

# The Girl Who Was A Boy

THIS IS A STORY THAT ORIGINATES IN ROMANIA.

Like all folk tales it has been told and retold many times. I came across it when my friend Joe showed me a modern retelling by Paul B Sturtevant. This in turn was based on a version by Leonora Blanche Alleyne. This was translated from a French version by Jules Brun which may in turn have been based on a version collected and written down by Petre Ispirescu.

I have made my own retelling of the story, which you can hear on my website. I've also included links there to the other versions mentioned on this card. You can find them at [www.somestories.co.uk](http://www.somestories.co.uk)

Although there are minor variations, the story always starts in the same way. It concerns a King who has three children. One day, his kingdom is threatened by a powerful Emperor. The King signs a peace treaty but in return the Emperor demands ten years' service from one of the King's sons. The King believes he has no son – only three daughters – but his youngest child has other ideas, for he is sure that he is a boy. With the help of his father's ancient warhorse, the boy sets off to fulfil his father's promise to the Emperor.

The hero, Fet-Fruners (or Făt-Frumos in the original Romanian) has various adventures. These include rescuing a beautiful princess named Iliane (Ileana) from a tall tower. At the climax of the story, Fet-Fruners is tasked with stealing a vial of holy water from a distant nunnery. He succeeds in his task but is cursed for his theft. The curse causes anyone it falls upon to change sex. For Fet-Fruners, this is not a curse but a boon, for he becomes a man in every way. His gender affirmed, he marries the princess and they both live happily ever after.