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THE SILENT LANGUAGE

Translation into English: Zoran Paunović

CHARACTERS

POOR GASHO

ELF

IRONJAW HAG

SORCERESS

BOGEYMAN FROM THE BOG

BUGABOO FROM BUKULYA

MOCKING WITCH

SNAKE

KING OF SNAKES

WIND

HORSE

BLACKY THE RAVEN

OWL, GEESE, DOG, PIG, PIGEON, WASP, FROGS

BIRD AND FLEDGLINGS

HEARTBREAKER HOLLY AND OTHER GRASSES

One day, a village servant and flunky, called Poor Gasho, is carving a hazel wand with his pen knife. The geese are grazing and walking through the puddles.

GEESE

Honk, honk, honk, honk, honk.

GASHO

Fie on you! Nothing but “honk honk honk honk”, all day long.
Don’t you know anything else?

GEESE

Honk, honk, honk, honk – plonk!

(Then frogs are heard from the swamp.)

FROGS

Croak, croak, croak, croak! Cro-cro-croak!

GASHO

Cro-cro-croak – oh, come on!
I am fed up with that tone.

(The wind starts blowing.)

WIND

Swish... swish.. swish...

GASHO

It’s getting cold. I shall light the fire and bake some potatoes.

(He takes a few branches and two or three stumps and sets the fire. Then he puts several potatoes in it.)

Corn bread and potatoes,
and on top some cheese.
It will be a treat,
it will be a feast!

(Suddenly a voice is heard from the fire.)

SNAKE

Oh, my friend, my brother!
Save me from this fire!

GASHO

Am I dreaming or what?
Something speaks from the stump?
Who is that speaking?

SNAKE

It's me, snake.

GASHO

Is this the truth, or just an illusion?
I've never encountered such a strange thing,
a snake that speaks like a human being.

SNAKE

Hiss – hiss – sssh!
I know all languages, including human.

GASHO

But how can that be?

SNAKE

I shall tell you that later on
'Cause it's becoming really dangerous.
The flames are so close and so murderous.

(Gasho hands out his speckled wand, and the snake coils itself around it.)

SNAKE

Take me in your arms
and let us to my father.
An ample reward from him you will get.
Hey, what's up now? Why are you upset?

GASHO

I fear you might bite me!

SNAKE

Have no fear. Trust me.

(Gasho puts the snake under his shirt.)

SNAKE

What is the matter with you? Why do you wriggle and writhe like that?

GASHO

It is not pleasant, pray you mind my word,
when under one's shirt a snake's voice is heard.

(They set off towards the woods.)

(Soon they arrive into a chamber, decorated with garish mosaics and carpets with scenes from serpents' life.)

SNAKE

Put me on that carpet.
I like to crawl on it.
Father soon will come.
Make yourself at ease,
sit wherever you please.

GASHO

Being somehow restless

I'd rather walk on.
What is that? A throne?

SNAKE

That's what it is.
My father is King of all of the snakes.
This means you have saved a real princess.
Therefore as a reward,
Take nothing else but silent language.

GASHO

But what is that?

SNAKE

You will understand what the geese honk about,
what the pigeons coo about,
what the calves moo about.
And then:
what the crows caw,
what the pigs oink,
what the frogs caw
what the hens cluck.
And also:
what the birds chirrup,
what the blackbirds whistle about,
what the quails yelp about,
what the partridges gobble about.
And moreover:
What the branches of the old lime squeal about,
what the bell rings about,
what the wasp buzzes about,
what the wind swishes about,
what the leaves rustle.
That, to put it short,
Is the silent language.

GASHO

Yes, that sounds funny,
But what about some money?

(The King of snakes enters.)

SNAKE

Father!

KING OF SNAKES

My dear daughter!
Tell me, who might be
that lad over there?

SNAKE

From imminent death
my life he did spare.
For that magnificent and glorious deed
an ample reward he deserves indeed.

KING OF SNAKES

Come, let me embrace you,
for you helped my daughter dear.
What might be your wish,
speak, that I may hear.

GASHO

I want the silent language.

KING OF SNAKES (*Hisses at his daughter.*)

Hisss-ssssh!
That you cannot have.
That is not for humans.

GASHO

When I ask for something,
I want only that.
Never will I change my mind,
on that you can bet.

(*Gasho prepares to leave.*)

KING OF SNAKES

Wait! You will get what you want! But mind my word:
Don't tell anyone about your secret might,
for if you do, you will lose it at once.
....Look straight in my eyes.

GASHO

Oh, how sleepy I am.

KING OF SNAKES

Now you are falling asleep slowly...
Your eyelids are so heavy,
you will fall asleep, and in your dream
you hear birds on top of the pine,
you hear pikes from the bottom of the river,
you hear the wind in the heath...
you hear the frogs in the swamp...
you hear...

(Gasho falls asleep.)

(Gasho wakes up in a field.)

GASHO

Ooooh.
I feel like my head is not mine.
What is that rustle near my ear?
Leaves and grass blades I now seem to hear!

VOICES OF GRASSBLADES

Chamomile grass I am,
Many illnesses I heal.
I am mint, known to all.
I am yarrow.
I am primrose.
Cowslip I am.
And I am nettle.
I am pansy.
And madder I am!

(Gasho sets off towards his cabin. His dog runs to greet him.)

DOG

Woof, woof!
Thieves and foxes
are prowling wow-round.
Woof, woof!
I am so wow-ful!

GASHO

Hallo, Shaggy!

DOG

Woof! Woof!

(Geese start to honk.)

GEESE *(Singing and dancing)*

Honk, honk, honk,
We like to honk through the pools,
and to go a-honk the road.
We like to honk and honk,
about everything and all!
We like to bathe, we like to swim,
and also to splash each o-honk-ther
to honk, to chatter
and dance in the even-honk-ning.

GANDER

My dear honkie!

GOOSE

My dear honkie!
My dear gander is oh-honk so beautiful.
My love for him so-oh-honk plentiful.

GANDER

Honk! Here comes our honk-master.

GOOSE

Some honk-master he is indeed. Just take a honk at him.
He will re-honk-main a servant for honk his life.
He is well known as Gasho the Poor,
whom every-honk-one ignores.

