

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

FRAN MILČINSKI
ABOUT THE TINY LITTLE
SOUL THAT COULDN'T
GET INTO HEAVEN

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Fran Milčinski: About The Tiny Little Soul That Couldn't Get Into Heaven

There once lived a mother who had two sons of whom she took little care, because her mind was too taken up with vain and aimless pursuits. She taught them neither to pray nor to work, and so they turned rotten, and when they grew up, they left their mother and joined up with brigands, and she never heard any- thing of them again.

And it came about that she had yet a third child, a daughter. This brought her no joy at all. "I'm still young, I want to have fun and laugh like the others, and here I'll have to stay home and take care of you and change your diapers. Why did you have to come along?" And barely had the child been christened and the sun gone down than it was dead.

Its soul fluttered about the house before sliding out through a low-set window. It flitted this way and that through the wide, wide world, before finding its way at last to the door to heaven.

It knocked gently until a peephole opened up and the heavenly doorman looked through. He saw the little soul and said, "Tiny little soul, poor little soul, I mustn't let you in. The judgment says that heaven's door is not to be opened to you until you bring us a watering can full of solid water that flows from the base of a hill up to its top, beneath a bone mountain." He gave the little soul a watering can and closed the peephole.

The little soul turned away sorrowfully, with no idea where or how it was supposed to complete its tasks. And when it had flown a thousand miles, it ran into the yellow sun and approached it. "Hello, hello, little sun, you climb up high and shine far and wide, have you ever seen – oh please, I hope you can tell me – have you ever seen solid water that flows from the base of a hill up to its top, beneath a bone mountain?"

The yellow sun caressed her with its warm rays and replied, "I may well climb high, and I may well shine far and wide, but in the whole wide world of the universe I've never come across a spring like the one you're looking for, tiny little soul."

The little soul turned around with big, fat tears streaming from its little eyes. On it flew carrying its little silver watering can, with no idea where or how it was supposed to complete its tasks, until it ran into the new moon, whom it asked, "Hello, hello, new moon. You climb up high, you shine far and wide, have you ever seen – I hope you can tell me – have you ever seen solid water that flows from the base of a hill up to its top, beneath a bone mountain?"

The new moon replied as a star twinkled nearby. "Poor little soul, tiny little soul, I think I can help you. Slide down on my moonbeam and it will show you the way to the spring of solid water that flows from the base of a hill up to its top, beneath a bone mountain."

The little soul thanked it kindly and, now consoled, slid down a gentle beam of the new moon to the earth, then through a small, low-set window and into the little room of its mother, who was sitting on a blanket chest. But she wasn't alone, for a gray-haired woman sat by the fire, the gray-haired woman of old age.

Its mother was saying, "What do you want from me, old age? You've come much too soon. I still want to go to parties and have fun. Get out of here! You're ugly and mean."

But old age pleaded with her gently. "What is the point of your dancing and having fun, when your brow and your cheek are already creased and your hair is turning gray? Give up those thoughts and stop getting upset. I'm not as ugly and mean as you say. Mothers with children chasing round their skirts call me kind and beautiful. Their eyes take joy in their burgeoning offspring, their thriving youth, bred in suffering, raised to serve the good, their laughter and health, their fortune and happiness are a blessing to every mother's heart and not one would trade that sort of old age for all the fun of their youthful years."

Thus spoke old age, and when the mother recalled the children she had rejected, the loneliness she had felt, and the youth she squandered to no benefit, she was seized with a powerful sense of remorse, she lay down her head in her arms and she began sobbing out loud and shedding tears. A solid stream of them welled up from under the bone mountain, from the base of the hill up to its top. The little soul set out its little silver watering can, which filled up with its mother's tears.

It hurried back to the entrance to heaven, carrying the full watering can. It knocked on the door gently. Slowly the peephole opened and the heavenly doorman looked through. He accepted the little watering can and said to her pleasantly, "Tiny little soul, poor little soul, I can't let you in yet. For the judgment states that heaven's door will not be open to you until you perform a second task. Go out into a yellow field with a little juniper tree standing in it and sit in that tree until it dries up, and only then will the door to heaven be opened to you."

The little soul listened to the judgment and quickly flew back down, the sun showing her the way to a yellow field, and in the yellow field there was a little tree, a little juniper tree, and she perched in it and waited for it to dry up.

And she waited and waited, through sweltering heat and frigid bora, through snow and windstorms, through hail and lightning, year after year for seven full years and half of an eighth, and the little tree still hadn't dried up.

And then one evening two bandits came. They built a fire beneath the juniper tree and sat down beside it.

The first one rubbed his hands and said, "It's cold, but last night was even colder. I spent the night in the Church of St. Nicholas on the Mountain. I used the pews to make a fire, and when all the pews had burned up, I threw the saints on the fire to keep me warm."

The other one, who was turning a spit that had a stolen goose roasting on it, said, "I'm hungry, but last night I was even hungrier. I broke into a mill, and the miller tried to stop me, so I killed him, his wife and their daughter, and then all the pantries and cellars were open to me."

The little soul was sitting in the tree and the flames shot up to where it was and singed its wings. It fluttered in pain, but it didn't budge out of the tree, which was beginning to dry up. Then the first bandit looked up and said, "Brother, look at that stupid bird. The flames are singeing its wings, and it's flapping them in pain, but it refuses to fly off."

The little tree had already dried half up when the little soul spoke. "I'm not a bird, I'm your littlest sister. Before the first day of my life had passed, moments after I was christened, I had to die. Now I've been suffering for seven years, seven years and half of an eighth to earn my way into heaven. I mustn't leave this little tree until it dries up. That's my judgment."

Both bandits fell flat to the ground and the first one said, "Tiny little soul, innocent little sister, you've been condemned to suffer for seven years and half of an eighth to earn your way into heaven!? In that case woe to a bandit and arsonist like me! It burns, it burns, hellfire burns, for salvation I have nowhere to turn.

The little soul said, "Salvation is lacking only for those who despair of heaven's grace," and then it flew out of the dried tree. It flew off, flying past the golden sun and the new moon until it arrived at the entrance to heaven. And lo and behold, it didn't have to knock – the entrance to heaven opened up wide before her all on its own, with innumerable little lights lighting up all on their own and mighty pipe organs trumpeting forth all on their own, and then came the Lord of heaven, who took her by her white hand and led her into heaven and

said, "Tiny little soul, poor little soul, you do realize you weren't suffering on your own account, it was for your mother and your two brothers that you suffered.