***Grimm’s Fairy Tales***

***Chapter 5***

### ***Faithful John***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Synopsis:***

A faithful servant takes care of his master by getting for him the maiden he wants as well as keeping him safe. However, the master does not completely trust his servant and the servant is turned to stone. Only after the master sacrifices his own children is the servant restored. The children are also brought back to life.

This story teaches the lesson of trusting others. Although faithful John had always been trustworthy, the king does not trust his motives when this trust matters most. In order to undo his lack of trust in John, the king must sacrifice his own children to bring John back to life. In return for his ability to take this step of faith and sacrifice his children, the king is rewarded by not only getting his faithful servant back but also getting his children back. Consider the symbolism of the three ravens and the three drops of blood.

***Summary:***

* This king knows he's dying, so he instructs his servant Faithful Johannes to look after his son in every way but not to let him see the portrait of the Princess of the Golden Roof, because then he'll fall in love with her. Which will put him in danger, apparently.
* Old king dies; new king wants to see all his new stuff. Faithful Johannes shows him everything but the forbidden room. Young king flips out and demands to see it, then faints when he sees the portrait of this princess.
* When he comes to, the king goes on about how much he loves her, needs to win her, blah blah blah.
* So Faithful Johannes comes up with a plan: this chick really digs gold (does that make her a gold-digger?) so they commission a bunch of pretty things from goldsmiths and set sail.
* Faithful Johannes goes incognito, lures the princess onto the ship to look at their golden wares, and they sail off. Not shady at all, right?
* Luckily she consents to be the king's wife upon meeting him.
* On the voyage back, Faithful Johannes overhears three ravens talking. You know, as they do.
* Each one reveals a threat to the maiden, king, or both; however, if someone reveals that Faithful Johannes knows this info, he'll turn entirely to stone. Faithful Johannes is mildly angsty about all this but decides to serve his master even if it means giving up his life.
* First threat? An amazing horse will steal away the king forever. Faithful Johannes shoots it. Other servants are all, what the what? King is like, let it be, he's my loyal servant.
* Second threat? A dazzling bridal outfit that will burn the king alive. Faithful Johannes tosses it into the fire. Again, other servants get ticked off, and again, the king is like whatevs.
* Third threat? At the wedding celebration, the bride falls down as though dead. Faithful Johannes knows to take her to a room and suck three drops of poisoned blood from her right breast. The king is there the whole time, so this is awkward.
* Finally, the king is pissed enough to throw Faithful Johannes into prison and sentence him to death…for saving his new wife's life.
* Faithful Johannes confesses why he did everything, and is subsequently turned to stone. The king and queen are super sad about this.
* The stone figure communicates to the king that he'd be turned back if the king beheads his new kids and rubs the statue with their blood.
* The king kills his kids while his wife's in church, thus disenchanting Faithful Johannes.
* Luckily he can put their heads back on and bring them back to life. So they all live happily ever after.

***Critical Study:***

\*This post is part of A Grimm Project, a series of short fiction pieces using each of the Brothers Grimms’ Nursery and Household Tales as writing prompts. For more information about the project, [*click here*](https://grimmproject.wordpress.com/about/). For more about the story which inspired this freewrite, [*click here*](https://grimmproject.wordpress.com/2013/10/01/thoughts-on-faithful-johannes/).\*

My sweet children, sit on this rock beside me, and together we will watch the waves tow their burdens into port. If you squint your precious eyes tightly until they are nearly closed, you may see the faint shadow of the land where I was born. It was across this sea that your two fathers brought me as a golden prize. In that land we cannot see from here, I was like a trinket. Here, I was happily made your mother.

You must forgive me, dear ones, for not saying I would save you. You must understand, we all knew how it would turn out. Me, and both your fathers—fathers, yes, for they have both given you life—understood how the story works, and for this understanding, we were rewarded with your lives.

My place in the story is to exist as the prize. The Princess of the Golden Roof is made to be won, and to acquiesce. The king’s love must have a voice, even if that love is not truly for me. I am here to distract, as precious metals always do. It was hard, at first, knowing that the king did not love me best—I knew it even before he did. But we are all very happy now. I have my own prize, do I not? My two darling children.

