

# SEVEN TALES FROM THE CLINICAL CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST



## Veronika Ivanova

Phd, Clinical psychologist, psychotherapist (Varna, Bulgaria)  
Chief Assistant Professor in Medical  
University of Varna

Email: [veronika\\_ivanovi@abv.bg](mailto:veronika_ivanovi@abv.bg)

ORCID: [0000-0002-9237-5496](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9237-5496)

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## Abstract

The article presents seven archetypical fairy tales composed to reflect the inner dynamics of some of the most common clinical cases in the practice of child and adolescent psychiatry. These seven stories provide seven collective archetypal images of child suffering. When clothed in a story, the pain is more bearable to live with and to deal with even in the most difficult environment.

**Keywords:** fairy tales, child psychiatry, positive and transcultural psychotherapy, archetypes

## Introduction

All suffering in childhood is unbearable and All suffering in childhood is unbearable and evokes a sense of guilt and helplessness in adults, but hardly any suffering is so shrouded in mysticism and fear as psychic suffering. In the "house of suffering," Bulgakov argues, children need the fairy tale more than ever, and if not them, maybe we adults need it. So, in this text seven fairy tales are collected, dedicated to seven children with seven different diagnoses, and with different destinies. The text is not biographical, and each fairy tale is a collective image of children, clean, simple, maybe even a little naive, as in a true fairy tale. The principles of positive psychotherapy teach us that fairy tales are an important element of dynamics in psychotherapy, an element of folk psychotherapy that helps to solve life's problems (Peseshkian, 2016). Fairy tales are images, a direct path to the unremembered, to the archetypal structure, as Dr. Remmers also says: "Creation myths, classical legends or the repeated basic patterns and archetypes of fairy tales and children's songs are collective models of understanding" (Remmers, 2022).



## I Under the power of the snow queen or autism in childhood

It's so cool here, white and cold, perfectly tidy  
It's so cool here, white and cold, perfectly tidy and clean. A huge throne room, one room, there is no exit, just a small hole in the sky. In the middle there is a child standing on the ice, not looking at me. He is putting together a glass puzzle. I step on my toes, I am afraid that my voice will seem like a scream to him and cause an avalanche, in this

snow fairy tale. I do not even have a chair to sit on, I stand like an uninvited guest, but when it comes, I quietly sing a song to myself. Whenever I am scared, I sing it in my head: "The world is beautiful, the world is wonderful, the world needs my song..." I try to warm myself, I feel the cold behind me, the shadow of the big white bear. The child does not seem to notice. I am afraid of her, she must sleep in her rooms. I recall the fears of my childhood, to be unwanted, unloved, unnoticed, as if they were coming true. How beautiful it is here, blue and white and so cold. I sit down, I wait, although I am not Gerda and far from wearing a rose brooch, and I remember Andersen's fairy tale "Roses, bloom, beauty, beauty, soon we will see the Christ Child" (Andersen, 2019).

The child still sits so still and cold, engrossed in his difficult riddle, impossible for the human mind, I have the right to ask him to follow me into our loud, shrill, so frighteningly sacred world, neon, too bright, too garish, smelling of an oriental market, while here he looks so peaceful in his solitude. As if in a desert, my voice does not reach him but sounds like a scream and he covers his ears in horror, his eyes finally look at me. Whether he looks at me or at something far away, unknown, it is difficult to understand. I softly sing the song about the Christ Child and he really looks at me for the first time, just for a few seconds, then resumes his complicated task of arranging a puzzle from a mirror to another world so inaccessible to us, so far away and white. Suddenly a violent wind rushes through the windows, only now I notice them, eyes, eyes, from everywhere eyes and everything stares at us, threatening, glowing with a cold green flame... will he be able to cope with them, will he be able to overcome the hatred and loathing in them, towards everything that is distant and incomprehensible, that is dangerous and strange?! Is not the Snow Queen his last refuge from us, who are so sinful and dangerous, intrusive and offensive, and who, from everywhere, stretch out our hands, voices and lips to him, to bring him out of his frozen attitude?! I hear the "Our Father" from outside, repeated on the frozen lips of a girl who loves him, she is in a hurry, she is coming, she will surely come... "Roses, bloom, beauty, beauty, soon we will see the Christ child".

