

Once upon a time, there lived a shepherd. He lived the life that shepherds live, tending his flock by day, and sometimes by night. The wind was his companion, the sun and moon his guardians. A beautiful woman was his wife, and their children looked to him for love and guidance.

Yet he was never satisfied.

One evening, he and his youngest returned with the flock. Nearing home, he cursed: he had left his milking stool behind. Despite the cold, the wind and the night taking hold, he sent the child to fetch the stool.

Across the whispering grass, around the moonlit lake, through the ancient trees and up the hill to their shelter the boy went. Like a beacon it stood, ablaze with light.

The child entered to find the room dancing with laughter. As the fires died down and the moon flooded in, the wayfarers asked the boy if he would like to learn to play the pipe.

He left with the morning sun and a pipe, which he played so beautifully that the wind stood still to listen, birds carolled in delight, and passers by found their souls drenched in joy, their bodies swathed in light. Such a sound had never before been heard from human lips.

Aghast, the shepherd questioned the boy.

The child told him everything.

Determined that he should be granted the same gift, the shepherd retraced his son's journey.

Morning unfurled into day and the afternoon stretched to dusk. The shepherd did not return.

They found him sitting: dazed, silent, staring into nothingness.

Never again did a single sound pass his lips.