

The Tale of the Three Brothers and Their Descendant

There were once Three Brothers who were traveling along a lonely, winding road at twilight. In time, the Brothers reached a river too treacherous to pass. But being learned in the magical arts, the Three Brothers simply waved their wands and made a bridge. Before they could cross, however, they found their path blocked by a hooded figure. It was Death, and he felt cheated. Cheated because travelers would normally drown in the river. But Death was cunning. He pretended to congratulate the Three Brothers on their magic and said that each had earned a prize for having been clever enough to evade him. The First Brother asked for a wand more powerful than any in existence. So Death fashioned him one from an elder tree that stood nearby. The Second Brother decided he wanted to humiliate Death even further and asked for the power to recall loved ones from the grave. So Death plucked a stone from the river and offered it to him. Finally, Death turned to the Third Brother. A humble man, he asked for something that would allow him to go forth from that place without being followed by Death. And so it was that Death reluctantly handed over his own Cloak of Invisibility. The First Brother traveled to a distant village, where with the Elder Wand in hand, he killed a wizard with whom he had once quarreled. Drunk with the power that the Elder Wand had given him, he bragged of his invincibility. But that night, another wizard stole the wand and slit the Brother's throat for good measure. And so Death took the First Brother for his own. The Second Brother journeyed to his home, where he took the stone and turned it thrice in hand. To his delight, the girl he'd once hoped to marry before her untimely death, appeared before him. Yet, soon she turned sad and cold for she did not belong in the mortal world. Driven mad with hopeless longing, the Second Brother killed himself so as to join her. And so Death took the second brother