back to his house. The merchant never went into the forest again, and the merchant's wife slept soundly every night for the rest of her life.

Heard in a village near Whitby-by-the-Sea:

An old woman lived by herself on a farm at the edge of an old forest. One day, a traveler with a magpie on his shoulder came to her door and asked for a night's shelter. Being a kind person, she invited him to stay in her hayloft. The next morning, she saw that the magpie had eaten all of the grain in her field! When she complained, the traveler laughed at her, turned into a magpie himself, and flew off into the forest.

The next month, a hunter with a hound at his feet came to her door and asked for a night's shelter. Being a kind person, she invited him to stay in her barn. The next morning, she saw that the hound had slaughtered her sheep! When she complained, the hunter laughed at her, turned into a hound, and ran into the forest.

The next month, a peddler with a rat in his pocket came to her door and asked for a night's shelter. This time, she invited him into her house, and set before him a big jug of wine. She watched while he guzzled the wine and his rat gobbled up all of her other provisions. Finally, when the peddler had drunk the entire jug of wine, she complained. The peddler laughed at her and turned into a rat. But the crafty old woman grabbed the empty jug and slammed it down on him; and being slowed by the wine, he could not flee, so he ran into the jar! And then the old woman corked it again!

The peddler's pet turned into a fearsome beast and charged her, but the woman did not fear. "Stand back, lest I throw your master into the fire!" she hollered, and the imp fell back, cowed. "Now return unto me what you have taken!" And the beast did, thricefold: It ran into the forest and came back with sacks of grain marked with the First King's sign; and sheep with golden wool and horns and hooves; and wine taken from the cellars of Autumn herself.

"Now set my master free!" the imp demanded.

"I'll free your master when I'm good and ready," the woman responded, "and until then, he'll stay in this bottle! Now begone with you, for I revoke your invitation to my home!" The beast called her many awful names, but without her invitation, he could not stay, and he fled back into the forest. And the old woman put that bottle on her mantle and lived comfortably on her farm for the rest of her life.



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