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The Four Little Girls
and
Desire Caught by the Tail

THE FOUR LITTLE GIRLS

Characters

FIRST LITTLE GIRL
SECOND LITTLE GIRL
THIRD LITTLE GIRL
FOURTH LITTLE GIRL

ACT ONE

Scene: A kitchen garden – a well almost in the centre.

FOUR LITTLE GIRLS (*singing*):

We won't go to the woods
The laurels all are cut
That honey there
Will go and pick them up
Let's go to the dance
This is how they dance.
Dancing, singing, kissing whoever you will.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Let us open all the roses with our nails and make their perfumes bleed on the wrinkles of fire, of games, of our songs and of our yellow, blue and purple aprons. Let's play at hurting ourselves and hug each other with fury making horrible noises.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Mummy, Mummy, come and see Yvette ransacking the garden and setting the butterflies on fire, Mummy, Mummy!

THIRD LITTLE GIRL: Decide for yourselves how you want to light the cock's feather flames of the candles among the diapers hung on the branches of the cherry trees. Be careful, I am telling you, of the wings detached from dead caged birds, singing in full flight on the shot silk sleeves of a dress pleated with sky that has fallen out of the blue.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL (*singing*):

We won't go to the woods
The laurels all are cut
That honey there...

(She shouts.)

There, there, there, the cat has taken one of the birds from the nest in its jaws and strangles it with its big fingers carrying it off behind a lemon-coloured cloud, stolen from the melted butter of the part of the wall that the ashen sun has knocked flat.

THIRD LITTLE GIRL: Isn't she stupid?

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Decide for yourselves all of you about the flowers. The knitting-wool is dragging its feet all over the garden and hangs its rosary of quick glances on each branch and glasses full of wine in the crystal of organs that can be heard tapping close at hand on the cotton wool of the sky hidden behind great rhubarb leaves.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Make the best you can, make the best you can of life. As for me, I wrap the chalk of my desires in a cloak, torn and covered with black-ink stains that drip full-throated from blind hands searching for the mouth of the wound.

THIRD LITTLE GIRL (*hidden behind the well*): Coming, coming, coming.

FIRST, SECOND AND FOURTH LITTLE GIRLS: Stupid, stupid, you are stupid, you are doubly visible, you can be seen all naked covered with a rainbow. Tidy your hair, it is in flames and is going to set fire to the chain of curtsies scratched in the tousled wig of bells licked by the mistral.

THIRD LITTLE GIRL: Coming, coming, coming. You won't get me alive and you can't see me. I am dead.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Don't be an idiot!

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: If you don't come back, we shall all go and hang ourselves from the lemon trees and live our dramas in flowers and our dances on the knife-edge of our tears.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: We are going to bring you a ladder.

ACT ONE

(They fetch a long ladder and carry it, held upright with difficulty.)

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: No, she is behind the well. No, she is on the roof of the house.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: She is on the branch with the flowers up there to the left of the pear tree.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: I see her hand biting the end of the wing of a leaf that bleeds.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: No, no, she is in front of the reddish-brown stain that makes a bugle call on the window of the room upstairs, scalding with punches a broken corner of the blinded sun trying to find his way in darkness.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: She crawls along, she seems to be looking between the damp leaves and the herbs for her lunch, unrolling her arabesques in curves and colours and gossamer threads.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Will you please come along, Paulette, yes or no? You are a pain in the neck. I would like to tell Mummy that you don't want to play and that you want to show off by changing, in a thousand different ways, into a bouquet of japanese flowers.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Let them do what they like! I gather grapefruit, I eat them, I spit out the pips, I wipe my lips with the back of my hand and I light up the festoons of lanterns with my laugh, incomparable cheeses, I ask you to accept yours sincerely at your feet and I sign.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: It is really difficult to spend a pleasant summer afternoon with you and it's more and more and more obvious that you won't play at anything which touches chronologically on the lessons that we have been given at ears' length in class all winter.

THE FOUR LITTLE GIRLS

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: We must leave her and not worry about her, she will come back, her craftiness all subdued, and make us laugh with her sham account books and her ingenious arrangements, however artistic they be.

(FIRST, SECOND AND FOURTH LITTLE GIRLS. A long silence – three minutes; holding the ladder with much difficulty, they go round in silence from one corner of the stage to another, bringing it near to the trees, to the walls of the house, and trying to get it near and to put it into the well; during this time the voice of the THIRD LITTLE GIRL is heard.)

THIRD LITTLE GIRL: Coming, coming, coming, coming.

(It begins to rain.)

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: It's raining, it's soggy
It's the fate of old froggy
It's raining, it's soggy...

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: It's raining, it's soggy
It's the fate of old froggy...

THIRD LITTLE GIRL: Coming...

