

THE BINIOU



Once upon a time my grandmother's grandmother's grandmother had a son. One evening, when dusk was falling, she sent him to the village, and to get there he had to walk through a wood in which there were often wolves. Before leaving, the boy said:

"As there are wolves in the wood I will bring my biniou; if the wolves come to eat me, I will play them a tune before I die."

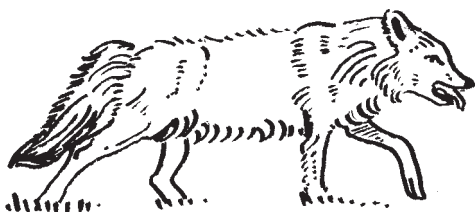
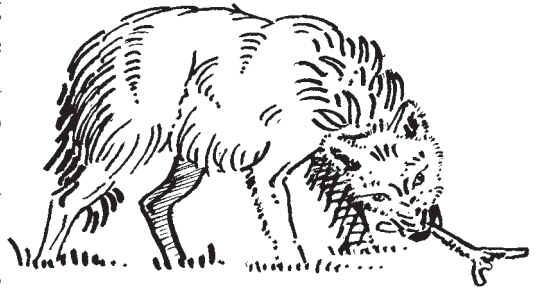
When the boy entered the wood he heard the wolves, which had smelt him, and he looked round for a tree to climb. However, the trees were all small, and their trunks were little more than the width of a man's arm. The boy managed to scramble up the biggest of them, keeping tight hold of his biniou.

Hardly had he reached the top of the tree when a pack of about twenty wolves surrounded it, barking and sniffing at the trunk. They started to scratch at the earth with their feet and soon they had uncovered the roots; the little boy began to think the tree would fall down and he said:

"At least before I am eaten I will play my prettiest song on my biniou."

He put the instrument to his lips, but as soon as the wolves heard the unfamiliar sound they took fright and ran off as if a pack of hounds was after them.

Delighted by his escape, the boy climbed down from the tree and continued down the road to the village; to keep off the wolves he played his biniou all along the way; and he reached home safely.



Told in 1880 by Bathilde Delaselle, aged 13, who heard the story from her grandmother.