The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids
(A German Tale)

As you read, guess these words from the context: devour, disguise, deceit, grief, gorged, greediness

There was once upon a time an old goat who had seven little kids, and loved them with all the love of a mother for her children. One day she wanted to go into the forest and fetch some food. So she called all seven to her and said, "Dear children, I have to go into the forest. Be on your guard against the wolf; if he comes in, he will devour you all -- skin, hair, and all. The terrible wolf often disguises himself, but you will know him at once by his rough voice and his claws." The kids said, "Dear mother, we will take good care of ourselves; you may go away without any worry." Then the old goat went on her way with an easy mind.

It was not long before someone knocked at the door and called, "Open the door, dear children; your mother is here, and has brought something back with her for each of you." But the little kids knew that it was the wolf, by the rough voice. "We will not open the door," they cried; "you are not our mother. She has a soft, pleasant voice, but your voice is rough. You are the wolf!"

Then the wolf went away to a shop and bought himself a great jar of honey, ate this, and made his voice soft with it. Then he came back, knocked at the door of the house, and cried, "Open the door, dear children, your mother is here and has brought something back with her for each of you." But the wolf had laid his sharp claws against the window, and the children saw them and cried, "We will not open the door. Our mother doesn't have claws like you; you're the wolf!"

Then the wolf ran to another shop and said, "I have cold hands, find some gloves for me." But the glovemaker thought to herself, "This wolf wants to deceive someone," and she refused. The wolf threatened her, saying, "If you won’t do it, I will devour you." Then the glovemaker was afraid, and made gloves for him to hide his claws.

Now the wolf went for the third time to the door of the goats’ house, knocked at it and said, "Open the door for me, children, your dear little mother has come home, and has brought every one of you something back from the forest with her." The little kids cried, "First show us your paws so that we may know if you are our dear little mother." Then he put his paws in through the window, and when the kids saw that he had beautiful gloves, they believed that all he said was true, and opened the door.

Who should come in but the wolf! They were terrified and wanted to hide themselves. One sprang under the table, the second into the bed, the third into the stove, the fourth into the kitchen, the fifth into the cupboard, the sixth under the washing-bowl, and the seventh into the tall clock-case. But the wolf found them all, and one after the other he swallowed them down his throat. The youngest, who was in the clock-case, was the only one he did not find. When the wolf had satisfied his appetite, he took off, laid down under a tree in the green meadow outside, and began to sleep.
Soon afterwards the old mother goat came home again from the forest. Oh, what a sight she saw there! The door stood wide open. The table, chairs, and benches were thrown around, the washing-bowl lay broken in pieces, and the quilts and pillows were pulled off the bed. She looked for her children, but they were nowhere to be found. She called them one after another by name, but no one answered. At last, when she came to the youngest, a soft voice cried, "Dear mother, I am in the clock-case." She took the kid out, and it told her that the wolf had come and had eaten all the others. Then you may imagine how she wept over her poor children.

Finally in her grief she went outside to get some air, and the youngest kid ran with her. When they came to the meadow, there lay the wolf by the tree and he snored so loudly that the branches shook. She studied him carefully from every side and saw that something was moving and struggling in his gorged belly. "Ah, heavens," she said, "is it possible that my poor children whom he has swallowed down for his supper can be still alive?"

Then the littlest kid had to run home and fetch scissors, and a needle and thread. The mother goat cut open the monster's stomach, and hardly had she make one cut than one little kid thrust its head out, and when she cut farther, all six sprang out one after another, and all were still alive, and had suffered no injury whatever, for in his greediness the monster had swallowed them down whole.

What rejoicing there was! They embraced their dear mother, and jumped like, well, like goats! The mother, however, said, "Now go and look for some big stones, and we will fill the wicked beast's stomach with them while he is still asleep." Then the seven kids dragged the stones to her as fast as they could and put as many of them into his stomach as they could get in there. The mother sewed him up again in the greatest hurry, so that he was not aware of anything and never once stirred.

When the wolf at length had had his sleep, he got on his legs, and as the stones in his stomach made him feel very sick, he wanted to go to a nearby pond to drink. But when he began to walk and move about, the stones in his stomach knocked against each other and rattled. Then he cried,

"What rumbles and tumbles
Against my poor bones?
I thought 't was six kids,
But it's only big stones!"

And when he got to the pond and stooped over the water and was just about to drink, the heavy stones made him fall in, and there was no help for him - he had to drown miserably. When the seven kids saw that, they came running to the spot and cried aloud, "The wolf is dead! The wolf is dead!" and danced for joy round about the pond with their mother.

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1. What other fairy tale does this remind you of? (besides “The Three Little Pigs”)
2. Does this story teach the same lessons as “The Three Little Pigs”?
3. Which story do you like better (or do you not like either one)?
4. Is this a good story to tell children? Why or why not?