THE CHILDREN WHO FOLLOWED THE PIPER

By Padraic Colum

Illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker

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BY

PADRAIC COLUM

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DUGALD WALKER

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1933

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HOW THE PIED PIPER CAME

FIRST there were the rats: they came into the town in families, and each family went to live in a stable. From the stables they went into the cellars, and from the cellars they went into the kitchens; and from the kitchens they went into the parlors, and from the parlors they went into the bedrooms. Then they went into the town hall. Then they went into the churches. The cats they chased and the dogs they jeered at. They ate the bacon and the beans, the cheese and the custards. They squeaked under the beds and they climbed the ropes in the belfries; then they went to live in the ovens where the bread was

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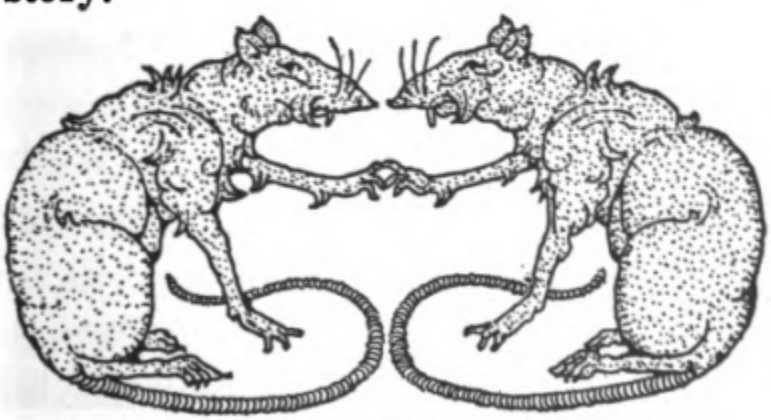
dren pass behind the rock. But when they went up to the place the rock was where it had been, and the children were not to be seen high up or low down.

The rock had moved to let the Piper and the children through—that was plain to be seen—but there was no way of making the rock move again. The people tried and tried, and for days and nights they stayed beside the rock. No sound or sign of the children came to them. The Pied Piper had gone, and the town's children had gone with him.

All this is known to all of you, but it is right for me to say that this is only the beginning of my story.



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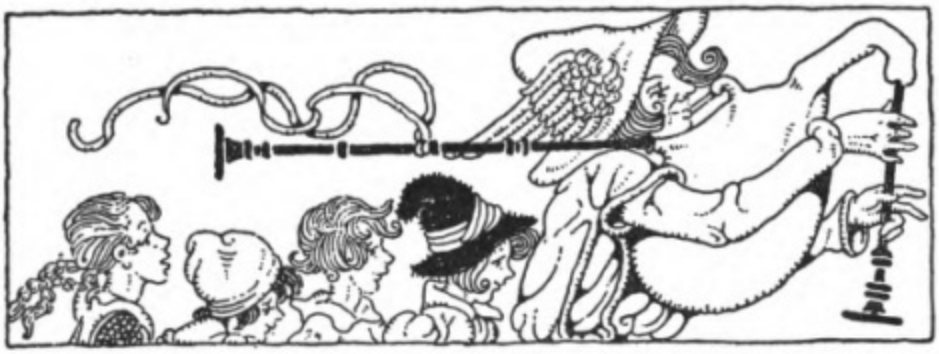

THE WAY THE CHILDREN WENT

THE Piper made the rock turn as if it were on a hinge by playing a special tune before it. When he was far inside with the children crowding behind him he played another tune that made the rock close like a door. Past the rock they were in a great cave, and cave after cave opened before them. The Piper played, and a light came out of the pipes he held.

And what did he play to them? Well, the children thought that his music was telling them about a story that they knew. It was a story about Reynard the Fox. Oh, more delightfully than ever they had heard it before

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Valentine, the Emperor's Son.

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ing. Trees were growing outside, a whole forest of trees.

John Ball stood with Baldwin at the mouth of a cave on a mountainside. He heard the sound of pipes going amongst the trees; he saw the dresses of some of the children who followed the Piper. He stood by the side of the horse as he had often stood by him. And Baldwin, with his hide gray with the flour and the wheat that he used to carry to and from the mill, looked at him in the same friendly way. Then John Ball, the Miller's son, put his hand upon the horse's mane, and they went down the side of the hill and into the forest where the Piper and the children had gone.