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: You mustn't believe that the cat has gone off behind the carrots to eat its eagle without fear or remorse. The blue of its cry for pity, the mauve of its leaps and the violent violets of its claws tearing Veronese-green rays from the sulphur-yellow of its rage, detached from the blood spurting from the fountain full of vermilion, the ochre of the lilac wall and the sharp cobalt fringes of its cries, the poor bird crouching on the clogs of its feathers, acrobatic monkey, the flags smacking their tongues on the steel and the knife already embedded, the cat gathers together and lets go its shadows and its swords on each floor, confused and

ACT ONE

confounded in the fall of verticals squashing themselves
drop by drop on the olive-green curtain.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: It's raining, it's soggy,
It's the fate of old froggy.
It's raining, it's soggy,
It's the fate of old froggy.
It's raining, it snows,
It's the fate of the bedbug.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: I wish she would come back. We
miss the sun, it's raining. The laughter of the flowers is
tearing the dress with the white and verdigris checks and
bursting the heart of the cloth crucified on my sandals
with acrobatics and crabby temper. Call her, Jeannette,
give a great shout, so that she takes her place in the sun
again and pull the plumb line through the wrong end
of the opera glasses.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Let her alone and say nothing. Silence
should lay its egg on the square of her fate broken to
pieces by the game of the great curves thrown at great
expense over the windmills with numerous intrigues
their wings clipped of all laurels and very happy to be
out of trouble at such small cost.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: You won't make me believe – and
if I say believe I exaggerate – that her departure and
the synthetic projection of her image, even diluted in
the imaginary broth of this afternoon, is subject to the
following dazzling revelations and audacious cursory
discussions.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: The rain which rises little by little lasts
ten centuries already and composes meticulously the
page painted so minutely with little signs and squiggles
coming undone and Gordian knots and anthropometric
pegs, all responsibilities and consequences of the game
imposed by the other side of the river – that's where she
has given us so much pleasure...

THE FOUR LITTLE GIRLS

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: She has sunk us and doesn't realize that for us it's raining, that it's freezing, that the sun is lying flat on the ground, that we walk on it, that we burn ourselves.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: The birds have horns, the flowers are chewing their fingernails and the clouds are being used to clean the window panes. It is stifflingly hot in paradise, and the birds are already setting the clouds on fire.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: The flowers smell the soup that my aunt has on the stove for dinner since five o'clock yesterday evening and which at ten minutes to seven the wide-open door of our weeping carried with staring eyes all souls aboard the paroxysm yes – no – yes – I don't know. But the fine weather again takes over and tickles its palette filled to the brim from a load of stained glass drunk to the dregs.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: It's stopped raining, we can play. Let's run round the well, let's have fun, let's play the fool. The branch of the pear tree has smacked that great pile of clouds, and the toe of the palm tree's shoe snores crouched on the tablecloth, mouse grubbing out its lice. Let's run like mad things, like lunatics, and carry off with us all the flowers, the blondes and the brunettes, the sweet and the bitter, the tender and the hard in stone and in cotton wool, in oil and vinegar, in Chinese ink and invisible ink, without a spelling mistake and with forty-five thousand commas. Let's go and run, play, go mad...

(Dancing)

...mad – mad – mad – mad – mad – mad – mad – mad...

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Black the leaves of the kitchen garden are going to write their life in a flash, the branches will dream of the arches of the future and will be gentle and

ACT ONE

well behaved like votive images and, although they look noisy and although their breath is homely, comfortably seated in front of the fire reading the paper they will mark up the acts of fate on a slate. Attack of memories with folded arms unwinds its music in acid, the great winged sheep far away rings its bell.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Isn't it lovely here, and isn't it lovely in the country, in the sun, your big tummy all melting in the middle, playing, playing and giggling in the sun stuffed with mulberries, the sun full of ribbons, full of pebbles, full of ice-cream cones. Let's all go and laugh and sing and have din-dins.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Bring your pieces of coloured glass and find the cuttlefish bone which do as a plate. The russet feathers of the dry branches, olive stones and shells from my necklace with cinders from the great wall of plane trees will oil the slice of brown bread from the fruit bowl caught in a trap by the fountain. Go and find the black silk veil with which we can cover ourselves all over so as to act the wedding night that we are going to spend at the bottom of the well full of fried stars. Jeannette's mummy, the evening of my sister's wedding, had on a dress embroidered with coloured electric-light bulbs. Go and see if the trees are already in bed and asleep. We must make as much noise as possible, and in all our caperings we are going to shout aloud the joy of being alone and mad. We are going to hang the ladder on the tree, and we are going to light our kitchen fire on each leaf, which we will darn with cotton, branches, thorns of sugar, the bitter honey of the needles, the prickly double eucalyptus flowers.

(They take a ladder and hook it to the top branches of the tree, lying on their stomachs on the ground, and going to sleep the voice is heard of the...)

