

TALES OF THE WINDSHIP

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By Fengar Gael

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*"Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with the tales and fables of childhood, you have been crammed with geography and natural history!"*

Charles Lamb to Samuel Coleridge  
October, 1802

## Cast of Characters

### **Story 1: The English Tale of Lazy Jack**

#### 10 CHARACTERS:

Jack  
Jack's Mother  
First Child  
Second Child  
Farmer  
Milkmaid  
Baker  
Cobbler  
Nobleman  
Gertrude, his daughter

### **Story 2: The German Tale of Rumpelstiltskin**

#### 12 CHARACTERS:

Carpenter  
Elsa, his daughter  
First Guard  
Second Guard  
King Griswold  
Executioner  
Rumpelstiltskin  
Parson  
Stork  
First Messenger  
Second Messenger  
Third Messenger

### **Story 3: The Chinese Tale of The Four Foo Sisters**

#### 9 CHARACTERS:

Papa-San Foo  
Yang Foo, number one daughter  
Chang Foo, number two daughter  
Ying Foo, number three daughter  
Ming Foo, number four daughter  
Mai Fong  
Papa-san Fong  
Judge  
Executioner

### **Story 4: The French Tale of The Yellow Dwarf**

#### 7 CHARACTERS:

Queen Marie  
Princess LaBelle, her daughter  
Simone, a servant  
Two Headed Dragon  
Bon Mot, a yellow dwarf  
Bon Bon Fairy, his sister  
King of the Golden Mines

**Story 5: The Mexican Tale of Perez The Mouse**

7 CHARACTERS:

Senora Carlita  
Esperanza, her servant  
Cat  
Bush  
Turkey  
Cow  
Wheat Field

**Story 6: The Russian Tale of The Magician**

9 CHARACTERS:

Ivan the Luckless  
Olga, his wife  
Ivanuska, their son  
Mishka, the magician  
First Apprentice  
Second Apprentice  
Third Apprentice  
Merchant  
Katrina, his daughter

## **Author's Note**

### **Acting Style**

Tales of the Windship are freely adapted from authentic folk tales of six different countries, and written in the style of narrative or story theatre. The tales can be performed with an ensemble cast of six actors or as many as fifty-five. In order to evoke their multinational flavor, the actors should strive for the accents of those countries when their characters are speaking directly to other characters. When they are speaking descriptively or narrating the action of the play, they should retain their non regional American accents. I have attempted to facilitate this conceit by employing phonetic word spellings and placing the interactive dialog in quotation marks. Despite current cultural sensitivities, the characters in these stories are often based on brazen stereotypes, and should be played fearlessly, with heightened passion and humor.

### **Stage Setting**

The scenery should be minimal, functional, and suggestive, leaving the details to the imaginations of the audience. The only essential set pieces are the two Windships: the first can be a giant kite or wind sock made to accommodate a petite actress. It can be made by connecting two hula hoops with several yards of fabric, creating a tubular effect. Streamers can be attached and affixed in place by nylon fishing line. (A manufactured wind sock can serve as a model.) The second Windship is a miniature duplicate of the larger one, and will be held aloft by an actor dancing around the larger Windship to indicate its flight patterns.

### **Acting Style**

The actors should have one basic costume that evokes the simple rustic qualities of bygone days. Additional costume pieces such as capes, aprons, hats, and so forth can be placed on hooks or in crates to enable the actors to dress appropriately from character to character. The costumes could be more imaginative than literal. For example, the actor playing the stork could wear a white laboratory coat, and the actors playing the two headed dragon could utilize a large poncho.

### **Acting Style**

"The Windship Song" is sung at the beginning and end of the play. Between tales, while the Windship is in flight, the tune is hummed in harmony by the actors. A single soprano might improvise a separate counter-melody that follows the rhythms of the dancer carrying the smaller Windship.

