

# 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 fixed themselves on the apples across the cobbled 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 drifted away in much the same way her dreams had done many moons before.

'Come on ladies. Get your apples. Get your juicy 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. A bargain I tell you'.

The cries of the stallholder started to blur, as though 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 have something to eat.

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

The street bustled with people heading home to a dry set of clothes and a hot meal.

'God bless you ma'am. Six apples it is'.

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

A passer-by nudged her arm and two shillings fell to the floor.

'Not to worry ma'am, allow me'.

The magpie girl reached for the nearest apple and hid it under her shawl. She knew that the apple would no longer 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.

