



Good Night Tales

A FAMILY TREASURY OF READ-ALoud STORIES

C. S. FRITZ



Good
Night
Tales
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Good Night Tales: A Family Treasury of Read-Aloud Stories

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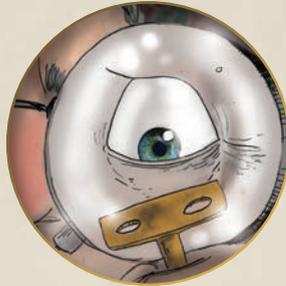
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✠ FOREWORD ✠

I love children's books. As a father of three and a grandfather of nine, I have done more than my share of both reading children's stories and inventing a few of my own. Not to mention my assignment as a pastor to occasionally gather the children of my congregation to sit on the carpet for a story.

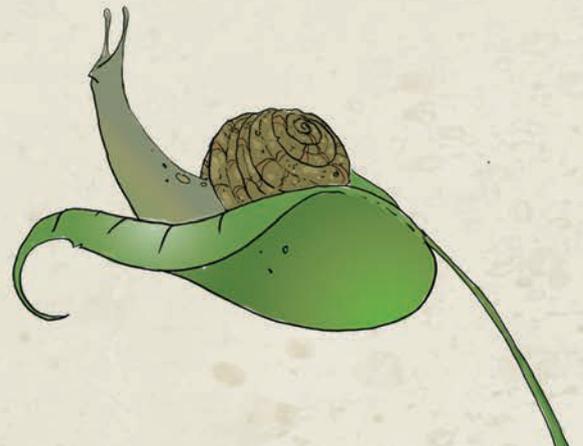
One of my favorite of these experiences happened in March one year as the snow melted and spring was on its way. I had brought an old bird's nest into the sanctuary and invited the preschoolers to join me for a story. When they were assembled, I showed them the nest. As we all huddled over it, I told them that a bird in Venezuela, a country a long way away in the south, had woken up that morning and realized that he and his friends could fly north and come to Montana for the summer. We talked together about how far it was and what the birds would do when they got to Montana, what trees they would nest in and what food they would eat. Then suddenly, one of the five-year-olds, Brucie, interrupted me: "Why don't you have any hair on your head?"

So much for visual aids. It took a while to get the children to refocus on the bird's nest.

My friend Casey Fritz is a dad and also a pastor, and he writes stories for children. This quite glorious book is full of interesting characters. My favorite is a plum-eating giant, but you and your children will be captured by all of them: a wolf and a fox and rabbits, lions galloping with deer, mice on the noses of bears, and turtles carrying beetles and worms on their shells. The final section concludes with a reassuring go-to-bed question to our King: "Do you love me?" The answer? Yes, yes, he does.

Eugene H. Peterson

EUGENE PETERSON



✠ TO THE READER ✠

*Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children,
you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 18:3, NIV

The imagination of a child is a thing of wonder, isn't it?

Children see the world in living color. Rain is music. Fingers are paintbrushes. Meals are a palette. Every wall is a canvas.

Above all, children have an incredible mind for story. They see a world brimming with possibility. Any given moment of their day could be prefaced with “Once upon a time . . .”

We never quite lose that connection with story as we grow older. No matter our age, stories can be transformative, a way of expanding our imaginative borders, driving us to explore and reach for heights unseen.

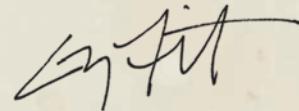
You hold in your hands twelve stories that point to the Grand Story—God’s redemptive story, the truest and greatest of stories. Its wonders fill oceans. These stories will capture your imagination, but they’re not meant to leave you there. As you read stories of trolls

and treasures, crickets and songs, I hope you'll see the Grand Story running under them and stretching beyond them.

At the beginning of each story is the reference to Scripture that sparked my imagination, and at the end of this book are some questions to help you draw your children into conversations about the character of God and the reality of his grace. As you read these stories and questions together, I encourage you to listen to your children's answers rather than offering your own. See how their understanding grows each time you return to the story.

