

Weaver of Wool

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Free and flowing (♩=180)



Fa-ther, oh fa-ther, your will is so strange: Jack is a gamb-ler and drin-ker.



Terms and con - di-tions that none can ar - range. Beth is a rea-der and thin-ker.



Wise men are baff-led; the fools are no use. We seek an an-swer that none can pro-duce.



I am a spin-ner and wea-ver of wool. Fa-ther, your will is too cruel.

Father, oh father, your will is so strange:

Jack is a gambler and drinker.

Terms and conditions that none can arrange.

Beth is a reader and thinker.

Wise men are baffled; the fools are no use.

We seek an answer that none can produce.

I am a spinner and weaver of wool.

Father, your will is too cruel.

Mother, distraught, sent the word via Beth.

"Children, come quickly, your father's near death."

Jack left a hand undealt; I left my sheep.

We said farewell; father passed beyond sleep.

What kind of lawyer would draft such a will?

Father was out of wit; father was ill.

"Give to each child, however well blessed,

One equal share that cannot be possessed."

What kind of lawyer would play such a trick?

Father was not himself; father was sick.

"Give to each child, however employed,

One equal share that will not be enjoyed."

Mother, unable to fathom his plan,

Says, "I'll divide it the best way I can."

Beth gets the library, Jack gets the bottles,

I get the sheep and the spindles and shuttles.

Cursed be the judge who must clear the estate.

Cursed be our father, and cursed be our fate.

If we cannot do as father set down,

All of our shares will revert to the crown.

Here's an old talespinner, wizened and lean,

Claiming to know what our father might mean.

Bring him some stew and a pitcher of beer.

Gather the family, and we will all hear.

Sheep go to Jack, skilled in betting, not earning.

Wine goes to Beth, who is eager for learning.

I get the books. Though we have equal measure,

None of our shares brings us comfort or pleasure.

Taking no counsel and giving no warning,

Jack sells the shears and the sheep the next morning.

Jack claims the offer's too good to decline.

Beth, to avenge me, sells all of the wine.

Having the money to purchase my books,

Beth is too kind; she will share my sad looks.

Fighting her tears back, she helps me to sell

All the books to a scholar in town she knows well.

Those with ill fortune in what they inherit

Hasten to sell it when they cannot bear it.

Books may be heavy, but money is light.

I leave with Beth for the new world tonight.

This song is based on an Aesop fable in an unusual sense of the term: the fable is not attributed to Aesop, but he appears in it as a character. It is found in volume IV of the fables of Phaedrus, who wrote them in Latin verse in the first century C.E. I found it under the title "The riddle of a will" in *Fables of Aesop*, translated by S. A. Handford, Penguin Books, 1954, new edition 1964.

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