Are you not happy too? You, you lucky ducklings, have all three parents to love. And we do, my dears, despite how callous we might seem on the page. May you grow to be as open-minded as your mother, and as tender-hearted as your two fathers. Ah! Come and kiss me, and then let’s gaze at the gulls. My children! How dear you are with your heads back on.

***Significance:***

Tale of the Brothers Grimm translated by M. Hunt [1884]  
Interpretation by Undine & Jens in green [2018]

There was once on a time an old king who was ill, and thought to himself, “I am lying on what must be my death-bed.” Then said he, “Tell Faithful John to come to me.” Faithful John was his favourite servant, and was so called, because he had for his whole life long been so true to him. When therefore he came beside the bed, the King said to him, “Most faithful John, I feel my end approaching, and have no anxiety except about my son. He is still of tender age, and cannot always know how to guide himself. If thou dost not promise me to teach him everything that he ought to know, and to be his foster-father, I cannot close my eyes in peace.” Then answered Faithful John, “I will not forsake him, and will serve him with fidelity, even if it should cost me my life.” On this, the old King said, “Now I die in comfort and peace.” Then he added, “After my death, thou shalt show him the whole castle: all the chambers, halls, and vaults, and all the treasures which lie therein, but the last chamber in the long gallery, in which is the picture of the princess of the Golden Dwelling, shalt thou not show. If he sees that picture, he will fall violently in love with her, and will drop down in a swoon, and go through great danger for her sake, therefore thou must preserve him from that.” And when Faithful John had once more given his promise to the old King about this, the King said no more, but laid his head on his pillow, and died.



Who is the old king who ruled the world and now becomes ill and dies? He should be something superior, otherwise he would not be here at the beginning of this great fairy tale. Is it perhaps even the Great Father, God or the true spirit? “The true spirit dies and God is dead!” This reminds us of Friedrich Nietzsche, who writes in the third book of his ’Gay Science’:

*“Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was the holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves?”*

That may sound very gloomy at first. But what is the big problem when the true and healing spirit dies and God is dead in us, so to speak? Who rules the world in his place? Only the personal ego of “I want!”? And who then could be our good John, whom the king, as the dearest and most faithful servant, entrusts to guide his still ignorant son, and to serve and help him? We cannot help but think of the Bible, where John is found in various roles as Gospel writer, Baptist, and even Prophet in Revelation. And who really serves, guides and even enlightens us inwardly even as faithfully as John? Every human being has such a helper inside, more or less conscious. There are different terms for him.

In the Bible, he is also called “Paraclete”, the helper in the form of the salutary or holy spirit. We just want to call him ’reason’ or ’wisdom’ here, which perhaps most people are familiar with these days. And what mission does the reason get from the old king? Show the growing soul everything in this world, but save it from the fall into illusion! This also reminds us, of course, of the famous words in paradise when God spoke to man: *“You may eat of all the trees in the garden, but you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For on the day you eat of him, you must die of death. [Bible, Genesis 2]”*Of course, we already suspect that the king did not accidentally mention this particular chamber and did not arrange the picture in vain, just as God did not in vain put the tree of worldly knowledge in paradise and warned against it. But our king has full confidence in his faithful servant that everything will be fine in the end.

When the old King had been carried to his grave, Faithful John told the young King all that he had promised his father on his deathbed, and said, “This will I assuredly perform, and will be faithful to thee as I have been faithful to him, even if it should cost me my life.” When the mourning was over, Faithful John said to him, “It is now time that thou shouldst see thine inheritance. I will show thee thy father’s palace.” Then he took him about everywhere, up and down, and let him see all the riches, and the magnificent apartments, only there was one room which he did not open, that in which hung the dangerous picture. The picture was, however, so placed that when the door was opened you looked straight on it, and it was so admirably painted that it seemed to breathe and live, and there was nothing more charming or more beautiful in the whole world. The young king, however plainly remarked that Faithful John always walked past this one door, and said, “Why dost thou never open this one for me?” - “There is something within it,” he replied, “which would terrify thee.” But the King answered, “I have seen all the palace, and I will know what is in this room also.” and he went and tried to break open the door by force. Then Faithful John held him back and said, “I promised thy father before his death that thou shouldst not see that which is in this chamber, it might bring the greatest misfortune on thee and on me.” - “Ah, no,” replied the young King, “if I do not go in, it will be my certain destruction. I should have no rest day or night until I had seen it with my own eyes. I shall not leave the place now until thou hast unlocked the door.”