We all have been given an incredible ministry and opportunity to point the precious children in our lives to the one who made them and loves them. And story—the richness of imagination—can be a way to lead them there.

I pray that you connect deeply with the children in your life through these pages. But above all, I pray that they are drawn to the glorious King who is calling their names as you seek him together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. S. Fritz', with a stylized, cursive script.

C. S. FRITZ

1 SAMUEL 8

Kings of the Forest

Do you remember a time when kings ruled the forest?

When the wilderness was not its own, and the
mountains were reverent?

Dandelions bowed,
shadows brightened,

creatures sang,

and the forest brimmed with blossoms and gladness.





There was *the king who ruled the trees*, who smelled of red maple and whistled the most somber of melodies as he walked through the forest at dawn.

There was *the king of the flowers*, who was draped in delicate petals and strands of ivy and whose famous temper would change with the seasons. Flowers would blossom or wilt depending on his mood.

There was *the mountain king*, who ruled over the peaks and hilltops that stretched far and long throughout the forests. When the clouds rained, the mournful king would cry into the night with the voice of thunder.





Every king in the land was powerful, but only one was glorious.

His name was so pure that no creature or tree dared to pronounce it. He was the King over all the other kings, and everyone—from the leaf beetle to the hare to the buffalo—bowed down to him. He spent long days roaming the land, talking with animals of all sizes, helping the weak, and guiding the strong. He loved all the creatures in his realm. And as the sun was setting by the great waterfall in the White Willow Gully, he could often be found singing to any animal that was near.

He truly was the greatest of the kings.



All the kings worked together to care for the forest,
making sure the trees shaded the deer and the bees fed the flowers.
But one year, when winter hung on just a little too long and its cold
winds wouldn't retreat, something terrible happened.

In the White Willow Gully, all the creatures of the wilderness
gathered before their glorious King.



“If you were truly a great king, you would stop this winter!” cried the toad.

“We no longer want to hear your songs,” squawked the birds.

“We want a king like the others,” lowed an elk.

The glorious King, with sadness in his heart, gave them what they asked for. He turned and left the forest.





Day after day the animals searched for a new king. They wanted a king that was not only like the others in the forest, but better.

They found him waiting in a dark and mysterious corner of the forest. He hibernated in the Bitternut Caverns every season but winter. *This bear was a ferocious, powerful, dreadful being.*

“He is strong!” whispered one fox to another.

“All the other kings will fear him,” said the mountain lion.

The animals asked him to be their leader. The beast was only too happy to oblige. His time had finally come.

But even though the new king looked strong, he was secretly fearful and weak. His fierce anger made every creature tremble. He forced them to labor day and night to build and to hunt for him.

And winter after winter, his reign only grew worse.

