

# The Magpie Girl

One for sorrow, two for joy,  
Three for a girl and four for a boy.  
Five for silver, six for gold,  
Seven for a secret never to be told.

Her heavy eyes stared at the apples across the street as they shone like rubies in the setting December sun.

The cold air nipped at her fingers and bit at her toes and her frosted breath floated away just as her dreams had done many moons ago.

'Come on ladies. Get your apples. Get your lovely apples'.

The winter rain made her hair cling to her face and her rags cling to her body.

'Come on now, tuppence ha'penny for four juicy apples'.

The cries of the stallholder started to blur, as if a fog was wrapping itself around his words. And all she could think about was that for the first time that day she was going to eat.

'It's *only one* apple. It's *only one* apple.'

The street bustled with people running home to put on dry clothes and have a hot meal.

'God bless you madam. Six apples it is'.

The apples rustled in the brown paper bag as the lady, dressed in pale blue, hid under her umbrella.

Somebody nudged her arm and two shillings fell to the floor.

'Not to worry madam, allow me'.

The magpie girl reached for the nearest apple and hid it under her shawl. She knew that the apple would not taste as sweet as the stallholder had promised, but at least she would eat. Life was starting to teach her the hard way that not everything in this world is as black and white as it should be.

