



Tonight's Bedtime Story

Fairy Tales for Sleepy Children

presents

Little One Eye,
Little Two Eyes,
And little Three Eyes

From "the Fairy Book" by Miss Mulock



here was a woman who had three daughters, the eldest of whom was called Little One Eye, because she had only one eye in the middle of her forehead; the second, Little Two Eyes, because she had two eyes like other people; and the youngest, Little Three Eyes, because she had three eyes, one of them being also in the middle of the forehead. But because Little Two Eyes looked no different from other people, her sisters and mother could not bear her. They said, "You with your two eyes are no better than anybody else; you do not belong to us." They knocked her about, and gave her shabby clothes, and food which was left over from their own meals; in short, they vexed her whenever they could.

It happened that Little Two Eyes had to go out into the fields to look after the goat; but she was still quite hungry, because her sisters had given her so little to eat. She sat down on a hillock and began to cry, and cried so much that two little streams ran down out of each eye. And as she looked up once in her sorrow, a woman stood near her, who asked, "Little Two Eyes, why do you cry?"

Little Two Eyes answered, "Have I not need to cry? Because I have two eyes, like other people, my sisters and my mother cannot bear me; they push me out of one corner into the other, give me shabby clothes, and nothing to eat but what they leave. To-day they have given me so little that I am still quite hungry."

The wise woman said, "Little Two Eyes, dry your tears, and I will tell you something which will keep you from ever being hungry more. Only say to your goat, 'Little goat, bleat; little table, rise,' and a neatly-laid table will stand before you with the most delicious food on it, so that you can eat as much as you like. And when you are satisfied and do not want the table any more, only say, 'Little goat, bleat; little table, away,' and it will all disappear before your eyes." Then the wise woman went out of sight.

Little Two Eyes thought, "I must try directly if it is true what she has said, for I am much too hungry to wait." So she said, "Little goat, bleat; little table, rise;" and scarcely had she uttered the words, when there stood before her a little table, covered with a white cloth, on which was laid a plate, knife and fork, and silver spoon. The most delicious food was there also, and smoking hot, as if just come from the kitchen. Then Little Two Eyes said the shortest grace that she knew, "Lord God, be our guest at all times.—Amen," began to eat, and found it very good. And when she had had enough, she said as the wise woman had taught her—"Little goat, bleat; little table, away." In an instant the little table, and all that stood on it, had disappeared again. "That is a beautiful, easy way of housekeeping," thought Little Two Eyes, and was quite happy and merry.

In the evening, when she came home with her goat, she found a little earthen dish with food, which her sisters had put aside for her, but she did not touch anything—she had no need. On the next day she went out again with her goat, and let the few crusts that were given her remain uneaten. The first time and the second time the sisters took no notice; but when the same thing happened every day, they remarked it, and said, "All is not right with Little Two Eyes; she always leaves her food, and she used formerly to eat up everything that was given her; she must have found other ways of dining."

In order to discover the truth, they resolved that Little One Eye should go with Little Two Eyes when she drove the goat into the meadow, and see what she did there, and whether anybody brought her anything to eat and drink. So when Little Two Eyes set out again, Little One Eye came to her and said, "I will go with you into the field, and see that the goat is taken proper care of, and driven to good pasture."

But Little Two Eyes saw what Little One Eye had in her mind, and drove the goat into long grass, saying, "Come, Little One Eye, we will sit down; I will sing you something." Little One Eye sat down, being tired from the unusual walk and from the heat of the sun, and Little Two Eyes kept on singing, "Are you awake, Little One Eye? Are you asleep, Little One Eye?" Then Little One Eye shut her one eye, and fell asleep. And when Little Two Eyes saw that Little One Eye was fast asleep, and could not betray anything, she said, "Little goat, bleat; little table, rise," and sat herself at her table, and ate and drank till she was satisfied; then she called out again, "Little goat, bleat; little table, away," and instantly everything disappeared.