GANDER

Yes, but he doesn't give a honk,
plodding after us all day long,
moc-honk-ked and scor-honk-ed by everyone.
Every-honk-one laughs at him,
the poorest creature he is, it seems.

GOOSE

Yes, but if he only knew for those three caskets of go-honk-old!

GANDER

What go-honk-old, my dear honkie?

GOOSE

There in the grove
three caskets are buried.
If he digs them honk-out,
he will honk not be a honk-servant any more
but a honk-master he will become.

GANDER

He would get rid of honk of his debts
and honk of his cares and troubles.

GASHO

So I will not be poor anymore
but very rich theretofore!
What am I to do with all that gold?
I think I know: my house is old.
To build a new one, that is now my task,

so that each and every man might ask:
'To poor Gasho does this house belong?'
'He used to be poor, now he's rich and strong.'
Those village boys who laugh at me aloud
will have to respect me, and I will be proud.

(He hears birds in the tree.)

FLEDGELINGS

Tweet-tweet, this is it!
Life is so nice, tweedily-tweet.

GASHO

I'd like to hear what they are twittering about.

BIRD

Tweet tweet tweedily twain,
it is so nice to come home again.
Tweet tweet tweedily two
I wonder what my fledglings do.
Tweedily tweedily tweet tweet tweet,
perchance they'd like something to eat.

FLEDGELINGS

Twitter twitter, where did you linger
for five nights, our mother dear?

BIRD

Tweet tweedily tweet,
wherefore that fear?

FLEDGELINGS

We are so hungry. We want to eat.

BIRD

Tweedily tweet tweet twitters,
now you should also become hunters.
Now you should fly tweet tweet tweet
and look for little flies to eat,

and here and there a grain or two

FLEDGELINGS

But now we need sometweet from you.

BIRD

And I have brought you an ear of grain.

FLEDGELINGS

Yes, but whose is this strand of hair?

BIRD

Many thousands of tweets from here,
there lived a king's daughter dear.
She lived happily from day to day,
'till an evil elf took her away.
This golden strand of hair belongs to her!

FLEDGELINGS

How do you know that, tweet us please?

BIRD

Five days ago, as I was looking for food
I was tweetaken by the wind
Away from here, from my tweeting self,
right to the hut of that evil elf.
Being so frightened in that place aloof,
I found a shelter under the roof.
It was then that I saw that princess,
a nonpareil of beauty, as from a tweetest dream.

FLEDGELINGS

What was she doing, pray you tweet?

BIRD

Beside tweet window, combing her hair,
she was looking at tweet distance,
waiting for her saviour.

FLEDGELINGS

Then she was really sad, to the utmost tweet?

BIRD

Yes, for that ogre was constantly
urging her to marry him instantly.

FLEDGELINGS

Someone is hiding here, by tweet!

BIRD

It is Mr. Twitter, I know who tweet is.
Who do you eavesdrop, Mr. Twitter, please?

GASHO

Is there not a knight, I'm asking myself
Who might overpower that evil elf?
How might a man get there, say?

BIRD

I don'tweet know. The wind took me there.
And on my re-tweet-turn, the fog was so dense
that I couldn't see anything else.

GASHO

To hell with three caskets
of gold and silver!
I must save the princess
from that elf thither!

BIRD

Tweet just tweet, you just twitter,
get away from here, we don't need you hither!

FLEDGELINGS

The days are get-tweet-ting shorter,

the nights are get-tweet-ting colder,
the food is more dif-tweet-ficult to find,
the autumn will soon tweet arrive,
it is tweet time to set off for south.

BIRD

But firstweet to fly you must learn.
Tweet tweet, swing on that twig,
Spread your wings, fly, and set off for the sky.

GASHO

My heart wrings when I think of the poor princess!
I am going to free her!

HEARTBREAKER HOLLY (*Singing*)

I am heartbreaker holly grass!
Whoever has love troubles, a lad or lass,
should make tea from heartbreaker holly
and drink it before meal.
It's better to drink heartbreaker tea
than round the world to roam free.

(Gasho is preparing for the journey.)

PIG

Oink-oink.
It's so-oink far from here.
That elf is hor-oink-rible indeed.

(Gasho is putting his boots on.)

DOG

Yes, he is wow-ful, so don't go there.

GASHO

As soon as I put on that golden strand of hair...

DOG

You said wow how I am in love!

Oh, come on!

(Gasho has put his boots on. He jumps and thumps on the ground.)

GASHO

Do you hear what the boots say? They say thump-ho!
That means one thing: it's time to go!

DOG

Oh, wow stubborn he is! Wow oh wow!

(And so Gasho sets off on a long journey.)

GASHO *(Sings)*

At the crack of dawn
I set off on my own
to look for a hut
that stands right beside
a canyon steep
an abyss black,
but what the heck!

(A wolf's howling is heard.)

And then, near a shady grove,
I happened to hear an awful howl.
The birds stopped singing, stunned,
and from fear my horse shunned.
But I said: wait, just wait,
I think I can deal with that.

(He puts two fingers in his mouth and utters a piercing whistle.)

Whenever my loud whistle I utter
the beasts from fear begin to stutter.
At the crack of dawn
I set off on my own
to look for a hut

that stands right beside
a canyon steep
an abyss black,
but what the heck!

(Gasho comes to a swamp.)

FROGS *(Singing)*

A pool, a puddle, croak croak,
so green, so nice, so croak.

FIRST FROG

There will be rain, croak, go find an oak
and hide croakself under
for you'll get croaking wet.

GASHO

I'm looking for the hut of the evil elf
Can you croak me where it is?

FIRST FROG

I croak not know.

GASHO

Oh, come on, croak me, please.

FIRST FROG

There is a learned frog among us. Let us ask her.

THE LEARNED FROG

Who is that talking in the croaked frogs' language?
Where are you heading, boy?

GASHO

I'll croak you presently.
I'm looking for the hut of the evil elf.

THE LEARNED FROG

The roads are so long,
croakingly long.
The hills are so steep,
croakingly steep.
The pools are so deep,
croakingly deep.
Ogres live there, so croakingly mean.
The elf is also a mean croakture.
He catches swimmers by their legs
and drags them down into the pool.

