
7-15-2001

The Story

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Recommended Citation

Cates, Ed (2001) "*The Story*," *The Mythic Circle*: Vol. 2001: Iss. 24, Article 8.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/vol2001/iss24/8>

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The Story

THE STORY

by

Ed Cates

--for Robert Callahan

Now I understand it; how the story begins.
With a knapsack, a hat and a horn
Like those straight out of a Corot.
With a nail, a riddle, and seven ravens.
How three brothers will go out as if they were one,
To the well, to the wall, to find the blue light;
How six men got on in the world,
And who returned by night.

I understand how the story starts off,
To see its fortune among strange musicians, good strangers,
I know the story of the Boy Who Went Forth
To Learn what Fear Is, and as soon as he set off
Learned the language of animals.

And there will be
A Woman Without Hands, Godfather Death, or a White Snake
Someone ill searching for the waters of life,
A toad singing beside a well, waiting for a golden ball
To rise. Now I understand the story, now I sleep
With eyes open to recognize the dream when it arrives,
And shudder to think about all those who shudder to think.

In this history of once-upon-a time
Set in the future, there will be a wishing table,
A valiant little tailor, a singing bone.
In the story, and in the story of the story.
And in the story's end. Amen.