## II

### **Pippi Longstocking and the ADHD girls**

She's a tomboy, a chatterbox, a dreamer, an explorer. She does not really want to cause trouble but that's exactly what happens. She walks backwards, on hands, on roofs. She likes to boss around, she may even seem a little spoiled and headstrong to you. Risk is her element, she moves quickly from one to another, to a third, until you get the feeling that she has climbed up somewhere, she has managed to make a mess out of the objects around. She smiles so seductively and charmingly that you immediately forgive her. If you spend more time with her, you will understand that she is suffering, that deep inside, she feels rejected and misunderstood, but always secretly; she hides her tears, otherwise no one will believe her. She always and everywhere hears "Shut up!", "Stop moving, I feel dizzy", "Can you not be like other girls, what kind of girl are you?", "I am tired of living with you", "Good girls are always neat, combed, with homework written, and you look at them"... And she tries so hard, she wants you to like her, to love and accept her, at least a little bit, just as she is... a brave traveller, dreamer, explorer, who has so many ideas and dreams, so many things to do that she always forgets one and starts another without finishing the first one. If you are in a hurry, this can happen to you, too, but do not be angry with her, she really did not mean it. Well, when she draws, she often goes beyond the outline and the horse spreads all over the room, and she is so tired of this math. Believe it or not, she really means well, like when she decided to treat you to pancakes and you had to scrape them off the kitchen walls for two weeks; or when she hurriedly helped you with your bags and broke the eggs you were carrying, or when she was happy to see you and hugged you and poured coffee on your new dress... She just does not know how to foresee the consequences of her actions, but she will be the first to rush to the aid of any child threatened by bullies, even if she comes back bruised and battered. She can be anything, call her windy, crazy, manly, chatty, but Pippi is brave and dignified. If you trust her, which I advise you not to do if you are not brave enough yourself, she will take you on a trip to Korekoredut Island or to the neighbouring farm, from which you will definitely return with a full heart and a desire to sleep for the next two days at least. She will put her feet up on the table while you drink coffee and tell you about her antics that her teacher is not happy about for some reason, poor thing. "On the sunny summer days, I walk through the woods and fields.

I am familiar with my wickedness and with my wet skirt. I clap, I clap..." (Lindgren, 2006).

Her greatest dream is never to "grow". In a sense, she remains forever alive, buzzing, colourful, cheerful, waving from the roof, from the window, from behind the door. "Imagine that one day, many, many years from now, an old lady will come by and see us running and playing in the backyard, and maybe she'll ask Tommy, " How old are you, boy?" And you will answer her fifty-three, if I am not mistaken"... She does not hear us anymore, she looks in front of her with a dreamy look... how empty and boring it has suddenly become without her...

### III

#### The little match girl and the drug addiction

She was so thin, under the hospital blanket. She often ran away from home after her parents' divorce, although she spoke of them with affection. She hid from me that her mother often brought home strange men and drove her into the street last winter. She spoke with love for this woman, without an iota of hatred. Then she discovered the magic crystals, like matches from the little matchmaker. She takes them and does not feel death creeping up upon her, does not feel her numb hands because she sees a room, warm, cozy, prepared by her mother's hands, warm soda bread on the table, with butter and cheese, and her mother sitting there waiting for her, knitting new warm gloves for her, to warm her hands. Hands, how magical alone these crystals are. They can invent a childhood and a loving mother for her, while around her blows the wind, this north wind that embraces winter in an ominous grip. and she feels the hand of a man that gives her a new illusion, of warmth, acceptance, affection and... a new dose of drugs. But she does not see the dark fire in his eyes, does not see that he is nowhere near as good as she sees him through her squinting gaze, she only sees that the dream is an embrace and a sharing she never received. She takes again from the magic crystals, this time she sees a prince, golden-haired and good, who will take her and love her forever, so warm and clear is the flame of this dream that she does not hear the voice of her feminine intuition, for the children who were not loved by their mothers never become women, they remain little girls, with matchboxes full of illusions and dreams, so beautiful, so desired, like the icy death amidst the

