

# A Temporal Analysis of Ozark Folklore

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### A Temporal Analysis of Ozark Folklore

At present, linguistic studies, including anthropological linguistics and folkloric studies, populate a family of fairly young sciences, and the mental processes surrounding language are still quite mysterious. In some ways, one could compare current research in linguistics to medical science around 2,700 years ago, in the era of the ancient Greek physicians. For those early practitioners, observation and categorization were crucial to learning something of the way the body works on the inside. Although individuals like Alcmaeon and Hippocrates might not have had microscopes or x-ray machines at their disposal, their careful notations laid the groundwork for the modern medical sciences. Today, doctors and scientists are able to witness on a cellular level the processes that are responsible for the symptoms observed thousands of years ago.

Like the ancient Greek physicians, anthropologically-minded linguists are not able to observe the mind of a speaker and witness the processes that produce language. These processes are not limited to the crackling of synapses, but are also subject to the less definable influences of culture, emotion, and situation. Cataloguing the traits of language helps us to understand this complex and personal subject. Folklorists are valuable participants in this process of observation and understanding because oral narratives, folk songs, rhymes, and other similar speech acts are verbal artifacts of the culture in which they originate. This paper will focus specifically on folktales collected in the Ozark region of southern Missouri and a slim strip of northern Arkansas, a region full of humor and vitality and, in the small towns and rural backwoods, fairly isolated from mainstream America.

#### **Folklore**

“Folklore,” as defined by its scholars, may include everything from riddles to tales to games to handicrafts. In Europe, folklorists include dances, games, and traditional crafts in their studies; in America, however, folklore studies focus primarily on the verbal elements of culture, like songs and stories and idioms (Dundes, 1966). Throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the focus of most American folklorists has been on the collection of endangered texts like the Ozark folktales selected for this study. In his handbook on folkloric research, Jan Brunvand states that recent efforts at studies within the field of folklore “generally develop in a sequence from collection to classification to interpretation, although it should be remembered that none of these stages is ever abandoned, [and] that not all folklorists necessarily engage in all three” (Brunvand, 1976, p. 27). And, as Alan Dundes points out, merely collecting the text of a folktale leaves a great deal to be desired. Analysis is an important step whether focusing on texture, text, or context, terms which Dundes (1980) uses and which I will use to describe the language of a piece, the narration as a whole, or the culture and situation from which it arose. The culture produces the person, the person produces language, and the language is the vehicle for the text. In order to properly digest a folktale, then, a thorough folklorist must

play the roles of linguist and cultural anthropologist, the first to appreciate the texture of the piece, and the second to account for the cultural context of the informant and the tale.

### **Ozark History**

In order to proceed on to method and analysis, then, I will first introduce the context, that is, the “folk” who have shared their tales with curious field researchers. The limits of this paper do not provide for a complete history of the Ozark region or people. For a complete history that is both accessible and respectful I recommend *The Ozarks: Land and Life* by Milton Rafferty (2001). However, a few important points should be touched on here in order to provide an informed perspective for the folktales that will be examined.

In brief, the majority of people who first settled and remained in the Ozark region were originally from Ulster, or Northern Ireland, called Scotch-Irish to differentiate them from the mostly Catholic native Irish. These hard and hardy individuals originated in the highlands of Scotland, where a harsh growing climate and raiding neighbors prepared them for later settlement, first in the equally hostile Northern Ireland, and then in the rugged hills of Tennessee and Kentucky. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, these same intrepid folks were among the first European Americans to travel into the deeper hills of the Ozark region. Used to living in isolation in unfriendly and barely fertile wilderness, these folks settled into the Ozarks and remain the ethnic majority, especially in the rural areas, into modern times (Rafferty, 2001). In the mid-nineteenth century, several groups of German immigrants also moved into the Missouri area, along with a few groups of Poles, Italians, and Russians, most of whom, again, were used to scraping out an existence farming in the rocky hills. During the Civil War, bands of guerilla fighters, many of them basically outlaws, took their toll on the towns and farms of the Ozarks, especially along the Missouri-Kansas border and in the northern part of Arkansas. Even after the war, gangs of vigilantes seeking to find justice, and sometimes vengeance, in the turmoil that accompanied Reconstruction roamed the hills and hollows. The legacy of these uncertain times has been a generally conservative demeanor in the Ozarks, and a need for self-reliance, even going so far as taking the law into one’s own hands (Rafferty, 2001).

In the 1930s, the “discovery” of the Ozarks as an impoverished area would spur New Deal programs and government assistance that many people still rely on today. At the same time, tourism became more accessible to Americans and what has become a multi-billion dollar industry spread throughout the Ozark areas, especially around rivers, lakes, and natural springs (Rafferty, 2001). Today, the Ozarks have become much more racially, economically, and culturally diverse. That said, there are people who live in the backwoods of Missouri and Arkansas that bear a striking resemblance to the first Ulstermen who carved out little farms for themselves on the rocky hillsides or the deep river valleys (Rafferty, 2001). Certain cultural qualities, like the value of self-reliance, the prevalence of poverty and agriculture, and a general suspicion and dismissal of Yanks, tourists, and

other strangers are evident in the data presented here. In fact, the tellers of these tales would likely not care much about the in-depth analysis of their local folktales by a “furriner” like myself.

### **Literature Review**

Before I begin the discussion of my own folkloric analysis, I must give acknowledgment to the scholars who informed this project. Alan Dundes is a brilliant and experienced folklorist. He has been most emphatic in his statements that folklorists analyze the works they collect, as noted in his book *Interpreting Folklore* (1980), and his two articles “Bloody Mary in the Mirror: A Ritual of Pre-Pubescent Anxiety” (1998) and “The American Concept of Folklore” (1966). Jan Brunvand (1976) has also influenced my approach to research, and his handbook for research in the field of folklore is a clear and useful reference for any beginning folklore scholar. Alan Dundes (1998) and Richard Bauman (1986) both provided examples of classic folkloric analysis for me to compare with my own methods, Dundes working with female college students in southern California and Bauman with old cowboys and dog trainers in Texas. They both use their sample texts as jumping-off points to comment on the folk who produced them. They focus their inquiries into the psychology behind the texts, and comment on the context surrounding the folktales. In every case, the text is examined as a whole rather than according to its constituent parts, and the overall feel is of a psychological or cultural rather than a linguistic analysis. William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, however, in their oft-cited work on personal narratives, provided the framework for my own analysis (*Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience*, [1966] 1997). Though a bit dated in terms of its release, their temporal structuring of oral narratives proved a convenient method for me to translate the texts presented here into graphic representations, and its frequency of citation by other scholars indicates its continued relevance. Labov and Waletzky do break a narrative down into its constituent elements, a process I will describe in the “Method” section of my paper.

As a source for the folktales discussed in this paper, I relied on the excellent work of Vance Randolph. From his beginnings as an amateur folklorist to his rise to fame as one of the experts in his genre, Randolph has shown a continued interest in and delight with the people and culture of the isolated Ozark communities in which he worked. His collections of folktales have provided the data for my analysis, and his writings have helped me understand the home folks who shared them in the first place. I will discuss my selection process more thoroughly later, but the following collections of Randolph’s were the sources for the tales presented here: *The Talking Turtle* (1957), *Who Blowed Up the Church House?* (1952), and *Stiff as a Poker* ([1955] 1993). His collection methods varied greatly and are not described for each folktale. At times Randolph was accompanied by a graduate assistant that took notes, at times he took notes himself, and at times he used an audio recording device. In everything, Randolph sought to reflect exactly what his informant told him, but editorial mistakes are possible. Also, Randolph made an effort to convey the vocabulary of his informants, but

his transcriptions are not phonetic, so an analysis of dialect is not possible with these sources. For additional historical and cultural observations, I have made use of *Ozark Magic and Folklore* (Randolph, [1947] 1964) and *We Always Lie to Strangers* (Randolph, [1951] 1974), and Randolph and Wilson's *Gallery of Ozark Folk Speech* (1953) has helped to clarify some of the more obscure folk terminology.

In addition to these folklorists, I have made use of the work of other scholars in honing my focus and helping to dissect the folklore samples I have selected. Harriet Klein's concise article "Narrative" (2001) was a valuable second perspective on the subject to compare with Labov's definition. Frank Parker and Katherine Riley (2005), along with R.H. Robins (1980) and Ronald Langacker (1973) are knowledgeable linguists, each helpful in determining how to break a narrative down into its component parts. Particularly for non-linguists, their discussions of sentences and clausal structure are helpful for students seeking to understand these potentially confusing topics. I will refer to their work again in my discussion of sample selection. Also, as mentioned previously, Rafferty's overview of the history of the Ozarks and its people is very informative, offering a nonjudgmental view of the often stigmatized rural American subculture.

### **Method**

My goal in this study was to see how Labov's method of structuring oral narratives would help me in my analysis of selected Ozark folktales. I have already pointed out the value of analyzing this collected data. I hoped that following a method that results in a graphed representation of each folktale would enable me to make qualitative observations of the sample folktales based on patterns in the charts, which of course are much easier to analyze and organize than swaths of narration. Furthermore, Labov's definition of oral narrative is temporally based. He describes it as "a verbal sequence of clauses [matching] the sequence of events that actually occurred" ([1966] 1997, p. 12). I have found that Ozark narratives follow, for the most part, the same direct path that Labov's narratives did, making his method quite applicable to my data. Allow me, then, to outline the elements of Labov's process as I made use of them.

Labov deconstructs his oral narratives based on their temporal structure. Within the narrative, as it proceeds line by line, he isolates each piece of the event being related. That is, he isolates each "potentially complete utterance," as described by Robins (1980, p. 190). This is usually a whole sentence, though this need not necessarily be the case. It is, rather, built on the action being described, typically as an independent clause. For example, note the division of the following compound sentence, taken from "The Dumb Supper" (Randolph, 1952, pp. 22, c.f. App. B) into independent clauses based on the verb phrase, which has been underlined for emphasis:

- A      It was a plumb dark night,
- B      (and) the wind was a-rising.

Contained herein are two distinct events, described one after another, contained within two independent clauses. At times, the events described by two different independent clauses necessarily happen simultaneously, as in the following example, taken from the same story, with my underlining:

C        One time the old folks went to town and left three girls alone in the house.

This is a case of simultaneity the likes of which simply does not appear in Labov's data sample. He does not deal with this measure of linguistic complexity in his paper, and so I have exercised my best judgment in this study in using his method of focusing not on any one clausal structure but rather on individual events as they unfold in the narrative. In this case, I have chosen to group these two clauses together as one event because, using Labov's method, I am interested in the step-by-step proceedings of a narrative, and C describes a single event.

