

There once was a princess who needed to marry a prince from a distant land. My dear, we're delighted you're here," said the king. "I hope you've had a pleasant journey?" The king and prince were surprised by this, but they promised to do as she asked. asked the king. And so as soon as the real princess had struggled up the Never-ending Hill on her old nag, people spoke to her as if she was her own maid! And no matter how hard she cried and claimed to be the real princess, no one believed her. She was taken to the palace yard, where she was told that she would be the grubby little Goose Boy's assistant! Every day she had to feed the geese. Then she had to help the Goose Boy lead the geese through the higgledy-piggledy streets of the town to a meadow where they could peck about and roam freely. They had to make sure that the geese didn't stray to the wrong side of the Never-ending Hill, where the land just fell away into nothing. Then every day at dusk they led them back to the palace yard again. The people of the town complained because the geese left their droppings wherever they went. The streets and alleys of Faraway were all coated with a greenish slime. The real princess apologised of course, but she didn't see how she could stop the geese from making a mess. There wasn't much that the Goose Boy didn't know about goose droppings. He talked about them a lot. The real princess tried not to mind too much. She felt sorry for him because he'd never known any other kind of life, whereas at least she'd once been a princess. But one thing he did made her angry. When she sat by the stream in the meadow, the real princess would often take off her maid's cap and let down her hair. Then the Goose Boy would reach out his grubby hand and try to pull out one or two of the shining strands. The real princess would whisk her hair back under her cap. she'd cry. And the Goose Boy would hang his head and shuffle off. But the next time she shook out her shining hair, he was there again, trying to tweak some of it out. One day the real princess got so annoyed that she stamped her foot and shouted, "Blow breezes, blow! Make his hat go!" So she asked the maid, "Won't you fetch me some water in one of the golden goblets we've brought?"

The princess was so shocked that she meekly got off her horse and fetched her own water from the river. No one had ever spoken to her like that before. Comforted by this, she climbed back onto him and stroked his mane. But later she forgot how rude her maid had been, and asked her again for water. Once more the maid refused and said, "Get it yourself! You've got legs, haven't you?" The princess realised that her maid wasn't going to be helpful at all. So she got down from her horse, took off her crown and cloak and her silver shoes and paddled into the river. Cupping her hands to drink she murmured, "Falada, Falada, what shall I do?" Now you can help me to rule wisely and well!" As for the maid, after a short time of shovelling the droppings, she went to the princess and begged her forgiveness. The princess didn't think this was much of an apology. And she wasn't prepared to let the maid avoid her punishment so easily. You must take all the goose droppings you've cleared from the streets and spread them on the gardens of Faraway," she said. People cheered and shouted, "Hooray for the princess!" Falada started to protest, but the maid leaned over and whispered into his ear, "You'd better keep quiet, or I'll put a bag over your head!" The false princess stood up. "I think," she said, "that such a person should be put in a barrel, and rolled down the wrong side of the Never-ending Hill, and never seen again!" So a prince was found who ruled over the land of Faraway, at the top of the Never-ending Hill. She rode around in a circle waving, and everyone was happy that she was setting off so joyfully. But she got on it anyway and followed the princess upstream, which was the way Falada had told them to go. They hadn't gone far

before the princess began to feel thirsty. And when the princess looked up, she was horrified to see her maid was sitting on him. She was even wearing the princess's cloak and crown and silver shoes! said the princess. "And that's my cloak, and my crown and those are my silver shoes! Tell her, Falada!" The maid laughed, then tugged Falada's reins roughly and rode off. "They should scoop up the droppings and put them on their gardens," the Goose Boy said. As he stood blinking in the sunlight, the real princess ran to him and put her arms around his neck. "Dear Falada!" she cried. "The maid told the Goose Boy he had to help her, of course. Soon the gardens of Faraway bloomed more beautifully than any gardens in the world. Then the Goose Girl and the Goose Boy settled down together to grow their own flowers and vegetables and look after their geese. And so it can truly be said that everyone in Faraway lived happily ever after, thanks to the power of the goose droppings and the wisdom of a talking horse. This was because there weren't any princes who lived nearby. "That doesn't sound nice at all," she wept. "You must follow his advice. He'll be your best and wisest friend." And her horse replied, "Drink now then ride, soon you'll be a bride." Because Falada was so fast, the maid reached the kingdom of Faraway first. Before long she came to the King of Faraway who sat next to his handsome son, the prince. "Oh— and my maid'll be along in a while," added the false princess. And the land of Faraway was very beautiful. said the false princess.