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OLD COUPLE'S HOUSE

THIS was Old Couple's House, the Piper told the children. Once, long and long ago, before the gods had lost their high places, Jupiter and Mercury went through the world. They seemed poor and hungry men going to different houses for food and shelter. As they went through the world they were made sad and angry because of the hard-heartedness of men; every house of the thousand houses they came to turned them away.

At last they came to a very little house; it was the poorest of all the houses they had been near; there was a little garden beside it, with cabbages and a few fruit trees, and there was a

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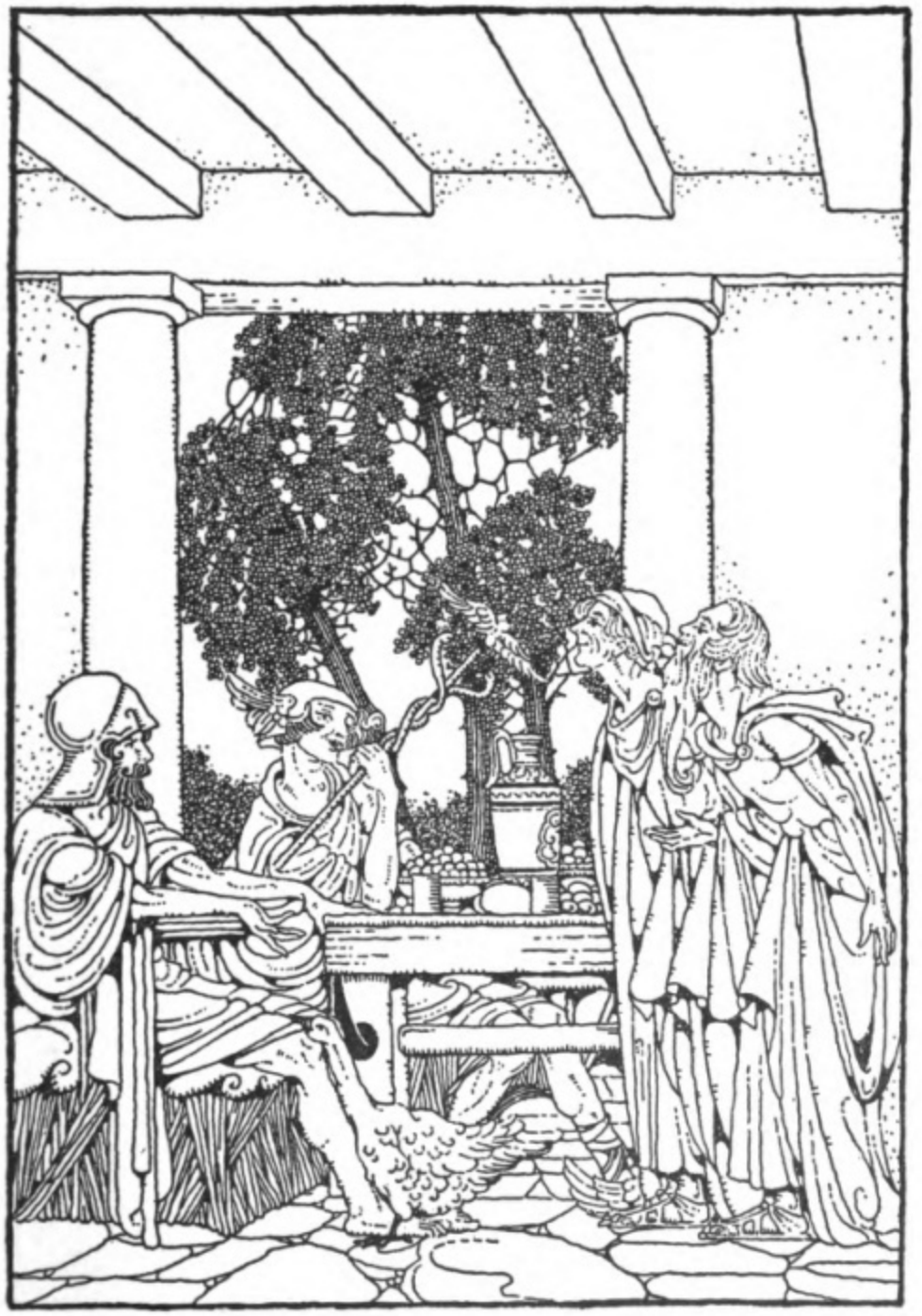

They found the goose with its neck upon Jupiter's knees.