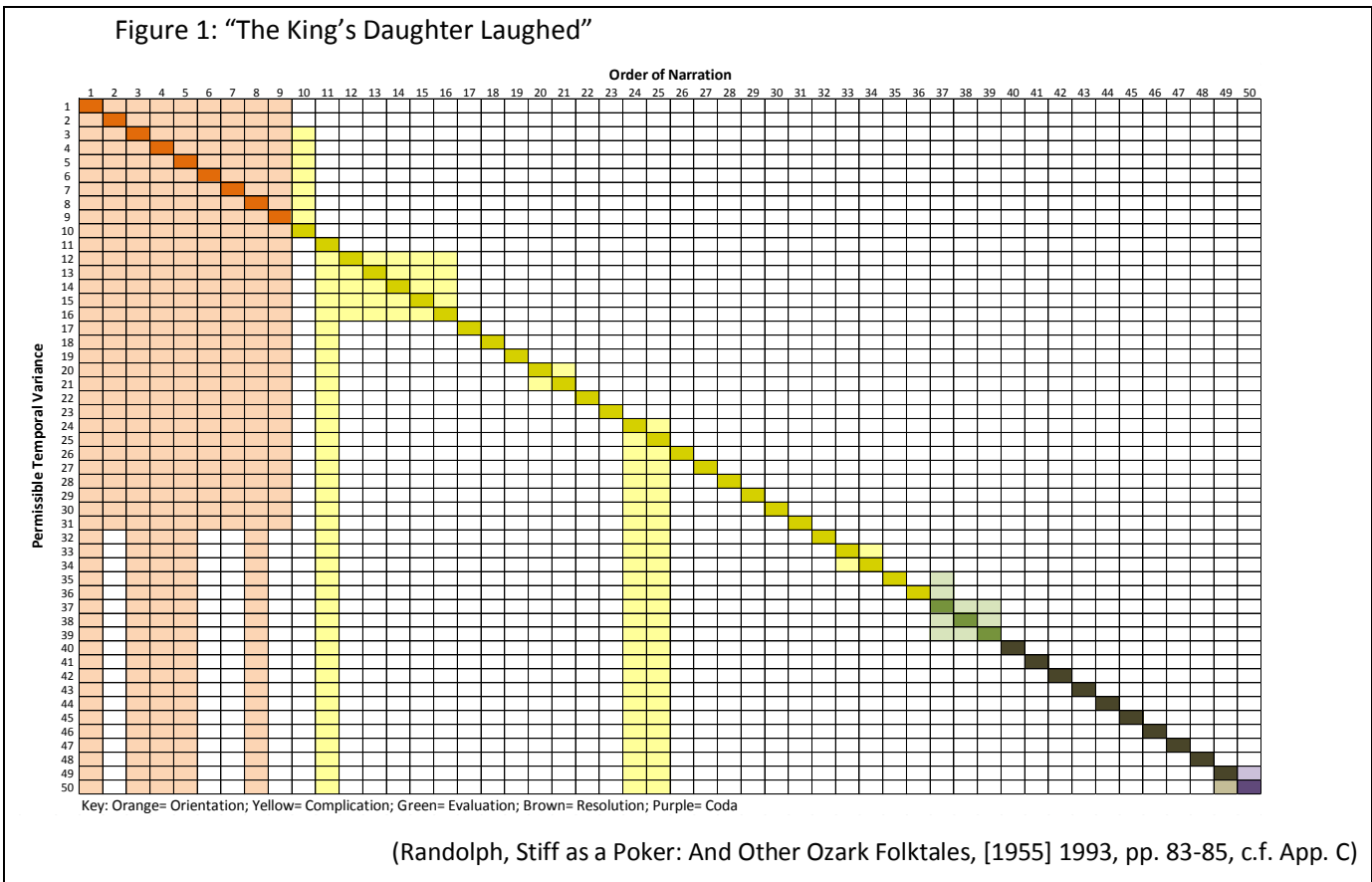
In this paper, I will use some of Labov's terminology that identifies various parts of the narratives as different types of clauses. I must make it clear that he is using a loose definition of a clause as simply a group of consecutive words. It is worth pointing out that Labov, talented as he is, does not specialize in syntactical linguistics. For myself, I will refer to examples such as A, B, and C as events or elements within the narrative because I feel that these terms are more consistent.

Labov then uses numerical notation to describe each narrative element based on its temporal restrictions in the story. Using the above examples again, A and B, as events, are not very restricted by the timeline of the story. It might be a dark night throughout the action of the narrative, and the narrator might conceivably mention this at any point in the narration. Additionally, the wind might have picked up right as night fell or closer to midnight, when the action of the story takes place. In comparison, the event described in C is temporally limited to its position within the narration. It happens "just at midnight," and not a moment before or after any of the preceding or following events as related in the narrative. Labov's numerical notation was useful for keeping track of where all the events in a given narration might allowably take place. However, I focused on the pictorial representation of the timeline of a given story. I found it easier to read and compare to other stories, and I was able to separate it into its assorted narrative parts.

Labov coined some useful terms for differentiating between each narrative element and how it behaved within the temporal structure of the narration, and I will be using the same terms. In brief, there are four different kinds of elements within a narrative: narrative clauses, free clauses, restricted clauses, and coordinate clauses. Narrative clauses are allowable only where they fall within the story, as in C above. Free clauses, are not necessary to the proceeding action and may be moved to any position in the temporal line of the verbal narration. Event A, above, functions as a free clause. Restricted clauses are limited free clauses; they may be placed in a range of positions within the story, but not just anywhere. Coordinate clauses are a collection of

events that are, as a group, anchored in their position in the narrative, but can be reordered amongst themselves without changing the meaning of the story (Labov & Waletzky, [1966] 1997, pp. 15-17).

After labeling and charting each element in the narration along a temporal line, Labov’s process results in a graph of each story, presented as a collection of free, restricted, coordinate, and narrative clauses. For clarity, I developed my own style of chart, as shown on the following page. The order of verbalized events is represented by a diagonal line descending from the beginning of the narrative at utterance 1 to the end of the narrative at utterance 50. The level of temporal freedom or restriction of a given element is demonstrated by its vertical range. Event 11, for example, would be equally appropriate stated in its place or at any time after it in the narration. It is a restricted clause. Event 17, however, is a narrative clause; it is only allowable at that point in the story line. Free clauses are those with a full temporal range, presented in the chart as a full vertical range, as in the case of event 3. Coordinate clauses form boxlike groups when translated to a graph form, as in the case of events 33 and 34. This method of organization allows me to visually depict each folktale as a graph, and to more easily divide the narrative into its constituent parts.



Labov describes such parts of the narrative as orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda, terms which I will use in this paper according to his definitions. To paraphrase, the orientation of the narrative sets the scene for the action and gives the audience needed information about who’s who and what’s

what, also clarifying obscure cultural details, as will be demonstrated later. The complication is the action of the story, leading up to the evaluation, which Labov describes as a moment of reflection or an observation made by the narrator to justify the telling of the story. This is a complicated idea which will be touched on later, as I am not sure an evaluation section is as necessary to a successful narrative as Labov suggests. The resolution, then, is the closing action, usually following the evaluation, and the coda is an optional statement at the end that brings the story and the audience back to the present, so to speak (Labov & Waletzky, [1966] 1997).

### **Data Selection**

Thus have I applied Labov's method to the folktales I have selected as a preliminary sample from Randolph's collections. In choosing tales to analyze, I have selected for genre. These stories are from different storytellers throughout the Ozark region, though most are focused around or just north of the Missouri border, and east of Springfield, Missouri. This western part of the Ozarks, away from the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, was almost exclusively settled by the Scotch-Irish mentioned before. Effort has been made to include folktales from a variety of storytellers, and no two stories within one subgenre are from the same narrator. All of these stories were collected between 1921 and 1951, though most of them date from the turn of the century.

I have selected fifteen stories as a preliminary sample for the complete process of charting and analysis. I divided these fifteen into three subgenres of five folktales each. The first subgenre, which I call "home stories," contains events that are related as if true, or possibly true. The second subgenre, "granny stories," all touch on the supernatural. Contained within this group are stories with the granny figure, which may be portrayed in folktales as a witch, wisewoman, or occasionally a crackpot, and also stories involving sorcery and ghosts. The third and final subgenre I have called "king stories." These are presented in a fashion very much reminiscent of fairytales, and involve kings, queens, giants, and other figures that would not have existed in Ozark society.

### **Results**

I proceeded in my analysis by first applying my adapted version of Labov's process as described above so that I had fifteen charts, as seen in Figure 1, above. By analyzing and comparing each chart in its subgenre and in the group of Ozark folktales as a whole, I discovered patterns in the narratives that I believe add to the knowledge pool and help to describe the Ozark folktale genre.

### Orientation

As shown in Figure 1 and the following three folktales, set side by side for comparison below, the orientation sections of folktales in each of the three subgenres are made up primarily of free or very broad restricted clauses. These clauses do not always describe an action being taken, but serve primarily to place the story in a setting. Where restrictions occur, this is often due to very early action that, sets the stage for the later

primary complication, or statements about the state of things early on in the story that will be changed later. For example, in Figure 3, below, we find the following opening lines to “Bang Away, My Lulu!”:

- D One time there was a young fellow married a fine woman,
  - E (but) he would not stay home of a night.
  - F He was always sneaking off to see a no-good hussy named Lulu, that he had went with before.
- (Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 55, c.f. App. B)

Events E and F become inapplicable as the story progresses, but D remains relevant throughout; at no point does the wife stop being an upstanding woman, though she fixes her adulterous husband. Likewise, element 3 in Figure 2 simply states that a newly widowed father has “a passel of children” to care for (Randolph, 1952, p. 50), which will affect his later decisions.