Little Two Eyes now woke Little One Eye, and said, "Little One Eye, you pretend to watch, and fall asleep over it, and in the meantime the goat could have run all over the world; come, we will go home." Then they went home, and Little Two Eyes let her little dish again stand untouched; and Little One Eye, who could not tell the mother why her sister would not eat, said, as an excuse, "Oh, I fell asleep out there."

The next day the mother said to Little Three Eyes, "This time you shall go and see if Little Two Eyes eats out of doors, and if anyone brings her food and drink, for she must eat and drink secretly."

Then Little Three Eyes went to Little Two Eyes, and said, "I will go with you and see whether the goat is taken proper care of, and driven to good pasture." But Little Two Eyes saw what Little Three Eyes had in her mind, and drove the goat into long grass, and said as before, "We will sit down here, Little Three Eyes; I will sing you something." Little Three Eyes seated herself, being tired from the walk and the heat of the sun, and Little Two Eyes began the same song again, and sang, "Are you awake, Little Three Eyes?" But instead of singing then as she should, "Are you asleep, Little Three Eyes?" she sang, through carelessness, "Are you asleep, Little Two Eyes?" and went on singing, "Are you awake, Little Three Eyes? Are you asleep, Little Two Eyes?" So the two eyes of Little Three Eyes fell asleep, but the third did not go to sleep, because it was not spoken to by the verse. Little Three Eyes, to be sure, shut it, and made believe to go to sleep, but only through slyness; for she winked with it, and could see everything quite well. And when Little Two Eyes thought that Little Three Eyes was fast asleep, she said her little sentence, "Little goat, bleat; little table, rise," ate and drank heartily, and then told the little table to go away again, "Little goat, bleat; little table away." But Little Three Eyes had seen everything. Then Little Two Eyes came to her, woke her, and said, "Ah! Little Three Eyes, have you been asleep? you keep watch well! come, we will go home." And when they got home, Little Two Eyes again did not eat, and Little Three Eyes said to the mother, "I know why the proud thing does not eat: when she says to the goat out there, 'Little goat, bleat; little table, rise,' there stands a table before her, which is covered with the very best food, much better than we have here; and when she is satisfied, she says, 'Little goat, bleat; little table away,' and everything is gone

again; I have seen it all exactly. She put two of my eyes to sleep with her little verse, but the one on my forehead luckily remained awake.”

Then the envious mother cried out, “Shall she be better off than we are?” fetched a butcher’s knife and stuck it into the goat’s heart, so that it fell down dead.

When Little Two Eyes saw that, she went out full of grief, seated herself on a hillock, and wept bitter tears. All at once the wise woman stood near her again, and said, “Little Two Eyes, why do you cry?”

“Shall I not cry?” answered she. “The goat who every day, when I said your little verse, laid the table so beautifully, has been killed by my mother; now I must suffer hunger and thirst again.”

The wise woman said, “Little Two Eyes, I will give you some good advice; beg your sisters to give you the heart of the murdered goat, and bury it in the ground before the house-door, and it will turn out lucky for you.” Then she disappeared, and Little Two Eyes went home and said to her sisters, “Dear sisters, give me some part of my goat; I don’t ask for anything good, only give me the heart.”

Then they laughed and said, “You can have that, if you do not want anything else.” Little Two Eyes took the heart, and buried it quietly in the evening before the house-door, after the advice of the wise woman.

Next morning, when the sisters woke, and went to the house-door together, there stood a most wonderful splendid tree, with leaves of silver, and fruit of gold hanging between them. Nothing more beautiful or charming could be seen in the wide world. But they did not know how the tree had come there in the night. Little Two Eyes alone noticed that it had grown out of the heart of the goat, for it stood just where she had buried it in the ground.

Then the mother said to Little One Eye, “Climb up, my child, and gather us some fruit from the tree.”

Little One Eye climbed up, but when she wanted to seize a golden apple, the branch sprang out of her hand; this happened every time, so that she could not gather a single apple, though she tried as much as she could.

