

## Tales too good to sleep through

Once upon a time there lived two sisters in one house - Martha and her sister. Martha was married and she had a lot of children. Martha's sister was not married. When Martha got up in the morning (I say 'she got up' just in the traditional sense; in fact she never slept at all) she would immediately start baking pies. She had a huge stove. On one side of the stove there stood a tea pot; on the other stood food.

That's about all there is to say about Martha.

As for her sister, I've already said, she wasn't married and she was also rubbish at housework. But she's the person who made up all these tales I am about to tell you. Like Martha, she also got up at the crack of the dawn, but unlike Martha she slept like a log all night. She got dressed, then she helped her nieces and nephews. She told her stories to the first to get out of bed, but the slowcoaches heard nothing.

Since many mums had children apart from Martha, and many of them were sleepyheads, Martha's sister went from one house to the next, all day long, waking children up. She had all the children's names and addresses written on her dress. This was because when parents ran into her in the street, in the shops or on the bus, they used to go up to her and ask her to write down their addresses so she could come and wake up their children. And as Martha's sister didn't like carrying a note book or even a handbag (instead of a handbag she usually had a duck, I'll explain why later), she wrote them on her clothes. And because she wasn't married, she changed her clothes several times a day. Finally she got so tired of constantly looking for the addresses and telephone numbers on her many dresses and t-shirts that she bought two red dresses and wore them all the time, either one or the other. She needed two, because before she washed one she would copy the addresses into the other.

Martha thought her sister was stubborn and lazy, not that anybody usually asked for Martha's opinion. But let's imagine:

'Martha, what's your opinion of your sister?'

'She's a stubborn, lazy girl. You just only imagine how much time she wastes copying the addresses from one dress into another! An hour! I could bathe three children and bake fifty pies in that time.'

Still, why were the dresses red?

Well, first of all the addresses showed up better on red material, and second, it's easier to wake up at the crack of the dawn if a person in a red dress suddenly looms over you, even more so if they're holding a duck. I told you that she used to carry this duck everywhere; it was so as to wake up the children. You might think (although who would think such a thing except Martha?) it would be better to cart around a cockerel. But a cockerel would cockadoodle-doo three times and then fall quiet, whereas the duck quacked so annoyingly and monotonously that the children, driven mad, would finally crawl out from under their duvets. Well, imagine what they had to put up with: "Once upon a time, quack, quack, quack, quack...in a village without a name... quack, quack, quack, quack... or rather the village obviously had a name, but no one could remember it... quack, quack, quack, quack... the domestic and the wild animals swapped places... quack, quack, quack, quack..."

Very hard to listen to, that's why I'm going to tell Martha's sister's tales without the quacking – but you should keep it in mind anyway (the quacking, I mean) and now and again I will remind you about it.

So, remember the quacks, and off we go.

## **The Swap**

Once, in a village without a name, or rather it had a name but no one could remember it, the domestic and the wild animals swapped places. This revolution began with a lion's roar. You know that in general all revolutions seem to begin with some kind of roaring. In this case it was a lion's.

'Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!'

No, perhaps lions don't roar like that, but as I have never been to Africa and never heard them I can't be sure. In any case that'll do for our tale. The most important thing is that all this took place in a forest, and it was no ordinary forest. The trees growing in that forest made anyone who passed underneath them willy-nilly set to thinking and wondering. The local people had noticed this, and they always used to send their children to the forest to collect firewood before they sat any exams. Thanks to these trees, the animals also wandered about deep in thought. Some even started talking to themselves. Imagine a talking animal, and what's more, an animal which talks to itself!

I am telling you all this so you won't be surprised why just one roar made so many things happen. In any other forest nobody would pay attention to the lion's roar, but here everything was discussed and the animals started arguing why the lion roared.

- What can bother the lion? If I were a lion the whole world would belong to me, I would not marry either - the monkey said.

-In my opinion, sadness appears when you are not duly appreciated! – the peacock concluded.

A snake wanted to say something too, but because it permanently lay in the sun instead of the tree shade, it was not able to speak yet.