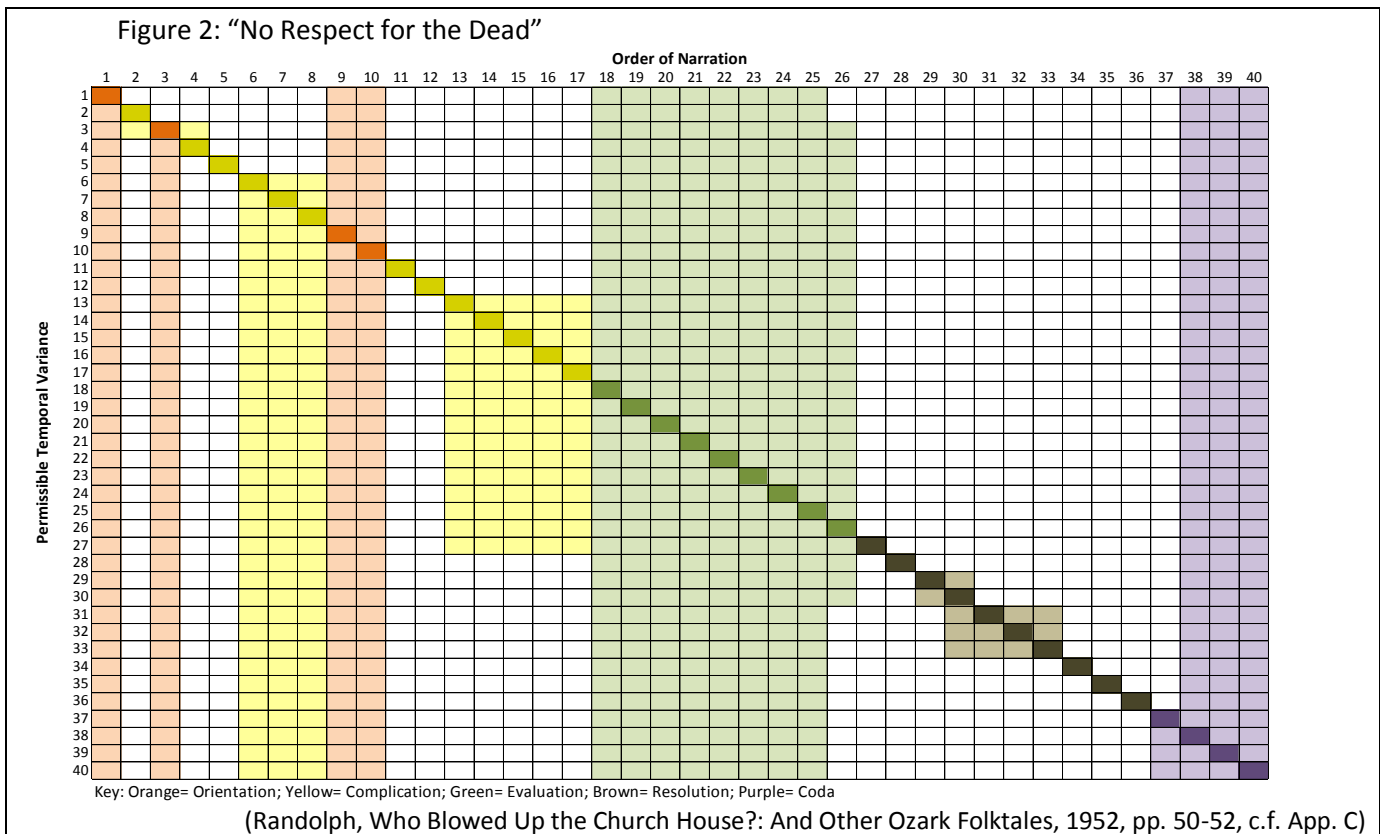
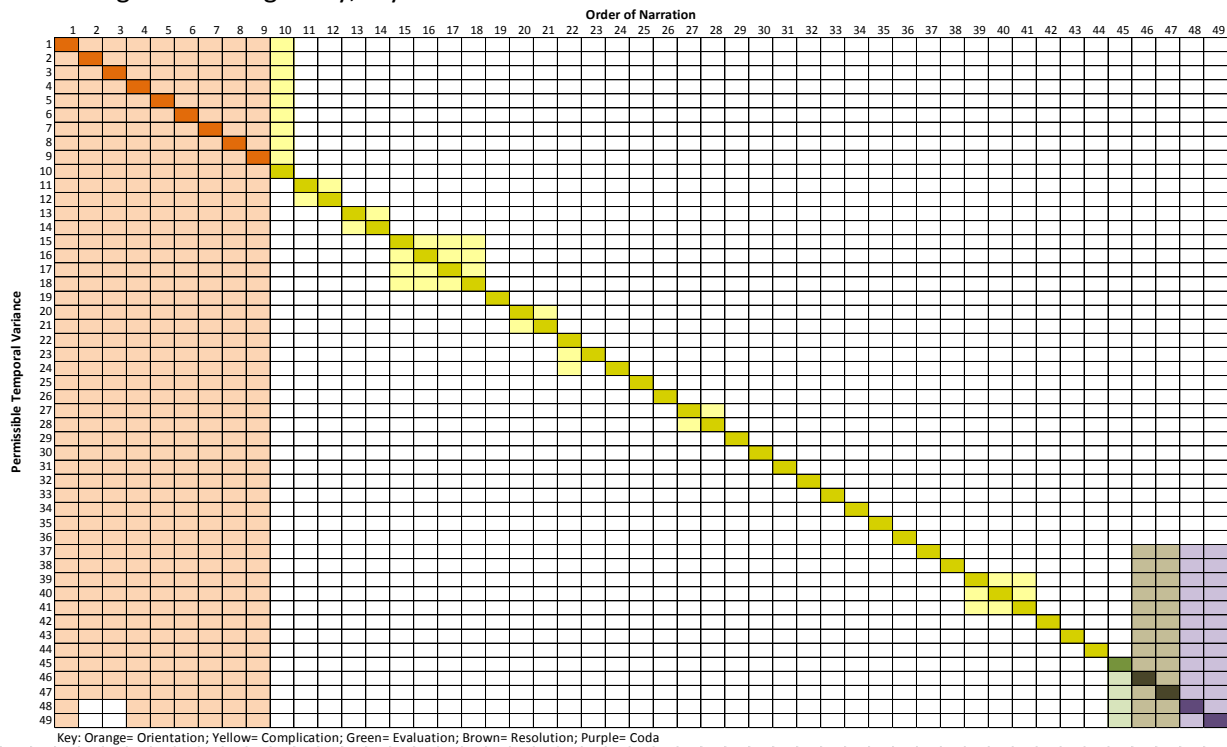
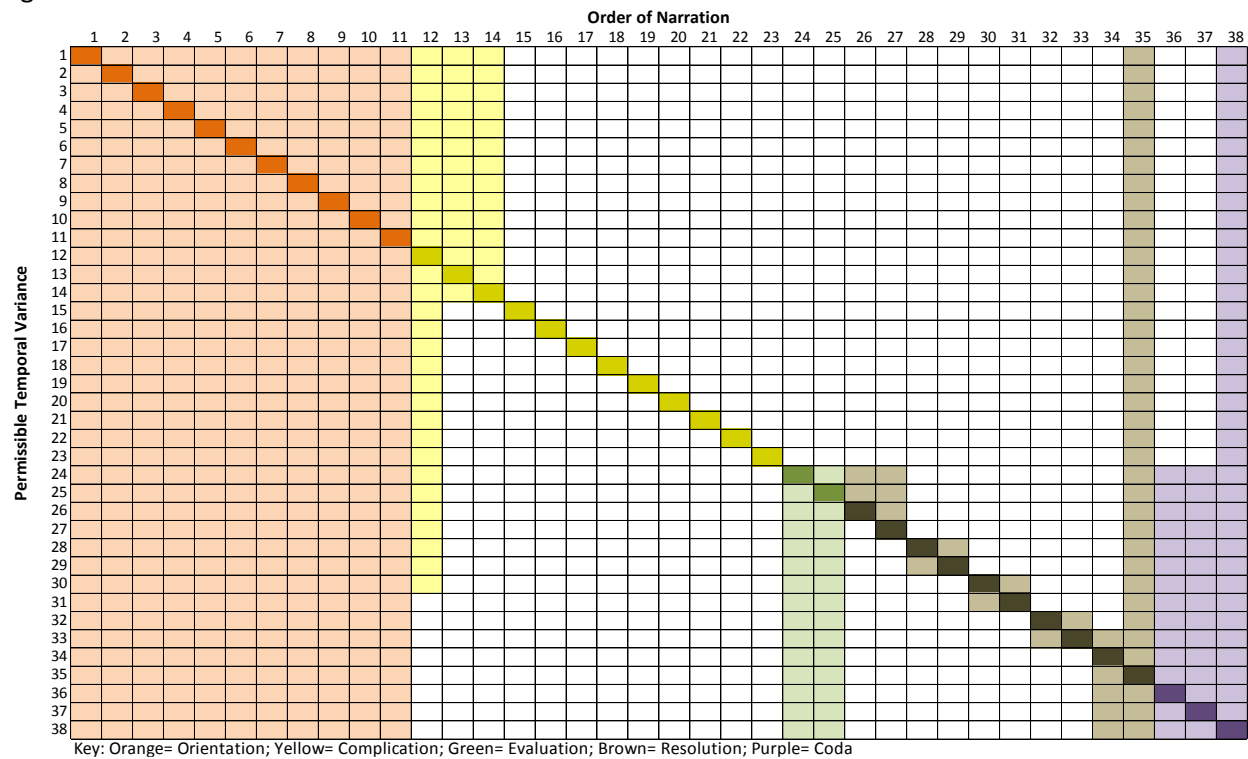


Figure 3: "Bang Away, My Lulu!"



(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 55-58, c.f. App. C)

Figure 4: "The Queen's White Glove"



(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 101-102, c.f. App. C)

The above folktales, one home story, one granny story, and one king story, also demonstrate a few patterns I found consistently in my preliminary samples. First, there is a longer orientation section in Figure 4, the king story. This was consistent as an overall trend. Additionally, I noted that the orientation in the king stories typically served to give the backstory necessary to understand the main action, whereas the same section in 4 out of 5 home stories and 4 out of 5 granny stories contained no backstory at all. The exceptions are stories specifically about reprisal for a certain action, so the offense is first briefly recounted. There is no placement that occurs in the orientation section of the king stories; perhaps there is no need to contextualize what, to the audience, is obviously a fairy tale. However, a common element in all of the home stories and in two granny stories were statements like “nice little cornpatch under rail,” (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 97, c.f. App. A) “right beside our new highway,” (Randolph, 1957, pp. 86, c.f. App. A) and “up on Sugar Creek,” (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 158, c.f. App. A) that give the audience some idea of a physical setting. I believe such settings give the story credence, as they are familiar enough to suggest that the story might have really happened nearby and still vague enough to allow for the flexibility of fiction.

In some instances, as in Figure 2 above, orientation occurs later in the story. This appears in two home stories and in three granny stories. In one case, two free clauses give additional information about the weather. In most cases, though, the language has an informative tone, and the subject matter relates to customs or cultural artifacts. For example, note this section of late-added orientation from “The Dumb-Bull,” one of the home stories:

G        The noise a dumb-bull makes ain’t very loud, but it sounds terrible deep and dangerous.

H        You can hear it a mile off easy, if the wind is right. (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 43, c.f. App. B)

The narrator is describing an instrument made out of a hollow log and rawhide that, as Randolph and Wilson point out in their glossary of Ozark speech, was common entertainment at revelries in the Ozarks (Randolph & Wilson, 1953, p. 242). It is likely, in my opinion, that this kind of information is added to folktales for the sake of the field researcher and that it would go without saying in the native setting.

Anecdotally, I also noticed that in most cases, weather is not mentioned in these sample stories. There are three exceptions in which storms are mentioned. In “Little Thumb and the Giant,” a “big rain” is the excuse for a character in the story to stay overnight at a giant’s house (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 53, c.f. App. A). Twice, however, in both of the granny stories involving ghostly apparitions, the narrator alludes to the classic dark and stormy night, namely, “A Pretty Girl in the Road” (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 79, c.f. App. A) and “The Dumb Supper” (Randolph, 1952, pp. 22, App. A). Interestingly, the climate and seasonal cycle of the Ozarks can result in gale-force winds and sudden severe thunderstorms (Rafferty, 2001, p. 24 & 28).

### Complication & Resolution

As indicated by Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 above, most of the complicating action is very direct and step-by-step, consisting mostly of narrative and coordinate clauses. Figure 2 presents an exception to the general rule in this case with its abundance of restricted clauses, but the trend was noticeable throughout my data as a whole (c.f. App. C). The timeline is straightforward, coordinating with the typical Western method of perceiving time as a line proceeding from start to finish. Such a representation of time is not universal. Examples in the Amondawan tribal culture in Amazonia (Sinha, Sinha, Zinken, & Sampaio, 2011) and many American Indian groups, like the Tewa group of the Pueblo Indians (Kidwell & Velie, 2005) provide alternative perspectives of time in narrative and art. It makes sense that folktales, which traditionally endure as an oral art form, would reflect cultural notions of time.

To continue, the language of these Ozark folktales is also very simple and direct. The stories are driven by the actions of the characters, with little time spent on description or details. King stories tend as a group to be longer than either of the other two subgenres, and the bulk of the extra length seems to be in the orientation section.

This style of story continues in the resolution portion of the narrative, which is typically, though not universally, much shorter than the complication. As expected, the language generally has the tone of winding down. In three of the fifteen sample folktales the story cuts off with a punch line ending. Two of these are the ghost stories mentioned previously. No doubt an abrupt ending is more dramatic. The third exception, the king story "Fill, Bowl, Fill" (Randolph, 1952, pp. 17-19, c.f. App. A), has a resolution and ending very much evocative of a long joke. In the case of this particular folktale, there are actually two versions. One is the version used in this study, which reads very much like any other folktale, except for the sudden ending; the other, in Randolph's collection of more taboo folktales, *Pissing in the Snow and Other Ozark Folktales* (1986), is much more explicit. This indicates to me that this story actually functions more like a bawdy joke, tamed down for more modest audiences.

### Evaluation

In Labov's opinion, a narrative without an evaluation section is not "a complete narrative... Such a narrative lacks significance; it has no point" ([1966] 1997, p. 28). Klein also states that one consistent element of narrative is "implicit or explicit evidence of the narrator's preconceptions and aims" (2001, p. 162). The function of the evaluation section is to justify the narrative to the audience, and in Labov's model everything following the evaluation section is considered the resolution. In the case of folktales that, we may assume from their humorous content, serve primarily to entertain or while away the hours, the evaluation section typically draws attention to the absurdity of the situation or event being recounted. This may be through direct or indirect

methods. For example, consider the following evaluative clauses from the sample folktales discussed here.

Words or phrases that serve the evaluative function have been underlined for clarity:

- I        It didn't seem hardly decent, when a man's wife has been burnt to death,  
 J        (so) he just stood there with his mouth open. (Randolph, 1957, pp. 73, c.f. App. B)  
 K        It was on a Wednesday the Judge told Mis' Culpepper all this,  
 L        (and) Saturday morning here come Gram with a little bundle of sassafras roots.  
           (Randolph, 1952, pp. 104-105, c.f. App. B)  
 M        They kept it up till plumb dusk, (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 44, c.f. App. B)

In the case of events I and J, which are both from "Gabe Says it Ain't So Bad," the narrator enters the story directly and comments on the state of affairs within the story. This definitely draws attention to the uniqueness of the situation and therefore qualifies the tale as worthy of being told for entertainment. The evaluative elements in K and L together are a bit more subtle. In form, they are temporal markers. But the effort made by the narrator to point out the closeness of the two events serves, within the story, to link them. Gram doesn't come back until Mis' Culpepper learns her lesson, and then she comes back pretty quick. This juxtaposition highlights the humor of the situation for the audience. Element M is less clear, and here we begin to see the difficulty in expecting, as Labov does, some verbalized form of justification in narratives.

The use of the adjective "plumb" in M does emphasize how long the event being related took place, and as a lexical marker it serves some evaluative function. However, I think it's just as likely that this adjective is simply meant to add intensity, fit with the cadence and rhythm of the narrator's speech, or may just represent the narrator relating to his characters. Perhaps M serves some evaluative function here, but the case for it seems weak. And, more importantly if we are trying to stick to Labov's perspective of the evaluative section, cutting this clause from the story would not result in an incomplete or pointless narrative. In contrast, cutting elements I and J or K and L would cut something valuable from the story, diminishing the humorous point if not killing it outright.