THE FOUR LITTLE GIRLS

THIRD LITTLE GIRL: Coming, coming, coming...

FIRST, SECOND AND FOURTH LITTLE GIRLS (*gets up and begins to dance round, jumping and singing*):

Coming, coming, coming, coming. Let's go to war, war at home. Marshmallow angels, mice and rats, caramel night, jingle-bell morning. The bustle that goes on has made a mess in my sheets. Coming, coming, coming, coming. Life hides its vows to milk the cows. Life is fine, let's hide away from it. The calves are dead and have got wings. The wheel that turns undoes its dress and shows its breasts under the grass, the night hides its little fishes. The lovely turtle dove loves its turdle. Tell us, hollyhock, about this evening's sunrise, tell us a story and make us laugh, take off your ball and chain, untie your rosaries, play your pistol for us on this bouquet of miserere moss-roses, how happy we are, happy to be together tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, today and yesterday.

(They turn round, jump and shout faster and faster, louder and louder, and laughing fall to the ground on top of each other.)

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: We had a good giggle. I giggle.

You giggle. She giggles. Happy happy happy happy, I am happy.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Happy.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: I am happy, I am happy.

(They start shouting:)

Coming, coming, coming.

(And innumerable birds are heard singing, and a rain of eyes begins to fall on them, sticking to their hair and their dresses.)

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SECOND LITTLE GIRL: We are covered with light.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: We are dirty with light.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: I am burnt.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: I am frozen with light.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Look, look at the top of the ladder:
a bird. It's tearing itself to bits, you can see its heart
crying and its claws scratching out its eyes.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: The leaves around it are showing
their wolf's teeth and threaten it with their gentle hands
closed.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: We must help it.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Don't touch it, it burns, it is on
fire: a torch.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Let's tear all these eyes off our dresses
or hide their stare under our hands.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Let's wrap ourselves in the veil, let's
frighten ourselves and make a hedge around us with a
circle of knives stuck in the ground by their handles.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Let's throw the flowers in the garden
at him so that he dies of laughter.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Let's act a play. Let's set the stage
in front of the well and disguise the trees as waves. You,
you'll be the shipwreck, you the thunder and lightning,
and me the moon. You, you'll tell the waves to take
off their nets and catch all the stars and the shells in
their paws and throw them to us like pearl necklaces
and march past on the blue table and the black chairs
riding on cows and making faces. You, the smallest,
you will offer them carrots, cabbages and tomatoes that
we are going to gather on our knees singing, holding
the veil by its four corners, and you, during all this,
you will light a great bonfire and throw on it all our
dresses. We shall be naked, and you too will undress
at the same time, and we shall go and hide under the
table. But take great care not to burn yourself in the

fire. Don't get too near with your pitchers full of wine. Some big rhubarb leaves that we shall plait around it will make the blackest of curtains for the tender mercies that the storm will let loose on us when the waves come and seize us by the throat and wrap us up with their shrews. The greediest silence will fill its pitcher of fire, and the broken wings of the horse that drags its guts in the ashes will open their grenades to a mirror filled with moons. When at a sign you will show you are going to bite, we shall all get up, and we shall scratch our faces till they bleed. Then the honey from the well will disgorge all its bees, and, pretending to be dead with fright, we shall laugh and sing our heads off together. The ship which will come onto the stage with all sails set will be full of milk and blood and on fire, lit up by a thousand lanterns.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Tell me, tell me, will the thunder and lightning laugh, laugh, be unhappy, will she be frightened, all naked in the sea under the table, will she be blonde and a redhead and tall with long black-and-amaranth-coloured hair, will she have a lover, don't tell me the truth but whopping lies, I want to see my hands, rummage in the thick mattress of stars thrown no matter how on the back of the sky, walking about on the edge of that crazy roof.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Finally, a mighty disappointment, spontaneously drawn up in intricate arabesques and mathematical circumvolutions. But the big question is to know if I am absolutely white, in swan's down, in pure white linen paper and entirely covered with snow and standing alone on the edge of the roof and immobile.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Shut up, you bore us!

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: No, you will be the one who sees, and with your piece of chalk, with your eyes closed, you will draw the admiring glances of men everywhere.

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FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Hide your hands behind your eyes and read the spring green future of leaves and flowers that water your hair with music.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: I sing, I sing evening and morning, and I don't like fooling around, I only like the noisy refuge of the silence of my sinking ship, and catch! – it's the height of the season.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Do you see...

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Ha!

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Do re mi fa sol la ti do.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: Do ti la sol fa me re do. There, a great sun slowly rolls across the stage to our feet, where it stretches out full length and licks our hands. Isn't he nice!

