

“Alas, No!” Sister Anne replied. “I see a cloud of dust, but it is only a flock of sheep on the road.”

But now Bluebeard bawled out so loudly for his wife to come down, that the whole house shook.

“Sister Anne, Sister Anne, tell me is no one coming?”

“I see two horsemen afar off,” cried Sister Anne. “I will beckon to them to hasten hither.”

But Bluebeard would wait not a moment longer. Nearly dead with terror his wife descended the stairs, still begging him to spare her life.

He would not, however, give heed to her prayers. He was just brandishing his sword, so that it might come down straight and true upon her slender neck, when the door burst open and two young army officers came rushing in. Bluebeard recognized them as the brothers of his wife.

He swiftly fled, but they speedily followed. When they caught him, they slew him then and there for his many crimes.

All his wealth now belonged to his widow. She gratefully rewarded her brothers by buying them commissions in the army. She also gave her sister a large sum of money. After a while she married again, and with a good husband lived a happy life.

BLUEBEARD, OR THE LOCKED ROOM



An Old Arabian Tale



A LearningIsland.org
Tale of Old

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Bluebeard or the Locked Room/An Old Arabian Tale

Summary: An exciting tale of a wife who is told not to unlock a certain room.

1. Fairy Tales. Juvenile Literature. 2. Arabia. Juvenile Literature.

Created in USA

Words: 1376
Reading Level: 5.2



“Sister Anne, Sister Anne, look once again, can you see no one coming?” whispered the young wife wringing her hands. Her brothers, she knew, were to visit her that day. If only they would come in time!

“Ha! What is this?” he cried. “What is this stain that I see!”

His poor wife trembled still more, and could not speak.

“Wretched woman!” shouted Bluebeard, “you have used this key. You have unlocked the door of that room at the end of the passage. You shall die!”

In vain did his wife plead with him to spare her. She knelt before him with tears streaming from her eyes. “You shall die!” he cried again, more savagely than before.

“Let me have a few moments alone, to prepare for death,” she begged.

“A quarter of an hour, but not a moment longer,” he replied, and left her.

The poor young woman hastened to a room at the foot of the turret stairs where was her Sister Anne, and called to her.

“Sister Anne, Sister Anne, look from the tower window. Can you see no one coming?” And Sister Anne, looking out, answered:

“Alas! No! Nothing but the green grass, and the sun which shines upon it.”

Bluebeard shouted from below that the time was almost up.

BLUEBEARD

In the long ago times, there was a splendid house, surrounded by fine gardens and a park. In this house lived a man who was very rich. He had everything to make him popular, except one thing: his beard.

His beard was neither black as a raven's wing, golden as the sunlight, nor just an ordinary everyday color, but it was blue, bright blue.

Of course had blue beards come into fashion his would have been considered beautiful beyond words. But, as far as we know, blue beards have never as yet been fashionable, nor are they likely to be so.

However, in spite of his blue beard this man had married several times, though what had become of his wives nobody could say.

Now, not far from Bluebeard's house there dwelt a widow with two very lovely daughters. One of these Bluebeard wished to marry, but which he did not mind, they might settle that between themselves.

Neither of these girls had the least desire to have a husband with a blue beard. Also, not knowing the fate of the other wives, they did not like to risk disappearing from the world as those had done. But being very polite young women they would not refuse Bluebeard's proposals outright.

The younger said, "I would not for a moment take away Sister Anne's chance of marrying such a wealthy man."

Sister Anne declared that, although the elder, she would much prefer to give way to her sister. And so it went on for some time.

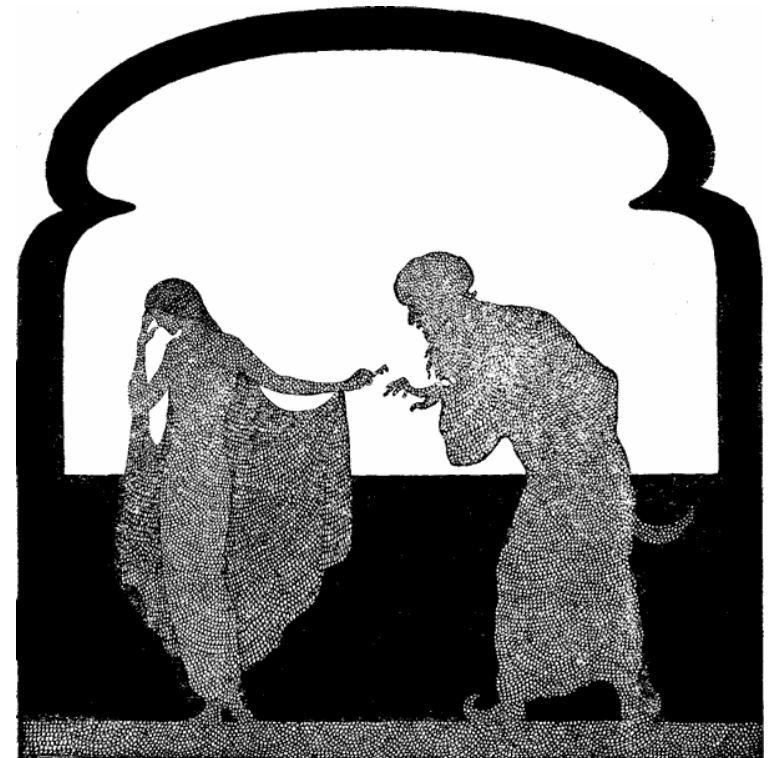
Then Bluebeard invited the widow and her daughters to spend a week with him. He also invited many of their neighbors.

