

Cast In Order Of Appearance:

Narrator
King
Soldier
Strong Man
Sharpshooter
Runner
Princess

NARRATOR : Once upon a time there was a soldier who served in a war. When the war was over the King decided to dismiss him.

KING : You have served well and bravely. Here, take these three farthings for your troubles. Goodbye now.

SOLDIER : Three farthings! Why that's lousy pay for being in a war and all! If I can meet the right people, I'll bet I can get this King to pay me more.

NARRATOR : The soldier then went into the forest and soon saw a man who was so strong that he was pulling huge trees out of the ground as if they were blades of grass.

SOLDIER : Ho, this man will be of use to me. Excuse me, strong man? Will you be my friend and come with me? If we two are together, we ought to be able to get on in the world.

STRONG MAN : Why certainly, my new friend. But first I must take this little bundle of sticks home to my mother. I'll just pluck one more tree out of the ground and wrap it around these others to hold them together more securely.

NARRATOR : The strong man quickly finished his work, said goodbye to his mother, and off he went with the soldier. A short time later, they found a sharpshooter poised and ready to fire his rifle.

SOLDIER : Sharpshooter, what are you aiming at?

SHARPSHOOTER : Two miles from here there's a fly sitting on a branch of an oak tree and I'm going to shoot its left eye out.

SOLDIER : Oh, come with us. If we three are together, we certainly ought to be able to get on in the world.

SHARPSHOOTER : Sounds good to me.

- NARRATOR : And off they went together. After a bit, the three men came to seven windmills whose sails were turning furiously and yet there was no wind to be felt. The soldier was the first to comment on this.
- SOLDIER : The windmills are turning and yet the air around us is calm.
- SOLDIER,
SHARPSHOOTER
& STRONG MAN : How can this be?
- NARRATOR : Confused they kept walking. Two miles later they discovered a man leaning against a tree. He was casually blowing his breath out and looked as if he was whistling with no sound. The soldier again commented first.
- SOLDIER : What is this?
- STRONG MAN : Yes, what is this?
- SOLDIER : Sharpshooter, go ask that man what he's doing over there blowing his breath out like that.
- NARRATOR : The sharpshooter did as he was told and returned saying –
- SHARPSHOOTER : Remember those seven windmills that we passed two miles from here? Well, he's the one who is making them turn round and round.
- STRONG MAN : Oh, he must come with us, come with us!
- SOLDIER : Yes, if we four are together, we shall carry the whole world before us!
- NARRATOR : The man agreed to go with them and off they all went together. Further down the road, the four men came across another man who was standing on one leg.
- SOLDIER : Why is he standing so?
- STRONG MAN : I shall ask him.
- NARRATOR : And the strong man did just that.
- STRONG MAN : Sir! Why are you standing on one leg?
- RUNNER : I am a runner of foot races, and to stop myself from running too far too fast, I've taken off one of my legs. If I use both my legs at the same time, I run faster than any bird can fly.

SHARPSHOOTER : Oh, come with us then.

SOLDIER : Yes, if we five are together, we shall carry the whole world before us!

RUNNER : Why not?

NARRATOR : And the adventure continued. Before long, the five men came across yet another man who was wearing his cap entirely on one ear.

STRONG MAN : What is this? He looks like an idiot wearing his cap like that.

NARRATOR : The runner, who was exceptionally sensitive to possible slights upon a person's character, spoke up quickly.

RUNNER : I know him. He has to wear his cap like that because if he doesn't cover his left ear, a terrible frost comes about and all the birds in the air freeze and drop dead to the ground.

STRONG MAN : Then he must come with us!

SOLDIER : Yes, if we six are together, we shall carry the whole world before us!

NARRATOR : And so they became the six men of this story.

SIX MEN : Hoorah for us! Off we go!

NARRATOR : At the soldier's suggestion, the six men decided to return to the kingdom from whence the soldier came. The next morning, the King rode into the village square and proclaimed –

KING : He who first runs a race with my daughter, the Princess, and wins – may marry her. But any man who loses a race against the Princess – shall also lose his head.

NARRATOR : The six men discussed this wager and together they agreed that this was their chance to get on in the world.

SOLDIER : We shall go to the King.

STRONG MAN : Yes, we shall!

RUNNER : Together as one!

SHARPSHOOTER : Together!