PROLOGUE

The Windship sails on stage,  
followed by the ACTORS who enter  
from the theatre, flourishing  
gauzy streamers, representing the  
WINDS while making eerie,  
whistling sounds. The WINDS  
surround NOBODY, a small unkempt  
girl seated in the audience, then  
whisk her to the stage in a  
flurry. The whistling becomes  
melodious as the WINDS sing "The  
Windship Song."

VOICES OF THE WIND

Come and ride the wind with me,  
Fly away on a fantasy,  
To faraway places by land and sea;  
Oh, come and ride the windship with me.

You'll meet maidens from legends of old,  
Slay dragons of powerful might;  
See kings and queens and fairies and elves,  
And a man who spins gold so bright!

And when it's time for you to go,  
And leave the wind behind;  
Remember you can close your eyes,  
And sail the winds in your mind.

Come and ride the wind with me,  
Fly away on a fantasy,  
To faraway places by land and sea;  
Oh, come and ride the windship with me.

The WINDS scatter, leaving NOBODY  
spinning in the center of the  
stage. The actor playing  
WHIFFINPUFF stands behind the  
Windship bellowing at an  
amplified volume. NOBODY,  
terrified, walks timidly toward  
the Windship.

Is anybody there?

NOBODY

Aye!

WHIFFINPUFF

Where?

NOBODY

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Here! WHIFFINPUFF

I can't see you! NOBODY

No mortal sees me. I am Whiffinpuff, Tale Teller of Ancient Lore and Brother to the Wind. Who art thou? WHIFFINPUFF

Oh, I...I'm... NOBODY

Speak up! WHIFFINPUFF

Nobody! NOBODY

What?! WHIFFINPUFF

Nobody. NOBODY

Humbug! Every mortal is a somebody. WHIFFINPUFF

Well, if I am, then I've forgotten. I must have bumped my head. NOBODY

Upon my Windship? WHIFFINPUFF

Windship...? NOBODY

Aye, it sails wherever there's a tale to be told. Hast thou a homeland and heritage? WHIFFINPUFF

Not that I remember. NOBODY

Ah, perchance ye belong to one of the Windship's tales, a small womanish character, a servant perhaps, or a witch. Art thou old or young? WHIFFINPUFF

I...I forgot. NOBODY

WHIFFINPUFF

When were ye born?

NOBODY

I don't know. Sometime in the past.

WHIFFINPUFF

Yea, then, once upon a time, but where? Was it in a kingdom far far away?

NOBODY

I guess.

WHIFFINPUFF

Once upon a time, in a kingdom far far away. Hmmmm. Then thou couldst be Lazy Jack's mother from "The Tale of Lazy Jack."

NOBODY

Well, maybe...

WHIFFINPUFF

Quick! Make haste! Climb aboard the Windship! We set sail for England!

The WINDS hum "The Windship Song" as NOBODY steps inside the Windship, rocking gently from side to side, peeking out her head as if in flight. Meanwhile an ACTOR carrying a miniature replica of the Windship, waltzes across the stage, demonstrating the flight pattern of the larger Windship until it lands.

STORY 1: THE ENGLISH TALE OF LAZY JACK

WHIFFINPUFF

Nobody! Disembark! We are in England!

As NOBODY exits, WHIFFINPUFF  
tosses her a head scarf and an  
apron.

WHIFFINPUFF (CONT'D)

Don these garments and repeat after me! Once upon a time,...

NOBODY

Once upon a time,...

WHIFFINPUFF

...there was a hard working woman who made her living by  
sewing.

NOBODY sits on a stool and mimes  
sewing.

NOBODY

...there was a hard working woman who made her living by  
sewing.

WHIFFINPUFF AND NOBODY

She had a son.

JACK enters, yawning.

JACK

His name was Jack. He was so lazy he did nothing but lie in  
the shade.

MOTHER (NOBODY)

Occasionally his mother would try to persuade him to help  
her.

