



# The Enchanted Cap

by Allison Galbraith

**Setting** – anywhere you like.

**Time** – A day and age when people were still hung for stealing.

**Protagonist** – a child, a local young or old man, a known character, or an unknown person.

**The plot** – the protagonist is making their way home through a wild place. This can be a local moor, woodland, forest, coast, or glen.

They become lost. This is particularly good if it's a child. An adult can be caught out in a storm and is looking for shelter.

They see a light in a humble dwelling and take shelter. They can be invited in by the occupants, or they go into an empty place and fall asleep.

The occupants can be three witch-like women, of differing ages, or three little women, possibly fairies.

When he is meant to be asleep the protagonist witnesses the three women putting on berets, or night caps and saying, "London Again" or, "Off to the big house", or "Let's off to, *anywhere you want to choose*" And the women either fly out the window, up the chimney, or just disappear.

The protagonist finds another cap/beret/hat, or one has fallen back down the chimney. He puts it on and says the same words as the women.

The protagonist finds themselves in a wine cellar – often the king of France's wine cellar! Or it can be a known grand big house. Here the women are drinking fine wine, helping themselves to good food, or dancing with the devil.

The protagonist is invited to join them.

The protagonist wakes on the cellar floor the next morning with a terrible

headache/hangover. The women have gone.

The protagonist is caught by the servants of the big house and accused of thievery, which has been going on for many years.

The protagonist's denial of wrong-doing and pleas for mercy are ignored, and he is sentenced to death by hanging (this can lead to interesting discussions about children being executed for stealing food, in by-gone times, if your protagonist is a child)

The day of the hanging arrives and the protagonist is lead out to the gallows, the rope put around his neck, but then...

Either he remembers the beret/cap in his pocket, puts it on, says, "Lets off home" and is magically transported back safely to his home/your chosen place. Or, one of the women/fairies arrives amongst the hanging crowd and asks the hang-man if she can cover the prisoner's eyes with her cap/hat/beret, before he is hung. Again the words are chanted, "Here's off to, *the place you've chosen*". And with the hat on his head they both disappear.

The ending can include a moral lesson learned about never drinking too much again, or the protagonist bringing home the gallows and rope, which can come in very useful. Lawrence Tulloch in his version of the story (*London Again, The Foy and other folktales*. Published by The Shetland Times Ltd, 2006) has the protagonist as a wrecked ship's captain, who is looking for a good piece of timber to fix his damaged ship. The gallows he was nearly hung on in London, serves this purpose. A similar ending can be found in Sheena Douglas' version, which you can find here: <http://www.tracscotland.org/tracs/resources/the-witches-of-kintail>

You can also end the story with a family reunion, but no-one will believe the protagonist's fantastical explanation of where he's been!

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