- SIX MEN : Hoorah!
- NARRATOR : The soldier stood before the King and introduced himself. The King was unimpressed.
- KING : And is it you, who shall be running in the race against my fair daughter, the Princess?
- NARRATOR : The runner leapt forward and bowed before the King.
- RUNNER : I shall run for my friend.
- NARRATOR : The King eyed the runner and then eyed the soldier again.
- KING : Then you both must stake your lives on this race.
- RUNNER
& SOLDIER : We will!
- NARRATOR : All was arranged and on the day of the competition, the King announced the rules of the royal race.
- KING : You and my daughter, the Princess, shall both carry a pitcher to the Red Lake far away. You will each fill your pitcher with its red water and then bring it back. Whomever returns first shall be declared the winner. Begin!
- NARRATOR : The soldier turned to the runner and said –
- SOLDIER : Get going and help us win!
- NARRATOR : The runner saluted the soldier and took off. The runner then reached the Red Lake, filled his pitcher with its red water, and began his run back to the tournament grounds to claim victory. But suddenly, he began to slow down.
- RUNNER : Ho, I'm a little tired. I think I'll take a little nap. My, look at this – a horse's skull on the ground before me and we're not even in New Mexico. I'll just make a pillow out of this horse's skull so I don't get too comfortable and sleep for too long.
- NARRATOR : Yet, while he was sleeping, the Princess finally caught up to him.
- PRINCESS : Ha! The fool! I shall empty his pitcher of red water run on ahead, fill my pitcher, and then run back and win this race. That'll fix him – try and marry a princess, will ya. Ha!

- NARRATOR : Fortunately, the sharpshooter, who had exceptionally keen eyesight, and also happened to be standing on top of the castle wall, saw what the Princess had done.
- SHARPSHOOTER : She thinks she's so clever, that Princess. I'll just shoot that horse's skull out from under my friend the runner and wake him up.
- NARRATOR : And so he did.
- RUNNER : Oh no! My red water has been dumped out and I can see the Princess ahead of me. She's on her way back to the castle. But that's okay. I'll still win this race.
- NARRATOR : And so he raced back to the Red Lake, filled his pitcher once again, and started the run back to the finish line. The strong man, who was standing in the crowd, saw him and called out.
- STRONG MAN : Look! The runner has passed the Princess!
- SOLDIER : He's going to beat her to the finish line by at least ten minutes!
- SHARPSHOOTER : Here he comes to the finish line!
- SIX MEN : Hoorah!
- NARRATOR : The King was very unhappy.
- KING : Rats! Now what am I going to do? I can't go back on my wager or the peasants will draw and quarter me.
- PRINCESS : Father, you can't let me be married to a lowly soldier.
- KING : I know, I know.
- PRINCESS : Well then, do something! Find some way to get rid of him!
- NARRATOR : The King frowned and thought as hard as he could.
- KING : I've got it! We'll invite this soldier and his friends to come and celebrate their victory with a meal in the castle. I'll put them all in a room with a floor made of iron.
- PRINCESS : And then what? Make them eat themselves to death? Hope they lick the floor, get iron overload, and die of hemochromatosis?

- KING : No, I'll have the cook make a fire beneath the floor. It will get so hot in the room that all the air will disappear and then they'll suffocate to death, one by one.
- PRINCESS : That's a great idea!
- NARRATOR : The King called for the six men to come forward.
- KING : Come, gentlemen. We shall celebrate your victory with a feast in my castle.
- SOLDIER : Oh boy! We get a princess and some food!
- SIX MEN : Hoorah again!
- NARRATOR : Once the six men were shut in the room, the King had the cook begin the hottest fire he could make.
- KING : Throw on as many logs as you need. I want an inferno beneath them.
- NARRATOR : The six men began to sweat.
- SOLDIER : Ahem, isn't it getting a little warm in here?
- STRONG MAN : It's the food and the wine that are making you hot. Eat! Eat!
- NARRATOR : But it grew hotter still. The sharpshooter went to the windows to open them.
- SHARPSHOOTER : Hey! The windows are all bolted closed from the outside!
- NARRATOR : The strong man went to push open the door.
- STRONG MAN : And the doors are bolted closed from the other side also!
- SOLDIER : We must do something quick or we will suffocate and die!
- NARRATOR : The man with the cap over his one ear jumped up from his seat and pulled the cap off. The runner cheered him on.
- RUNNER : Yes! Look now, everyone! That wicked King! Well, he'll not succeed. With our friend's cap off his ear, this room will freeze down right away. Our friend here will make a frost so great that the fire beneath us will be ashamed and creep away.