(speaking with a Cockney  
British accent)

"Get up, Jack! You lazy good for nothin' rascal! 'Elp your  
poor ole mum!"

JACK

(with a Cockney accent)

"It's too cold to work!"

MOTHER

"What do you mean too cold? It's the middle of summer!"

JACK

"It's too 'ot to work!"

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MOTHER

Jack's mother could not persuade him to lift a finger, so she was finally forced to tell him, "If you don't start workin', I'll turn you out of the 'ouse!"

TWO CHILDREN scurry on stage.

FIRST CHILD

Jack's friends heard his mother and sang...

TWO CHILDREN

"Poor Jack, lazy Jack,  
His mother doesn't want him back!"

The CHILDREN stick out their  
tongues and run off.

JACK

This threat roused Jack, so he ventured out and met a farmer...

A FARMER enters.

FARMER

...who hired him for a tuppence. "Help me plow these fields, me lad, and I'll give you a tuppence."

JACK

"How jolly! A tuppence! This will make mum cheerio!"

JACK and the FARMER mime plowing.

JACK AND THE FARMER

So Jack and the farmer plowed the fields.

FARMER

"Here's your tuppence!"

JACK

And Jack went home, but as he was walking across a bridge, he dropped the tuppence!

Plop plop sounds are heard.

JACK (CONT'D)

"Oooops, mum isn't going to like this." But when he saw her, he explained his predicament.

MOTHER

"You stupid moron! You should've put the tuppence in your pocket!"

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JACK

"Oh, blimie, I'll to it next time." So the next day Jack went out again.

The TWO CHILDREN enter skipping.

SECOND CHILD

On the way, he was accosted by two children.

TWO CHILDREN

"Poor Jack, lazy Jack,  
His mother doesn't want him back;  
He's so dumb he doesn't know  
That pennies go in pockets, oh!"

The FIRST CHILD taps Jack's  
shoulder while the SECOND CHILD  
stomps his toes. Then THEY dash  
off.

JACK

Jack, being a sporting fellow by nature, ignored the vicious children and hired himself to...

A MILKMAID enters.

MILKMAID

...a milkmaid. "I'll give you a full bucket of milk if you'll  
'elp me milk me cows."

JACK

"Oh, jolly good! A bucket of milk! That'll really make mum  
cheerio!"

JACK AND THE MILKMAID

So Jack and the milkmaid milked the cows.

THEY mime milking to whizzing  
sounds.

JACK

Then Jack took the bucket of milk and poured it into his  
pocket. "Blimie, it's spillin' all over the bloomin' place!"  
Later that day, when Jack returned home...

MOTHER

...his mother said, "You witless imbecile! You should've  
carried the bucket on your 'ead!"

JACK

"I thought you said put it in me pockets."

MOTHER

"Pockets are for pennies. Milk goes on your 'ead!"

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JACK

"I'll do it next time. There's a baker who needs 'elp. I'll try gettin' a job with 'im." On his way to the baker, Jack heard some children singing.

The TWO CHILDREN enter, singing loudly in Jack's ears. HE covers them and crouches down, then THEY slap their hands on his head.

TWO CHILDREN

"Poor Jack, Lazy Jack,  
His mother doesn't want him back;  
He's so dumb he doesn't know,  
That buckets go on heads, oh!"

JACK

"Oh, knock it off!" Later, Jack met the baker...

The BAKER enters.

BAKER

"Delighted to 'ave you along, chappy. Just knead this dough and I'll give you a shoulder of mutton."

JACK

"How jolly!"

JACK AND THE BAKER

So they kneaded the dough.

JACK

And Jack put the mutton on his head, but by the time he got home, the hot sun had dried it to a crisp. "Uh oh."

MOTHER

"You stupid lout! It's spoiled rotten and stinks to high heaven! You should've wrapped it in a cold wet cloth and carried it on your shoulder!"

JACK

"Blimie, I'll do it next time."