Furthermore, besides weak cases like M above, there are three folktales, even within my limited preliminary sample, that appear to have no evaluation section at all, though there is a detectable switch from complication to resolution. Take, for example, the following section from "Little Thumb and the Giant":

- N        "Well, by God!" says the giant, "if you can do it, so can I!"  
 O        And with that he grabbed the knife  
 P        (and) cut himself wide open.  
 Q        So then the old giant begun to bleed like a stuck pig,  
 R        (and) pretty soon he fell down dead. (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 55, c.f. App. B)

In this case, the giant's action follows a battle of wits that, as we see, ends badly for him. There is a break in the action that signifies the beginning of the resolution somewhere between N and O, but I can find no verbalized evaluative markers.

I see two possibilities to explain this. First, I suggest that, in the case of folktales, evaluation is not always necessary. If these are established and well-known stories among the folk, perhaps any need for justification is past. Another option relates to the difficulties of collecting folktales in the first place. Klein states that one element narratives tend to have is "permission to speak" (2001, p. 162). In a researcher-informant setting, however, this preface to a folktale might go unrecorded or even unstated because it is irrelevant. I think the evaluation could suffer the same effect. After all, if a field researcher asks you for some local folktales, why should you feel the need to justify those tales to him or her? This is the kind of dilemma that Dundes seeks to deal with when he discusses the importance of context in folklore studies (1980). I imagine it is a dilemma common to all field researchers seeking the purest form of local custom or lore.

#### Coda

The coda takes an interesting form in my preliminary sampling of Ozark folktales. It is present in every story except for the three "punch line" stories discussed above. Perhaps stories that end so abruptly traditionally require no closing rhetoric to bring the audience back to the present.

In the five home stories, the coda often takes the form of a comment on the truth of the story. For example, in "The Bull Was Found Guilty" we see that "Some of the old-timers says the whole thing is a joke, and it never really happened at all," (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 98, c.f. App. A) and in "A Private Room" we are told that "Most people thought it was just a made-up tale... But that was because they hadn't ever been up on Greasy Creek. The home folks didn't see nothing unreasonable about it." (Randolph, 1957, pp. 87, c.f. App. A) In every case, the codas of the home stories have some sort of verification function, either in a positive or negative fashion. This is unique to home stories, which are also unique in their plausibility. Another common element of codas in home stories is a quick description of how the story has spread or who believes it. Altogether, the codas are longest in the home stories, an expected result of spending multiple clauses in verification.

In the granny stories in my sample selection, there are no efforts made at verification within the narration, though stories may still be presented as true. This is demonstrated in the coda for "It Sure Won't Do No Harm," which finishes "they do say that Gram French never spoke to Doc Holton as long as she lived." (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 159, c.f. App. A) In this case, "they" is an ambiguous term, not a reputable source like the old-timers or home folks of the previous two examples. It should be noted that the two ghost stories also fall within the granny story subgenre, so only 3 out of 5 of this group of folktales have codas. This is not enough, in my opinion, to make any solid predictions about codas in other granny stories.

Finally, there is a very traditional coda that occurs 3 out of 5 times in my selection of king stories. “And they lived happily ever after,” is a pleasant closing to many well-known fairytales in America, and its function is the same in the Ozark folktales in which it occurs. Although this finding suffers from the same lack of additional data that affects the granny stories, I imagine that similar Ozark folktales would be likely to have the same ending because of how prevalent this coda is in fairytales in Western culture. This is a structured, traditional ending for what are the most formally structured, easily categorized stories in my sample selection. As to the two king stories that do not have this coda, the first is “Fill, Bowl, Fill,” (Randolph, 1952, pp. 17-19, c.f. App. A) which has already been discussed, and which ends with a punch line much like a joke. The second king story that does not follow the regular pattern is called “Little Thumb and the Giant.” (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 53-55, c.f. App. A) Events N through R, listed in the previous section of this paper, are the beginning of the ending for this folktale, which ends with a coda more similar to those of the granny stories than any other, as seen below:

S        And from that time on Little Thumb just went to the giant’s house whenever he felt like  
          it,

T        (and) done whatever he wanted to. (Randolph, [1955] 1993, pp. 55, c.f. App. B)

I do not know why the narrator chose to add this postscript to the main action of the narrative instead of the more traditional fairytale ending. Perhaps the only character who really lived happily ever after was Little Thumb. The end seems to me to allude to some intimate activities executed by Little Thumb and the giant’s wife who, as stated before in the story, “he liked.” (Randolph, [1955] 1993, p. 53)

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are some traits clearly evident in my preliminary sample of texts. Orientations differ depending on whether the folktale is meant to be set in plausible, knowable reality or the fantasy world of fairytales. Orientation is fairly brief except in the case of the king stories, where a set-up of some sort is required for the main action. The complicating action of the folktales is consistently straightforward and plot-driven. Culture plays a central role in the story, to the point that cultural artifacts must be explained if the audience is not familiar with them. There may or may not be an evident section of evaluation within the narrative, and the resolution is typically brief, delivered in much the same tone as the complication. Codas are generally cheerful and, depending on the subgenre, may involve a good amount of verification. In king stories, they may also follow the classic “happily ever after” model. Altogether, the folktales are often humorous and, in my opinion, universally entertaining.

Overall, I feel that Labov’s method is most useful when dealing with stories with a directly linear temporal structure and simple syntax. It worked well for the personal narratives he focused on, and for most of the folktales I analyzed, which had simple timelines and uncomplicated language. In longer, more complex

narratives, however, I felt that the process grew a bit fussy, as it became difficult to differentiate between independent events and the resulting expansive graphs were more challenging to examine. Nonetheless, the visual depiction that resulted from using his method was very useful in comparing folktales. I would be interested to see what patterns remain consistent and what new patterns may emerge with a larger sample size. With more data, one may even divide granny stories into two subgenres: one about the granny figure, and one about ghosts and apparitions. Additionally, further study is needed to fully understand the function of evaluation within Ozark folktales. However, by experimenting with different methods in analyzing folklore, my hope is that we can get more out of the folklore collections we have. As Brunvand writes: "We may expect strong efforts to complete unfinished business." (1976, p. 31)

## Appendix A: Sample Folktales

### A.1 Home Stories

#### **The Bull Was Found Guilty**

One time there was farmer had a nice little cornpatch under rail, and there was a bull come along and ruined it. That bull was the breachiest critter that ever lived, and he could bust through a stake-an'-rider fence like a mess of spider webs. When the farmer seen the shape his corn was in, he told the Justice of the Peace. The constable went after the man that owned the bull, but the man was not home. So the constable arrested the breachy bull, and he come a-leading the critter into the settlement.

There was some jackleg lawyers around town, and they says it ain't legal to try a bull no matter what he done. But the Squire didn't pay no attention, and they had the trial under a big oak tree. A big crowd come to see it, and some of the boys was pretty drunk. The bull bellered and pawed up dust, so the constable couldn't keep no order. The lawyers argued pretty near all day. One lawyer says the Squire is the damndest fool he ever seen, but they fined him two dollars for contempt of court. Finally the Squire decided the bull is guilty of trespass and destroying valuable property, so the critter must pay twenty-five dollars and costs.

The constable says the bull ain't got no money, and what will we do now? The Squire thought about it awhile, and then he says, "Butcher the varmint, an' sell the meat!" So that's what they done. It wasn't no time till people was building fires and cooking beef all over the place. Everybody got their chin greasy, but the Squire took the hide and tallow. The folks all sung songs and chawed fat and guggled whiskey out of the same jug. Before sundown the Squire and the lawyers was drunk as anybody. The whole lot of 'em was a-dancing round the fire and yelling like Indians.

Next morning everybody seen they had made a fool out of theirsself, and the least said the soonest mended. Some of the old-timers says the whole thing is a joke, and it never really happened at all. And even if something peculiar did happen, there ain't no way to find out who was to blame. So then some of the boys took up a collection for the fellow that owned the bull, and never said no more about it.

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 97-98)

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#### **The Dumb Bull**

One time there was a fellow lived on a little farm away up the river. He kept talking how the woods was full of panthers and catamounts. He says he seen their tracks all over the place and heard them squalling in the pineries every night. So finally some regular hunters took their dogs and went out to see about it. They camped on a gravel-bar three nights, and didn't hear nothing but hoot owls. The truth is that wolves is pretty common

yet, and so is foxes, and maybe a bobcat comes through the holler once in a while. But there ain't been no panthers in that country for twenty years.

But this here scary fellow kept right on talking about panther tracks. The old hunters just laughed, and they got to calling him "Panther Pete." But the folks up that way are mostly damn fools, and pretty soon everybody for miles around was hollering about panthers, and some people was scared to step out of their own house after sundown. Some of the town boys got together one day and made a dumb-bull. They just took a barrel and stretched rawhide over one end, like a drum. Then they cut a hole in the rawhide and fixed a leather string with rosin on it, to pull through the hole. The noise a dumb-bull makes ain't very loud, but it sounds terrible deep and dangerous. You can hear it a mile off easy, if the wind is right.

They hauled the dumb-bull out there in a wagon, and a couple of boys carried it up on a hill, just above Panther Pete's house. They could see him out in the field, and his wife and another woman was hoeing the garden. There was three or four children a-playing round. When the boys pulled the string on that there dumb-bull, Pete jumped about six foot high and looked all round like a pop-eyed rabbit. Then he took out for the house, but the womenfolks had done gathered up the kids and got there ahead of him. They barred the door, too. The fellow hollered and cussed and pounded, but them women was so scared of panthers they wouldn't let him in. Just when he was about to bust the door down, the boys turned the old dumb-bull loose again. Next thing they knowed Panther Pete scrambled up onto the roof, and he was hollering down the chimney for Lucy to fetch him the gun.

After he hollered himself plumb out of breath, Pete crawled down to the edge of the roof, and one of the women opened the door just a crack. Maybe she figured on letting her man into the house, or else she was aiming to pass the gun up to him. But them fool boys pulled the string again, and the old dumb-bull roared louder than ever. The door slammed shut quick as a wink, and Pete scampered up onto the ridgepole again. The boys laid low for awhile, but every time Pete started to come down the old dumb-bull would let out a whoop, and he'd go a-scuttlin' back up to the peak of the roof. They kept it up till plumb dusk, and then they carried the dumb-bull back to town. The last they seen of Panther Pete he was still setting on top of his house, a-cussing the womenfolks because they don't come out and fight like a man.

Ever since that day, Pete carries a gun all the time, and he can't be talked out of it, neither. Some of the folks tried to tell him about the dumb-bull joke, but Pete just laughed in their face. And he says you cain't fool me about the things, because I have studied the varmints from childhood up, and I know a panther's holler when I hear one. It sure don't sound like no boys fooling with rawhide in a rain-barrel, he says.

Just a few years back the float-trip people seen him out there a-plowing, with a long six-shooter hanging down and his belt full of big brass cartridges. The guides told the tourists how the feud had broke out again, and

them farmers was killing each other every Saturday, and all kinds of foolishness. But the home folks knowed it was just old Pete, fixing to protect his family from them man-eating panthers up in the pineries.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 42-44)

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### **Gabe Says it Ain't So Bad**

One time a fellow named Wes Adams met up with old Gabe Ledbetter in the road, and they hadn't saw each other for a long time. So they shook hands, and Wes says, "How are you making out these days?" Gabe looked mighty solemn. "I'm a-living on Hockey Mountain," says he, "and pretty far up, at that. I got married a couple of years back."

Wes Adams thought any woman must be out of their head to marry old Gabe Ledbetter, but the idea tickled him anyhow, so he says, "That's good."

"It ain't so good as you might think," Gabe says. "My wife come of a no-account family, and she brought me a lot of grief."

"Well, that's bad," says Wes Adams.

"It ain't so bad as you might think," Gabe says, "because she was pretty well fixed. I made her give me seven hundred dollars before we got married."

"Well, that's good," says Wes.

"It ain't so good as you might think," Gabe says, "because I put the money in sheep, and the goddam wolves eat 'em up."

"Well, that's bad," says Wes Adams.