hellish fatigue of their unfeeling bodies. How does this soda bread smell, kneaded by a mother's hands, opening the door to the warm home of a non-existent childhood. In her childhood there were many scandals, she saw her father's face ashamed when she felt again that there was another man in the house. She did not like these men much, they looked at her dirty and lustful, or worse, they did not even notice that she was there, hiding behind the door, silently crying tears so as not to incur the wrath of her angry mother. One day her father took her to the small, poor house of her grandmother, who sang in the choir of the village church, and there she met that kind priest who showed her that there is someone who will love you when people have rejected you, regardless of your faults, regardless of the crystal boxes. It was Christmas Eve, she and her grandmother were at the service, it was warm and beautiful, at home the warm soda bread and the peppers stuffed with beans were waiting for her, in the morning she called her grandmother, but she did not answer, she had gone to God, and the child sat with the matchbox in front of the icon, orphaned. But with sad and grateful eyes, she took a match from the box and went to light the candle in front of the icon. (Andersen, 2019).

### IV

#### Ivan the Fool, the Scarecrow with the Straw Head and the Mentally Retarded Child

Whatever he did, it was always not wise, it whatever he did, it was always unwise. It always turned out to be funny, like Ivanushka from the fairy tale, who led the children he was supposed to look after into the forest and dropped them threw the door on their backs and ran after them (Gorky, 1972), he is ready to guard this door at any cost because he promised.

He is used to everyone taking him for a fool. Yes, he is not very good at math, he has trouble with reading, but if he promises to guard the door, he will guard it if he has to carry it on his back through the forest. And if you are traveling with him and meet Bear in the forest, you can be sure that he will do everything to save you, unlike many others, who are smarter and better mathematicians. He has an iron logic "who is evil is also stupid", and here neither he nor you are evil, so you can not, you can not be stupid about anything in the world. With one heartfelt gesture, this boy can put us all in his pocket, with our

arrogance and pride, with his kindness, and Bear can win. He can teach us all something very valuable, friendship, selflessness, purity of heart, if only we look for his strengths, if we help him a little so that he does not feel so different. He does not tell us how proud, evil and unpleasant we are in our relationships; he sees it but does not say it. He endures the insults, the ridicule of all the wise heads and smiles. Yes, he smiles and separates from you, gives you his last breakfast, well, because he is a fool, out of love and trust. He sees our weaknesses and loves us anyway and asks us quietly when we tell him:

"Go away, you fool!"

- "Ah, are you very wise?" - he answers us.

- "Me?"

- "Well, that goes without saying, does it not? I do not know."

- I do not know either - he answers. - "Are you angry?"

- "Well, no, why?"

- "In my opinion, the one who is evil is also stupid, and I am not evil, it turns out that you and I are not stupid!"

He is here to teach us kindness, to give us a chance to open our hearts, to lead us on a journey like this lovable scarecrow, trusting and therefore so brave. "I am stuffed with straw and have no mind," he says, sharing in a whisper that he is afraid of only one thing, a "burning match," and we scratch that match every day, roasting it in the fire of our endless demands, our exaggerated requirements of all-ness. But when we set out through the forest, the steps will be less frightening when he is with us. He will go straight through the holes to protect us from them, he will fall and stand up with a smile and say quietly, "My life is so short that I really know absolutely nothing. I was created only yesterday. What happened in the world before that is completely unknown to me. Fortunately, when the farmer made my head, one of the first things he did was to mark my ears, so I could hear what was happening around me."

Never forget that your child hears your subtle insults and your neglect and your cold heart, he hears everything, although for him every day is like the first, as pure and new as his soul. How sad this little man is, how he tries to meet all the demands of his environment, under the heavy judgment of psychometrics and the great intelligence tests, he is so misunderstood and lonely. He comes to repair what is broken in us, what was missing in his

mother, what was lacking, insufficient, he fills with his wise smile.