The TWO CHILDREN enter: the FIRST CHILD crawls behind JACK, and the SECOND CHILD topples him backwards.

TWO CHILDREN

"Poor Jack, lazy Jack,  
His mother doesn't want him back;  
He's so dumb he doesn't know,  
That muttons go on shoulders, oh!"

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JACK

"Scat, you brats!"

MOTHER

"You see, dimwit, everyone's making fun of you!"

JACK

So the next day Jack hired himself to...

A COBBLER enters.

COBBLER

...a cobbler. "I'll give you a donkey if you'll 'elp me mend these shoes."

JACK

"Oh, splendid, a donkey! I'll wrap it in a cold wet cloth and tuck it over me shoulders!"

COBBLER

The cobbler thought, "This bloke's balmy, but I'll give 'im the donkey anyway."

JACK AND THE COBBLER

So Jack and the cobbler mended shoes all day long.

THEY mime hammering.

JACK

"Ouch! Me thumb!"

COBBLER

And finally the cobbler gave the crazy chap the donkey.  
"Here, me lad."

Braying sounds are heard.

JACK

"Oh, blimie, I've got to wrap 'im in a cold wet cloth and lift 'im on me shoulders." So Jack wrapped the donkey and heaved and hoisted the poor creature onto his shoulders. Then Jack began staggering home, and in the course of his journey encountered...

A well dressed NOBLEMAN enters.

NOBLEMAN

A rich nobleman who lived with his daughter, Gertrude. Alas, the rich man was so unhappy, he wept  
(sobbing)

without shame.

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JACK

Upon seeing the man so distressed, Jack remarked, "Blimie, your lordship, whatever is the matter?"

NOBLEMAN

The man was so grieved, he didn't even look up. "Oh, life's a bloody pit. I wish I were in my grave."

JACK

"But your lordship, you're rich!"

NOBLEMAN

"Rich but miserable. I have a beautiful daughter, but she's deaf and dumb. She has never heard or spoken a single solitary word."

JACK

"That's a bloomin' shame, your lordship."

NOBLEMAN

"The doctor says she'll never recover unless someone makes her laugh, and I'm so smitten with sorrow, I can't laugh myself."

JACK

"Oh, dearie me."

NOBLEMAN

"I've offered anyone who can make her laugh my entire fortune and her hand in marriage."

JACK

"How jolly! I'd give it a try meself, but I'm such a lazy lout I can't muster enough wits to amuse meself much less anyone else." So Jack was about to continue his journey when the beautiful daughter appeared.

GERTRUDE enters, and upon seeing  
JACK bursts into hysterical  
laughter!

GERTRUDE

"Oh, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! That's the silliest thing I've ever seen! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh, my sides, my sides!"

NOBLEMAN

"By George, I can't believe it! My daughter's laughing! And she's actually speaking! Why she's cackling like a regular hen!"

JACK

"Blimie, why so she is!"

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NOBLEMAN

The nobleman was quite puzzled, so he inquired, "My dear Gertrude, can you stop laughing long enough to tell me what's so frightfully funny?"

GERTRUDE

"Oh, look, father! He's carrying a donkey on his shoulders! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

NOBLEMAN

"By George, so he is! Oh, ha, ha, ha, ha! What a stupid fellow! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"  
So the rich nobleman...

GERTRUDE

...and his daughter,...

NOBLEMAN AND GERTRUDE

...laughed until their bellies ached.  
(groaning in unison)  
"Ohhhhhh."

NOBLEMAN

Then the nobleman fulfilled his promise. "Well, my lad, you can have my wealth and my daughter, Gertrude."

JACK

"Wow! This will really make mum cheerio! Let's go and tell 'er the good news!"

GERTRUDE and the NOBLEMAN link arms and walk behind JACK.

GERTRUDE AND NOBLEMAN

So they walked down the road...

Jack's MOTHER enters followed by the TWO CHILDREN.

