

FAIRY TALES
FROM
FAR AND NEAR



KATHARINE
PYLE

FAIRY TALES FROM FAR AND NEAR

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED

**BY
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Then the two old Eagles flew away. FRONTISPIECE.

CONTENTS

LITTLE SURYA BAI. *A*
HINDOO STORY

THE PRINCES AND THE
FRIENDLY ANIMALS. *A*
LITHUANIAN STORY

GRACIOSA AND PERCINET.
A FRENCH STORY

THE GIANT'S CLIFF. *AN*
IRISH STORY

THE STORY OF CONN-EDA.
AN IRISH TALE

THE BLUE BELT. *A NORSE*
TALE

THE DUTIFUL DAUGHTER.
A KOREAN STORY

THE OAT CAKE. A SCOTCH
STORY

THE DREAMER. AN
ENGLISH STORY

THE STORY OF HARKA. AN

AMERICAN INDIAN TALE

*SCHIPPEITARO. A JAPANESE
STORY*

*EROS AND PSYCHE. A
GREEK TALE*

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Then the two old Eagles
flew away

As fast as she touched them
each one was turned into a stone
figure

The serpents reared up and
opened their fiery jaws

When she saw the bear she
cried aloud with terror

The king bade her step into
the flower. She did so, and at
once the leaves closed about her

As soon as he saw the oat
cake he was wide awake again
in a moment

When he reached the farther
shore, he turned and looked

back

Soon she came to the river
and saw the boat lying there

**FAIRY TALES FROM
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LITTLE SURYA BAI

A HINDOO STORY

THERE was once a poor peasant woman who sold milk. Every day she filled her cans with milk and went to a near-by town and sold it, returning with her cans empty.

One day, when she set out she took her little baby daughter with her. In each hand the mother carried a milk can, and the baby held to her skirt and walked close beside her.

Suddenly two great eagles appeared, wheeling about in the sky, and one of them dropped down and seized the child and flew away with it; the other eagle, which was its mate, followed it.

The woman cried aloud and dropped her milk cans, and ran along after the eagles, but they quickly disappeared in the distance. The woman beat upon her breast and wailed bitterly, but nothing she could say or do could bring her child back to her.

The eagle flew on and on with the baby until they reached the tree where they lived. There the father eagle, who had carried her, laid her gently on the grass.

He and his mate were so delighted with the child and her pretty ways that they determined to keep her.

They built a house for her high in the top of the tree. The house was made of iron, and was very strong, and it had seven iron doors and there was a key for each one of them so it could be locked. In this house the little girl lived with a little dog and cat the eagles had brought her for company.

The eagles loved the child dearly and named her Surya Bai, which means Sun Lady. They brought her food and beautiful clothes,—clothes such as princesses wear, and magnificent jewels. Each day, after they had set forth, Surya Bai locked the doors so she would be safe. Then she played about the house with the little dog and cat and was well contented. In the evening, when the eagles came home, they would knock, and Surya Bai would unlock the seven doors, one after another, and let them in. Always they brought her some pretty present.

One day the mother eagle said, “Our Surya Bai has now everything she needs except a diamond ring to wear upon her finger. It makes me sad that she should not have a diamond ring.”

“Yes,” replied the father eagle, “she ought to have one, and I will go out and find one for her.”

“But an ordinary diamond ring will not do,” said his mate. “Once, far away, upon the borders of the Red Sea, I saw a princess walking, and on her finger she wore a ring so bright and dazzling it was like the sun in splendor. It is such a ring as that that I wish to give to our Sun Lady.”

“In that case we will fly away to the Red Sea and get one for her,” said the father eagle.

So the two birds arranged to set out the next day, and as it would take a long time to make the journey, they brought to Surya Bai enough food to last for six months. They then cautioned her not to open the door to any one while they were gone, and not to leave the house for any reason whatever, and to keep the fire always burning on the hearthstone. Then the two old eagles flew away, and they were sad to leave her.

Now after they had gone, Surya Bai went about the house and set it in order. Every day she cooked food for herself and the little dog and cat, and fed them, and she played with them, and they were very happy together. Then one day, when she was cooking dinner, the little cat crept close to her, and while Surya Bai was not looking stole the very choicest bits of the dinner and ate them up very quickly.

When Surya Bai turned round and saw what the cat had done, she was very angry. “Now I shall punish you because you are a thief,” she said.

She took a little switch and beat the cat with it. That made the cat very angry, and it ran over to the hearth and upset the pot of water over the fire and put it out. Then Surya Bai did not know what to do. She had now no way to cook the food for herself and the little dog and cat, and as they could not eat it raw, for three days they went hungry.

