stopped, foaming at the mouth with rage, and called after her:

"Woe worth you, Molly Whuppie! Never you dare to come again!"

And she, turning her head about as she sped over the One Hair Bridge, laughed lightly:

"Twice yet, gaffer, will I come to the Castle in Spain!"

So Molly gave the sword to the King, and, as he had promised, his eldest son wedded her eldest sister.

But after the marriage festivities were over the King says again to Molly Whuppie:

"You're a main clever girl, Molly, and you have managed very well, but if you could manage still better and steal the giant's purse, in which part of his strength lies, I will marry my second son to your second sister. But you need to be careful, for the giant sleeps with the purse under his pillow!"

Well! Molly Whuppie thought this would be a very good downsitting, indeed, for her second sister, so she said she would try her luck.

So that evening, just at sunset, she ran over the One Hair Bridge, and ran, and ran, and ran until she came to the giant's house looking for all the world like a castle in the air, all ruddy and golden and glinting. She could scarce believe such a dreadful double-faced giant lived within. However, she knew he did; so she slipped into the house unbeknownst, stole up to the giant's room, and crept in below the giant's bed. By and by the giant came home, ate a hearty supper, and then came crashing upstairs, and soon fell a-snoring. Then Molly Whuppie slipped from under the bed, and slipped up the bed-clothes, and reaching out her hand slipped it under the pillow, and got hold of the purse. But the giant's head was so heavy on it she had to tug and tug away. At last out it came, she fell backward over the bedside, the purse opened, and some of the money fell out with a crash. The noise wakened the giant, and she had only time to grab the money off the floor, when he was after her. How they ran, and ran, and ran, and ran! At last she reached the One Hair Bridge and, with the purse in one hand, the money in the other, she sped across it while the giant shook his fist at her and cried:

“Woe worth you, Molly Whuppie! Never you dare to come again!”

And she, turning her head, laughed lightly:

“Yet once more, gaffer, will I come to the Castle in Spain.”

So she took the purse to the King, and he ordered a splendid marriage feast for his second son and her second sister.

But after the wedding was over the King says to her, says he:

“Molly! You are the most main clever girl in the world; but if you would do better yet, and steal me from his finger the giant's ring, in which all his strength lies, I will give you my dearest, youngest, handsomest son for yourself.”

Now Molly thought the King's son was the nicest young prince she had ever seen, so she said she would try, and that evening, all alone, she sped across the One Hair Bridge as light as a feather, and ran, and ran, and ran until she came to the giant's house all lit up with the red setting sun like any castle in the air. And she slipped inside, stole upstairs, and crept under the bed in no time. And the giant came in, and supped, and crashed up to bed, and snored. Oh! he snored louder than ever!

But you know he was a double-faced giant; so perhaps he snored louder on purpose. For no

sooner had Molly Whuppie began to tug at his ring than ... My!...

He had her fast between his finger and thumb. And he sate up in bed, and shook his head at her and said, "Molly Whuppie, you are a main clever girl! Now, if I had done as much ill to you as you have done to me, what would you do to me?"

Then Molly thought for a moment and she said, "I'd put you in a sack, and I'd put the cat inside with you, and I'd put the dog inside with you, and I'd put a needle and thread and a pair of shears inside with you, and I'd hang you up on a nail, and I'd go to the wood and cut the thickest stick I could get, and come home and take you down and bang you, and bang, and bang, and bang you till you were dead!"

"Right you are!" cried the giant gleefully, "and that's just what I'll do to you!"

So he got a sack and put Molly into it with the dog and the cat, and the needle and thread and the shears, and hung her on a nail in the wall, and went out to the wood to choose a stick.

Then Molly Whuppie began to laugh like anything, and the dog joined in with barks, and the cat with mews.

Now the giant's wife was sitting in the next room, and when she heard the commotion she went in to see what was up.

"Whatever is the matter?" quoth she.

"Nothing, 'm," quoth Molly Whuppie from inside the sack, laughing like anything. "Ho, ho! Ha, ha! If you saw what we see you'd laugh too. Ho, ho! Ha, ha!"

And no matter how the giant's wife begged to know what she saw, there never was any answer but, "Ho, ho! Ha, ha! Could ye but see what I see!!!"

At last the giant's wife begged Molly to let her see, so Molly took the shears, cut a hole in the sack, jumped out, helped the giant's wife in, and sewed up the hole! For of course she hadn't forgotten to take out the needle and thread with her.

Now, just at that very moment, the giant burst in, and Molly had barely time to hide behind the door before he rushed at the sack, tore it down, and began to batter it with a huge tree he had cut in the wood.

"Stop! stop!" cried his wife. "It's me! It's me!"

But he couldn't hear, for, see you, the dog and the cat had tumbled one on the top of the other, and such a growling and spitting, and yelling and caterwauling you never heard! It was fair deafening, and the giant would have gone on battering till his wife was dead had he not caught sight of Molly Whuppie escaping with the ring which he had left on the table.

Well, he threw down the tree and ran after her. Never was such a race. They ran, and they ran, and they ran, and they ran, until they came to the One Hair Bridge. And then, balancing herself with the ring like a hoop, Molly Whuppie sped over the bridge light as a feather, but the giant had to stand on the other side, and shake his fist at her, and cry louder than ever:

“Woe worth you, Molly Whuppie! Never you dare to come again!”

And she, turning her head back as she sped, laughed gaily:

“Never more, gaffer, will I come to the castle in the air!”

So she took the ring to the King, and she and the handsome young prince were married, and no one ever saw the double-faced giant again.

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