

The Searcher for her Brothers

Once there lived nine brothers and their sister Elenytè. Their parents died, leaving each son a stallion and the daughter a mare. The brothers soon left to fight in wars. Elenytè was left at home.

Long she waited for her brothers. Nine years went by, but she received not a word about their whereabouts. So she hitched up her mare and rode out to search for her brothers. She rode and rode and, not knowing whether her brothers were still far away, she began to sing:

Whinny, sweet mare,
Whinny, dear bay:
Where your nine sons are,
There are my nine brothers!

And the mare whinnied. And lo, Elenytè heard from far away, from over a hundred miles, the answering whinny of nine stallions. So Elenytè rode in the direction, from where she heard the whinnies. She's riding through a big forest and suddenly she sees a rabbit running in her direction. He says:

„Elenyte, give me a ride. A hunter and his hounds are on my trail!

Elenyte lifted the rabbit up into her carriage. The hounds ran right by.

She rides on and meets up with a laumè. The laumè, dressed in ugly rags, is riding in a trough hitched with entrails to a sow. They ride on side by side and come up to two rivers. So the laumè says:

„Elen, Elen, let's go bathing! This river is flowing with milk, but that one is boiling with blood.“

But the rabbit says:

„Dear sweet Elenyte, don‘t believe the laumè! It‘s this river that‘s boiling with blood and the other river that flowing with milk.“

Enraged, the Laumè grabbed the rabbit and twisting, broke his little leg. But Elenyte didn‘t accept the Laumè‘ s invitation and didn‘t go bathing. The ride on and again they come upon two rivers. Again the laumè calls:

„Elen, Elen, let‘ s go bathing! This river is flowing with milk, but that one is boiling with blood.“

The rabbit says:

“Dear sweet Elenyte, don‘t go! It‘ s this river that‘ s boiling with blood and the other river that flowing with milk.“

Enraged, the laumè broke the rabbit‘ s other little leg, but Elenyte listened to the little rabbit and didn‘t go bathing. Again they rode on and again they came upon two rivers. Again the little rabbit didn‘t let Elenyte go bathing. This time the laumè broke his hind legs. Then the laumè broke his neck and the little rabbit died. Again they came upon two rivers. The laumè invites Elenyte to bathe in the river of blood. There was noone there to warn Elenyte, so she went bathing with the laumè. When they were done, the laumè jumped out of the river first, put on Elenyte‘ s clothes and climbed into her carriage. There was not Elellyte could do: she had to put on the laumè‘ s rags, climbed into her trough and rides on. Now the laumè sings out in a deep voice :

Whinny, sweet mare,
Whinny, dear bay:

Where your nine sons are,
There are my nine brothers!

But the mare did not obey the laumè and she did not whinny. The laumè ordered Elenytè to sing. Elenytè sang and the mare whinnied. The nine stallions whinnied in response, this time quite close by. So the laumè rode in that direction. The brothers did not recognize her; they figure the clothes were their sister's, but they were quite surprised: their sister, Elenytè used to be pretty, but this girl was ugly and fat.

„Oh, this is my shepherdess!“ the laumè said, pointing at Elenytè.

The brothers didn't recognize her, but her face reminded them of their sister, so they wanted to let her into their mansion. But the laumè did not allow them, saying she should spend the night tending the horses. The brothers sat the laumè down at the table, were good to her, gave her mead and wine to drink, and Elenytè went to tend the horses. As she tended the horses, Elenytè cries and crying sings plaintively:

The laumè, the witch, is drinking mead and wine,
While the brothers' poor little sister tends the horses!

Then, looking at the full moon, she sang again:

Oh, dear moon, dear sweet moon, tell me, please,
What are my mother and father doing in heaven?

And the moon replied:

Your father is drinking mead and wine,
Your mother is spinning thread.

The laumè came out onto the porch and, hearing the songs, cried out in a deep voice:

Your father is collecting manure,
Your mother is collecting wood shavings.

The brothers heard Elenytè singing. They liked her songs. So the next night the oldest brother went out to listen to her singing. But soon he fell asleep and didn't hear anything. The night after the next brother went out. He also fell asleep and didn't hear the singing. And so all the brothers went out to listen, but none of them heard anything. Now it was the youngest brother's turn. He lay down and pretended to fall asleep. Then, just as she did every night, Elenytè began to cry and sing:

The laumè is drinking mead and wine
While the brothers' poor little sister tends the horses!

Then the brother says to Elenytè:

„Scratch my head!”

Elenytè scratches his head and he can feel the tears falling from her eyes onto his head. Suddenly something sparkled on her hand and the brother recognized Elenytè's ring, which their mother had given her. Surprised, the brother asked where she got the ring. And then Elenytè told him everything. Next day the brothers spread tar on the mare and stood her in front of the door. They went to get the laumè and said:

„Let's go take a walk on our estate, dear sister!”

The laumè goes with them. Seeing the tarred horse in front of the door, she shrieked:

„Why is the mare standing here?“

„Strike her with your hand, dear sister, and she will walk away.“

The laumè struck the mare and her hand got glued to the horse. The brothers say:

„Hit her with your other hand and the first one will get detached!“

The laumè struck and her other hand got glued to the horse. She kicked with her foot and her foot got glued, she kicked with her other foot and that one got glued. The brothers say:

„Sister, hit her with your tummy and your hands and feet will get detached!“

The laumè butted the horse with her tummy and now she was completely glued. Then the brothers say to the mare:

„Carry her, where the sun never shines, where the wind never blows, where no beast goes, where no bird flies!“

Then they tell her to bathe in the river of wine, roll in the field of silk and come home. And that's what the mare did. The brothers and sister lived happily ever after. And they're still living, if they haven't died.