GASHO

And where does he live?

THE LEARNED FROG

I don't know that. His friend Bugaboo lives in the water,
but where the elf lives, I do not know. Ask beasts and
birds from the wood!

GASHO

Look, there's a wasp in the pool. It's drowning.

FROG

Its wings are wet.

WASP

I am not a wasp! I am a horrible hornet!

GASHO

Do you buzzhops know
where the elf lives.

WASP

Buzz of course I know. He lives up and down!

GASHO

And where is that?

WASP

It's not too near buzz not too far either.

GASHO

Some help, indeed!

(Gasho goes on. Suddenly he sees a raven caught in the trap.)

RAVEN

Caw-caw!

GASHO

What is that noise?
Oh, there's a raven caught in the trap.
I'll set him free and let him go on,
so that his crow is not left alone.
Hallo, there!

RAVEN

Hallo. I am Blacky the raven,
as black as soot,
a hundred years old.

GASHO

An old chap indeed! How did you get caught!

RAVEN

I was caw greedy and c-caw-lumsy,
while building a nest on a caw-branch
I saw a piece of c-caw-cheese.
For quite a while I cawed around it,
and then, as I went down to peck it,
something c-caw-caught me all of a sudden.
But where are you heading so caw-quickly?

GASHO

I am looking for the hut where the elf stays put.

RAVEN

I've heard of him. He's a great crook.
I know that some king's daughter he took.
And that the king offers a huge reward
to the one who caw-could free her.

GASHO

I will free her.

RAVEN

Don't pre-caw-tend to be a hero.
You will get croaked! You will perish!

GASHO

You ungrateful creature!

RAVEN

Wherefore that haste? Hear what I tell you.
There stands the Sorceress' cabin! She will help you
to find the hut where the elf stays put!

GASHO

Thank you. Goodbye, Blacky!

(Gasho soon arrives to the Sorceress' cabin. He sees her murmuring some unintelligible words.)

SORCERESS

Three, three, three,
red oak big auk bad bag
bud cob buy dye eat bun
all owl dig fig few mew
gin gig hag hen hie hog
jab jay kid kea lam lad

lay lea lob log bug bog

GASHO

What are you doing?

SORCERESS

I'm casting spells! Looking at the future!

GASHO

But where are your cards?

SORCERESS

Others can use cards for prophesying, or beans, or molten lead...
But I prophesy with three-letter words.

GASHO

But why three and not two or four?

SORCERESS

Because three is both beginning and end.
When fire is burnt in the fire
number three remains!
That is why three-letter words are magic words.
They keep all secrets.

GASHO

Does that mean that with them it is possible to reveal the secrets of magicians and elves?

SORCERESS

All of us witches and magicians, all the fairies and elves, swore at our congregation that they will hide the solutions of all their secrets and charms into three-letter words.
If you handle these words patiently, they will tell you everything you want to know...
For three years now, I've been collecting and handling three-letter words in order to find out where one fairy is hidden...

GASHO

Tell me what your words see on my path.

SORCERESS

Three, three, three...
red oak big auk bad bag
bud cob buy dye eat bun
Fit man has ire.

GASHO

That's me!

SORCERESS

See: ilk gal for one pal...

GASHO

You hit the nail on the head! That is the king's daughter who was snatched by the forest elf. Could you please help me find his hut?
I've been looking for it for quite a while, but couldn't find it anywhere.

SORCERESS

You can go on looking for it 'till times are done and you won't find it because it is hidden by magic charms. Maybe you have passed by it hundreds of times, without being able to see it.

GASHO

Ask magic words whether they have seen it.

SORCERESS

Pay the price!

GASHO (*Gives her two coins.*)

This is all I have.

SORCERESS

I accept... Three, three, three...
red oak big auk bad bag
bud cob buy dye eat bun
all owl dig fig few mew

gin gig hag hen hie hog
jab jay kid kea lam lad
lay lea lob log bug bog
put top hut but for bad elf!

GASHO

I take it to mean that the elf's hut is on top of some hill?

SORCERESS

Exactly so.

GASHO

Everybody knows that. Fairies and elves like to dwell
on tops of hills and hillocks.

SORCERESS

I told you what the magic words have told me.
Try it yourself.
Patiently compose magic three-letter words
and they will be composed into a solution, sooner or later...

GASHO

I will try!

(Gasho continues his journey.)

GASHO *(Sings)*

I am a hero, an old-fashioned knight,
I have a horse that never takes fright.
And here in my bag, indeed,
I have everything a hero might need:
an apple or two
and some clothes too.
I am a hero, an old-fashioned knight,
I have a horse that never takes fright.

(Suddenly he hears someone laughing at him, repeating his words in mockery.)

MOCKING WITCH

'I am a hero, an old-fashioned knight,
I have a horse that never takes fright.'

GASHO

Whose is that hump behind the stump?
Who says swoosh behind the bush?
Who's trying to mock me
or perhaps to shock me?
Who is chiding and deriding?
In bushes and ravines who is that hiding?

MOCKING WITCH

It's me – the mocking witch!

(The Mocking Witch steps in front of Gasho.)

MOCKING WITCH

You are a hero, an old-fashioned knight,
but where's your horse, that never takes fright?

GASHO

Oh, it's just a song I like!

MOCKING WITCH

Hey, hero, hold on for a while.
Where are you heading?

GASHO

I am looking for the hut where the elf stays put.
Do you know where it is?

MOCKING WITCH

Of course I know. He lives in Theretown.

GASHO

Theretown! Never heard of. Is there some bigger place near it?

MOCKING WITCH

Oh, yes, there is. Nowheretown.

GASHO

So Theretown is near Nowheretown.

(He wanders for some time, looking for Theretown near Nowheretown, and then he meets Mocking Witch again.)

MOCKING WHICH

Where to, young lad?

GASHO

I am looking for Theretown near Nowheretown.

MOCKING WITCH

Never heard of such places. And why do you want to go there?

GASHO

I am looking for the black hilltop on which a hut stands in which an elf lives.

MOCKING WITCH

I will help you. I see that you are a good and honest chap.
The elf lives up there, on the top of that hill. His name is Thereman.