Most sumptuous was the entertainment provided for them. Hunting and fishing expeditions, picnics and balls went on from morning till night, and all the night through. There was not time even to think of sleep, only feasting and pleasure the whole week long.

That same evening Bluebeard returned saying he had met the man who he had wanted to see, and so the long journey was unnecessary. He was glad to be at home again.

The next morning he called for the keys. His wife brought them to him, but not the little one. That one she left behind.

Bluebeard noticed this right away and sent her to fetch it. Trembling, and white as a sheet, she was forced to give it to him.



At last she could bear it no longer. Slipping away from her visitors, she ran along the passages and stairs. Finally she came to that door at the end of the corridor.

Not pausing an instant, she thrust the key into the lock. The door sprang open.

At first she could see nothing, for the room was dark and gloomy. Then, all of a sudden, she knew what had become of Bluebeard's other wives. There they lay, in a long, straight row; all dead.

She stood horrified for a moment or two. She gazed at the pale faces and long hair spread out around them.

Then she picked up the little key which she had taken from the lock but dropped in her fright. She quickly left the room, shut and locked the door, and ran to her own chamber to calm herself before returning to her guests. But she was unable to rest for an instant, so dreadful were her feelings.

Then with terror she noticed that on the key there was a stain. She wiped it with her kerchief, but it was blood that would not be wiped away.

She washed the key and rubbed it, and scraped it and polished it. It was no use. If she succeeded in cleaning one side, the mark came out on the other. For the key was enchanted.



BLUEBEARD

Painted by Jennie Harbour

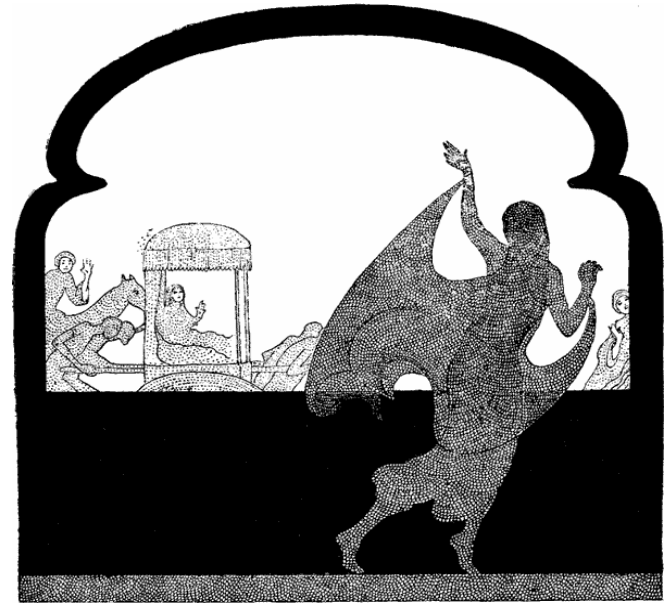
So well, indeed, did the younger sister enjoy this, that by the end of the week she had begun to think perhaps after all her host's beard was not so very blue, and that it would be a fine thing to be the mistress of such a magnificent mansion, and the wife of such a rich husband.

And so, not long afterwards, there was a grand wedding, and the widow's younger daughter became Mrs. Bluebeard.

About a month later, Bluebeard told his wife that he must leave her for several weeks, having to travel on business.

“While I am absent, my dear,” said he, “invite your relations and friends and enjoy yourself just as you please in entertaining them. See here are my keys, the keys of the rooms and of the chests where I keep my money, my gold and silver plate, and my jewels. Unlock rooms and chests and use freely what you will.”

“This small key,” he added, pointing to quite a little one, “is the key of the door at the end of the lower landing. You will not need to use this at all. In fact, should you open that door, or even put this key into the lock, I should be dreadfully angry. Indeed I should make you suffer for it in a terrible way.”



Then Bluebeard bid his wife good-bye, and left.

As soon as Mrs. Bluebeard's friends and relations knew that her husband was away, they came flocking to visit her. They had wanted to see all her splendid possessions, but had feared to come before.

They admired the magnificent apartments, and ran from one to another praising everything they saw.

But the young wife heard nothing they said and saw nothing they did. All she thought of was that little key which she must not use. She wondered more and more why she ought not to open that one particular door.