"It ain't so bad as you might think," Gabe says, "because I killed forty-three of them wolves, and there's a thirty-dollar bounty on wolf scalps now."

"Well, that's good," says Wes Adams.

"It ain't so good as you might think," Gabe says, "because the house caught fire while I was in town to get the bounty, and burnt plumb to the ground."

"Well, that's bad," says Wes Adams.

"It ain't so bad as you might think," Gabe says, "because my wife was in the house, and there ain't nothing of left of her but a tubful of ashes and a few black bones."

Wes Adams started to say "Well, that's good," but he stopped himself. It didn't seem hardly decent, when a man's wife has been burnt to death, so he just stood there with his mouth open.

"She had some life insurance, too," says Gabe, "and the house wasn't worth much, anyhow. It ain't so bad as you might think," he says. So then Gabe Ledbetter just waved his hand, and walked on down the road.

The way Wes tells it, his head was spinning round like a top by that time, and he couldn't think of nothing more to say.

Gabe Ledbetter always looked solemn as a judge, but he couldn't help cracking jokes like that. The facts of the matter is, Gabe hadn't never been married at all. He never kept no sheep, and if he ever killed a wolf the neighbors never heard tell of it. And his house didn't burn down, neither. The truth is, he never did have no house.

(Randolph, *The Talking Turtle: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1957, pp. 72-73)

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### **No Respect for the Dead**

One time there was an old man lived way up the creek, and all of a sudden his wife died. He had a passel of children to be took care of, and he didn't fool away no time a-courting. Before the wagon tracks was out of the yard, he married a widow woman that lived down the road a piece. Some say he married her just one day after his wife's funeral. Most of the neighbors thought the old man ought to have waited a week or two, just for the looks of the thing. But folks didn't blame him much, because they all knowed he had to get somebody to see after them children.

People was hell on shivarees in them days, and if a fresh-married couple wasn't shivareed it meant that they didn't have no standing in the community, and was kind of looked down on. Everybody wanted to do right by this here family, so they all come over to the house right after dark. Some was ringing bells, and some was shooting off guns, and some was just hollering loud as they could. One fellow had brought an old circle saw, and he was hammering on it with a cold chisel.

Everybody knows that when folks are being shivareed, they are supposed to set up something for the crowd. Mostly they invite the people into the house and feed them cake or pie or whatever they've got. Lots of new-married couples have chicken and fixings cooked up, and fine table all set for the shivaree party. And sometimes the husband has got a jug of corn-squeezings hid somewhere outside, where the menfolks can take a little snort, just for luck. And maybe there is a fiddler in the crowd, so they can have a regular square dance right then and there. Anyhow, the least a couple can do is to pass out candy and cigars, or something like that.

This old fellow was pretty well-to-do, but he was terrible close with his money. And he was not in no mood for jollification anyhow, because of one thing and another. Pretty soon he come out on the porch in his nightshirt, looking mighty sour. "What's the matter with you folks?" says he. "Ain't you got no respect for the dead?"

Well sir, that shivaree party was so set back, they didn't know what to do. You could have heard a pin drop. Finally they took their guns and cow bells and walked out of the old man's yard. The fellow that fetched

the circle saw just left it a-laying there and shuffled on after the other folks with his mouth open and the cold chisel still in his hand. There wasn't a word spoke till they got away down the road. Then somebody begun to giggle, and minute later they was all laughing like fools. Some folks say you could hear them a-whooping and a-hollering clear over to the new highway.

It all happened a long time ago, but there's still a few old-timers around here that ain't forgot that shivaree. And they will bust out laughing to this day, when something happens to put them in mind of it.

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 50-52)

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### **A Private Room**

One time there was a man from Kansas City come down here, and built him a big hotel right beside our new highway. It was kind of a novelty in this part of the country. Every little town around here had two or three houses where they rented rooms and took in boarders, but the folks didn't know much about regular hotels. The Kansas City man done pretty good with the tourists in the summer time, and there was a few drummers come every week. But mighty few of the home folks ever set foot in the big hotel.

Sometimes a fresh married couple would go there, if the boy had money and wanted to show off. They used to tell about a young fellow that lived up on Greasy Creek, and he married one of the McCanse girls. Soon as the knot was tied they walked out of the courthouse and went to the big hotel. When they got up to the desk the boy says: "Mister, have you got any private rooms here?" The hotel man told him yes, sir. "Well," says the young fellow, "we want the best room you've got. I don't care what it costs, so long as it's private." The hotel man called the bellboy, but they wouldn't ride in the elevator, and the girl wouldn't let go of her satchel. The bellhop walked them upstairs, turned on the lights, and brought a pitcher of ice water.

Pretty soon the boy from Greasy Creek come back downstairs, and he was pretty mad. "Look here," he says, "didn't I tell you we wanted a private room?" The hotel man just gawked at him. "That's what I gave you, and it's the best room in the house," says he. "Hell's fire, it ain't private!" the boy hollered. "Why, there's a toilet up there! Folks will be running in and out all night!"

The hotel man was about to bust out laughing, but it's lucky he never done it. That Greasy Creek boy thought he was being took advantage of, and he wasn't in no mood for jokes. If anybody had laughed right then, there might have been bad trouble. So the hotel man went upstairs himself, and showed the boy how things was. "The whole thing is private, bathroom and all," says he. And then he showed the young folks how to lock the outside door, so nobody could get in. Everything was all right after that, and no more complaints from the honeymooners.

The bellhop told a couple of drummers, and the story got around. Most people thought it was just a made-up tale, like the one about the traveling salesman and the farmer's daughter. But that was because they hadn't ever been up on Greasy Creek. The home folks didn't see nothing unreasonable about it.

(Randolph, *The Talking Turtle: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1957, pp. 86-87)

## A.2 Granny Stories

### **Bang Away, My Lulu!**

One time there was a young fellow married a fine woman, but he would not stay home of a night. He was always sneaking off to see a no-good hussy named Lulu, that he had went with before. His wife raised hell about it, but she would not leave him because she didn't believe in no divorce. Also, she did not like to live at home with her folks, and there wasn't no other place for her to go. Another thing was, she didn't want people to think that some cheap floozy has took a man off'n her. And maybe she was kind of crazy about the young fellow, besides.

So finally she went and told her Aunt Sophie. The old woman says there is ways to take care of things like that, but it is kind of spooky and dangerous. She says it would be better just to let your fool husband go, as he ain't no good anyhow. But that girl says all she wants is to keep her man away from Lulu. "I don't want to kill nobody," she says, "but I will do anything short of a killin', no matter if it is spooky or not."

Aunt Sophie took chalk and drawed a big ring on the floor, and she killed a black chicken, and fixed up some other things that had to be done. And she got a boy to go in the night and steal one of Lulu's petticoats. Aunt Sophie tied the petticoat onto a pillow. Then her and the young fellow's wife took turns a-pounding it with a club. The girl thought it was all foolishness, but Aunt Sophie made her keep right on a-pounding the pillow to the tune of "Bang Away, My Lulu."

When the young fellow got to Lulu's house she was laying on the bed. She says, "That goddam wife of yours come here with some old woman, an' they throwed me down an' beat me something terrible." The fellow says, "Nonsense!" but Lulu pulled up her clothes and showed him how she is plumb black-and-blue. So the young fellow went home and says, "What do you mean, going around beating people with clubs? I never heard of such a thing," he says, "and you will disgrace the whole family!" And then his wife says, "It must be you are going crazy, because I have not been out of this house all day, except over to Aunt Sophie's." The young fellow went over to see Aunt Sophie, and she told him the same thing.

Next morning Aunt Sophie fetched the petticoat over and tied it onto a pillow. Then her and the young fellow's wife took turns a-pounding it and singing "Bang Away, My Lulu." When the young fellow come home he says, "Well, poor Lulu is beat pretty near to death, with blood running down her legs, and I hope you are

satisfied." And his wife says, "I have not set foot out of this house all day, and Aunt Sophie has been right here with me." The young fellow went and asked the neighbors, and they all told him it was the God's truth.

Next day Aunt Sophie and the young fellow's wife beat the petticoat again, and clear over in the other end of town Lulu raised such a holler that somebody called the sheriff. When he got there Lulu was a-prancing around yelling that two women was whipping her, but the sheriff could see that she was all alone in the house. So he figured Lulu must be crazy drunk or else taking some kind of dope, and he locked her up in the jailhouse. A lawyer made the sheriff turn her loose that night. Lulu got right on the train and went to St. Louis. She didn't come back, neither.

The young fellow never did find out just what happened, but it kind of scared him. He stayed pretty close to home after that, and him and his wife got along all right.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 55-58)

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### **The Dumb Supper**

One time the old folks went to town and left three girls alone in the house, and the girls set a dumb supper to see who they was going to marry. To set a dumb supper you got to do everything backwards and not make no noise. So the girls never said a word while they baked three little pones of bread, and set three plates on the table, and drew up three chairs. Still walking backwards, they opened the door and both windows, and then all three of them set down to wait for the change of the hour.

It was a plumb dark night, and the wind was a-rising. Just at midnight a regular gale tore through the house and blowed out the light. A minute later there come a flash of lightning, and the girls all seen a tall man standing by the table. The least girl she hollered "Oh my God!" and of course that broke the spell. They got the door and windows shut, and lit the lamp, but the stranger was gone.

The girls was all talking at once now, but nobody could tell much about the stranger except that he was tall, with a long coat, and he wore cowboy boots outside his pants. All of a sudden, the oldest girl pointed to her place at the table. The place was still there with the little pone on it, and the fork and spoon was there, but the knife was gone. There couldn't be no mistake about that knife, because it wasn't a common case-knife like the others. It was a sharp steel knife that Pappy had the blacksmith make out of a file, with a fine deerhorn handle riveted on.

The old man missed his knife next morning, so the girls had to tell about the dumb supper. Pappy just grumbled about the knife, but the old woman give the girls hell. She says dumb suppers ain't Christian, and no better than prayers to the Devil. She says all conjuring is wicked and terrible dangerous besides, and she made the girls promise they would never do nothing like that again.

By and by the oldest girl she married a man who was on the public works and made pretty good money, so they moved in to town. Then she got to working in a boarding house and going to dances at night. The next thing anybody knowed, she left her husband and run off with a fellow from the Indian Territory. He was a big tall fellow, and he wore cowboy boots outside his pants. Finally him and her got to fighting in a hotel somewheres, and the hotel people found her laying dead, with a knife stuck in her belly. It was a homemade knife with a deerhorn handle, the sheriff said. Looked like some blacksmith made it out of a old file.

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 22-23)

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### **It Sure Won't Do No Harm**

One time there was some people up on Sugar Creek had a mighty sick young-un. Her throat was stopped up pretty bad, and she looked feverish, so the folks sent after Doc Holton. When Doc got there he seen old Gram French was ahead of him, but he never let on.

Them granny-women can smell sickness ten mile off, and old Gram French always run over and took charge before the doctor come. And then when Doc got there he'd find the patient a-puking up slippery-elm bark, or maybe all gaumed up with cow-dung poultice. Doc Holton says Gram French has killed more people than the James boys, but what could he do about it? Gram hated Doc worse'n a rattlesnake, but she always acted nice as pie when he was around. She'd just grin at him and say, "Well, Doctor, these home remedies of mine may not do no good, but they sure won't do no harm."

Mostly Doc never said much, but this time he'd been up all night, and wasn't feeling well nohow. When he found a dirty stinking rag tied round the girl's neck it made him pretty mad. "What the hell's this?" says he. Gram just grinned at him, same as always. "Just a old dirty sock, Doctor. The best thing I ever seen for throat sickness. It might not do no good, maybe, but it sure won't do no harm."

Doc didn't return no answer, and he never paid no more attention to Gram till the sick girl was took care of, and he seen she was going to be all right.

Pretty soon Gram spoke up again. "I been havin' a misery in my stomach lately, an' catnip tea don't seem to take hold like it used to. What do you recommend for such as that, Doctor?"

Doc looked at Gram's tongue and asked her a few questions, and then he says for the girl's mother to fetch him a good big meat-rind, with plenty of fat on it. "My goodness, Doctor," says Gram, "I never heard tell of usin' a meat-rind for stomach trouble in all my sixty years of nursin' the sick!"

When the woman come back with the meat-rind, Doc passed it over to Gram. "Tie this on your old rump," says he, "and leave it there till it stinks as bad as this dirty sock. It may not do no good," he says, "but it sure won't do you no harm."