(Gasho goes to the place she showed him. He is awaited by the Mocking Witch, disguised.)

GASHO

Good morning. Does Thereman live here?

MOCKING WITCH

No. Here lives Hereman.

GASHO

It must be a mistake. So there is no Thereman here?

MOCKING WITCH

You are looking for Thereman, a good friend of mine? He lives there, on that hill, on the other side of the canyon.

GASHO

I shall go there.

(Again he goes to the opposite hill. Again he is awaited by the Mocking Witch in disguise.)

GASHO

Hey, Thereman!

MOCKING WITCH

What might Thereman be doing here? Here lives Hereman, and as for Thereman, Thereman lives there.

(Gasho again sets off towards the opposite hill.)

GASHO

Does Thereman live in this place?

MOCKING WITCH

Thereman? In THIS place? Here lives Thisman!

GASHO

I am all confused now.
From one hill to another,
from morning till dusk,
from one day to the other,
from Hereman to Thereman,
from Thereman to Thisman,
the elf is nowhere to be found
above or below the ground!
That Mocking Witch made me a fool!

(Gasho goes on through the forest. He meets an old woman.)

GASHO

Good morning, granny.

IRONJAW HAG

Good morning, my sweet one.

GASHO

What a good old woman. Reminds me of my granny.
She used to call me 'my sweet one'.

IRONJAW HAG

Come closer, my sweet one.

(When Gasho comes closer, she tries to hook and snatch him with her cane. Gasho manages to escape.)

GASHO

This granny is uncanny!

IRONJAW HAG

Welcome, my sweet pigeon, to Ironjaw Hag!

(She runs after him, grinding her teeth. She nearly catches him, but Gasho manages to climb up a tree.)

GASHO

Well, all right.

IRONJAW HAG

Well, all right.

GASHO

I'm in a safe place now.

IRONJAW HAG

He's in a safe place now.

GASHO

She would surely have caught me, since I am so tired.

IRONJAW HAG

He would surely have escaped me, since I am so old.

GASHO

This is much better.

IRONJAW HAG

This is much better.

GASHO

I am safe here until I think of something.

IRONJAW HAG

He is safe there until I think of something.

GASHO

She can do me no harm till then.

IRONJAW HAG

He cannot escape till then.

GASHO

She can only go around the tree and that is all.

IRONJAW HAG

He can only sit on the tree and that is all.

GASHO

Go and find yourself some other food. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

IRONJAW HAG

A bird in the hand cannot fly away, so you have no place to go.

GASHO

You just go on waiting.

IRONJAW HAG

You just go on sitting.

GASHO

I have all the time in the world.

IRONJAW HAG

I have all the time I need.

GASHO

She will get hungry and then she'll have to go.

IRONJAW HAG

He will get hungry and then he'll have to come down.

GASHO

I am not hungry at all.

IRONJAW HAG

I am also not hungry at all.

GASHO

In fact, as soon as she mentioned hunger, I became hungry.

IRONJAW HAG

In fact, as soon as he mentioned hunger, I became even hungrier.

GASHO

I shall wait for her to fall asleep and then I'll sneak out.

IRONJAW HAG

I shall wait for him to fall asleep and then he will fall into my mouth.

GASHO (*Yawns.*)

I am not sleepy at all

IRONJAW HAG (*Yawns.*)

I am not sleepy at all.

GASHO

In fact, as soon as she mentioned sleep, I felt sleepy.

IRONJAW HAG

In fact, as soon as he mentioned sleep, I felt sleepy.

GASHO (*Sings*)

Sleep, o sleep, my dear Ironjaw Hag.

IRONJAW HAG

Sleep, o sleep, my sweet one.

GASHO

I shall try to charm her with magic three-letter words.

...Three, three, three... aid boy ail, cad can dip doc, eat egg ere elf,

IRONJAW HAG

What do you say, my sweet one? ... He is already sleepy, he murmurs in his sleep...

GASHO

Fig emu fir get gnu and hen, hex hun irk ice jab jay.
Lag lad can lam but lib loe too.
Nag old man mow lea pen ode nab owl paw pal,
poh pig rag ram rap rat...
Sssshhh! She fell asleep. Maybe those three letter words are really magic.

(Gasho carefully climbs down from the tree and continues his sojourn.)

(In the meantime, in the Elf's hut, the Princess has been knitting a sweater for her still unknown saviour, singing all the time. The Elf enters.)

ELF

Who is the greatest? Who is the three-est? Look at me straight in the eye. Tell me who is the three-est?

PRINCESS

You, master,
you are the greatest,
you are the three-est.

ELF

In our congregation,
in the Deer Valley,
I was given the title of the three-est!
It is the highest elfin title!
Now I only need your acceptance.

PRINCESS

No, no, no!

ELF

I shall fulfill all your wishes, should you accept to be my bride.
Do you want the prettiest flowers that bloom on mountain fields?
'The prettiest flowers from who knows where, let them all be here instead.'

(All of a sudden, the flowers appear in front of the Princess.)

Do you want the most beautiful pearls from the sea? 'The most beautiful pearls from who knows where, let them all be here instead.'

(The pearls appear in front of the Princess, but she barely looks at them.)

Perchance you do not like my hut? Ask for the most magnificent castle this world has ever seen, and I will get it for you. 'Let the most beautiful castle from who knows...'

PRINCESS *(Interrupts him.)*

I don't need anything from you, ogre!

ELF

Everything that on earth earhens,
everything that in water waters,
everything that in forest forests,
everything I can get you from anywhere.
I am the one who tops on top.
I am the greatest,
I am the three-est.

PRINCESS

Is there not a hero, is there not a knight,
to free me from this Elf, save me from my plight?

(Suddenly some banging is heard at the door of the hut.)

ELF

Bogeyman from the bog and Bugaboo from Bukulya, or
the Water Bull.
I greet you with a warm welcome. Let me introduce you to my friends.

BOGEYMAN *(Introduces himself to the Princess.)*

There, where even the cock's crowing is not heard,
nor bells, barking or mewing.
There, away from every cave and den,
there live I, the Bogeyman.

I hide inside hollows and forks
of beeches and willows.
I have an awful voice
that really bellows.

Boo!