- NARRATOR : Two hours later, the King believed that all six of the men had perished, so he ordered the doors to be opened. The six men came strolling out.
- PRINCESS : Father, they live!
- NARRATOR : The King was very unhappy.
- KING : Rats! Now what am I going to do? We used up all our spare logs making that fire.
- PRINCESS : Buy them off! Give them gold! Father, you can't let me marry a lowly soldier!
- NARRATOR : The King frowned and looked at the floor.
- KING : When's the last time this floor was washed?
- NARRATOR : And then made up his mind.
- KING : I know what I'll do. Soldier! If I give you gold, will you renounce your claim on my daughter's hand and leave my kingdom forever?
- NARRATOR : The soldier paused, looked at the strong man for a moment, and then said —
- SOLDIER : Certainly. Give me as much gold as my friend here can carry, and I will not demand my right to take your daughter's hand in marriage.
- KING : As much as your friend can carry?
- NARRATOR : The King knew how heavy gold was and laughed to himself at the soldier's foolishness.
- KING : It is agreed then. You will have as much gold as this one man, standing here next to you, can carry. And then all six of you shall leave my kingdom forever.
- SOLDIER : Good. My friends and I shall return in fourteen days to fetch our gold.
- NARRATOR : The six men left. But, the strong man was worried because, though he was strong, he had only two arms with which to carry the gold.
- STRONG MAN : Soldier! What is this you have agreed to?
- NARRATOR : The soldier smiled at his friend.

- SOLDIER : Do not fret, my good man.
- NARRATOR : However, the runner was also worried.
- RUNNER : Yes, what are we going to do?
- SOLDIER : Trust me, my friends. I have a plan.
- NARRATOR : The next day the soldier sent word summoning all the tailors in the kingdom to their door.
- SOLDIER : Dear tailors, sew us the largest, strongest, most enormous sack you can make.
- NARRATOR: The tailors got busy with their work. Twelve days later, they finished the giant sack, and the soldier called the other five men together.
- SOLDIER : Now everyone, we are ready to go back to the King and pick up our gold.
- SIX MEN : Hoorah for us!
- NARRATOR : So the next morning they began their walk back to the castle. The King and the Princess both spied the strong man first through their breakfast window.
- KING : Who is that man coming towards us? And what is that huge pile of cloth on his back that looks as big as a house?
- PRINCESS : He looks like one of those men we were trying to get rid of, father.
- KING : You're right! And there are the other five men following behind him.
- NARRATOR : The strong man, who had exceptionally good hearing, said –
- STRONG MAN : Yes! It is I! A very strong man who is a friend of the soldier, who is exceptionally brilliant. The very same soldier you treated so unfairly when he returned from service in your war. I have come to carry away all the gold you have now promised him. We'll start with a ton!
- KING &
PRINCESS : Oh my!
- NARRATOR : The King had no choice but to have a ton of gold brought. But the strong man was not satisfied.

- STRONG MAN : This barely covers the bottom of my sack. Bring more!
- NARRATOR : The King emptied his treasury but still the bag wasn't even half full. The King was very unhappy.
- KING : Rats! I'll have to collect all the gold in the kingdom for them.
- NARRATOR : Seven thousand carts of gold were gathered and brought to the six men. The strong man put all the carts, and the oxen pulling them, into his bag.
- STRONG MAN : Any more gold, your Majesty? My bag still isn't full.
- NARRATOR : The King and the Princess were both sobbing.
- KING : Just a few dishes and trinkets.
- PRINCESS : And our crowns.
- STRONG MAN : Put them all into my sack and then we six men will be on our way, even though the bag still isn't full.
- NARRATOR : The strong man threw the enormous bag of gold over his shoulders and walked away as though it were light as a feather.
- PRINCESS : Father, you must send our fastest regiment to capture those six men and make them give us back all our gold!
- KING : Yes, my daughter! I must do this or we shall be the poorest kingdom of all!
- NARRATOR : So all the best horsemen were sent to hunt down the six men.
- SHARPSHOOTER : Look! The King has set his regiment on us!
- RUNNER : And they have us surrounded!
- STRONG MAN : They say we are their prisoners!
- NARRATOR : The soldier disagreed.
- SOLDIER : Oh no we're not! That regiment and their steeds will dance in the air! Just you watch.

- NARRATOR : The soldier then nodded to their friend, the fourth man who had joined them, and he began to blow his breath out as he had for the windmills. He caused such a wind that the King's regiment was carried away into the sky and scattered all over the mountains.
- SOLDIER : Hold on and gather your breath for a moment.
- NARRATOR : One by one they came crashing down. One horseman cried for mercy for his steed, so the six men took pity, and allowed them both to come to a rest more gently upon the ground.
- SOLDIER : Go home to your King and tell him to lay off. If he sends any more men, we shall have them all blown into the air just as the others.
- NARRATOR : The horseman saluted the six men and returned to the King, who was now thoroughly miserable.
- KING : Rats and then some. They must have magic on their side.
- NARRATOR : And so the six men divided up all the gold and went away to their separate homes at last. And there they each lived, very happily, for the rest of their lives.