The old granny just set there plumb flabbergasted, and Doc threw the dirty sock in the fire, a-washing his hands careful with stuff out of a bottle. He looked mighty pleased about something. But they do say that Gram French never spoke another word to Doc Holton as long as she lived.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 158-159)

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### **A Pretty Girl in the Road**

One time there was a fellow a-riding along and it was getting dark and coming on to rain besides. He seen a girl a-standing beside the road, where a old house had burnt down but the chimney was still there. She was a tall slim girl with a poke bonnet on, but he seen her face plain. He stopped and says if you are going somewheres I will give you a ride, because my horse carries double. She says her name is Stapleton, and her folks live down the road a piece. So then she jumped up behind him light as a feather. Pretty soon he spurred the horse a little, so she had to put her arms round his waist.

They rode on about a mile and he found out her first name was Lucy, and she wasn't married neither. He could feel her breath on his neck while they was a-talking, and he liked it fine. He got to thinking this was the kind of a girl he'd like to marry up with, because he liked her better than any girl he ever seen before.

So they rode another mile and it was pretty dark by this time, and they come to a graveyard. And there was a big house with lights in the windows just a little way off. She says that's where my folks live, but I'd better get down here. He figured she was going to take a short cut home, so her paw wouldn't know she had been riding with a stranger. Folks was awful particular about what their daughters did in them days. The girl jumped off and walked over to the gate. He says, "I'll be seein' you pretty soon," but Lucy just waved him goodbye and went into the graveyard.

The fellow waited awhile so she would have time to get home, and then he rode up in front of the big house. Soon as the dogs begun to bark an old man come out, and he says "My name is Stapleton." He says the fellow is welcome to have supper with them and stay all night, as they have got plenty of room. And then he hollered a boy out of the barn to take care of the traveler's horse.

They had a mighty good supper, but there wasn't nobody at the table only Judge Stapleton and his wife. The fellow kept looking for Lucy to show up any minute, but she never come. So after while he went to bed in the spare room. It was a fine shuck mattress too, but he didn't sleep very good.

Next morning after breakfast they got to talking, and the Judge says him and his wife just moved here a year ago. "We used to live two miles down the road," he says, "but our house was lightnin'-struck and burnt plumb down. There ain't nothing left now but the old chimney." The fellow says yes, he seen the chimney when

he rode by there last night. "I didn't mind losing the house," says the Judge, "only our daughter was sick in bed. We carried her out to the gate, but the shock was too much for her, and she died that same night."

The fellow just set there, and the Judge went on a-talkin' about what a fine girl his daughter was, and how him and the old woman was pretty lonesome nowadays. "We buried her in that little graveyard," says the Judge. "You can see her stone from the front gallery. There ain't a day goes by, rain or shine, that my wife don't walk over there an' set by the grave awhile."

Everything was mighty still for a minute, and then the traveler says, "What was your daughter's name?" It sounded kind of funny, the way he said it, but he was obliged to know.

"Her name was Lucy," says the Judge.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 79-81)

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### **Strawberries are Easy Witched**

One time old Judge Culpepper set out a big patch of strawberries, and they done fine at first. But the Judge's wife was mean and hard to get along with, always having trouble with the neighbors. Old Gram French come along the road selling sassafras roots, but Mis' Culpepper didn't want no sassafras roots, and she says Gram French don't know enough to dig sassafras anyhow. One word led to another, and pretty soon both of them women was cussing and blackguarding loud as they could. So Gram went out in the road and drew a little circle in the dust. Then she marked a cross in the circle, and spit on the cross. Everybody knowed Gram French could talk the Devil's language, and they figured she was throwing a spell on Judge Culpepper's berry patch.

Next morning the Judge got up early to look at his strawberries, and it looked like they was doing all right. The next day he was out again, but he couldn't see nothing wrong in the strawberry patch. Old Mis' Culpepper says this gabble about witching berries is all foolishness, and Gram French could draw circles in the dust every day if she wants to, and it won't make no difference. The Judge didn't say much, but when he went out the third morning he seen that the leaves didn't look right, and by four o'clock that evening every one of them fine strawberry plants was dead.

Old Mis' Culpepper had changed her tune by this time, and she says Gram French is a witch sure enough, and the folks ought to run her plumb out of the country, or maybe shoot her with a silver bullet. But the Judge he says you come with me, and they went out to the patch, and he showed her some little white grains in the dirt. "Taste that stuff," says he. So Mis' Culpepper put some on her tongue, and she says it tastes like salt. "It is salt," says the Judge, "and salt is death on strawberries, and the ground won't grow nothing but sparrowgrass from now on. That's what comes of cussing Gram French," he says.

So then Mis' Culpepper begun to holler how she is going to fix Gram, but the Judge says you have done enough fixing already, and from now on you better keep your big mouth shut. And next time Gram French comes along selling sassafras, you just give her the nickel or dime or whatever it is she wants. Fooling with them people is bad luck, he says. Do you want my new barn to catch fire mysterious and burn plumb to the ground? How would you like to see all our chickens poisoned, and the ducks too? Maybe you would rather have a dead snake in the well every few days, or some buckeye juice throwed in to drive us both crazy, he says.

It was on a Wednesday the Judge told Mis' Culpepper all this, and on Saturday morning here come Gram with a little bundle of sassafras roots. They was not red ones neither, but thick white roots that ain't fit for nothing. But old Mis' Culpepper she took them just the same, and give Gram ten cents, and says she is mighty glad to get some good sassafras roots. So then Gram just grinned at her and went on down the road. The Judge he grinned too when he heard about it. "I ain't educated like my wife is, but I know better than to cuss Gram French," he says. "It's a lot cheaper to buy the goddam sassafras." Mis' Culpepper figured she better do what the Judge told her about things like that, and they all been getting along pretty good ever since. (Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 103-105)

### A.3 King Stories

#### Fill, Bowl, Fill!

One time there was a king, and he had a daughter. The hired man's name was Jimmy, and he got to sparking the king's daughter, till the king seen he would have to do something about it. They had a pet rabbit that always come to the king's house at night, so he says if Jimmy kept the rabbit for a week he could marry the king's daughter. Jimmy took the rabbit over to where he lived, and trained it so it would come when he rung a bell.

The king told his pretty servant girl if she would fetch the rabbit he'd give her five pounds, as money went by the pound in them days. Jimmy got the best of her, and she give him half the money besides. She picked up the rabbit and started off, but Jimmy rung the bell and the rabbit broke loose and come back. So she went home and told the king she couldn't get the rabbit.

Well, the king told his daughter if she would fetch the rabbit he'd give her two hundred pounds. The king's daughter went over and says to Jimmy, "We are going to get married anyhow, and two hundred pounds would be nice for us to have." Jimmy got the best of her too and she give him half the money besides. She picked up the rabbit and started off, but Jimmy rung the bell and the rabbit broke loose and come back. So she went home and told the king she couldn't get the rabbit.

Next the king told his wife if she would fetch the rabbit, he'd give her three hundred pounds. The king's wife done her damndest, but Jimmy got the best of her too, and she gave him half the money besides. She picked up the rabbit and started off, but Jimmy rung the bell and the rabbit broke loose and come back. So she went home and told the king she couldn't get the rabbit.

Late in the night, here come the king himself and says he would give five hundred pounds for the rabbit, but Jimmy got the best of him too, and the king give him half the money besides. Then he picked up the rabbit, and he told Jimmy to come along. When they got to the king's house there was a great big bowl setting in the middle of the floor. The king says, "Jimmy, are you a good singer?" and Jimmy allowed he was pretty good. "Well, if you can sing that bowl full, you can marry my daughter," says the king, "and if you don't sing it full, I am going to cut your head off." So Jimmy done the best he could, and this is what he sung:

The first come over was the king's own servant,

To steal away my skill,

I took and got the best of her,

Fill, bowl, fill!

The next come over was the king's own daughter,

To steal away my skill,

I took and got the best of her,

Fill, bowl, fill!

The next come over was the king's own wife,

To steal away my skill,

I took and go the best of her,

Fill, bowl, fill!

The last come over was the king himself

To steal away my skill,

I took and-----

"Hold on, Jimmy," says the king, "that's enough! Don't sing another word. The bowl's plumb full, and you can have my daughter!"

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 17-19)

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### **The King's Daughter Laughed**

One time there was a king had a pretty daughter, but she was kind of sad all the time. She looked healthy, and the doctors couldn't find nothing wrong with her. Everybody says she must be witched, or maybe

hipped. She just set there all day mute as a mouse, and never said one word only if the king asked her a question. Nobody seen her smile in seven years, and some folks thought maybe she was losing her mind. So finally the old king says that if any man makes the girl laugh he can marry her, and get a big farm besides, and gold to go with it.

There was young fellows come from all over the country, a-trying to make the king's daughter laugh. They sung songs and told stories and danced jigs and turned summersets and done all kind of tricks. But the king's daughter just watched them awhile, and then she would look out of the window. Some of them boys fetched in clowns, and trained animals, and fireworks, and all kind of things like that. But it didn't do no good. The king's daughter never laughed once.

There was a big farm boy come along one day, and he had a pig that could stand on its hind legs and dance. The farm boy had brought some fancy clothes in a poke and a tin whistle he was going to blow while the pig was a-dancing. Some smart-alecks put the farm boy in a little closet to change his clothes, and they fed the pig a whole churnful of buttermilk. Then one of them put some turpentine under the pig's tail.

The next thing anybody knowed, here come the pig right through the house, a-squealing fit to wake the dead, with buttermilk a-squirting out behind. And here come the big farm boy stark naked, with the tin whistle in his hand, hollering "Soo-ey! Soo-ey!" at the top of his voice.

The king's daughter just took one look, with her mouth open and her eyes a-sticking out like doorknobs. Then she busted out a-laughing, and you could hear it all over the place, with the pig still a-squealing and the farm boy hollering "Soo-ey! Soo-ey!" The king's servants run in by this time and chased the pig out, and they hustled the farm boy back into the closet where his clothes was at. Pretty soon here come the old king himself to see what was going on, but his daughter was still a-laughing so hard she couldn't tell him nothing.

Some of the servants was fixing to put the farm boy in jail, because they figured he has insulted the quality folks. But the king's daughter just laughed, and the old king stood there a-looking at her kind of thoughtful. Pretty soon she stopped laughing, and she says have that young man put his clothes on and come in here, because I got something to tell him.

After while the big farm boy come in and he started a-talking how the whole thing was a accident, because them smart-alecks turpented his pig while he was changing clothes. The king's daughter says never mind the pig, the thing is do you want to marry me? And the farm boy says, "Yes, ma'am." The king's daughter says that's fine, because you are the only man in this country I would even think about marrying. The old king he just looked at both of them for a minute, and then they all laughed like fools. And so the big farm boy married the king's daughter, and they lived happy ever after.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 83-85)

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### Little Thumb and the Giant

One time there was a fellow named Little Thumb, and he used to slip into the old giant's house pretty often. There was good things to eat over there, and he liked the giant's wife besides. The giant's wife told him to stay away, or else the old giant would kill him sure. But little Thumb just laughed, and kept right on a-coming.

It blowed up a big rain that evening, and Little Thumb knowed the giant would be home any minute. But he went to bed in the spare room anyhow, and pretty soon he heard the old giant a-coming. So Little Thumb slipped out of bed and run to the fireplace. There was a pile of chunk-wood beside the hearth. Little Thumb put some wood in the bed and pulled the quilt over it. Then he hid over in the corner where it was dark, and he laid right still. Pretty soon here come the giant, and busted the wood in the bed with his big club.

When Little Thumb come down to breakfast next morning the giant was mighty surprised, because he figured Little Thumb was dead sure. "Did you sleep good last night?" says he. "Yes, I slept fine," answered Little Thumb, "only there was a rat run across the bed, an' kind of slapped me with his tail." The giant just set there and goggled at him. Little Thumb didn't pay no attention, and the old giant thought this fellow is a lot tougher than he looks.

The giant eat breakfast enough for twenty men, and pushed big platters of stuff over to Little Thumb. "Eat every bite of it," says the giant, "I cain't stand to see good victuals go to waste." Little Thumb was ready for this, and he had a big sheepskin sack under his clothes. He let on like he was eatin', but just slipped most of them victuals into the sack. "By God," says the old giant, "I believe you can eat as much as me!" Little Thumb just grinned at him, and shoveled in some more ham and couple dozen fried eggs, and washed them down with a gallon of coffee.

