


















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THE GRATEFUL CRANE.






A Japanese Folk Tale



There was a young single man  who lived in the mountains  with his mother  and made his living by making charcoal. At the beginning of the winter, the  set off for town to do some shopping. On his way, he saw a crane  caught in a trap. The man felt sorry for the , so he didn't hesitate, and freed it from the trap. The crane soared up to the sky joyfully, circled around, and disappeared beyond the horizon.







When the  came home in the evening, he told his  what had happened. Suddenly, a beautiful girl  knocked on the  and begged the  to let her stay overnight. The man declined politely but the girl kept begging, so eventually the  and his  agreed. On the following day, the girl asked the man to marry her. The  was surprised and declined the 's wish again, but the girl kept insisting. She was a real beauty; so in the end, the  agreed and married the .






About a month, later the wife asked her husband to let her weave some cloth  on a loom. She only had one condition: She wished to work alone in a closed room, so that no one would disturb her or see her working. The  had no objections. The  worked day and night, night and day. Only the clatter of the loom could be heard from the room. The man was worried about his wife, but he didn't open the .




On the morning of the fourth day, the  opened the  herself – and the  felt a great sense of relief. He was happy that his  was all right, and offered her some food. When she finished eating, she showed her husband a beautiful bolt of  and asked him to go to the market to sell it.


The man obeyed, took the  and went to sell it. The lord of the castle  was impressed by the  and offered the  even more  if he would bring him another bolt. The man came home happy and told his wife about the deal.

The  promised that she would weave the second bolt of  so that the man could keep his part of the deal, but she also said that she did not know how long it would take. Again, no one was allowed to enter the room or to disturb her.

Days were passing, and the  was getting more and more worried about the , but he respected her wish and did not disturb her. However, on the evening of the seventh day, he gave in to his worries and opened the  a crack to check on the . The  was so fascinated by what he saw that he let out a soft cry. He did not see his beautiful  in the

room, but there was a ? who was weaving , even more beautiful than the last, from its  with its . When the ?, now all naked, finished her work, she spoke to the . She told him that she was the ? whom the  had saved at the beginning of winter on his way to the market, and that she wanted to return this favour and help him. She wanted to become his wife so that she could weave a luxury  from her own feathers, which would sell well.

Since the  had found out about his wife's true form, the ? told him that they could no longer be together, but would have to part ways. The  who did not care about the 's true form, wanted them to stay together forever.

The ? was heartbroken but she knew that she couldn't live any longer with the .

At sunset, a flock of cranes appeared and took the naked crane with them. All the cranes then flew away together.

A Quiz for the Inquisitive

1) The largest rodent of the northern hemisphere is:

- a) beaver
- b) umpalumpa
- c) rat



2) What do sousliks do in winter?

- a) They sleep
- b) They play cards with their friends
- c) They eat the grains which they had accumulated underground



3) What do beavers do in winter?

- a) They sleep in the beavers' castle the whole winter
- b) They rest at the bottom of the lake above the beaver dam
- c) They do not hibernate, and have a supply of branches that they had accumulated under the water to keep them from being hungry

4) How many teeth does a beaver have?

- a) 244
- b) 20
- c) 4

5) How do the sousliks live?

- a) alone
- b) in colonies which can consist of several tens of individuals
- c) in couples

At the beginning of the last century, this tiny owl was common almost everywhere in our country. Today, it is the most endangered owl species in the Czech Republic, with an estimated population of fewer than 100 couples! Intensive agriculture and the related changes to the originally diverse landscape are among the main reasons for the reduction in the number of individuals and the decreasing areas in which this species occurs. Small fields with fence posts are disappearing from the countryside, as are scythed meadows and pastures. Old hollow trees that this tiny owl needs for nesting are vanishing, as well.

And what is the name of this owl? Fill in the crossword and you will find out.

The answer is in the secret.

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 2 [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 3 [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
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MATCHING EXERCISE

A souslik, a squirrel and a beaver got lost and cannot find their homes. Match the animal friends with their habitats and help them get home!