In the booest night,
right there around midnight
between the houses, along the path long
you can hear me thumping along.

I trod and plod all through the night,
I like to cause fear and fright,
to boo and shoo, to walk and run,
and all the time I do have fun.

When people have rest
in their cozy rooms,
I come to them
and utter my boos.

In vain the cock crows,
no help from bolts and doors,
anyway I will get to you
and utter my horrible boo!

I like to go everywhere
and with my boos weaklings to scare!

BUGABOO (*Introducing himself to the Princess.*)

Whirlpools and pools,
waterfalls and water wells,
these are the places
where Bugaboo dwells.

My castle is on Bukulya
at the bottom of a whirlpool!
And all the shepherds there
think I am mean and cruel!

Two horrible horns
my head adorn.
My voice is deep and booming,
very fit for my booing.

PRINCESS

At my father's court
we have three learned sages,

they say that bogeymen
and bugaboos don't exist.

BUGABOO

They are foo-foo-fools!

BOGEYMAN

I have heard certain people
(otherwise very dear and sweet)
saying bogeymen do not exist,
they are the creatures no one can meet.

But what they think and feel
I'd really like to know,
when I come to them
shouting my awful boo.

Surely they will be able to conclude then
Whether there are such things as bogeymen.

ELF

How do you like my chosen one?

BUGABOO

She's pretty as a flowerBLOOM.

BOGEYMAN

A real BOO-uty.

BUGABOO

Time for you to get married.

BOGEYMAN

Will there be wedding soon?

BUGABOO

We shall prepare a booming feast.

PRINCESS

Never, never, never.

ELF

Just for her joy and pleasure
I'm doing everything,
but she always postpones
the day of our wedding.

BOGEYMAN

Give her some hard work to boo,
so she will learn to appreciate you.

ELF

Go dig the garden, harvest the grain,
Possibly it will make you a bit more tame.
Go spin the flax, shear the sheep,
your pride on end it will keep.
Go spin the wool, clean every room,
and it will bring you to your wits soon.

PRINCESS

This ghastly weirdo
gives me hardest work to do
in order to make me marry him.
Is there not a hero, is there not a knight
to free me from this Elf, save me from my plight?

(Gasho was going through the woods, composing magic words, attempting to discover the secret of the Elf's hut.)

Fox mux art, nob ban nod, bad axe yon noy big owl,
nub oaf and buy cat, opt our oak out, pie pal dig pot...
It doesn't work...
In these three-letter words
lies the solution of the magic spell.
It hides the place where he dwells.

Listen to this: rax red ram ere ebb, say fie set saw fop fog and rip hem...

(After these words, the wind is heard.)

WIND

Swissshhhh.... Swissshhhh....

GASHO

Maybe the wind knows?
... Hey, wind, how can I find the enchanted hut?

WIND

Look on the top, but also look at the bottommmmm....

GASHO

On the top of the hill – a cabin.
At the bottom of the river – sand...
That wouldn't do...

WIND

Not like that.
Look at the bottom of what is on the top,
and on the top of what is at the bottommmmm.....

GASHO

Oh, how complicated that is..
On the top ... on the top... *(he looks up)*
on the top of the hill – just mist...
at the bottom of mist – a field...
at the bottom of the field – a well *(he notices the well)*
at the bottom of the well...
at the bottom of the well the secret is hidden!
I will go down into the well! *(He goes down, then he comes back.)*
... What is at the bottom of the well when there is nothing there?

WIND

Wait for the water to calm down and then look better!

GASHO

Indeed. At the bottom of the well, an oak is reflected!

(He looks at the oak.)

And on the top of the oak there is a nest,
at the bottom of the nest there must be an egg,
and in that egg the secret is hidden!

(Gasho climbs up, takes an egg from the nest, but does not look content.)

On the top of the egg, it reads:

‘You should look up, but also look down!’

It means I must start all over again!

Above the earth – clouds

under the clouds – a mountain...

Above the mountain – a tree

... Under the tree – a well

above the well – a drinking fountain...

And on the fountain, it reads:

‘You should look at the beginning, but also look at the end.’

So I am at the beginning of the beginning again. What is at the beginning?

WIND

At the beginning of the search – nothing less but the whole world...

GASHO

At the end of the world... what is at the end of the world?

At the end of the world – the enchanted forest!

At the beginning of the enchanted forest – a cave...

at the end of the cave – a field...

at the beginning of the field – a path...

at the end of the path – a heath...

at the beginning of the heath – a brook...

at the end of the brook – a pool...

At the beginning of the pool – a cabin...

At the end of the cabin – a shelf

at the beginning of the shelf – a book

at the end of the book it reads:

‘At the Rtanj mountain up there
music and turmoil everywhere...

When you cross three wells,
three crossroads, three anthills,
then you will reach the hut
where the Elf doth dwell!
On its highest top

you will see three elms...
and then the hut, like a spell...'

(The mist disperses and the Elf's hut appears.)

GASHO

Hey!
Is there anybody there?

ECHO

Where... where... where...

(Gasho whistles, and the whistle is repeated three times... Gasho bangs at the door three times.)

GASHO *(To himself.)*

It ought to be here.
There are those three elms...

(The Princess comes out.)

PRINCESS

Everything is in threes here, good knight
Three grapevines in front of the hut,
three bolts on the gate.
And all the objects are secret signs:
three caskets, three jugs,
triple candlesticks.
Three boxes, three quinces,
all in threesomes, not a single pair.
And beside the fire, on a three-legged stool,
the master himself is sitting there.

GASHO

I came here to set you free, beauty!

PRINCESS

You are my saviour,
loyal and true!
I was so unhappy

before I met you.
I didn't drink, I didn't eat,
I was just crying and that was it!

And I kept on dreaming
of a brave lad,
a courageous dare-do
to defeat this weirdo!

GASHO (*To himself.*)

Take care how you speak to the Princess!
... As soon as I heard
of what happened to her,
though a quiet person,
I seethed with anger!

And that very moment
I started my trip,
Although many people
Warned me against it.

Many dangers I met,
but I despised them
and I kept going further
went on to meet my fate.

PRINCESS

This ghastly weirdo
gives me hardest work to do
in order to make me marry him!

