

## **THE FAIRY AURORA**

from Roumanian Fairy Tales

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For three days and three nights the whirlwinds did not stop blowing. Thrice they uprooted trees, drove the rivers from their beds, dispersed the clouds by beating them against the rocks, swept the bottom of the sea and destroyed the surface of the earth. It was all in vain. They came back to the house, each one more tired, angry and mortified than the other.

Only one still lingered: the Spring wind, the soft, lazy, warm Spring wind. What had become of him? They all knew that he could not have accomplished much. Who knows? Weary as he was, he had perhaps lain down somewhere in the shade. Nobody troubled his head any more about him. Suddenly, after a short time, when all were racking their brains to discover Petru, the leaves began to stir gently.

Holy Friday felt the soft air, and went out. "What news do you bring?" she asked the favorite of all the winds.

"Sad, very sad, yet good,"--whispered the young wind. "After I grew tired of so much searching, destroying, and pulling, I reached an empty well, and, being rid of my brothers, thought I would rest a while before setting off for home."

"And you found Petru at the bottom of the well?" cried Holy Friday, joyfully.

"Yes, and the bay by his side."

"May your speech be sweet, your breezes soft, and may you ever bring good tidings!" said Holy Friday; then she commanded him to hasten to Holy Thursday and tell her she must be ready with the gold crucible, for Petru was in a sad case:--from there the Spring wind was to rush to Holy Wednesday and tell her she must come to the well with the water of life. "Do you understand?" said Holy Friday. "And go as fast as you can," and they all set off together.

They reached the deserted well. There was nothing left of Petru except bones and ashes. Holy Wednesday took the bones and fitted them together--not a single one was missing. Holy Friday ordered the whirlwinds to search the bottom of the well, turn up all the dust, and collect Petru's ashes. This was done. Holy Thursday made a fire, gathered the dew from the flowers into the gold crucible,

and set it on the flames. When the water began to boil, Holy Wednesday repeated three spells, looked once to the east, once to the west, once to the north, and once to the south, and threw the herb of life into the boiling water. Holy Friday did the same with Petru's ashes. Holy Thursday counted one, two, three, and took the crucible off the fire. Petru's ashes and the herb of life were made into a fragrant salve. The Spring wind blew upon it once and stiffened it, then Petru's bones were smeared with it seven times from head to foot, seven times from foot to head, seven times across one way, and seven times across the other, and, when this was done, up sprang the hero, a hundred thousand times handsomer, braver, and prouder than before.

"Jump on the horse!" said Holy Friday.

As soon as the bay felt his master on his back, he began to neigh and stamp. The animal was more spirited than ever.

"Where shall we go?" the horse asked gayly.

"Home," replied Petru.

"How shall we ride?"

"Like a curse."

Petru expressed his thanks for the service done him, and set off; he rode and rode as fleetly as a curse flies, till he came to the emperor's court.

Nothing was left of the palace except the ground where it had stood. No trace of any human being who could have uttered a word or given any tidings was to be found. At last old Birscha came out of a ruined cellar. Petru learned what had happened and its cause, turned his bay, and went back even more swiftly than he had come. He did not even stop to take breath until he reached the Fairy Aurora's kingdom. The time that had passed since every thing had been in the condition the queen had commanded, can not be told in words. It must have been a long period.

When Petru reached the bridge the sun had only three bright rays, seven warm, and nine cold ones left; all the others had gradually been lost.

The Fairy Aurora felt that some remarkable person must be coming, for it seemed just as it had done when she woke from the dream that had made her so sad. She was longing for something, she knew not what, just as she had

then.

"Who is coming?" she asked in a low tone.

"Hold firmly, master," said the bay.

Petru struck in the spurs, drew the bridle, and felt nothing until he was on the other side of the bridge.

"The hero is coming! Over the bridge!" cried the guards, waving their hats in the air.

The Fairy Aurora did not stir nor speak.

Petru suddenly rushed up to her, clasped her in his arms, and kissed her--just as fairy princes always kiss bewitching fairies.

The lovely fairy queen felt as she had never felt before. She said nothing more, asked no more questions, but made a sign to have the bay led into the stables of the sun, and entered the palace with Petru.

The fairies began to smile merrily, the flowers to smell sweetly, the springs to pour forth clear waters, the winds to blow cheerily, the wheel of life whirled faster than a top, the black veil fell, and the radiant sun rose high in the heavens, higher than it had ever done before. And in the world there was a light like the sun's, so that for nine years, nine months, and nine days it was so terribly bright that nothing could be seen.