Then Faithful John saw that there was no help for it now, and with a heavy heart and many sighs, sought out the key from the great bunch. When he had opened the door, he went in first, and thought by standing before him he could hide the portrait so that the King should not see it in front of him, but what availed that? The King stood on tip-toe and saw it over his shoulder. And when he saw the portrait of the maiden, which was so magnificent and shone with gold and precious stones, he fell fainting to the ground. Faithful John took him up, carried him to his bed, and sorrowfully thought, “The misfortune has befallen us, Lord God, what will be the end of it?” Then he strengthened him with wine, until he came to himself again. The first words the King said were, “Ah, the beautiful portrait! Whose is it?” - “That is the princess of the Golden Dwelling.” answered Faithful John. Then the King continued, “My love for her is so great, that if all the leaves on all the trees were tongues, they could not declare it. I will give my life to win her. Thou art my most Faithful John, thou must help me.”

And of course it comes, as it had to come, the forbidden attracts the young soul especially and no reason seems to help against the great desire. On the upper level the palace of the father is described with the many chambers. On a middle level one can see the same picture as the diversity of external nature and on a deeper level as our mind with all the concepts, ideas and memories. And there are really certain pictures that have been waiting to overwhelm us since time immemorial. Of course, this includes, above all, the urge to the opposite sex, with all the strange ideals that have been implanted in us and that can rob us of our self-control. This is the mighty power of Eros, the passionate love.

Fortunately, reason comforts us again and again and helps us along this path, which is probably inevitable in every life. And who is the beautiful picture here? This question alone is most memorable, just as the answer: the ’king’s daughter of the golden dwelling’. Such puns probably point to a deeper level of symbolic meaning. And so here again meet the male and female principles, which strive for harmonious union. Because each of them has what the other one lacks. The male has the essential gold and the female has the outer forms. Of course, the ’golden dwelling’ also reminds of an outer shell that covers the inner being. This is not so simple, because actually we live in a ’golden dwelling’. The external wealth is much more important in our society than the intrinsic values such as virtue and truthfulness. But where does this lead, if one seeks happiness and indulges oneself only in external, fast transient forms and no longer in the inner, true being?

The faithful servant considered within himself for a long time how to set about the matter, for it was difficult even to obtain a sight of the King’s daughter. At length he thought of a way, and said to the King, “Everything which she has about her is of gold: tables, chairs, dishes, glasses, bowls, and household furniture. Among thy treasures are five tons of gold; let one of the goldsmiths of the kingdom work these up into all manner of vessels and utensils, into all kinds of birds, wild beasts and strange animals, such as may please her, and we will go there with them and try our luck.”

The King ordered all the goldsmiths to be brought to him, and they had to work night and day until at last the most splendid things were prepared. When everything was stowed on board a ship, Faithful John put on the dress of a merchant, and the King was forced to do the same in order to make himself quite unrecognizable. Then they sailed across the sea, and sailed on until they came to the town wherein dwelt the princess of the Golden Dwelling.

Of course, it is hard for the reason to approach this feminine side of our soul that loves the outside so much. But he is not stupid and of course takes advantage of this contrast to eventually reunite both poles. Thus he lets the raw gold of the king be beautifully shaped, so that the forms are pleasing to the feminine. For outer form and inner being naturally belong together and attract each other accordingly. Then it goes by ship over the sea. This expresses the fact that the two opposites are still far apart, and one can even say that in this field of tension between male and female arises this whole wide world, the ocean of life, which is to be mastered. All the persons and things we find in this world are any disguises of the Supreme Being, the pure Spirit, or even God. And the most common disguise is the merchant who wants to trade as an independent person in the world (“to act”) and of course wants to win a lot.