I cleaned the house, dusted the floors,
washed all the windows and doors.
But I am too tender
for such an ordeal,
how tough it has been
my bruises reveal.

I looked at the distance
for someone to save me,
but there was no one there
and I started to despair.

GASHO

I made haste as much as I could,
never slept in a bed,
never sat at a table,
but I was picking wild fruit,
eating it along the way.

The hills I climbed, the rivers I swam,
hurting myself now and then.
I did my best this top to find,
tore up my clothes, but I don't mind.

PRINCESS

Though' I was tired
(never took a rest),
hoping for the better
I made you this sweater.

(She hands him the sweater. At that very moment, a swishing sound is heard. The Elf has entered.)

ELF

I am so tired after this hunt.
Someone is here, it seems
What might be a mortal doing,
here on Rtanj Mountain.

PRINCESS

It is my cousin.
He came here to see me.

ELF

He didn't come to see you
but to take you away.
(To Gasho.) For more than a month
I haven't eaten a man.
What are you doing here, say!

GASHO

And I am asking you why you snatched the King's daughter.

ELF

I did it just to see
how you are going to feel!
Ha, ha, ha.
Why did you come, say!

GASHO (*Frightened, apologizing.*)

I didn't want it,
but my boots insisted.
They are so old,
but they made me go.

ELF

Don't prattle and don't linger here,
it would be wise for you to disappear
before I catch you. Take care of yourself,
for you know, I am a very strong elf.
Look at these horrible paws
and even more horrible jaws,
just think of what will happen to you
if you should fall into my claws.
Get away quickly, take my advice,
Or else I might pluck out your eyes.

GASHO

Bragging and boasting,
that's all you know,
mere muscular power,
no wisdom at all.

ELF

Do you want to tell me
that my head serves
just to hold my hair, nose and ears?
Well, let us see then who of us is smarter,
I'll ask you a question, and if you know the answer,
You can take the Princess
wherever you want to.

GASHO

Go on, ask me!

ELF

Look at these two golden coins
that in my palms I'm going to hide.
Tell me which one is bigger
the left or the right?

BIRD

Rightweet, rightweet.

GASHO

The right!

ELF

Let us repeat it, you saw when I hid them.
Which one is in my right hand now? The smaller or the bigger?

HORSE

Neigher, neigher!

GASHO

The bigger!

ELF

You knew that,
someone has told you.
But here is another riddle:
tell me where the magic ring is
where elves and fairies meet?
Is it near or is it far?

WASP

Buzznear... buzznear...

GASHO

It is near!

ELF

Yes, it is.
At the Rtanj Mountain up there,
music and turmoil everywhere.
But where is it: in the north or south?

PIDGEON

Coo-outh... coo-outh...

GASHO

In the south!

ELF

You guessed that too.
But where exactly: at the bottom or on the top?

WIND

Swishtop... swishtop...

GASHO

At the top!

ELF

Exactly so. Mountaintops and hilltops are favourite places of fairies and elves.
Tell me one more thing: what kind of dance do we prefer:
slow (*he starts dancing slowly*) or fast (*he starts dancing fast*)?

WASP

Buzzfast... buzzfast...

GASHO

Fast!

ELF

That's right.

I like to dance fast
I like to jump!
... This chap knows everything.
How can I outwit him?
Just one more riddle.

(He takes the Princess to another room. Then he comes back with five identical golden-haired girls.)

One of them is real,
the others are illusions.
If you find the real one
You can take the Princess!

(Gasho goes from one girl to another, trying to recognize the Princess. Each of them tries to persuade him that she is the right one. Each of them speaks the same words)

‘The solution here
is easy to find.
I’m the King’s daughter,
bear that in mind.’

(Gasho passes by the girls for the second time, and when he stops by the second from the left, he hears the bird.)

BIRD

Tweet-tweet-twitter, that’s the King’s daughter!

GASHO *(To the bird)*

Thanks for your help.
... That’s the King’s daughter!
... I’m fed up with stupid riddles.
(To the Princess.) Let us go!

(Gasho and the Princess set off, leaving the Elf defeated and confused.)

(The old Ironjaw Hag enters the Elf’s hut.)

ELF

What are you doing here, you old hag?

IRONJAW HAG

Everyone is so rude, ah, to the poor old Ironjaw!
Master of spirits though you are,
you were cheated by a village lad!
The whole forest knows about that...

ELF

How did he cheat me?

He knows the silent language:
beasts from the forest, frogs and birdies,
they helped him solve
all of your riddles!

ELF

Hey, my friend, Bogeyman from the bog!
And you, my friend, Bugaboo from Bukulya!

BOGEYMAN

Boo! Here I am!

BUGABOO

Boo! And me boo!

ELF

Go chase them! Go chase them!

BOGEYMAN

I like chasing.

BUGABOO

It will boo great fun.

(Gasho and the Princess are hurrying to leave the Elf's territory. Suddenly a bird from a branch is heard.)

BIRD

Chirrup-chirrup-chase!

RAVEN

Caw-caw-chase!

Hide among the branches, fast!

(Gasho and the Princess hide themselves quickly. Bogeyman and Bugaboo pass by their hiding place without noticing them. Gasho and the Princess then set off in the opposite direction. But the Elf, Bogeyman and Bugaboo are soon on their trail again.)

GASHO

Here they are again!

Where can we hide now!

PRINCESS

The forest is too far...

GASHO

But the cave is here. Let us hide in there!

(They enter the cave. Soon the chasers arrive too. They go right towards the cave and it seems that they will discover the fugitives immediately.)

BOGEYMAN

They must be somewhere here!

ELF

Wait!

In vain we try

for he knows the silent language.

He knows what the wind and the grass say,
understands rustling of leaves.

He talks to beasts and birds.

BOGEYMAN

It means that they tell him everything,
so that we tread and plod in vain.

ELF

Silent language, that's nothing special.
We'll find a way to deal with that!
I forgot more than he will ever learn.
That silent language is as very simple.
O, cave, please, can I ask you something.

'CAVE' (*It is Gasho speaking.*)

Go on, ask!

ELF

Where have Gasho and the King's daughter gone?

'CAVE'

I haven't seen them, but I'll ask the owl...

