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## Fairy Tales: A Compilation - The Young Women of a Glass Tower

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# The Young Woman of the Glass Tower

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Languages and Literatures of Europe and the Americas 353 (20th Century Russian Arts and Culture)

Mentor: Dr. Anastasia Kostetskaya

## Artist Statement

In writing this story, I strove to retain the simplistic charm of the classic fairytale by keeping the structure of the story itself similar to what is found in the traditional fairy tales, both those that I grew up with and those that were read and discussed in LLEA 353. I was particularly inspired by the elements of repetition and the growth of the protagonist through a journey. Within this framework, however, I tried to integrate the theme of emotional independence that is absent from many traditional tales for children, especially those that are aimed at young girls.

At the furthest end of the blue horizon, a young woman lives alone in a glass tower. Many great travelers have claimed to see her brown or gold or silver hair in the deep woods or hear her joyful or fearful or sorrowful voice in the mountains, but the simple fact is that to this day, no living person can describe her because no one but the mighty gods and devious spirits have been able to reach her.

For many years, she waited in this glass tower, supposing that she was either to die or to be discovered, or both. There is not much to do at the end of the blue horizon, and for centuries she sat, waiting, wishing desperately to die or to be saved.

In this same area of the world lived a family of spirits, a mother and father, three sons, North, South, and East, and their sister, West. One day, in the middle of the most stagnant, grueling, boring summer the world has ever suffered, the three brothers decided to play a cruel series of tricks on the young woman in the glass tower.

The first to appear to her was the eldest: the loud, angry North. He stood outside of her bedroom window, singing,

“O princess of the blue horizon,  
Queen of the rising and setting sun,  
Tell me, tell me,  
Have you heard the good news?”

The young woman responded, “No, but I assume you’ll tell me soon.”

“A young man, noble and tall, has been seen riding through the hills towards this palace. It is said that if you stand in the garden when the sun is at its peak tomorrow, he will find you there and carry you off to be his bride” exclaimed North proudly, before promptly heading back home.

The young woman was very excited, and spent the day preparing a new dress of the finest fabrics she owned. As the sun rose, however, a sense of dread began to grow within her, though she could not explain why. She decided not to wait in the garden for the man, but to watch for him from the safety of her window.

She waited and waited, but no man was to be seen. Instead, a great inferno, as bright as the sun, ignited in the



Sarah Igarashi is currently a senior studying Art History with a minor in English. While she is thoroughly familiar with academic writing, the opportunity to write creatively for a larger project was a new and exciting experience for her. She is extremely grateful for this opportunity and hopes to make creative writing a larger part of her everyday life.

garden, devouring her crops and flowers. The young woman wanted to sit down and cry, but instead she gathered water in a large basin and put out the fires. She did cry a little, too, but everything turned out alright.

The next day, as she stood in the garden, desperately trying to tidy up what was left of it, the second brother, South, appeared right beside her, singing,

“O princess of the blue horizon,  
Queen of the rising and setting sun,  
Tell me, tell me,  
Have you heard the good news?”

And once again the young woman responded, “No, but I assume you’ll tell me soon.”

“A young man, noble and tall, has been seen riding through the hills towards this palace. It is said that if you stand in the garden when the sun is at its peak tomorrow, he will find you there and carry you off to be his bride” exclaimed South proudly, before promptly heading back home.

Now, the young woman was not so foolish to fall for that again. All that evening and into the morning she toiled, constructing a brick wall around the garden so as to protect it from further fire damage. As the sun rose in the sky, however, she somehow had the same sinking feeling she had gotten just two mornings before. Just like that past morning, she sat by the window and waited for the man to come or for the fire to start.

Neither of those two things happened. Instead, a great storm began to rain down upon the tower, greater than had ever been seen on earth. The young woman wanted to sit down and cry, but instead she went straight to work, boarding up the windows of the tower. She did cry a little, too, but everything turned out alright.

The next day, as she wiped up the water that had entered the house during the flood, the youngest brother, East, appeared. He stood outside the tower, singing so loud that the woman could hear him from inside the boarded-up windows,

“O princess of the blue horizon,  
Queen of the rising and setting sun,  
Tell me, tell me,  
Have you heard the good news?”