Faithful John bade the King stay behind on the ship, and wait for him. “Perhaps I shall bring the princess with me,” said he, “therefore see that everything is in order; have the golden vessels set out and the whole ship decorated.” Then he gathered together in his apron all kinds of gold things, went on shore and walked straight to the royal palace. When he entered the courtyard of the palace, a beautiful girl was standing there by the well with two golden buckets in her hand, drawing water with them. And when she was just turning round to carry away the sparkling water she saw the stranger, and asked who he was. So he answered, “I am a merchant.” and opened his apron, and let her look in. Then she cried, “Oh, what beautiful gold things!” and put her pails down and looked at the golden wares one after the other. Then said the girl, “The princess must see these, she has such great pleasure in golden things, that she will buy all you have.” She took him by the hand and led him upstairs, for she was the waiting-maid. When the King’s daughter saw the wares, she was quite delighted and said, “They are so beautifully worked, that I will buy them all of thee.” But Faithful John said, “I am only the servant of a rich merchant. The things I have here are not to be compared with those my master has in his ship. They are the most beautiful and valuable things that have ever been made in gold.” She wanted to have everything brought to her there, but he said, “There are so many of them that it would take a great many days to do that, and so many rooms would be required to exhibit them, that your house is not big enough.” Then her curiosity and longing were still more excited, until at last she said, “Conduct me to the ship, I will go there myself, and behold the treasures of thy master.”

Thus, reason approaches the feminine side of our soul and awakens her personal interest in the beautiful forms of gold. Here one could ponder what is meant in the deeper sense with the beautiful gold that appears so truly, valuable and imperishable and can take on so many wonderful forms? What is the true essence of all things in this world? A modern scientist would perhaps speak of energy and information, from which everything arises. It is basically nothing else than the age-old concept of the ’spirit’, which, unfortunately, has almost become a swear word in our science. Of course, we all got into this hot water together. The religions of the past centuries have severely abused their power, and so, of course, came a hard countermovement in the guise of modern science. Let us hope that this vain dispute between spirit and nature will soon settle again, and that the concept of ’spirit’ may once again play a role in the natural universe, as it used to be taken for granted in everyday life. In this ancient sense, we also want to use it here, although in the same way one could also speak of energy and information.

On this Faithful John was quite delighted, and led her to the ship, and when the King saw her, he perceived that her beauty was even greater than the picture had represented it to be, and thought no other than that his heart would burst in twain. Then she got into the ship, and the King led her within. Faithful John, however, remained behind with the pilot, and ordered the ship to be pushed off, saying, “Set all sail, till it fly like a bird in air.” Within, however, the King showed her the golden vessels, every one of them, also the wild beasts and strange animals. Many hours went by whilst she was seeing everything, and in her delight she did not observe that the ship was sailing away. After she had looked at the last, she thanked the merchant and wanted to go home, but when she came to the side of the ship, she saw that it was on the deep sea far from land, and hurrying onwards with all sail set. “Ah,” cried she in her alarm, “I am betrayed! I am carried away and have fallen into the power of a merchant I would die rather!” The King, however, seized her hand, and said, “I am not a merchant. I am a king, and of no meaner origin than thou art, and if I have carried thee away with subtlety, that has come to pass because of my exceeding great love for thee. The first time that I looked on thy portrait, I fell fainting to the ground.” When the princess of the Golden Dwelling heard that, she was comforted, and her heart was inclined unto him, so that she willingly consented to be his wife.



So this spirit, which can take any form, lures the feminine side of our soul to the ship, which, under the command of reason, then quickly leaves the shore and sails on the ocean of life. On the upper level of the story, of course, this is a crafty kidnapping that seems unfair to us today, but in ancient times it was one of the usual conquests of kings. As an ordinary merchant, that would surely have been a crime at that time, but when he showed his true nature, the lovers found themselves. But, as so often in life, the happy ending has not yet been reached.

