



## The Seventh Father of the House

Once upon a time in the mountains of the north, a traveler was walking through the night when it began to snow. Snow fell upon his cap and he brushed it off. It fell upon his shoulders and he brushed it off. Then it fell upon his cap and his shoulders and soon it was falling thick and falling fast.

“Oh dear,” said the traveler to himself, “if I don’t find a bed for the night soon, I’m going to freeze.” And with that he said a little prayer. No sooner had he turned the next corner than he saw before him a huge mansion, all made of wood, with the windows alight and shining brightly.

“Well, there’s bound to be a bed for me somewhere here,” he said to himself. He went to the front door and was just about to knock when he saw through shrouds of snow an old man chop chop chopping at a lot of wood.

“Good evening, Father,” said the traveler. “I wonder if I could have a bed for the night.”

“Ah, Son,” said the old man, “I’m afraid I’m not the father of this house. You must go and ask my father. You’ll find him in the kitchen around the corner.”

The kitchen door was a little big ajar, and inside there was the smell of roasting meat. Sitting by the fire was a very old man, much older than the last. “Good evening, Father,” said the traveler. “I’m wondering if I could have a bed for the night.”

“Oh, my son, I’m afraid I’m not the father of the house. You must ask my father. You’ll find him in the dining room.”

The traveler went through to the dining room, and there, sitting at a long table, was a very, very old man, much older than the last. And he was reading a huge book like a tiny child. His hands were shivering and shaking, and his teeth were chattering. “Good evening, Father,” said the traveler. “I wonder if I could have a bed for the night.”

“I’m afraid I’m not the father of this house. You must go and ask my father. You’ll find him on the chair over there.”

The traveler looked and there, sitting on a wooden chair, was a very, very, very old man, much older than the last. He was all bundled up, trying to smoke a pipe, but he could quite get it into his mouth. “Good evening, Father,” said the traveler. “I wonder if it would be possible for me to have a bed for the night.”

“I’m sorry, son, but I’m not the father of this house. You must go and ask my father. You’ll find him in the bed over there.”

The traveler looked, and there on the bed was a man so old you could barely tell he was alive. He was much older than the last man, but you could see two eyes winking and blinking in the light.

“Excuse me, Father,” said the traveler. “I was wondering if I might have a bed for the night.”

“I’m sorry, my son, but I’m not the father of this house. You must ask my father. You’ll find him in the cradle over there.”

The traveler looked, and there was a wooden cradle, rocking in the breeze. In it was an old man, so old that he’d shrunk to the size of a baby. You could barely tell that he was alive. “Good evening, Father,” said the traveler. “I wonder if I could have a bed for the night.”

It took a very long time for the old man to speak, and even longer to finish. He said, “I’m sorry, my son, but I’m not the father of this house. You must go and ask my father. You’ll find him hanging on the horn on the wall.”

The traveler went to the back of the house and looked up. High above was a horn, a buffalo horn. Perched on the end of the horn was a tiny pillow. On the tiny pillow was a speck of dust. In the middle of the speck of dust were two beady black eyes. The traveler had never seen anything so old. He took off his cap and spoke quietly, so as not to blow the speck of dust away. He said, “Good evening, Father. I’m the traveler that has been travelling a very long way. I wonder if it might be possible for me to have a bed for the night.”

The tiny speck of dust spoke in a teeny tiny voice and it said, “Yes, my child.”

And when that voice spoke, the doors burst open, and in came trolleys laden with food, steaming and hot, and jugs of red wine. The traveler sat down and ate and drank his fill. Then invisible hands took the trolleys away.

In came a bed laden with reindeer skins. The traveler climbed into bed and pulled up the skins. He lay his head on the pillow and was just about to go to sleep when he thought to himself, “I’m so glad I finally found the true father of the house.”

