

## **451 The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers.**

(Including the previous Types 451A and 451 \*.)

A girl rescues her twelve (seven, three, six) brothers [P253.0.5, P251.6.7, Z71.5.1] who had been transformed into animals (birds) [P253.2]. This tale exists chiefly in three different forms but they are often mixed with each other: .

(1) A stepmother transforms her stepsons into swans [D161.1] (ravens [D151.5]). The sister looks for her brothers and finds out how to release them: She has to be silent for some years [D758] and has to make shirts out of cotton-grass for the brothers [D753.1].

A king finds the young woman in the forest and marries her [N711]. In his absence she bears a child, but her mother-in-law takes it away and accuses her of eating the child [K2116.1.1] (having borne an animal). The young queen remains silent because of her brothers, even though she is to be executed. On her way to the funeral pyre her period of silence ends and her brothers are disenchanted. Everything is explained and the mother-in-law is punished.

In some variants the disenchantment of one brother is not complete (he keeps a wing) because the sister cried a tear when her child was taken away (did not completely finish his shirt).

(2) A girl finds her brothers in a remote place and keeps house for them. They tell her to take care of the cat (dog), watch the fire, and be careful of the demonic neighbor (ogre, witch). Once she forgets to divide her food with the cat, so it puts out the fire. After the girl asks the neighbor for help, the ogre comes regularly to suck her blood. When the brothers discover this, they kill him. The girl takes flowers (herbs) from the grave of the ogre. Her brothers eat them and they are changed into oxen (sheep, birds). The episode of disenchantment is less important.

(3) A mother (father) curses her sons because there is not enough to eat. They are transformed into ravens (swans). The sister seeks for them and asks for directions from the sun, moon, and stars [H1232]. She finds her brothers on a glass mountain (glass palace). To reach them she needs a little bone as a key (gets help from the wind). She releases her brothers and they go back home.

In some variants the episode with marriage and slander follows.

Some variants start with the promise of the mother to sacrifice the brothers if a daughter (one more brother) is born [S272]. She tries to inform the boys after the birth by a sign [T595], but the wrong sign is sent [N344.1], so the brothers leave home [S272.1].

Combinations: 403,408,450, 706, 707, and 709.

Remarks: Early version see Johannes de Alta Silva, *Dolopathos* (No. 7).