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THE WOLF AND THE SEVEN LITTLE GOATS

Once upon a time, there was an old mother goat who lived in a little house in the forest with her seven little goats. She loved them very much and took care of them with great tenderness. Every day, she prepared food for them, kept them warm when it was cold, and taught them to be alert to the dangers of the forest. The seven little goats were small, playful, and very close to one another. They loved to run around the house, look out the

window, and listen to the stories their mother told them. But they also knew that, nearby, there was a very dangerous wolf.

One morning, Mother Goat had to go out into the forest to look for food.

Before leaving, she gathered her children and spoke to them very seriously.

—Dear children, I must go out for a little while, but you must be very careful of the wolf. If he gets into the house, he will eat you all up. Sometimes he disguises himself and tries to trick others, but you will be able to recognize him by his rough voice and his black paws.

The little goats listened carefully.

—Do not worry, Mother —they said—. We will be very careful.

Mother Goat kissed them, shut the door tightly, and went off down the forest path.

Not much time had passed when someone knocked at the door.

Knock, knock.

—Open the door, dear children —said a voice from outside—. It is your mother, and I have come back with food for you.

But when the little goats heard that voice, they knew right away that it was not their mother.

—We will not open the door —they said—. Our mother has a soft voice, and yours is rough. You are the wolf.

Angry, the wolf walked away from the door and went to find something to change his voice. He went to a shop and bought honey and other sweet things to make it softer. Then he came back to the little house and knocked again.

Knock, knock.

—Open the door, dear little children —he said this time with a softer voice—. Your mother has come home and has brought you something nice from the forest.

The little goats were happy to hear a gentler voice, but one of them still had a doubt.

—Show us your paw under the door —said one of the little goats.

The wolf pushed one of his black paws under the door.

—We will not open the door! —cried the little goats—. Our mother does not have black paws. You are the wolf.

The wolf clenched his teeth in anger and went away again. Then he found some flour and spread it over his paws until they looked white. After that, he returned for the third time.

Knock, knock.

—Open the door, dear little children —he said in a sweet voice—. I have come home at last.

The little goats looked under the door and saw a white paw.

—Yes, it is Mother —some of them said.

Without thinking any more, they opened the door.

As soon as the door opened, the wolf jumped inside.

—It is the wolf! —cried the little goats in terror.

They all ran to hide around the house. One hid under the table.

Another jumped into the bed. Another hid inside the oven.

Another ran into the kitchen. Another hid behind the curtains.

Another hid inside the cupboard. And the youngest one found a place inside the clock case.

But the wolf found them one by one.

He looked under the table.

He checked the bed.

He opened the oven.

He searched in the kitchen.

He pulled aside the curtains.

He opened the cupboard.

And he swallowed up six of the little goats.

Only the youngest one was not found, because he was still hiding inside the clock case, trembling and making no sound at all.

When the wolf had gone away, the house became quiet.

A little later, Mother Goat came back from the forest. When she saw the door open and everything in disorder, she felt a great fright.

—My children! —she called—. Where are you?

Then the youngest little goat came out of the clock case, crying.

—Mother —he said—, the wolf came. He changed his voice, he covered his paws to make them white, and when we opened the

door for him, he ran inside. He took my brothers and sisters away.

Mother Goat felt very sad, but she did not lose any time. She took the youngest little goat with her and went out to look for the wolf.

They walked through the forest until they found him asleep under a tree, snoring loudly. His belly was so big that it looked swollen.

Mother Goat looked closely and thought that perhaps her children might still be alive, because the wolf had swallowed them whole.

—Run and bring me scissors, a needle, and thread —she said to the youngest little goat.

The little goat ran as fast as he could and came back with everything his mother had asked for.

Then Mother Goat carefully cut open the wolf's belly. As soon as she made a small opening, one of the little goats put out his head.

—Mother! —he cried.

Then another came out, and then another, until all six little goats came out, safe and sound. Since the wolf had swallowed them whole, none of them was hurt.

Mother Goat hugged them with joy, and they all cried with happiness.

—Now we must act carefully —she said.

Then they found some large stones and filled the wolf's belly with them. After that, Mother Goat quickly sewed him up again, and the wolf went on sleeping without noticing anything at all.

When everything was ready, the little goats hid and watched from far away.

After a while, the wolf woke up. Because he was very thirsty, he walked heavily to a well to drink some water. But the stones were so heavy that, when he leaned over, he lost his balance.

And he fell into the well.

The seven little goats ran out and jumped with joy.

—The wolf will never come back again! —they cried.

Mother Goat smiled when she saw her children safe once more.

Then they all returned together to their little house in the forest. They shut the door tightly, hugged one another very hard, and were thankful to be together again.

From that day on, the little goats never forgot what had happened. They learned that we should not open the door to strangers, even if they seem kind or try to trick us with a sweet voice. They also understood that listening to Mother's advice can help a lot when danger appears.

THE END