"Eatin' is easy," says Little Thumb, "but I can do somethin' else that you cain't do. You'd be scared to try it, even." The Giant begun to holler how he ain't scared of nothing, but Little Thumb says, "Give me that knife, an' I'll show you." So the old giant give him the knife. Then Little Thumb stood up and cut the big sack open right through his jacket, shirt and all. It made a big hole, and pretty near fifty pounds of ham and eggs and biscuits and coffee sloshed right out on the table.

"Well, by God!" says the giant, "if you can do it, so can I!" And with that he grabbed the knife and cut himself wide open. So then the old giant begun to bleed like a stuck pig, and pretty soon he fell down dead. And from that time on Little Thumb just went to the giant's house whenever he felt like it, and done whatever he wanted to.

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 53-55)

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### **The Queen's White Glove**

One time there was an old king, and the queen was a lot younger than he was, and she was the prettiest woman in the whole country. They didn't have no children, but the king had a little dog that was trained, and could do all kind of tricks. Sometimes the king would hide his handkerchief or something like that, and then tell the little dog to go fetch it. The little dog would smell the king's hand just once, and away he went over hills and down hollers till he found the handkerchief, and then he would bring it back mighty proud and give it to the king. All the people would brag about what a smart dog he was, and what a good nose he had, and how he could smell out everything and never made no mistakes.

Well, one night the king and queen went to a big dance, and the queen says she has lost one of her white gloves. She wanted to go back home and look for it, but the old king says no, we will send the little dog instead. So the little dog smelled the queen's hand just once, and away he went over hills and down hollers. They waited awhile, and the queen says, "Maybe I better go back and look for the glove myself, because I know right where I lost it." But the king says, "Don't you worry, my little dog will fetch it pretty soon, because he has got the best nose of any dog in the world, and he never makes no mistakes."

After while they could hear the people hollering outside and they knowed the little dog had got back. So here he come into the room with something in his mouth, but not the queen's white glove. No sir, it belonged to the young servant man that lived in the king's house, and it was not the kind of thing the queen ought to be putting her hand on, neither. The king stuck it in his pocket right quick, so the people did not get much chance to see what it was. The queen laughed and she says well, your little dog sure made a mistake this time! The old king just looked at her, but he did not laugh. "Somebody has made a mistake, all right," says he, "but I ain't sure if it was the little dog or not."

So then him and the queen went out on the floor and led the dancing same as they always done, and all the people had a good time. But next day the young servant man that lived in the king's house was gone, and the king got another fellow to take his place. The new servant was pretty near seventy years old, and he was fat and bald-headed besides. The king was a very smart man, and he never said one word to anybody about the time his little dog made a mistake. But from that day on if the queen lost anything the king just let her go and find it herself, which was what she wanted to do in the first place. And so they lived happy ever after.

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 101-102)

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### **Shoes for the King**

One time there was a king, and he got sick. He couldn't eat very good, and something had went wrong with his head. The people didn't know what to make of it. You know if a common man goes crazy it don't make

much difference, but a king has got to keep his wits about him, or he is liable to ruin the whole country. The king had lots of men to advise him, but one smart fellow would say something and then some other smart fellow told him just the opposite, so the king couldn't make up his mind what to do about anything. Sometimes it would take him all day to decide if he needed a hair-cut or not, and the Government was going to hell in a handbasket.

Finally they got the best doctor in town, and he says "Where do you hurt?" The king says, "Doc, my feet is killing me." So the doctor examined the king mighty careful, and after while he says, "Well, if a man's feet hurt he don't feel good, so his head don't work right neither, and that's what is the matter with you." Then the people wanted to put medicine on the king's feet, but the doctor told them it wasn't no use. "Medicine won't help none in this case," says he. "you got to find some fellow that feels good all over, and take his shoes off, and put them on the king. That will cure him in no time." And so the king give the doctor a sack of gold.

Soon as the doctor was gone, the folks started out to get the king some shoes. There was several fellows in the king's house that wore the right size, but there didn't none of them feel good all over. One fellow has got a boil on his neck, and another one says he is ruined by the pox, and the rest of them suffers terrible with kidney trouble, or bellyache, or rheumatism, or something. Next morning the king's servants went into town and says to everybody, "What size shoe do you wear?" And if the fellow says number ten, they ask him did he feel good all over? But every man of them says no. So the servants come back and told the king the people in town was sick, and they couldn't find nobody that felt good all over.

The third day the king sent his soldiers out, and they went to every settlement for miles around. But after while the soldiers come back and says the people are sick everywhere and they couldn't find nobody that felt good all over. "Well by God," says the king, "things is in a worse fix than I thought." So he had them saddle his horse, and he says he will go out and see about it himself. Two soldiers come along with him and the king dressed up like a soldier too, so the people couldn't tell who he was.

They rode and they rode till the horses was plumb give out, but they couldn't get nobody to say he felt good all over. The king had to camp out every night, because he looked just like a common soldier, and the people would not let him stay in the hotels or the tourist camps even. "Just wait till I get home," says he, "and I will make a new law so soldiers can get the best beds everywhere, and it will do them fat drummers good to sleep on the ground." It seemed like camping out done the king good, anyhow, and he eat as much as anybody. His head was working better too, and he says it is the most fun he has had for a long time.

One day they rode up to a little shack out in the woods, and there was a fellow laying on the porch. The king says "Howdy," and the fellow just grinned and says "Light down, and rest your saddle." So the king ask him if he is sick, and the fellow says hell no, ne never felt better in his life. "Do you feel good all over?" says the king. "You're goddam right I feel good all over, and what's it to you?" the fellow answers right back. "Well," says the

king, "us soldiers has been sent out to find a good healthy fellow like you, because the king is sick and maybe you can help him." The fellow says he is sorry to hear about it, but why don't the king take a big dose of mayapple root, and if that don't do no good they better send for the doctor.

"The doctor says he has got to get the shoes off of a man that feels good all over," says the king. "You just fetch me your best shoes, and I will give you a sack of gold." The fellow looked down at his bare feet for a minute, and he wiggled his toes, and then he busted out a-laughing. "Soldier," says he, "I ain't had leather on them feet in twenty years. Why, I can kick sparks out of a flint rock! A man like me don't need no shoes."

The king he thought about this awhile, and then he pulled off his shoes and wiggled his toes. "Well, maybe you're right," says he. And so him and the two soldiers rode back home. They didn't have much to say, but pretty soon the word got around that the king was cured. "The main thing is to ride every day, and eat plenty of victuals, and sleep on the ground of a night," he says. "And it's healthy for a man to go barefooted around the house, too." And so the king got along pretty good after that, and they all lived happy ever after. (Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 130-133)

## **Appendix B: Sample Folktales Divided into Ordered Events**

### **B.1 Home Stories**

#### **The Bull Was Found Guilty**

- 1 One time there was farmer had a nice little cornpatch under rail,
- 2 (and) there was a bull come along and ruined it.
- 3 That bull was the breachiest critter that ever lived,
- 4 (and) he could bust through a stake-an'-rider fence like a mess of spider webs.
- 5 When the farmer seen the shape his corn was in, he told the Justice of the Peace.
- 6 The constable went after the man that owned the bull,
- 7 (but) the man was not home.
- 8 So the constable arrested the breachy bull,
- 9 (and) he come a-leading the critter into the settlement.
- 10 There was some jackleg lawyers around town,
- 11 (and) they says it ain't legal to try a bull no matter what he done.
- 12 But the Squire didn't pay no attention,
- 13 (and) they had the trial under a big oak tree.
- 14 A big crowd come to see it,
- 15 (and) some of the boys was pretty drunk.
- 16 The bull bellered and pawed up dust, so the constable couldn't keep no order.
- 17 The lawyers argued pretty near all day.
- 18 One lawyer says the Squire is the damndest fool he ever seen,
- 19 (but) they fined him two dollars for contempt of court.
- 20 Finally the Squire decided the bull is guilty of trespass and destroying valuable property,
- 21 (so) the critter must pay twenty-five dollars and costs.
- 22 The constable says the bull ain't got no money, and what will we do now?
- 23 The Squire thought about it awhile,
- 24 (and) then he says, "Butcher the varmint, an' sell the meat!"
- 25 So that's what they done.
- 26 It wasn't no time till people was building fires
- 27 (and) cooking beef all over the place.
- 28 Everybody got their chin greasy,
- 29 (but) the Squire took the hide and tallow.

30 The folks all sung songs  
 31 (and) chewed fat  
 32 (and) guggled whiskey out of the same jug.  
 33 Before sundown the Squire and the lawyers was drunk as anybody.  
 34 The whole lot of 'em was a-dancing round the fire  
 35 (and) yelling like Indians.  
 36 Next morning everybody seen they had made a fool out of theirself, and the least said the soonest  
 mended.  
 37 Some of the old-timers says the whole thing is a joke,  
 38 (and) it never really happened at all.  
 39 And even if something peculiar did happen, there ain't no way to find out who was to blame.  
 40 So then some of the boys took up a collection for the fellow that owned the bull,  
 41 (and) never said no more about it.

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 97-98)

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### **The Dumb Bull**

1 One time there was a fellow lived on a little farm away up the river.  
 2 He kept talking how the woods was full of panthers and catamounts.  
 3 He says he seen their tracks all over the place  
 4 (and) heard them squalling in the pineries every night.  
 5 So finally some regular hunters took their dogs and went out to see about it.  
 6 They camped on a gravel-bar three nights,  
 7 (and) didn't hear nothing but hoot owls.  
 8 The truth is that wolves is pretty common yet, and so is foxes, and maybe a bobcat comes through  
 the holler once in a while.  
 9 But there ain't been no panthers in that country for twenty years.  
 10 But this here scary fellow kept right on talking about panther tracks.  
 11 The old hunters just laughed,  
 12 (and) they got to calling him "Panther Pete."  
 13 But the folks up that way are mostly damn fools,  
 14 (and) pretty soon everybody for miles around was hollering about panthers,  
 15 (and) some people was scared to step out of their own house after sundown.

16 Some of the town boys got together one day and made a dumb-bull.  
17 They just took a barrel and stretched rawhide over one end, like a drum.  
18 Then they cut a hole in the rawhide  
19 (and) fixed a leather string with rosin on it, to pull through the hole.  
20 The noise a dumb-bull makes ain't very loud, but it sounds terrible deep and dangerous.  
21 You can hear it a mile off easy, if the wind is right.  
22 They hauled the dumb-bull out there in a wagon,  
23 (and) a couple of boys carried it up on a hill, just above Panther Pete's house.  
24 They could see him out in the field,  
25 (and) his wife and another woman was hoeing the garden.  
26 There was three or four children a-playing round.  
27 When the boys pulled the string on that there dumb-bull, Pete jumped about six foot high and  
looked all round like a pop-eyed rabbit.  
28 Then he took out for the house,  
29 (but) the womenfolks had done gathered up the kids and got there ahead of him.  
30 They barred the door, too.  
31 The fellow hollered and cussed and pounded,  
32 (but) them women was so scared of panthers they wouldn't let him in.  
33 Just when he was about to bust the door down, the boys turned the old dumb-bull loose again.  
34 Next thing they knowed Panther Pete scrambled up onto the roof,  
35 (and) he was hollering down the chimney for Lucy to fetch him the gun.  
36 After he hollered himself plumb out of breath, Pete crawled down to the edge of the roof,  
37 (and) one of the women opened the door just a crack.  
38 Maybe she figured on letting her man into the house, or else she was aiming to pass the gun up to  
him.  
39 But them fool boys pulled the string again,  
40 (and) the old dumb-bull roared louder than ever.  
41 The door slammed shut quick as a wink,  
42 (and) Pete scampered up onto the ridgepole again.  
43 The boys laid low for awhile,  
44 (but) every time Pete started to come down the old dumb-bull would let out a whoop, and he'd go  
a-scuttlin' back up to the peak of the roof.