## V

### The little mermaid and child sexual abuse

It is one of the most incredible stories, the most impossible, the most unbearable to tell - a story whose words are drowned out as if it were spoken under water, the water that enters your lungs. For this, this story is only of one sentence, there is no fairy tale, in the stolen childhood - "I dream of being a mermaid, so that they can not do this to me again..." said the ten-year-old girl.

## VI

### Aladdin and the boy who would do anything for love

Charming, smiling, he leads behind him a whole entourage of those boys who look like men at the age of 15, who followed him from his home town. There had been a strong and dramatic love story, which, however, did not seem to be his main affliction. Later it turned out that he had been abandoned by his parents at a very young age, that he did not know them and that a part of him remained forever locked in the magic lamp. Later I saw his suffering and tears, the terrible fear of being abandoned again. He - the proud one, the cool one whom everyone admired, the wonderful dancer and worthy knight - he did not love himself. He was so humble that he did not understand how brave and dignified, caring and responsible he was. Yes, the truly brave and dignified do not understand that themselves. He cares for others to hide his tears, to give to others what he himself never received and was ashamed to ask for.

Deep inside, he saw himself as Aladdin, a fake prince who only disguised himself as such, while in reality, it was the other way around. He was a real prince inside, he only had to connect with the part of himself that was locked in the lamp to discover the power of this genie, to release manhood, to release the pride and dignity that the others, us, had put in the dusty lamp and then told him that he belonged to no one, that he was "the son of a poor tailor and she the daughter of a sultan". Yes, all of us, to the shame of the one who had no one, nobler and truer than many other aristocrats in disguise. Carry this lamp with you, Prince, so that you can be comfortable inside when you get too cold among the people, but also go out to fight the



evil sorcerer if you have to, after understanding and releasing your power. Good luck, my boy!

## VII

### A fairy tale of the seventh and last and extraordinary, or of another Little Red Riding Hood

This fairy tale is about another Little Red Riding Hood who was so big that she could not fit into the coat her grandmother had sewn, who ate the contents of the basket long before she got to the wolf, whom she might have eaten if she had not been so afraid. Driven away by her mother into the dark forest, her father long dead, she found love and comfort only in food. For her, warm rolls were mother's kisses, sweet cake stories before going to sleep, curd dough was like a soft mother's hug. Therefore, no one understood that she wanted to be eaten by the wolf to end this torture, with the boundless feeling of emptiness and helplessness. Afraid of her own femininity, she had become a caricature of herself, so scared and defenceless inside that she had to pile up barriers so that she could feel at least a little safe, like a person who is cold and wraps herself with another and another blanket. To become self-conscious, conspicuous enough not to be ignored, before she met the wolf she was looking for, she stopped at the cemetery at the edge of the forest to "talk" to the father she adored but barely knew. Then she willingly set out to lose herself in that forest of unspoken and absorbed rage, so lonely and fearful that the wolf turned tail in fright and let her go her way. Death is feared by a man who fiercely longs for it. Convinced that she herself is worth nothing, Little Red Riding Hood was very sad to be rejected even by the wolf. He reached her sick grandmother, took care of her while the old woman told him stories, healing stories, and in the corner lay the red coat with the sewn shadow of a wolf.

## Conclusions

"We love to tell stories to children. We have to tell them. Because fairy tales are our excuse for them. An apology for the fact that the world we have prepared for them is not yet the world they deserve. We apologize, and the children always

forgive us. That is why they so often ask us to tell them stories they have known for a long time." G. Danailov "Children play outside" (2019). The aim of the present text is to connect the fairy tale, the archetypal, with some of the most common clinical cases in the practice of child and adolescent psychiatry. In the form of a collective image, seven fairy tales, seven stories, seven archetypal images of child suffering are presented. Suffering clothed in a story is something that can be lived with even in the most difficult environment.

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