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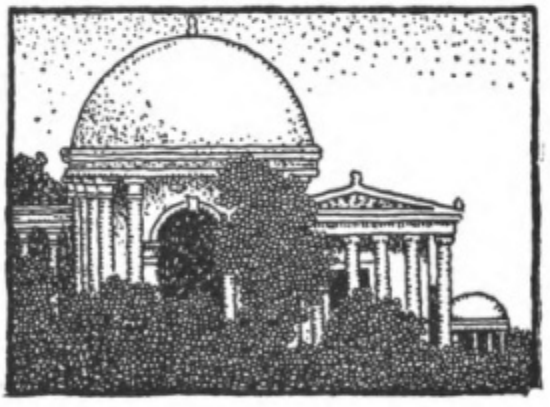
woven wattles thatched with reeds, they changed into a house of marble with a golden roof. For long and long that house shone there in its marble and gold. But then creepers began to cover the marble walls and grow over the golden roof. Now the creepers were a foot thick, and walls and roof were covered with them.

But Baucis and Philemon and the old goose still lived there, and the garden still had cabbages, and apples and nuts grew on the trees, and there was a spring of water beside the house, and a white-thorn tree before the door to keep ill luck away.



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THE DEEP WOOD AND THE DARK FOREST

IN that very place the children stayed. They were counting who had come and who had not come, when John Ball came up to them, mounted on old Baldwin. The children shouted for John Ball, and shouted for Baldwin, the old mill horse.

The Piper had gone. They looked around and around the white-thorn bush, but they could not find him. The Pied Piper had gone without making a sound on his pipes.

Three by three, then, they went into the House of the Old Couple. The house could not hold more than three of them at a time. They drank and they ate out of the never-emptied measures

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Jumping Joan tumbled head over heels.

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and John Ball. Golden Hood was gathering crocuses, but Valentine and John Ball were listening to the voices of Faunus that came to them from amongst the trees.

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THE CHILDREN AND THE GODS OF OLD TIME

THE voices were telling Valentine and John Ball that in the Wood of Daylight-Gone there would be never a change; the voices were telling them that those who had come there would be ever the same; the voices were telling them that the children who followed the Piper would be children always. Then John Ball and Valentine said, "Will we be children always and ever?"

The voices that Faunus spoke with said: "Unless you go out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone you will be children always."

A great sadness came over Valentine and over

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not return. Then Canens went searching for me, and for six days and six nights she sought me in the woods and on the hills and in the valleys. I did not show myself to her, although I heard her sweet voice calling me through the woods—'Picus, Picus, where art thou?' Then I heard her sing as a swan sings, and when I flew to her, I found her melting away in tears.

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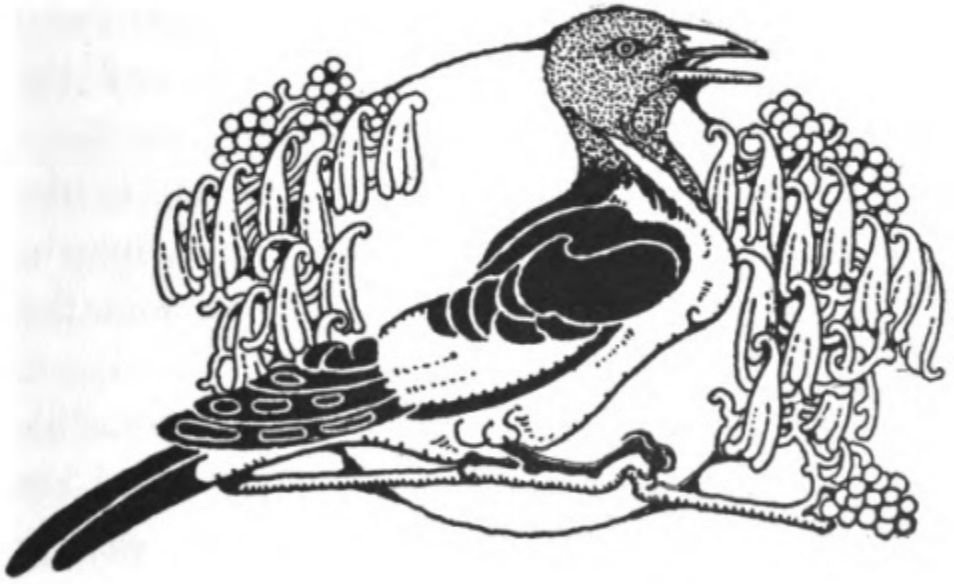
wood, these two cups, each with a border carved on the outside, and each with the inside covered with yellow wax. Gratefully they took the cups that Philemon gave. They fastened the cups to their belts, and they lay down to sleep, Valentine and John Ball.