By now, the young woman had had quite enough of this nonsense. She shouted back at him, “I am tired of you! If one of your kin lies to me once again, I will bring a great curse upon your family!”

“Fear not, good woman, for I speak no lies today,” said East. “A young man, noble and tall, really has been seen riding through the hills towards this palace. It is said that if you stand in the garden when the sun is at its peak tomorrow, he will find you there and carry you off to be his bride.” Then, like the others, East headed back home.

The young woman, understandably, did not believe him. She kept the wall around the garden, the boards around the windows, locked the door, and promptly went to bed.

Exhausted, she slept and slept until noon, when she awoke to the sounds of a horse galloping outside of her window. Curious, she opened the door a sliver, taking a glance outside. She couldn’t believe her eyes. Standing out past the garden was the man East had described, as tall and as noble as ever. Astonished, the young woman ran out to greet him.

“I have waited a million years for you! I am so glad you’re here!” she said, her eyes sparkling.

The man smiled gently, but said nothing. He helped the young woman up to his horse and rode off, away from the horizon, where they were to be wed.

They passed the towns and villages, bustling with life, teeming with people. They rode through charming hillsides and around pleasant, sparkling rivers, and into meadows and glens. Everywhere they went, others stopped to watch, murmuring to themselves, “how happy they must be!”

The young woman, however, was beginning to feel less and less enchanted with each passing minute. The further along the man took her, the colder and more lifeless their surroundings became. They rode into swamps, and finally, into what the young woman thought was the coldest, most desolate cave on the planet.

“Where are you taking me?” she asked the man. He didn’t respond, and suddenly she realized how frightening and cruel his features seemed.

“Please let me go,” the young woman said after a while. “I am very sorry, but I don’t think I want to be your wife anymore!” Once again, the man didn’t respond, and rode deeper into the cave.

The young woman jumped off of the man’s horse onto the trail below. Her fall wasn’t great, and yet she felt awful. She sat down and cried, more tears streaming down her face than ever before and more than she ever would in the future. Cold and confused, she lay down and accepted her terrible fate.

Suddenly, another woman appeared beside her. It was West, the sister of the other spirits. “I have heard of the terrible deeds of my brothers,” she said. “I am here to rescue you!”

The young woman, exhausted, accepted the offer. As a magical spirit, West had no need for transportation, so she did not bring a horse or a bike or a motorcar that they could use to get back to the glass tower. At the same time, she didn’t have the power to transport the young woman, so the two had to walk. West led the young woman in confusing directions, up and down unfamiliar slopes, and through strange passages.

At first, the young woman enjoyed the companionship, but eventually, she realized that they had been walking in circles. West, as well-intentioned and sweet as she was, didn’t know the way home because she had not seen the road there.

Fed up, the young woman told the spirit, “If you stand here and walk with me without knowing the way, we’ll simply

both be lost! Go on, get home to your mother and father!” With that, West vanished as quietly as she first appeared.

Alone and confused, the young woman began to panic. She had never been so far from home before, and she didn’t know what to do. Since there was nothing else to do, though, she began walking again, feeling her way carefully through the darkness, hoping that by some luck, she would stumble upon the mouth of the cave.

As she walked, she began to recognize familiar shapes. As she gradually retraced her steps, seeing the glowing light illuminating the exit, she realized something. She had been alone in her tower all her life, managed her own land, took care of herself through times of famine and plague, and supported herself emotionally. If she had managed to stand on her

own until now, there was no doubt she was brave and strong enough to find her way back home.

Once she recovered from the shock of the circumstance, she remembered that the trail should feel an increasing sense of warmth and vitality as she got closer to home. She went through the swamps, past the beautiful meadows, until finally she found her way back into the towns. As she passed, the people murmured amongst themselves, “How terrible! That young woman’s husband has abandoned her! She must feel awful, wandering around without a husband like that!”

She returned to her glass tower, where she resides to this day, minding her own business, passing the time on her own. As you might imagine, she no longer waits to be saved.