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Opening extract from

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Two court ladies gently unfolded the lace and revealed a beautifully worked tablecloth large enough to cover the long table that was to be used for the wedding banquet.

Poor Giovanni and his bride looked quite downcast, as the king was just about to proclaim Antonio as his heir. But Antonio's wife asked permission to speak.

"Through his kindness in agreeing to marry a monkey," she said, "Antonio has freed me and my people from the spell that had been cast on us. In

gratitude and affection I give him my kingdom as my dowry. And so, if Your Majesty agrees, let Prince Giovanni rule here after you."

The king smiled his blessing and they all hugged each other. The happy couples lived long and visited each other in their palaces throughout their lives.



The Coyote and the Ravens



A long, long time ago, in the Canyon of the Cedars, there lived a coyote.

One day he went out, telling his family that he was going hunting, although his wife and children knew perfectly well that he was only going out for a stroll to see what was going on.

He ambled over towards Thunder Mountain, dragging his tail behind him carelessly, and began to scramble up the loose rocks of the foothills.

Now it just happened that this trail led past a little column of rock with a rounded top, and perched on this rock were two old ravens having an eye-race.

They did it like this. With his beak one of them would point out a pinnacle on the slope on the opposite side of the valley. Then he would croak:

Swift and sure as the raven flies,
Round that rock will go my eyes.

At this, by lowering his head, craning forward, and squeezing with all his might – 'Pop' – he would force his eyes out of their sockets and send them whizzing across the valley, making a turn round the rock, and then speeding back to him.

As they approached, the raven would swell up his throat and make a long 'Whooooh' noise, ready to receive his eyes back in their sockets with a soft 'Thunk!'



The Impudent Little Bird



There was once a cheeky little bird who went to a tailor and ordered a little woollen coat. He chose the cloth and picked an attractive design. Then he held his wings up while the tailor took his measurements.

After that he went to the hatter and ordered himself a smart little hat, and then to the shoemaker and ordered a fashionable pair of shoes.

And the bird was so cheeky that when the coat and the hat and the shoes were ready for him to collect he just said, "Send me the bill," and flew off without paying. This left the tailor, the hatter and the shoemaker feeling very annoyed.

The little bird considered himself so smart in his new things that he thought he'd go and show himself off in the palace gardens. He perched on a branch by the open window of the banqueting room, where the King was dining, and sang at the top of his voice:

No wonder I whistle; no wonder I sing —
I'm dressed
In my best,
And I look like a king.

At first the King was rather amused to hear this, but after the fifth time it began to irritate him a little, and at the five-hundredth time it made him very annoyed indeed.

"Someone silence that impudent little bird!" he thundered. "I order him to be caught and plucked and cooked and served to me at once."

Although the other birds all thought he was a show-off, they still felt sorry for him, and when he begged for a few feathers to cover himself with, everyone willingly gave him one.



He darted over to the royal carpenter's shop and rolled around in the glue for a bit before beginning to stick feathers on to himself.



It didn't matter to him that the feathers were all of different sizes and different colours. In fact, when he looked at his reflection in the pool of the fountain, he was convinced that he was even smarter than he had been in his new clothes that morning.

He was so pleased with himself that he couldn't resist flying back to the tree outside the banqueting room, where the King was just peeling himself an orange to take the nasty taste away.



Looking like an exploded rainbow, the little bird burst into song at the top of his voice:

The King tried to eat me; I made him feel sick.
He popped me in fast, but I popped out as quick!

The King rose, overturning his chair.

"That impudent little bird," he stormed. "Catch him again, pluck him again, chop him into pieces and cook him again!"

But the little bird was having none of that. Instead, he flew like the wind and didn't stop until he landed on the nose of the man in the moon.

Out of habit she said all this to her turkeys as they went along, and told them how disappointed she was.

In the days leading up to the festival the countryside was alive with activities. At each little house the poor turkey girl saw people cleaning and mending their splendid garments, or preparing delicacies for the feast, or making decorations for the streets. Everyone was so busy and so happy that it made her feel even more alone and unwanted, as she told her birds.

On the day of the festival as she drove her flock down to the plain, Matsaki was almost deserted because the people had all left early in order to reach Zuni in good time.

The turkey girl was wandering along deep in thought, trying to imagine the crowds swarming happily through the town and the music and the laughter, when her day-dream was suddenly interrupted.

The largest turkey strutted up to her and, fanning out his tail and spreading out his wings like a skirt, said (in his bubbly voice):

"Maiden mother, we know how you feel and we truly pity you. At night, in our cage, we have been talking about you. We feel that it is unfair that all the people of Matsaki should go to the celebrations in Zuni and leave you behind, so we have decided on a plan to help you.

"Early this afternoon when the Bird Dance is just beginning, you must drive us all back to our cage. There we shall make you the most beautifully dressed young woman in the land. And you shall go to Zuni, and everyone will admire you, and – most of all – the young men will beg you to join hands with them in the circle of the dance."

At first the turkey girl could not believe that a turkey could be talking to her in this way, but after a while it seemed the most natural thing in the world.

"But are you sure that you can do this, my dear turkeys?" she asked. "I don't think I could bear it if my hopes were raised for nothing."