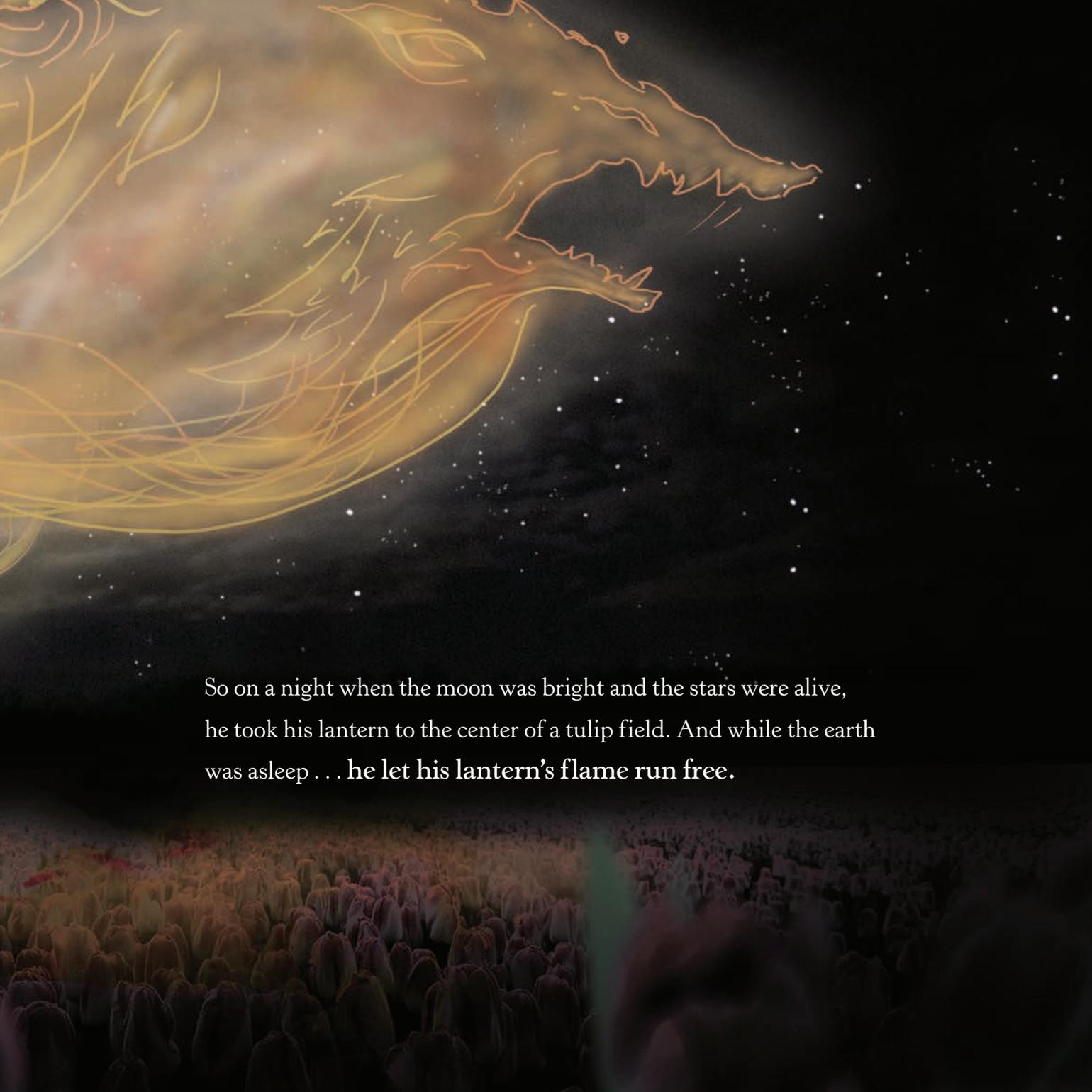
Over time, he began to worry about losing all that he had been given. He loved his treasure more than the four-horned antelope, his power more than the swallowtail butterfly . . . and himself more than the most fragile of elfin owls.

Soon his prideful heart filled with darkness, and he came up with a plan that would ensure that he—and he alone—would be king of the entire forest.









So on a night when the moon was bright and the stars were alive,
he took his lantern to the center of a tulip field. And while the earth
was asleep . . . he let his lantern's flame run free.

Every tree, shrub, and orchid burned into the air. The wilderness, which was once rich with life, was now filled with death.

When the other three kings saw that life in their kingdoms was no more, they blew a mournful kiss to the ashes and journeyed south. They were never seen again.

For centuries, the beast ruled an empire of embers and black wood. The day he finally died, all life in the forest was truly gone.

Until . . .





the glorious King returned.

In the midst of smoke and ash, the glorious King promised
that he would restore the wilderness, that he would bring
the caterpillars and the leaves back to life. . . .

And he would make all things new.



And he did. Creatures are coming from the north and south;
leaves are opening on the branches of this wild wood; flowers are
blooming up through the ashes.

And what once was a broken world is being made new. . . .