'OWL' (*In fact, the Princess.*)

I saw them half an hour ago.
They have gone perfectly left.
If you hurry up, they cannot escape.

ELF

So, do I speak the silent language, eh?

(The Elf and his mates go left. Gasho and the Princess exit from the cave and go right.)

(The Elf and his friends are already tired from their futile chase.)

BOGEYMAN

Oooh, I am boo tired.

BUGABOO

I am booth tired and conboosed.

ELF

We shall not chase them any more.
Let us set an ambush.

BUGABOO

I like so ambooshes and booby traps,
for they are so exciting!
I shall hide boohind a boosh,
And then I'll jump out and shout: BOO!

ELF

I have a better plan. I shall turn into hunger.

BUGABOO

And I shall turn into a green field.

BOGEYMAN

And I shall turn into an apple tree full of ripe apples.

ELF

They will get hungry...

BUGABOO

And then they will see red apples on the branch...

BOGEYMAN

Then they will pick them...

ELF

And with the first bite they will fall down, poisoned...

(They do as they planned. Gasho and the Princess have been running. Suddenly, the Princess becomes enormously hungry.)

PRINCESS

I am so hungry... I feel dizzy from hunger...

GASHO

I am also hungry, but I bear it better.

PRINCESS

There is an apple tree full of apples.

(She picks an apple.)

GASHO

Wait. They seem a bit too red.

PRINCESS

I am dying of hunger.

GASHO

Wait, I hear barely audible voice of grass blades!

GRASSBLADES

Do not eat those red apples! If you just try, you will surely die!

GASHO *(Throws the apple away.)*

Let's get away from here!

(Near the lake.)

ELF

I have a new plan. I'll turn into a hot day!

BUGABOO

And I will turn into a lake!

BOGEYMAN

And I will turn into a horrible dragon.

ELF

They will get thirsty...

BUGABOO

They will see the lake and kneel down to drink...

BOGEYMAN

And then... snap... I'll catch them by their throats!

(They do as they planned. Suddenly it becomes unbearably hot.)

GASHO

Oooh, how hot it is.

PRINCESS

I'm dying of thirst.

GASHO

Look at that lake!

(They run towards the lake.)

HORSE

Some-neigh-thing smells fishy here.

WIND

Swishhhh... The lake swishhides a horrible dragon....

GASHO

Thank you, wind, for warning us and refreshing us a little.

(Beside the cabin)

ELF

Now I will turn into biting frost.

BUGABOO

And I will turn into a warm cabin...

BOGEYMAN

And I will turn into a bolt.

ELF

And then, when they are freezing cold...

BUGABOO

They'll enter the cabin, trying to be quick.

BOGEYMAN

And then on the door the bolt will click.

(They do as they planned. Gasho and the Princess suddenly feel terribly cold.)

PRINCESS

Oh, how hot it is!

Look, I see

a cabin there,

and from its chimney smoke unfurls...

GASHO

Is there anybody there?

(From the cabin they hear: BOO, BOO, BOO.)

PRINCESS

What is that noise?

BUGABOO

It is fire BOOrning in there in the furnace.

PRINCESS

It is Bugaboo. Let's make haste.

(They run as fast as they can... All of a sudden, Gasho stops.)

GASHO

I'm fed up with running.

HORSE

Me too.

Let us fight.

Either they will neigh-get us
or we will neigh-get them.

(Gasho whistles. Echo repeats his whistle. The Elf, Bogeyman and Bugaboo have surely heard him.)

GASHO

Hey, weirdo, here we are!
I am fed up with running.

ELF

You say you are fed up with running?
I have to praise you
for your brave bearing!
Ho ho ho ho ho ho ho ho!

BUGABOO

You want boo fight?
Well, all right,
it will boo exciting!

(Bogeyman comes out of the forest first.)

BOGEYMAN

Here I am, after you, boo!
My snout is booawful,
my jaws boofull of teeth.
With my ghastly features
I'm a ghastly creature.
BOO!

GASHO

You make great fuss,
but you didn't scare us.

HORSE

Neigh, neigh, neigh,
We are not afraid.

GASHO

Get out of our way.

BOGEYMAN

My eyes I will booulge,
I will bare my teeth!
You will be frightened
like everyone I meet.

GASHO

You've gone too far now, scarecrow.
I'm going to teach you a lesson.

HORSE

Neigh, neigh, neigh,
Make him go away.

BUGABOO

Here comes Bugaboo from Bukulya.

Here comes horrible Water Bull.

GASHO

Here I come too!

BUGABOO

You are courting disaster,
for of all monsters I am the master!
I am a monster most prominent
and your death will be imminent.

GASHO

Go away, for though you may be wild,
you could not scare a little child.

BUGABOO

I am so boofuddled!

(Bugaboo runs away... Then the Elf comes out of the forest.)

ELF

Now it's my turn.

My teeth are singing,
my jaws are gaping,
my claws are scratching,
my hands are clutching.

Do you feel heartfreeze,
do you sense skinshiver,
when you see teethgrind
and think of pawclutch?
Do you feel skinshiver,
do you sense heartfreeze,
when you think of pawcatch,
when you think of clawscratch?

GASHO

Fie, weirdo, fie,
in vain you try.

ELF

You are still here!
I'll cast a spell on you now!

GASHO

And I will unspell myself.

ELF

I will tie you with cobweb.

GASHO

I will untie myself.

ELF

Hmmm.

GASHO

Hmmmm.

ELF

I will catch you in a trap.

GASHO

I will uncatch myself.

ELF

I will devour you.

GASHO

I will undevour myself.

ELF

I'll drown you in a whirlpool.

GASHO

I'll undrown myself.

ELF

I'll push you into a ravine,
so that you bruise yourself all over.

GASHO

I will unbruise myself.

ELF

I will put you in a jug of water
and shake, shake, shake before use.

GASHO

I will unshake myself.

ELF

I will set you an accident.

GASHO

I will unset it.

ELF

I shall curse you.

GASHO

I shall uncurse myself.

ELF

Hmmm.

GASHO

Hmmm.

ELF

So, that's how it is.

GASHO

So, that's how it is.

ELF

I will turn you into a stone.

GASHO

I will unstone myself.

ELF

I'll turn you into a fox.