Then the mother said, “Little Three Eyes, do you climb up; you can see better about you with your three eyes than Little One Eye can.”

Little One Eye scrambled down, and Little Three Eyes climbed up. But Little Three Eyes was no cleverer, and might look about her as much as she liked—the golden apples always sprang back from her grasp. At last the mother became impatient, and climbed up herself, but could touch the fruit just as little as Little One Eye or Little Three Eyes; she always grasped the empty air.

Then Little Two Eyes said, “I will go up myself; perhaps I shall prosper better.”

“You!” cried the sisters. “With your two eyes, what can you do?”

But Little Two Eyes climbed up and the golden apples did not spring away from her, but dropped of themselves into her hand, so that she could gather one after the other, and brought down a whole apron full. Her mother took them from her, and instead of her sisters, Little One Eye and Little Three Eyes, behaving better to poor Little Two Eyes for it, they were only envious because she alone could get the fruit, and behaved still more cruelly to her.

It happened, as they stood together by the tree, one day, that a young knight came by.

“Quick, Little Two Eyes,” cried the two sisters, “creep under, so that we may not be ashamed of you,” and threw over poor Little Two Eyes, in a great hurry, an empty cask that stood just by the tree, and pushed also beside her the golden apples which she had broken off.

Now, as the knight came nearer, he proved to be a handsome prince, who stood still, admired the beautiful tree of gold and silver, and said to the two sisters—

“To whom does this beautiful tree belong? She who gives me a branch of it shall have whatever she wishes.”

Then Little One Eye and Little Three Eyes answered that the tree was theirs, and they would break off a branch for him. They both of them gave themselves a great deal of trouble, but it was no use, for the branches and fruit sprang back from them every time. Then the knight said—

“It is very wonderful that the tree belongs to you, and yet you have not the power of gathering anything from it.”

They insisted, however, that the tree was their own property. But as they spoke, Little Two Eyes rolled a few golden apples from under the cask, so that they ran to the feet of the knight; for Little Two Eyes was angry that Little One Eye and Little Three Eyes did not tell the truth.

When the knight saw the apples he was astonished, and asked where they came from. Little One Eye and Little Three Eyes answered that they had another sister, who might not, however, show herself, because she had only two eyes, like other common people. But the knight desired to see her, and called out, “Little Two Eyes, come out.” Then Little Two Eyes came out of the cask quite comforted, and the knight was astonished at her great beauty, and said—

“You, Little Two Eyes, can certainly gather me a branch from the tree?”

“Yes,” answered Little Two Eyes, “I can do that, for the tree belongs to me.” And she climbed up and easily broke off a branch, with its silver leaves and golden fruit, and handed it to the knight.

Then the knight said, “Little Two Eyes, what shall I give you for it?”

“Oh,” answered Little Two Eyes, “I suffer hunger and thirst, sorrow and want, from early morning till late evening; if you would take me with you and free me, I should be happy.”

Then the knight lifted Little Two Eyes on to his horse, and took her home to his paternal castle; there he gave her beautiful clothes, food, and drink as much as she wanted, and because he loved her so much he married her, and the marriage was celebrated with great joy.

Now, when Little Two Eyes was taken away by the handsome knight, the two sisters envied her very much her happiness. “The wonderful tree remains for us, though,” thought they; “and even though we cannot gather any fruit off it, every one will stand still before it, come to us, and praise it.” But the next morning the tree had disappeared, and all their hopes with it.

Little Two Eyes lived happy a long time. Once two poor women came to her at the castle and begged alms. Then Little Two Eyes looked in their faces and recognised her sisters, Little One Eye and Little Three Eyes, who had fallen into such poverty that they had to wander about, and seek their bread from door to door. Little Two Eyes, however, bade them welcome, and was very good to them, and took care of them; for they both repented from their hearts the evil they had done to their sister in their youth.

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