At the end of that time Surya Bai made up her mind to go out and try to get some fire some place. She said to the dog and cat, “If the eagles could know how hungry we are, I am sure they would be willing for me to go.”

“Yes,” said the little cat, “but you must not go too far, for just beyond here is the Rakshas’ country; and if you go there, some Rakshas may catch you and never let you come back.”

“What is a Rakshas?” asked Surya Bai.

Now Rakshas are demons and very dangerous, but the cat would not tell Surya Bai that, because she thought if Surya Bai knew about them she would be afraid to go for the fire. So she said,

“I cannot tell you what they are,” and then she sat down in a corner and washed her fur and would not answer any more questions.

“At any rate, we must have the fire,” said Surya Bai. So she unlocked the seven doors, one after another, and climbed down from the tree and set out on her journey.

She went on and on for a long way and then, without knowing it, she really did come into the country of the Rakshas. There she saw a house, and in it was an old, old woman, bending over a fire. She was so old that her nose and chin almost met, and so crooked she was like a bent stick. Her gray hair fell over her eyes in a mat, and her teeth were long and yellow, and she was a Rakshas.

When she saw the maiden, she asked her who she was, and where she had come from, and what was her errand.

Surya Bai told her she came from a little house that had been built for her by a pair of eagles in a tree top far away. She told her the eagles were away from home, for they had gone to fetch her a diamond ring from far away and had left her with only a little dog and cat for companions. “And now the cat has put out the fire,” said she, “and I have no way to cook the food. We are very hungry, so give me, I beg of you, a little of your fire to carry home with me.”

Now the old woman Rakshas had a son who was very strong and terrible, but he was away from home on some business. “What a pity he is not here,” thought the old woman. “This pretty little girl would make a fine morsel for him. I will try to keep her until he returns, so that he may have her for his supper.”

So she made her voice as soft and friendly as she could, and said, "You may have the fire and welcome, but pound this rice for me before you go, for my arms are too weak and old for pounding. After that you shall have the fire."

Surya Bai was very obliging. She pounded the rice and pounded and pounded, but still the young Rakshas did not come, and presently she had finished.

"Now give me the fire," said the maiden.

But the old woman still wished to keep her. "I have no daughter to help me," said she. "Grind this corn for me, I beg of you, and then I will give you the fire."

Surya Bai ground the corn, but still the Rakshas had not come.

"I have pounded the rice and ground the corn; now give me the fire that I may be gone," said the maiden.

But still the old woman detained her. "Why should you be in such a hurry? Just fetch me some water from the well, and then you shall have the fire."

Surya Bai went to the well and fetched the old woman the water. Still the Rakshas had not returned.

"I have served you willingly," said the maiden, "and now I must be gone, and if you will not give me the fire, I must seek it elsewhere."

Then the old woman knew she could keep Surya Bai no longer. "You may have the fire," said she, "and you are more than welcome to it. I will also give you a bag of corn, and as you go you

can strew it along, so as to make a little golden pathway between your house and mine.”

This the old woman said because she thought if the girl left a trail behind her, the Rakshas could follow her to where she lived and catch her there.

But Surya Bai had no fear of evil, for she had always been treated kindly. She thought the old Rakshas was a very friendly old woman.

She took the fire and the corn also, and as she went home she scattered the corn along the way.

When the girl reached the tree where the house was, she climbed up and went inside, shutting and locking the seven iron doors behind her, one after the other. She cooked the meal and fed the dog and fed the cat, and then as she was very tired, she lay down and fell fast asleep.

Now very soon after she left the Rakshas’ house, the young Rakshas came home, and he was very fierce and terrible to look at. At once his mother began to scold at him.

“Why are you so late?” she cried. “A young maiden has been here, a fine and dainty morsel, all pink and white, and as tender as a bird, and you might have had her for your supper if only you had returned earlier, in time to catch her.”

When the Rakshas heard this, his eyes grew red as fire, and he gnashed his teeth together with rage.

“Which way did she go?” he bellowed. “Which way did she go? I’ll follow her and catch her however far she’s gone.”

“You’ll have no trouble finding the way,” replied his mother, “for I gave her corn to scatter as she went along, so as to make a pathway. Just follow the corn, and you’ll soon find her.”

At once the Rakshas set off. So fast he went that the ground was burned up beneath him. It did not take him long to reach the little house in the tree top, but Surya Bai was safely inside, and all the seven iron doors were locked behind her.

The Rakshas beat on the door and called to her to come and open. “I am your father, the eagle, returned from his journey,” he called to her. “Open quickly, dear child, that I may put the diamond ring upon your pretty finger.”

