

*The Complete Fairy Tales*  
*of the*  
**BROTHERS GRIMM**

*Translated and With an Introduction by*  
**Jack Zipes**

Illustrations by John B. Gruelle



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## Death and the Goose Boy

A poor goose boy went walking along the bank of a large, turbulent river while looking after a flock of white geese. When he saw Death come toward him across the water, the boy asked him where he came from and where he intended to go. Death answered that he came from the water and wanted to leave the world. The poor goose boy asked further how one could actually leave the world. Death said that one must go across the river into the new world that lay on the other side. The goose boy said he was tired of this life and asked Death to take him across the water. Death said it was not time yet, for there were things Death still had to do.

Not far from there lived a greedy man, who at night kept trying to gather together more and more money and possessions. Death led him to the large river and pushed him in. Since he could not swim, he sank to the bottom before he could reach the bank. His cats and dogs, which had run after him, were also drowned. A few days later Death returned to the goose boy and found him singing cheerfully.

“Do you want to come with me now?” he asked.

The goose boy went willingly and crossed the river with his white geese, which were all turned into white sheep. The goose boy looked at the beautiful country and heard that the shepherds of places like that became kings, and as he was looking around, the arch-shepherds, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, came toward him, put a royal crown on his head, and led him to the castle of the shepherds, where he can still be found.