It happened, however, while they were sailing onwards over the deep sea, that Faithful John, who was sitting on the fore part of the vessel, making music, saw three ravens in the air, which came flying towards them. On this he stopped playing and listened to what they were saying to each other, for that he well understood. One cried, “Oh, there he is carrying home the princess of the Golden Dwelling.” “Yes,” replied the second, “but he has not got her yet.” Said the third, “But he has got her, she is sitting beside him in the ship.” Then the first began again, and cried, “What good will that do him? When they reach land a chestnut horse will leap forward to meet him, and the prince will want to mount it, but if he does that, it will run away with him, and rise up into the air with him, and he will never see his maiden more.” Spake the second, “But is there no escape?” - “Oh, yes, if any one else gets on it swiftly, and takes out the pistol which must be in its holster, and shoots the horse dead with it, the young King is saved. But who knows that? And whosoever does know it, and tells it to him, will be turned to stone from the toe to the knee.” Then said the second, “I know more than that; even if the horse be killed, the young King will still not keep his bride. When they go into the castle together, a wrought bridal garment will be lying there in a dish, and looking as if it were woven of gold and silver; it is, however, nothing but sulphur and pitch, and if he puts it on, it will burn him to the very bone and marrow.” Said the third, “Is there no escape at all?” - “Oh, yes,” replied the second, “if any one with gloves on seizes the garment and throws it into the fire and burns it, the young King will be saved. But what avails that? Whosoever knows it and tells it to him, half his body will become stone from the knee to the heart.”

Then said the third, “I know still more; even if the bridal garment be burnt, the young King will still not have his bride. After the wedding, when the dancing begins and the young Queen is dancing, she will suddenly turn pale and fall down as if dead, and if some one does not lift her up and draw three drops of blood from her right breast and spit them out again, she will die. But if any one who knows that were to declare it, he would become stone from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot.” When the ravens had spoken of this together, they flew onwards, and Faithful John had well understood everything, but from that time forth he became quiet and sad, for if he concealed what he had heard from his master, the latter would be unfortunate, and if he discovered it to him, he himself must sacrifice his life. At length, however, he said to himself, “I will save my master, even if it bring destruction on myself.”

Ravens are often described in fairy tales and legends as wise messengers of destiny and reveal what is still in the dark. Not everyone can hear their voices, but the reason in our fairy tale obviously had this power. Forecasting future events is another topic that is considered unscientific today. That is probably the reason why we more and more have to face events whose effects nobody could scientifically foresee, such as pollution, nuclear bombs, media obsession and consumption binge. For our reason is increasingly dominated by the raw, rational intellect and loses the fine antennas of higher intuition. But foresight is nothing unusual. An attentive reason looks at the causes and can estimate the effects from them. The more careful one looks, the farther and clearer the vision can become. And that this passionate conquest of love will still meet great obstacles, should be clear to every reason.

The details are of course spectacular, on the one hand for the outer story and on the other hand as symbols with a deeper meaning. The first two obstacles threaten more the male side and the last obstacle the female side. Of particular interest here is the question why the reason will petrify when he expresses these foreseen events and their solution? That is a strange phenomenon. Well, hardly anyone believes in such revelations, and the speaker quickly becomes unreliable and muzzled - petrified, so to speak. But if people only want to believe and hold on to it, then a petrified reason arises, because one no longer seeks a solution, loses the sense of change and development and becomes blind to all other information. Just think of the Bible’s Revelation, which made some people wait for the end of the world every day and see only dark signs everywhere. The message of our fairy tale is clear: do not talk so much, but act with the best of intentions!

When therefore they came to shore, all happened as had been foretold by the ravens, and a magnificent chestnut horse sprang forward. “Good,” said the King, “he shall carry me to my palace,” and was about to mount it when Faithful John got before him, jumped quickly on it, drew the pistol out of the holster, and shot the horse. Then the other attendants of the King, who after all were not very fond of Faithful John, cried, “How shameful to kill the beautiful animal, that was to have carried the King to his palace!” But the King said, “Hold your peace and leave him alone, he is my most faithful John, who knows what may be the good of that!”