MOTHER

...as Jack's mother walked up the road.  
(shrieking)  
"Jack! You flea brained fool! Where 'ave you been?!"

JACK

"But mum..."

MOTHER

"Don't you 'but mum' me! Put that donkey down before you break its back! Donkey's are for riding, you stupid ignorant ninny!"

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JACK

Suddenly Jack gathered his courage and screamed, "Listen up, mum! This is me future bride, and I've inherited a bloody fortune!"

MOTHER

"What?!"

JACK

"We're rich!"

MOTHER

Then Jack's mother understood, and a big fat smile crossed her face. "Ooohhh, Jack, me sweet, clever boy."

JACK, his MOTHER, GERTRUDE, the NOBLEMAN and TWO CHILDREN form a tableau, singing:

TWO CHILDREN

"Poor Jack, lazy Jack,  
Your mother's glad to have you back!"

JACK

"Pennies go in pockets,  
And milk goes on me head;  
And muttens go on shoulders,  
That's what me mother said!"

MOTHER

"Donkey's are for riding,..."

JACK

"And lazy Jack's for bed;..."

GERTRUDE

"And girls are made for laughing,..."

JACK, MOTHER, GERTRUDE, NOBLEMAN,  
TWO CHILDREN

"That's what me mother said!"

The tableau stands silent as  
WHIFFINPUFF bellows.

WHIFFINPUFF

Nobody!

NOBODY

(leaving the tableau)

Yes, Whiffinpuff, is that you?

WHIFFINPUFF

Aye! Are ye still Nobody?

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NOBODY

Well, I can't be Jack's mother. She's too old and grumpy, and now she's rich, but I think I'm poor.

WHIFFINPUFF

Poor, eh? Hmmmmm. Perchance thou art the carpenter's daughter.

NOBODY

Who's she?

WHIFFINPUFF

A German lass from "The Tale of Rumpelstilkskin." Return to the Windship, and set sail for Germany!

Music as the ACTORS disperse and NOBODY enters the Windship. The ACTOR holding the smaller Windship pirouettes across the stage as the melody fades.

STORY 2: THE GERMAN TALE OF RUMPLESTILTSKIN

When NOBODY disembarks, the CARPENTER stands to the side, hammering. NOBODY'S apron and scarf have vanished, and her hair has lengthened.

WHIFFINPUFF

There is thy father. Thou art his daughter, Elsa.

CARPENTER

Once there was an old German carpenter who worked very hard.  
(he hammers several times)  
Alas, he was very poor, but he had a beautiful daughter who brought him his lunch.

NOBODY brings the CARPENTER his lunch.

CARPENTER (CONT'D)  
(speaking with a German accent)

"Ah, wiener schnitzel!" Now it happened that one day he had occasion to meet...

KING GRISWOLD and TWO GUARDS enter.

KING GRISWOLD

...King Griswold who tried to relieve his boredom by tormenting his subjects.

The TWO GUARDS drag the CARPENTER to the KING.

KING GRISWOLD (CONT'D)

"Off mit his head!"

The EXECUTIONER enters.

CARPENTER

In order to give himself an air of importance and save his life, the carpenter said, "I haff a daughter who can spin straw into gold."

The EXECUTIONER poses with his axe.

KING GRISWOLD

"Halt!" Upon hearing this, the king replied: "Dat is an art in which I am very much interested. Bring your daughter to mine castle und I vill put her to duh test."

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CARPENTER

Accordingly, the girl was brought to...

Now NOBODY becomes ELSA, the  
carpenter's daughter, speaking  
with a German accent.

ELSA

...the castle. "Vhy haff ve come here?"

CARPENTER

"Duh king vants to see you."

ELSA

"Duh king vants to see me?"

CARPENTER

"Yah. Vhen I described you to him, he vas very anxious to  
meet you."

ELSA

"Oh?"

The CARPENTER and ELSA approach  
KING GRISWOLD.