But Surya Bai did not open the door or answer, for she was fast asleep and the little cat and dog were asleep also.

The Rakshas began to tear at the iron door, but he could not stir it, and all he did was to break off one of his long brown nails, and then off he went, howling horribly, and leaving the nail still sticking in the crack of the door.

A little while after he had gone, the cat awoke and wakened Surya Bai. “Surya Bai,” mewed the cat, “I dreamed the eagles had returned and were calling at the door for you to open it. You had better go and see if they are there.”

Surya Bai at once arose and took the keys and opened the doors, one after another, and when she opened the seventh door, the Rakshas’ nail that he had broken off ran into her hand, so that she fell down as though she were dead; for the fingernail of a Rakshas is very poisonous.

Not long after that the eagles came home, and there they saw the doors all open and little Surya Bai lying on the threshold, seemingly dead. Then they were very sorrowful. They put the diamond ring upon her finger, and after that they flew away, uttering loud cries, and were never seen again; but the cat and the dog stayed beside her and mourned over her.

Now the very next day a handsome young Rajah^[1] came by that way, hunting, and stopped under the very tree where the house was. He happened to look up, and there, high above him in the tree top, he saw something dark and large, and he could not tell what it was. So he bade one of his attendants climb up and see.

The man climbed up as the Rajah bade him, and presently he came sliding down again, and he told his master that what he saw up there was a curious little house made of iron. The man told him the house had iron doors, but they were all open, and on the threshold of the first of the doors lay a lovely maiden. She lay there seemingly dead, but so beautiful he had never seen anything like her, and beside her sat a little cat and dog mourning for her.

When the Rajah heard this, he became very curious to see the maiden, and he bade some of his people climb up and bring her down to where he was.

This they did, and the little cat and dog came with them. No sooner had the young Rajah seen the maiden than he fell violently in love with her because of her beauty, and he felt he could not live unless he could awaken her to life and have her for a wife. She did not look to him as though she were really dead, for her cheeks and lips had kept their color, and when he lifted her hand, it was soft and warm in his fingers. Then he saw something long and dark,

that looked like a thorn, sticking in her hand. This was the Rakshas' nail.

The Rajah drew it out very slowly and carefully, so as not to hurt her, and no sooner had he withdrawn it than life came back to the maiden, and she opened her eyes and breathed again.

When the Rajah saw the change that had come over her he was filled with joy, and he told her who he was and what had happened, and he asked her whether she would come back to his palace with him and be his Ranee.^[2]

To this Surya Bai willingly agreed, for he was so handsome and kind looking that she loved him the moment she saw him. So Surya Bai went home with the young Rajah, and they were married with great magnificence and rejoicing, and every one loved the young Ranee for her gentleness. Only the Rajah's mother hated her. She was very angry that her son should have married a girl who had a pair of eagles for parents, and who had lived in an iron hut in the forest. She also envied Surya Bai because the Rajah had given her all the most magnificent jewels in the palace. Nothing was too good for the little new Ranee.

"This girl has bewitched him," the mother said to herself, "but if she were only gone and out of his sight, he would soon forget her." So she was always plotting and planning to get rid of the young Ranee.

Now there was an old woman about the palace, and she was very wise. She said to Surya Bai, "Do not trust the old Ranee. She is certainly planning some evil against you. I know her. She is jealous of you and so wicked that she would stop at nothing."

But Surya Bai would not listen to her. She was so good and gentle that she could not believe evil of any one.

One day Surya Bai and the Rajah's mother were walking in the gardens, and the old woman was with them, for she was one of Surya Bai's favorite attendants.

Then the old Ranee said to the young Ranee, "Your jewels are very beautiful and fine. Even when I was a young Ranee my husband never gave me such beautiful jewels as those you have. Let me put them on just for a short time, I beg of you, that I also may know how it feels to be as magnificent as you are."

Then the old woman whispered in the girl's ear, "Do not lend her your jewels. I know she is planning some evil against you."

But Surya Bai would not listen to her. She took off her jewels, all of them, and helped the old Ranee to put them on. She put the bracelets on the old Ranee's arms, and the necklaces on her neck, and the earrings in her ears,—all her jewels she lent to the old Ranee. She hung them about her until she shone like the sun with the splendor of them all.

When this was done the Rajah's mother bade the old woman go back to the palace for a hand mirror that she might look at herself and see how fine she was now that she was dressed in all those jewels.

The old woman did not want to go, but she was obliged to.

When the old Ranee was alone with Surya Bai, she said to her, "Come, Surya Bai, let us go over to the bathing tank while we wait for the mirror, that I may look at myself in the water."

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