Now let us try to interpret these strange events. The fiery, galloping horse could stand here for the passionate desire that can carry us away in adventurous and even dangerous way. This happens in practical life as well as on spiritual paths. Then reason should rise and hit the wild horse with its own weapons before it takes our soul away. A practical weapon would be, for example, the starvation of our desires. It often happens that in our hearts as well as in the outside, different voices arise that do not understand and criticize sharply. Then the soul should trust the reason and remain firm, even if it does not seem rational.

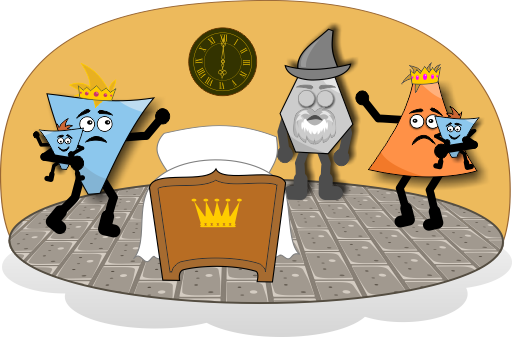
They went into the palace, and in the hall there stood a dish, and therein lay the bridal garment looking no otherwise than as if it were made of gold and silver. The young king went towards it and was about to take hold of it, but Faithful John pushed him away, seized it with gloves on, carried it quickly to the fire and burnt it. The other attendants again began to murmur, and said, “Behold, now he is even burning the King’s bridal garment!” But the young King said, “Who knows what good he may have done, leave him alone, he is my most faithful John.”

The next obstacle could be pride and vanity. Then we decorate ourselves with dangerous things that can burn us quickly, even if they initially look excellent. This is the artificial or even the imaginary, which, though appearing like gold and silver, has no true essence, but is quickly withering. Again, it is important to trust the reason, if he burns these things before our eyes.

And now the wedding was solemnized: the dance began, and the bride also took part in it; then Faithful John was watchful and looked into her face, and suddenly she turned pale and fell to the ground as if she were dead. On this he ran hastily to her, lifted her up and bore her into a chamber then he laid her down, and knelt and sucked the three drops of blood from her right breast, and spat them out. Immediately she breathed again and recovered herself, but the young King had seen this, and being ignorant why Faithful John had done it, was angry and cried, “Throw him into a dungeon.”

Now comes the great day of the wedding, when husband and wife reunite. Again, highest mindfulness is required for the reason. On the one hand, it often happens that after the marriage in the dance of life a spouse is so oppressed that he or she literally loses his life. But oppression is not the way to resolve opposites. On the other hand, on the spiritual path, at the point where the opposites reunite, there is always the danger of falling into nihilism, which deprives nature and also reason of all meaning. No meaning, no life. Then reason should feed on the blood of nature and restore nature to life. This giving and taking is a basic principle of nature and should be preserved in a good marriage as well as trust. The number three could stand here for life itself, since it reminds us of the Holy Trinity. But here ends the trust of our soul in reason, and the king apparently sees in this shameless act the dishonour of his wife, which calls for appropriate punishment. Thus, in the end, nature lives, but reason should die.

Next morning Faithful John was condemned, and led to the gallows, and when he stood on high, and was about to be executed, he said, “Every one who has to die is permitted before his end to make one last speech; may I too claim the right?” - “Yes,” answered the King, “it shall be granted unto thee.” Then said Faithful John, “I am unjustly condemned, and have always been true to thee.” and related how he had hearkened to the conversation of the ravens when on the sea, and how he had been obliged to do all these things in order to save his master. Then cried the King, “Oh, my most Faithful John. Pardon, pardon bring him down.” But as Faithful John spoke the last word he had fallen down lifeless and become a stone.



Fate takes its course. The trust is lost, and the higher reason must die and end in petrifaction as he tries to justify himself. This is a wonderful and memorable symbol.