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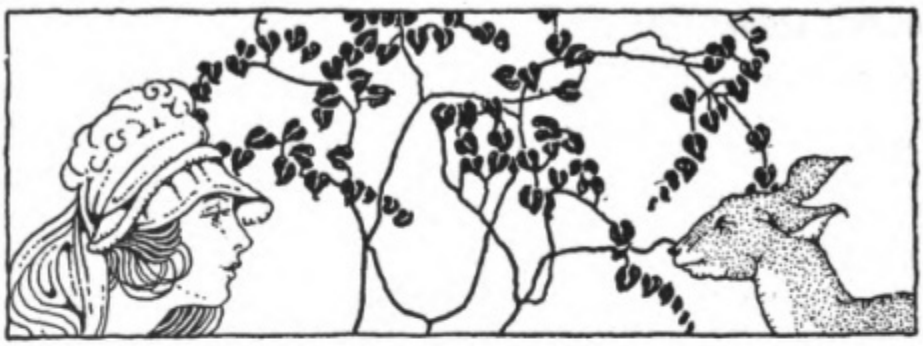

ONE GOES INTO THE DARK FOREST

THE children slept. Valentine and John Ball slept beside each other, and the cups that Philemon had given them were rim to rim. The same light, like the mixture of moonlight and sunlight upon a high hill in later summer, was there, and the one star dangled in the sky.

Golden Hood awakened. She saw the children sleeping under the great ash trees and beside the bushy white-thorn trees. She sat up and she looked where the crocuses grew out toward the Deep Wood.

And then Golden Hood saw a shapely thing going where the crocuses grew. She watched it,

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And so, in the Dark Forest, Golden Hood slept.

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ANOTHER GOES INTO THE DARK FOREST

VALENTINE wakened up. His mind was on the sword that Mars had told him of. He roused himself. As he did he felt at his belt the cup that Philemon had given him. He felt the cup, but he gave little thought to it, for his mind was on the sword that had been left beneath the stone.

He raised up the stone that was beside the well. There, in a leathern sheath, was the sword. He lifted it; he drew the shining blade out; he held it to the star that dangled in the sky. With that sword in his hand he was a child no more. With that sword in his hand he could go through

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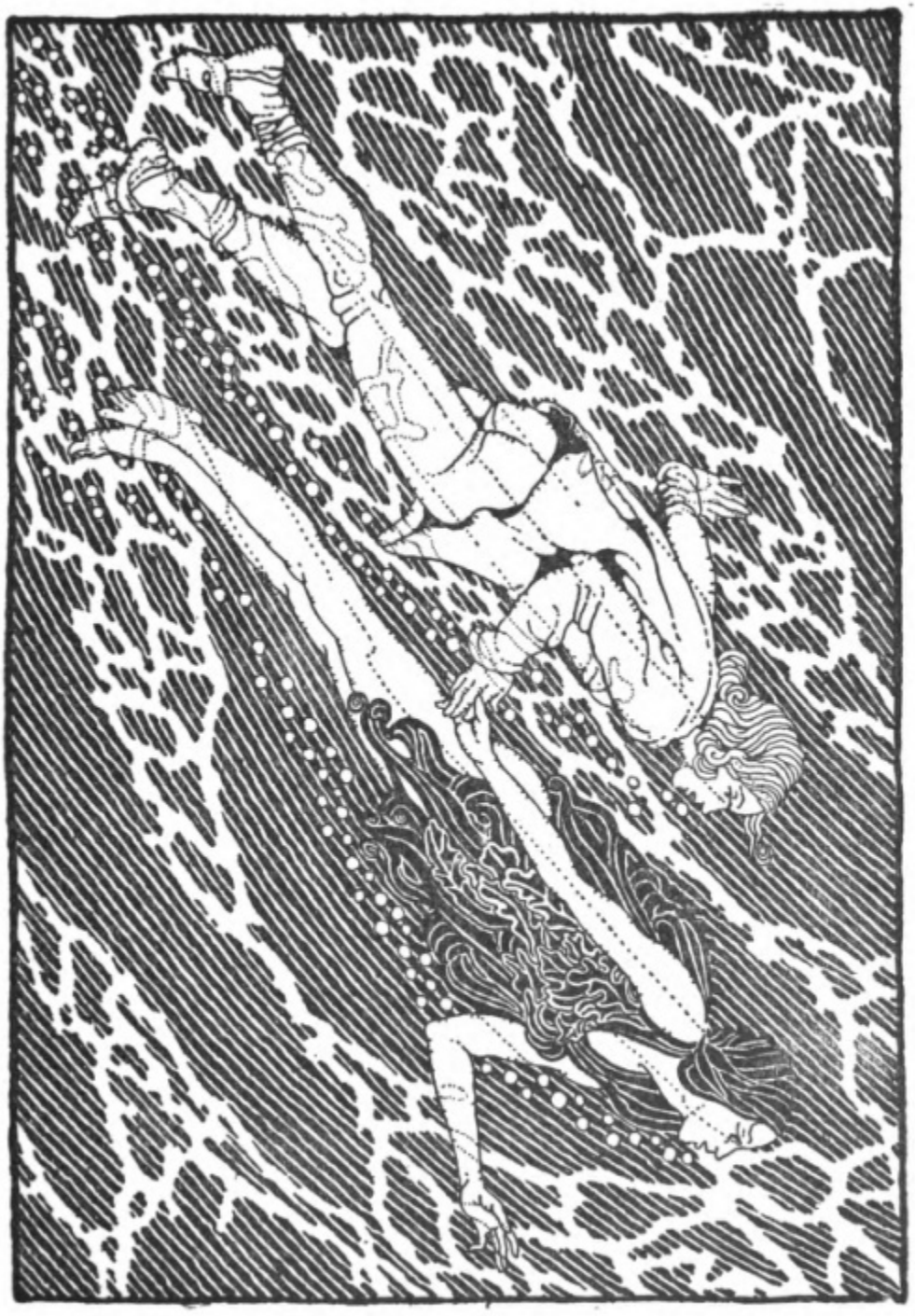