CARPENTER

"He also vants you to spin straw into gold."

The CARPENTER dashes off as the  
KING steps forward.

ELSA

"Vhat!?! Ach himmel! Vait! Fadder! Come back!"

KING GRISWOLD

"Right dis vay, my dear." King Griswold conducted Elsa to a  
chamber filled with straw, gave her a spinning wheel and a  
winder and said, "Now set to vork, und if between tonight und  
tomorrow's dawn you haff not spun dis straw into gold, den  
you must die! Auf Wiedersehen!" Thereupon, the king carefully  
locked the door of the chamber.

A loud click is heard.

ELSA

(shouting)

"But I don't haff the least idea how to spin gold from  
straw!" The probability of death made the unfortunate  
carpenter's daughter so depressed, she began to weep.

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ELSA sobs as a short, stooped fellow, RUMPLE-STILTSKIN, scurries into the room, wearing large billowing pants.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

Suddenly, a strange little man in fat pants entered the chamber.

ELSA

"Ach! Who are you?!"

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

"Goot evening little fraulein. Vhat are you weeping for, hmmm?"

ELSA

"Ach du lieber, I haff to spin dis straw into gold und I don't know how."

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

"Vhat vill you giff me if I spin it for you?"

ELSA

"My pearl necklace?"

RUMBLESTILTSKIN

"Vunderbar!" So the little fat pants sat before the spinning wheel and sang:

"Rrround und rrround und in und out,  
Und up und down und all about;  
Sticks of straw turned von by von,  
To purest gold so finely spun.

Oh, spinney, spinney, spinney spoo,  
I'll spin for me, I'll spin for you;  
Oh, spinney, spinney, spinney spee,  
I'll spin until I make you free!"

And so it went until all the straw was spun and the room was filled with gold!

A cock crowing sound is heard.  
RUMPLESTILTSKIN dashes out as the KING enters.

KING GRISWOLD

At sunrise the king came into the chamber. When he saw the gold, he was astonished and greatly pleased, but he became greedier than ever.

(to Elsa)

"Follow me!"

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ELSA

"Where are we going?"

KING GRISWOLD

"To another chamber. Spin this straw into gold in one night if you value your life!"

KING GRISWOLD locks the door and  
departs.

ELSA

The maiden was at her wits end, and began to weep when suddenly the shutters sprang open, and...

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

...the little fat pants appeared. "What will you give me if I spin this straw into gold for you?"

ELSA

"That ruby ring off my finger?"

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

"Swell!" So the little fat pants took the ring and began to weave at the wheel.

(singing)

"Oh, spinney, spinney, spinney spoo,  
I'll spin for me, I'll spin for you;  
Oh, spinney, spinney, spinney spee,  
I'll spin until I make you free!"

ELSA

By morning, he had spun all the straw, and once again the room was filled with gold. "Ah, wonderful!"

The KING enters as  
RUMPLESTILTSKIN exits.

KING GRISWOLD

"I am delighted with your work, my dear, but this is not enough. Follow me!" So he took Elsa to still a larger chamber filled with straw and said, "Tonight you must spin this straw into gold, and if you succeed you will become my queen. Even if you are only a carpenter's daughter, I won't find a richer woman in the whole world!"

The KING locks the door and  
leaves.

ELSA

"Oh, little fat pants, you can come out now! I know you are here!"

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

(hopping out)

"Yah, yah, now vhat vill you giff me if I spin dis straw for you?"

ELSA

"Oh, dear, I haff nothing more to giff."

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

"Ach, den I von't do it!"

ELSA

"Vill you take an I.O.U.?"

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

"Nein, never!"

ELSA

"Bill me at the end of duh month?"

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

"Nein!"

ELSA

"Please? Isn't dere anything?"

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

"HMMMMM, vell, promise me your first born child if you become qveen."

ELSA

"Who knows vhat vill happen? But I am lost for certain if I don't spin dis straw into gold."

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