

THE GOLDEN CRAB

PART 3

Rose missed Hans, the Golden Crab, very much indeed. Every day she wept and wept and refused to leave her room. She wouldn't even eat apples from the tree she had so enjoyed with him.

Everyone was very worried - and when news reached the fisherman in his little cottage by the sea he decided to go and look for the crab.

'If I can find it and bring it back, Princess Rose will be happy again,' he told his wife.

Off the fisherman went, climbing over mountains and passing through forests, but he couldn't find the Golden Crab anywhere.

Then one day he stopped by a stream to rest and eat his lunch, when suddenly a huge raven flew down from the trees and tore his food from his hand with its claws.

'Oi! Bring my lunch back!' cried the fisherman.

He chased after the raven through the trees, until he reached a rock face, with a tunnel and an open door.

'Perhaps it flew inside...' he thought, nervously.

The fisherman went through the doorway and climbed down a stone staircase.

When he reached the bottom, he realised he was inside a magnificent palace full of golden furniture and marble statues. In the middle was a large, stone table with twelve thrones round it.

Then the fisherman heard the sound of flapping wings and he hid behind a statue and watched as twelve ravens flew into the chamber and sat down - one on each of the thrones.

By now, it was nearly sunset. As the last rays of sunlight disappeared the ravens turned into princes with gold crowns on their heads! And the fisherman recognised Hans - the Golden Crab - straight away.

'Hans!' he cried, 'I've been looking everywhere for you. Why did you leave Princess Rose?'

'The witch that cast the wicked spell on us was very angry!' he replied. 'She turned me and my brothers from golden crabs into ravens and told us the spell will last forever. Rose won't love me anymore - not now that I've got a big beak and a horrid squawk! I want her to forget all about me.'



The fisherman headed home feeling excited. He knew that Rose would never forget about Hans and that she'd always love him.

When he got to the castle he rushed to tell her the news.

'I don't care if he's a crab or a raven!' she cried with joy. 'Can you take me to him? Right now?'

When they got to the palace they hid behind the statue and waited until the twelve ravens flew in and sat at their thrones. The moment they turned into princes Rose rushed out and gave Hans a big hug.

'I'm so sorry I revealed your secret,' she cried. 'But I will always love you, even if you have to become a raven by day forever!'

'And I will always love you, too,' replied Hans. 'I'm sorry I ran away from you.'

Rose and Hans spent the whole night talking and laughing.

They were so happy they forgot all about the time, until the sun was rising in the sky outside. Suddenly, Rose realised what had happened.

'Look! It's morning and you haven't turned into a raven!' she cried. 'Maybe the spell has been broken!'

When they saw Hans's brothers with big smiles on their faces they knew it was true.

'Hooray! Your love for each other is stronger than the spell!' they cried. 'Now we can be princes forever!'

When Hans and Rose returned to the castle the King and Queen were delighted.

'What did I tell you,' said the King. 'He was a proper prince in disguise all along!'

'And he's much more handsome than Prince Rupert,' sighed the Queen.

Rose and Hans were finally married and were happy - and when Hans's eleven brothers were married to Rose's eleven sisters they were even happier still.

'Ah, all's well that ends well!' said the fisherman to his wife. 'I wonder if I'll be lucky enough to catch another golden crab!?'