Then she drew him into her pool.

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the howl of a Satyr. And while he lamented the Satyrs came and stood around him. John Ball dashed away from the place, and he found somewhere to hide at the edge of the Dark Forest. His lair was the great hollow of a tree, and there he lived, eating roots and honey, and keeping himself from the band of Satyrs. And so it was with John Ball for the whole of a year.

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GOLDEN HOOD

SHE wakened up, and the Man with the Lantern was not beside her any more. All alone was she in the Dark Forest.

She stood up and she called out the name of the one whom she would most like to have near her; she called out the name of Valentine. But the name sounded hollow amongst the dark and stone-like trees.

Then Golden Hood ran on and on. Oh, how might she get out of this Dark Forest! She ran on until she saw before her a sight so welcome that she stopped for joy. There was Baldwin, John Ball's old mill horse! Baldwin saw her, and he whinnied to her.

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With an arm around each eagle was the maiden Golden Hood.

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fetch her a ring to go on her little finger—a ring cut out of a single diamond. Then they flew from off the rim of the nest. Golden Hood had just put the spicewood upon the fire, and now she stood upon the stool and watched out through one of the windows. She saw the eagles sweeping away. They flew swiftly out of sight; the maiden was left with nothing near her; all alone in the high, iron-hooped nest was she, within the seven doors that were tightly closed.

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She was lying on the Fleece of Gold.

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two doves in its branches and they were building a nest.

John Ball was there and Baldwin, the old mill horse, and Golden Hood was overjoyed to see them both. She clasped John Ball's hand, and she put her arm around the neck of old Baldwin. Then they went on their journey. Greatly surprised they were to find after a few turnings that they were back in the Deep Wood and near where the children were.

They were to meet with the hag again. Before they reached the first white-thorn tree she stood before them. "There will be separation for two of the three of you," she said, "short, or long, or forever as I can make it." Saying that she ran from them, and her raven flapped after her.

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As they looked toward the river they saw the children all going in one direction with the Piper dressed in his reds and yellows going before them. They were going to the country of Prester John where each one would have the lot in life that best pleased her or him. Valentine, John Ball, and Golden Hood shouted to the children, but they were too far away now to hear. And now the three had to think of how they could come to the Emperor's, Valentine's father's, city.

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and blood again. The wedding ball was over now. Out of the chamber of colored glass they bore John Ball. By order of the wise Emperor they left him by Valentine's bed.

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THE END OF THE STORY

FOR long and long thereafter Valentine went traveling through the world seeking counsel from sages and magians as to how John Ball might be transformed from stone into his own flesh and blood. Far and far he went and long and long he was away; many a sage and many a magian he talked with, but no one could tell him how his friend might be restored.

At long last he turned back to his father's city, his heart heavy with the hopeless thing he had to tell. But still his heart, heavy as it was,

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