

The Story of **William Tell**

Retold by Beverley Randell

Illustrations by Sara Luna



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Chapter 1

The Champion Archer

About seven hundred years ago, a man called William Tell lived in Switzerland. He was the best archer in the country, and won many contests. Ever since he was a boy, he had practised shooting deer and wolves in the forests around his mountain home.

One day, William Tell came walking down the steep mountainside to the nearest town. His crossbow was slung over his shoulder, and his son walked beside him.

It was a treat for young Walter to visit the lakeside town. In the busy market place, fruit and cheese and ducks and geese were for sale, and a pedlar sold little wooden toys.



But today the market place was crowded with foreign soldiers. The people of Switzerland hated the soldiers, and they hated the foreign governor who bullied everyone.

By the time William Tell and his son saw the soldiers, it was too late to turn back without being noticed. So they kept on walking. William Tell hoped that they could get past. He pretended that he had not seen the soldiers, or the tall pole they had put up, or the hat on top of the pole.

“You there! Stop!” ordered a voice, and a group of soldiers stepped out in front of William Tell, barring his way.

“Don’t you see our leader’s hat on the pole?” demanded a soldier. “All who pass must bow their heads to show respect for our leader.”

“Why should I bow to a hat?” said William Tell.

“I see no leader. I can see only a hat. Is your leader a hat?”





Someone in the crowd laughed loudly, and this made the soldiers angry. Three of them grabbed William Tell, and then the governor himself rode up on his horse to see who had refused to bow down.

“So it’s William Tell,” said the governor, when he was told the name of his prisoner. “William Tell, the champion archer! I have heard that you can shoot an apple off a tree, from eighty paces. Let me see you do it. I’ll give you one chance. If you hit the target, I will let you go.”



William Tell nodded without speaking.

The governor picked up an apple from a stall and tossed it to young Walter. "I know just where the apple must go," he said, with a cruel smile. He turned to his soldiers and gave an order. "Take William Tell's son to the far side of the market square and bind him to that tree. The apple can sit on the boy's head."

