

# EXPLORE TRADITIONS

**THE SMITH AND THE DEVIL**  
*Originated 6,000 years ago*  
 A blacksmith trades his soul to the devil for the power to weld any materials together. With his wish granted, the man traps the devil, sticking him to the ground until the evil spirit releases him from the bargain.



**A BOY STEALS THE OGRE'S TREASURE**  
*4,500 years ago*  
 A boy trespasses into a giant's house to steal his treasure. When the giant comes home, the boy hides and then manages to evade the giant's pursuit. Finally the boy kills the giant and takes his treasure.



**FRIENDS IN LIFE AND DEATH**  
*2,000 years ago*  
 A man invites his dead friend to his wedding. When the groom accompanies his friend to the underworld, 400 years pass and he misses his own nuptials.



**MODERN TAKES**

**Friends in Life and Death**  
 A dead man accepts Don Juan's invitation to a banquet in exchange for Don Juan's attendance at another event—in the underworld.

**THE ANIMAL BRIDEGROOM**  
*3,000 years ago*  
 Picking a rose lands a father in debt to a beast. In exchange for his freedom, his daughter is taken prisoner. After falling in love with the beast, she must overcome a curse to transform him into a prince.



**The Animal Bridegroom**  
 In Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, a witch's curse traps the prince in a beast's body until Belle's love breaks the spell.

**The Smith and the Devil**  
 Fictional scholar Faust and blues guitarist Robert Johnson are among the modern figures said to have sold their souls to the devil for knowledge.

**THE SUPERNATURAL HELPER**  
*2,500 years ago*  
 A peasant falsely tells the king his daughter can spin gold out of straw. An elfin creature appears, offering the real skill in exchange for her firstborn child. The only way out is to guess his name—which she does.



**A Boy Steals the Ogre's Treasure**  
 Magic beans grow to great heights in "Jack and the Beanstalk," allowing Jack to climb up into a giant's lair and steal his treasures.

**The Supernatural Helper**  
 Trapped in an agreement to give Rumpelstiltskin her first child, a young queen overhears him chanting his name and gets out of the deal.

## TALES AS OLD AS TIME

By Nina Strohlic

How does the same story come to be known as "Beauty and the Beast" in the U.S. and "The Fairy Serpent" in China? As Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm collected Germanic folktales in the 19th century, they realized that many were similar to stories told in distant parts of the world. The brothers Grimm wondered whether plot similarities indicated a shared ancestry thousands of years old.

Folktales are passed down orally,

obscuring their age and origin. "There's no fossil record [of them] before the invention of writing," says Jamie Tehrani, an anthropologist at Durham University. To test the Grimms' theory, Tehrani and literary scholar Sara Graça da Silva traced 76 basic plots back to their oldest linguistic ancestor using an international folktale database. If a similar tale was told in German and Hindi, the researchers concluded its roots lay in the languages' last common ancestor. "The Smith and the Devil," a story about a man who trades his soul for blacksmith skills, was first told some 6,000 years ago in Proto-Indo-European. Now we tell a similar tale about the blues guitarist Robert Johnson.

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