GASHO

I will unfox myself.

ELF

I'll turn you into a stump.

GASHO

I will unstump myself.

ELF (*To himself.*)

He can't be stupefied.

I'll have to use my secret charms....

Dark night.

GASHO

Nightly dark.

ELF

Murky night

GASHO

Nightly murk.

ELF

Dusky dark.

GASHO

Dark dusk.

ELF

Black night.

GASHO

Nightly blackness.

ELF

Dim dimness.

GASHO

Dark darkness.

ELF

He can uncharm all charms!

GASHO

Go away, weirdo,
and let me be.
You can't do anything to me.

ELF

These were just threats
to bring you to your wits.
But now this is for real.

GASHO

Take a cudgel, or a bat,
and then let us have fight!

(Gasho takes a cudgel.)

ELF

Go on, help yourself, go.
I will take just this piece of straw!

GASHO

Is this another trap or what?

HORSE

Neigh, neigh, neigh,
never trust an elf.

GASHO

There must be some trick, that's for sure.

ELF

I took that straw only in order to show
that for you I need no weapon at all.

HORSE

Go on, brave knight,
use all your might!

RAVEN

Caw, caw, don't make a flaw!

FROGS

Croak, croak, hit the creature!

RAVEN

Hit him with a branch
and caw caw catch him!

HORSE

Neigh, neigh, neigh,
blow his teeth away!

(Gasho attacks, heaving his cudgel. However, the Elf manages to block Gasho's blow with his straw, and hits him with the straw so that Gasho rolls over three times.)

HORSE

Now, what was that?

GASHO

He struck me so hard with that stupid straw
so where I am I really don't know.

(Gasho attacks again. The Elf blocks the blow of the cudgel with his straw and breaks the cudgel in two.)

ELF

Give up!

GASHO *(Rising.)*

I never give up.

(Sings.)

'I am a hero, an old-fashioned knight,
I have a horse that never takes fright.'

ELF

Don't sing so nicely, please!

GASHO *(Sings.)*

'I am a hero, an old-fashioned knight,
I have a horse that never takes fright.'

ELF

That is utterly, utterly wrong!
You have no gift for music at all.
When I hear you sing, my ears cringe.

GASHO

You don't like my singing!
But I can play too.

(He takes a double flute from under his belt.)

ELF

Oh, no, not that!

(Gasho starts blowing into the flute.)

ELF

Stop it, please!
'Cause for music you don't have an ear,
and your playing my brain does tear.

GASHO

Tell me how you would like.
I can play both louder and softer.
(He plays.)

ELF *(More and more disturbed.)*

Will you stop that awful whining!

GASHO

I like my playing.

ELF

All those who can't play or sing
like to listen to themselves,
but how it sounds to other people,
that's another thing!

GASHO

But listen to this now!

(The Elf is completely dumbfounded. He lies upon the earth and puts his hands on his ears in order to protect himself from Gasho's music.)

ELF

I give up! Just stop it.

GASHO

What's wrong with him? He really doesn't look well.\

ELF

What's wrong with me?
You seem to marvel at that.
Don't you know that the only thing
that can do any harm to us elves
is bad music?

(Enters Ironjaw Hag.)

IRONJAW HAG

Music uncouth, so rude and ugly,
of shepherd's pipes and swineherd's trumpets,
all the time hurts fairy creatures.
If it goes on like that – we'll become extinct.

ELF

You've done with me, pal
with that awful pipe!
I still seem to hear those horrible tunes.

IRONJAW HAG

He will not soon recover, boy,
from your truly disgusting noise!
We elves and fairies
like tuneful ditties.

ELF

All the elves and fairies,
those that on the earth earthen,
and those that in water water

let them all come hither.

(Carefully, there appear Mocking Witch, Bogeyman, Bugaboo and some other fairy creatures.)

ELF

Me, the threest Fairy King,
announce to all my subjects:
we are moving from here today,
away from people and their formidable music.

(They leave.)

GASHO

Princess, we have won.

PRINCESS

Ah, ah, ah!

(She faints. Gasho holds her.)

RAVEN

Caw, caw!
The story is almost done.
And in all fairytales in this world,
it is a custom so very old
that the Princess falls into the arms
of her courageous saviour.

(Princess opens her eyes.)

PRINCESS

What happened?
Ah, ah, ah,
it seems I fainted!
I was so wearied out
from all that excitement...
You know, princesses
are delicate creatures...

(Sweet and melancholy music is heard.)

GASHO

It is elves and fairies, going away
to certain distant mountain lands.

(at the end – a wedding)

RAVEN

Soon they caw-arrived in Belgrade, the caw-pital.

PIG

Then the courtiers started making hor-oink-rible plots.

BIRD

Court-tweet-iers are prone to boasting, babbling and envying.

DOG

So they started gossiping about Gasho, saying he is wow-fully this and he is wow-fully that!

HORSE

Saying he is un-neigh-educated, saying he has neigh-ever read a book!

RAVEN

Saying he caw-knows no grammar at all.
saying 'his views are far too narrow,
saying no language he does know
English or French,
Spanish or Greek.

GOOSE

But Gasho said:
I don't know what Spaniards speak,
or the English, or French, when we come to that.

But there is something I can manage,
I can understand the silent language.

RAVEN

Then Gasho remembered the King of Snakes' warning, and bit his tongue, but it was too late, he could not understand us any more...

GOOSE

The King was not too pleased to have a servant as his son-in-law!

PIG

Without a co-oink in his pocket.

GOOSE

But the Princess said that he loved only honk-honk-him!

RAVEN

The King was cawnfused, but he pronounced Gasho a nobleman.

PIG

Gasho became the Count of Countryside

RAVEN

A festive caw-eremony was prepared.

FROGS

A croaking ceremony!
A croaking beauty!
Pretty as a flower,
pretty as a picture!

RAVEN

Caw, caw, she has no flaw.

BIRDS

Tweet, tweet,

they will be wed, Mr. Twitter
and the King's lovely daughter.

PIDGEON

A princess and a servant,
coo, coo, coo.
Oh how happy
are those two.

BIRDS

Congratulations, Mr. Twitter, congratulations, Mrs. Twitter!

Curtain.