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: The distant flute takes to pieces the game of patience irrigating the colour and invents patiently the stage play with the great ship gliding amorously through the bridal veils of the wreck, scratching its fleas in the acid-drop blues of the azure, held in both hands on the pummel of the mare and catastrophically caught in a brief and fleeting run of luck.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: The blue aims the point of its azureal bluish cloak, indigo, cobalt, sky-blue, plum, at the outstretched arms of lemon-yellow, almond-green and pistachio, encircling the lilac-mauve, hit with both fists by the green of the orange and the tablecloth with royal-blue and periwinkle-blue stripes, bursting in confusion at its knees, and all the acid-drop rainbow of the white boarded by the arch of wet feet in emerald-green, funambulesque sounds of a gong beaten to death among the skeins of carnations and such rambling roses.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: The blue, the blue, the azure, the blue, the blue of the white, the blue of the rose, lilac-blue, the blue of yellow, the blue of red, the blue of lemon, the blue orange, the blue that oozes from blue and the white blue, and the red blue and the blue of

the palms from the lemon blue of white doves, to the jasmine in the fields of oats, in great almond, emerald-green songs.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Spirals of lemons, great white squares of oranges, lemon lozenges, perfect ovals, exasperated circles of lilac roses, of tomatoes sung, whispered by the olives of the violet hidden in mulberry syrup.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: White, the red rose, the carnation, the blue, the white yellow flooding over the wall, spittle of the varnish of fire chained to steel bars, a long veil, dragged along by the immense wings of the little needle stuck into the cheek of the circle which bursts out in a dress spangled with brambles of lights.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Sweet afternoon, sweet, sweet, an afternoon of sweetness, sweet.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Grandfather clock full of bees, isle of honey.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Ship full of bees suckling a flight of doves detached from their wings, carried away with great shouts of cars, games and capers of immaculate laughter and drunkenness.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: The twelve white winged horses that draw the coach made of a grain of rice inundate from their great blue, yellow and red jars the immensity of the plate full of golden sweets with a sheaf of acanthus leaves plaited round it, and jets of mercury from the fountain make their iridescent vapours and their melodies and naked swords of their songs.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Azure watermelon stuck all over the nails, scissors curring the woven threads of the river that drags its hair in the sand, its torn robe illegible to the ear of the broken charm, hobbling lamely on its long leg.

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FIRST LITTLE GIRL: The great yellow oval struggles in silence between the two blue points of its claws, all bent double in a fall of Icarus into the skein of lines of air olive-green lozenge trap, strangled in both hands by the tender violet of the square of a vermilion arch thrown from so far away by the orange.

FOURTH LITTLE GIRL: Blue, pink, lilac, lemon-yellow, pistachio-green, the green of orange and the blue and violet, mauve and lilac and red.

SECOND LITTLE GIRL: My hand is full of voices, my hair is covered with ribbons of all colours. Comb them out. They slip between my fingers and light fireworks on each leaf torn from the tree by each thrust of the hips.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: The golden dust which hangs on each sigh the capers of a white scarf which lifts the boat to the window isolates on the steps of the amphitheatre the plough and the furrow, which sacrifice solemnly the goat chained down to the immaculate paper of a great page of writing.

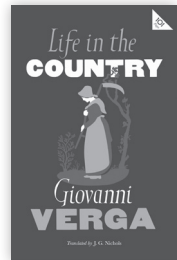
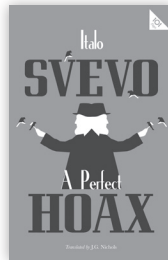
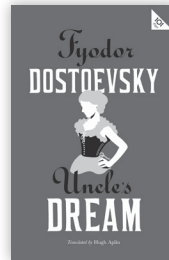
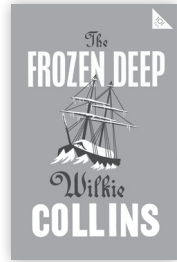
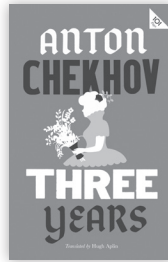
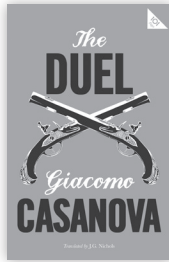
SECOND LITTLE GIRL: Let the goat graze, give her some cabbage leaves. You are stupid, you are stupid, really really you are stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid!

FIRST LITTLE GIRL: A mattress of brambles for me to sleep tonight on a syrup of blackberries. Skylark, gentle skylark, have you had a good breakfast?

(FIRST, SECOND AND FOURTH LITTLE GIRLS *silently start to run in every direction and catch each other, and doing so run up the steps leading to the first floor of the house.*)

THIRD LITTLE GIRL (*comes out of the well and jumps to the ground; she runs after the others, climbs the steps and goes in shouting*): Coming, coming, coming, coming, coming, coming, coming, coming...

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