Thereupon the King and the Queen suffered great anguish, and the King said, “Ah, how ill I have requited great fidelity!” and ordered the stone figure to be taken up and placed in his bedroom beside his bed. And as often as he looked on it he wept and said, “Ah, if I could bring thee to life again, my most faithful John.” Some time passed and the Queen bore twins, two sons who grew fast and were her delight. Once when the Queen was at church and the two children were sitting playing beside their father, the latter full of grief again looked at the stone figure, sighed and said, “Ah, if I could but bring thee to life again, my most faithful John.” Then the stone began to speak and said, “Thou canst bring me to life again if thou wilt use for that purpose what is dearest to thee.” Then cried the King, “I will give everything I have in the world for thee.” The stone continued, “If thou wilt cut off the heads of thy two children with thine own hand, and sprinkle me with their blood, I shall be restored to life.”

The King was terrified when he heard that he himself must kill his dearest children, but he thought of faithful John’s great fidelity, and how he had died for him, drew his sword, and with his own hand cut off the children’s heads. And when he had smeared the stone with their blood, life returned to it, and Faithful John stood once more safe and healthy before him.

King and queen, spirit and nature, are now reunited, but reason, the holy and healing spirit, is petrified and stands only as an idol in the corner of their bedroom. But the king at least feels great remorse on an intellectual level and wishes that higher reason may live again. So it often happens in life that we have to lose something first to realize its true value. But even this time of suffering was not in vain, it became fruitful and a pair of twins came into the world. Interestingly, there were two sons and not the usual son and daughter couple. This may already indicate that the opposites in this relationship of man and woman were still present, but not so distinct.

And how can you bring reason back to life? The confidence must be restored and that usually requires a serious test as well, because a lip service is not enough here. Of course, the test is hard, and the king is to sacrifice his beloved, to which he clings to in this world. This reminds us of a similar saying in the Bible: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Here we are just as frightened as the king of our fairy tale, and ask ourselves, “That should be reasonable?” Of course, this is not about hating the beings, but about selfish and thus partisan attachment to the creatures, which has to be cut off with the famous sword of knowledge. This is a truly great sacrifice that the soul offers here, and from this flows the pure blood of eternal life, which not only brings reason to life.

Of course, you should be very careful with such proof of faith, especially when it comes to worldly goals. Unfortunately, it has often been abused. Horrible wars were thus waged for political purposes, where reason was completely petrified. Therefore, always the greatest attention is required. Because the path to spiritual liberation is very narrow. And that’s obviously what our fairy tale is all about, otherwise we would not have to make such a big sacrifice.

He said to the King, “Thy truth shall not go unrewarded.” and took the heads of the children, put them on again, and rubbed the wounds with their blood, on which they became whole again immediately, and jumped about, and went on playing as if nothing had happened.

The truthfulness of such a sacrifice is, of course, recognized in the effect. The true reward is the true life. Everything else is death and transient illusion. And what does the feminine side of our soul say about this sacrifice? Will she react in opposition?

Then the King was full of joy, and when he saw the Queen coming he hid Faithful John and the two children in a great cupboard. When she entered, he said to her, “Hast thou been praying in the church?” “Yes,” answered she, “but I have constantly been thinking of Faithful John and what misfortune has befallen him through us.” Then said he, “Dear wife, we can give him his life again, but it will cost us our two little sons, whom we must sacrifice.” The Queen turned pale, and her heart was full of terror, but she said, “We owe it to him, for his great fidelity.” Then the King was rejoiced that she thought as he had thought, and went and opened the cupboard, and brought forth Faithful John and the children, and said, “God be praised, he is delivered, and we have our little sons again also,” and told her how everything had occurred. Then they dwelt together in much happiness until their death.

Wonderful, even the last test is passed! All three are now in harmony. The usual contrasts between man, woman and reason have been overcome. They can live united without quarrel, and that is really a reason for great bliss. You could say these three are the life. Without reason it would only be a back and forth in nature. But reason gives the whole thing a direction to develop. The more harmoniously these three are united and the less they argue with each other, the happier life is. Wonderful, that could be the great message and thus the happy ending of our fairy tale.