45 They kept it up till plumb dusk,  
 46 (and) then they carried the dumb-bull back to town.  
 47 The last they seen of Panther Pete he was still setting on top of his house, a-cussing the womenfolks  
 because they don't come out and fight like a man.  
 48 Ever since that day, Pete carries a gun all the time,  
 49 (and) he can't be talked out of it, neither.  
 50 Some of the folks tried to tell him about the dumb-bull joke,  
 51 (but) Pete just laughed in their face.  
 52 And he says you cain't fool me about the things, because I have studied the varmints from childhood  
 up, and I know a panther's holler when I hear one.  
 53 It sure don't sound like no boys fooling with rawhide in a rain-barrel, he says.  
 54 Just a few years back the float-trip people seen him out there a-plowing, with a long six-shooter  
 hanging down and his belt full of big brass cartridges.  
 55 The guides told the tourists how the feud had broke out again, and them farmers was killing each  
 other every Saturday, and all kinds of foolishness.  
 56 But the home folks knowed it was just old Pete, fixing to protect his family from them man-eating  
 panthers up in the pineries.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 42-44)

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### **Gabe Says it Ain't So Bad**

1 One time a fellow named Wes Adams met up with old Gabe Ledbetter in the road,  
 2 (and) they hadn't saw each other for a long time.  
 3 So they shook hands,  
 4 (and) Wes says, "How are you making out these days?"  
 5 Gabe looked mighty solemn.  
 6 "I'm a-living on Hockey Mountain," says he, "and pretty far up, at that. I got married a couple of  
 years back."  
 7 Wes Adams thought any woman must be out of their head to marry old Gabe Ledbetter,  
 8 (but) the idea tickled him anyhow,  
 9 (so) he says, "That's good."  
 10 "It ain't so good as you might think," Gabe says. "My wife come of a no-account family, and she  
 brought me a lot of grief."

11 "Well, that's bad," says Wes Adams.  
12 "It ain't so bad as you might think," Gabe says, "because she was pretty well fixed. I made her give  
me seven hundred dollars before we got married."  
13 "Well, that's good," says Wes.  
14 "It ain't so good as you might think," Gabe says, "because I put the money in sheep, and the goddam  
wolves eat 'em up."  
15 "Well, that's bad," says Wes Adams.  
16 "It ain't so bad as you might think," Gabe says, "because I killed forty-three of them wolves, and  
there's a thirty-dollar bounty on wolf scalps now."  
17 "Well, that's good," says Wes Adams.  
18 "It ain't so good as you might think," Gabe says, "because the house caught fire while I was in town  
to get the bounty, and burnt plumb to the ground."  
19 "Well, that's bad," says Wes Adams.  
20 "It ain't so bad as you might think," Gabe says, "because my wife was in the house, and there ain't  
nothing of left of her but a tubful of ashes and a few black bones."  
21 Wes Adams started to say "Well, that's good," but he stopped himself.  
22 It didn't seem hardly decent, when a man's wife has been burnt to death,  
23 (so) he just stood there with his mouth open.  
24 "She had some life insurance, too," says Gabe, "and the house wasn't worth much, anyhow.  
25 It ain't so bad as you might think," he says.  
26 So then Gabe Ledbetter just waved his hand,  
27 (and) walked on down the road.  
28 The way Wes tells it, his head was spinning round like a top by that time,  
29 (and) he couldn't think of nothing more to say.  
30 Gabe Ledbetter always looked solemn as a judge,  
31 (but) he couldn't help cracking jokes like that.  
32 The facts of the matter is, Gabe hadn't never been married at all.  
33 He never kept no sheep,  
34 (and) if he ever killed a wolf the neighbors never heard tell of it.  
35 And his house didn't burn down, neither.  
36 The truth is, he never did have no house.

(Randolph, *The Talking Turtle: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1957, pp. 72-73)

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### No Respect for the Dead

- 1 One time there was an old man lived way up the creek,
- 2 (and) all of a sudden his wife died.
- 3 He had a passel of children to be took care of,
- 4 (and) he didn't fool away no time a-courting.
- 5 Before the wagon tracks was out of the yard, he married a widow woman that lived down the road a piece.
- 6 Some say he married her just one day after his wife's funeral.
- 7 Most of the neighbors thought the old man ought to have waited a week or two, just for the looks of the thing.
- 8 But folks didn't blame him much, because they all knowed he had to get somebody to see after them children.
- 9 People was hell on shivarees in them days,
- 10 (and) if a fresh-married couple wasn't shivareed it meant that they didn't have no standing in the community, and was kind of looked down on.
- 11 Everybody wanted to do right by this here family,
- 12 (so) they all come over to the house right after dark.
- 13 Some was ringing bells,
- 14 (and) some was shooting off guns,
- 15 (and) some was just hollering loud as they could.
- 16 One fellow had brought an old circle saw,
- 17 (and) he was hammering on it with a cold chisel.
- 18 Everybody knows that when folks are being shivareed, they are supposed to set up something for the crowd.
- 19 Mostly they invite the people into the house
- 20 (and) feed them cake or pie or whatever they've got.
- 21 Lots of new-married couples have chicken and fixings cooked up, and fine table all set for the shivaree party.
- 22 And sometimes the husband has got a jug of corn-squeezings hid somewhere outside, where the menfolks can take a little snort, just for luck.

23 And maybe there is a fiddler in the crowd, so they can have a regular square dance right then and  
there.

24 Anyhow, the least a couple can do is to pass out candy and cigars, or something like that.

25 This old fellow was pretty well-to-do, but he was terrible close with his money.

26 And he was not in no mood for jollification anyhow, because of one thing and another.

27 Pretty soon he come out on the porch in his nightshirt, looking mighty sour.

28 “What’s the matter with you folks?” says he. “Ain’t you got no respect for the dead?”

29 Well sir, that shivaree party was so set back, they didn’t know what to do.

30 You could have heard a pin drop.

31 Finally they took their guns and cow bells and walked out of the old man’s yard.

32 The fellow that fetched the circle saw just left it a-laying there

33 (and) shuffled on after the other folks with his mouth open and the cold chisel still in his hand.

34 There wasn’t a word spoke till they got away down the road.

35 Then somebody begun to giggle,

36 (and) minute later they was all laughing like fools.

37 Some folks say you could hear them a-whooping and a-hollering clear over to the new highway.

38 It all happened a long time ago,

39 (but) there’s still a few old-timers around here that ain’t forgot that shivaree.

40 And they will bust out laughing to this day, when something happens to put them in mind of it.

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 50-52)

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### **A Private Room**

1 One time there was a man from Kansas City come down here,

2 (and) built him a big hotel right beside our new highway.

3 It was kind of a novelty in this part of the country.

4 Every little town around here had two or three houses where they rented rooms and took in  
boarders,

5 (but) the folks didn’t know much about regular hotels.

6 The Kansas City man done pretty good with the tourists in the summer time,

7 (and) there was a few drummers come every week.

8 But mighty few of the home folks ever set foot in the big hotel.

9 Sometimes a fresh married couple would go there, if the boy had money and wanted to show off.

10 They used to tell about a young fellow that lived up on Greasy Creek,  
11 (and) he married one of the McCanse girls.  
12 Soon as the knot was tied they walked out of the courthouse  
13 (and) went to the big hotel.  
14 When they got up to the desk the boy says: "Mister, have you got any private rooms here?"  
15 The hotel man told him yes, sir.  
16 "Well," says the young fellow, "we want the best room you've got. I don't care what it costs, so long  
as it's private."  
17 The hotel man called the bellboy,  
18 (but) they wouldn't ride in the elevator,  
19 (and) the girl wouldn't let go of her satchel.  
20 The bellhop walked them upstairs,  
21 turned on the lights,  
22 (and) brought a pitcher of ice water.  
23 Pretty soon the boy from Greasy Creek come back downstairs, and he was pretty mad.  
24 "Look here," he says, "didn't I tell you we wanted a private room?"  
25 The hotel man just gawked at him.  
26 "That's what I gave you, and it's the best room in the house," says he.  
27 "Hell's fire, it ain't private!" the boy hollered. "Why, there's a toilet up there! Folks will be running in  
and out all night!"  
28 The hotel man was about to bust out laughing, but it's lucky he never done it.  
29 That Greasy Creek boy thought he was being took advantage of, and he wasn't in no mood for jokes.  
30 If anybody had laughed right then, there might have been bad trouble.  
31 So the hotel man went upstairs himself,  
32 (and) showed the boy how things was.  
33 "The whole thing is private, bathroom and all," says he.  
34 And then he showed the young folks how to lock the outside door, so nobody could get in.  
35 Everything was all right after that, and no more complaints from the honeymooners.  
36 The bellhop told a couple of drummers,  
37 (and) the story got around.  
38 Most people thought it was just a made-up tale, like the one about the traveling salesman and the  
farmer's daughter.

39 But that was because they hadn't ever been up on Greasy Creek.  
 40 The home folks didn't see nothing unreasonable about it.

(Randolph, *The Talking Turtle: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1957, pp. 86-87)

## B.2 Granny Stories

### Bang Away, My Lulu!

1 One time there was a young fellow married a fine woman,  
 2 (but) he would not stay home of a night.  
 3 He was always sneaking off to see a no-good hussy named Lulu, that he had went with before.  
 4 His wife raised hell about it,  
 5 (but) she would not leave him because she didn't believe in no divorce.  
 6 Also, she did not like to live at home with her folks,  
 7 (and) there wasn't no other place for her to go.  
 8 Another thing was, she didn't want people to think that some cheap floozy has took a man off'n her.  
 9 And maybe she was kind of crazy about the young fellow, besides.  
 10 So finally she went and told her Aunt Sophie.  
 11 The old woman says there is ways to take care of things like that, but it is kind of spooky and  
 dangerous.  
 12 She says it would be better just to let your fool husband go, as he ain't no good anyhow.  
 13 But that girl says all she wants is to keep her man away from Lulu.  
 14 "I don't want to kill nobody," she says, "but I will do anything short of a killin', no matter if it is  
 spooky or not."  
 15 Aunt Sophie took chalk and drew a big ring on the floor,  
 16 (and) she killed a black chicken,  
 17 (and) fixed up some other things that had to be done.  
 18 And she got a boy to go in the night and steal one of Lulu's petticoats.  
 19 Aunt Sophie tied the petticoat onto a pillow.  
 20 Then her and the young fellow's wife took turns a-pounding it with a club.  
 21 The girl thought it was all foolishness,  
 22 (but) Aunt Sophie made her keep right on a-pounding the pillow to the tune of "Bang Away, My  
 Lulu."  
 23 When the young fellow got to Lulu's house she was laying on the bed.

24 She says, "That goddam wife of yours come here with some old woman, an' they throwed me down  
an' beat me something terrible."  
25 The fellow says, "Nonsense!"  
26 (but) Lulu pulled up her clothes and showed him how she is plumb black-and-blue.  
27 So the young fellow went home and says, "What do you mean, going around beating people with  
clubs?  
28 I never heard of such a thing," he says, "and you will disgrace the whole family!"  
29 And then his wife says, "It must be you are going crazy, because I have not been out of this house all  
day, except over to Aunt Sophie's."  
30 The young fellow went over to see Aunt Sophie, and she told him the same thing.  
31 Next morning Aunt Sophie fetched the petticoat over and tied it onto a pillow.  
32 Then her and the young fellow's wife took turns a-pounding it and singing "Bang Away, My Lulu."  
33 When the young fellow come home he says, "Well, poor Lulu is beat pretty near to death, with  
blood running down her legs, and I hope you are satisfied."  
34 And his wife says, "I have not set foot out of this house all day, and Aunt Sophie has been right here  
with me."  
35 The young fellow went and asked the neighbors,  
36 (and) they all told him it was the God's truth.  
37 Next day Aunt Sophie and the young fellow's wife beat the petticoat again,  
38 (and) clear over in the other end of town Lulu raised such a holler that somebody called the sheriff.  
39 When he got there Lulu was a-prancing around yelling that two women was whipping her,  
40 (but) the sheriff could see that she was all alone in the house.  
41 So he figured Lulu must be crazy drunk or else taking some kind of dope,  
42 (and) he locked her up in the jailhouse.  
43 A lawyer made the sheriff turn her loose that night.  
44 Lulu got right on the train and went to St. Louis.  
45 She didn't come back, neither.  
46 The young fellow never did find out just what happened,  
47 (but) it kind of scared him.  
48 He stayed pretty close to home after that,  
49 (and) him and his wife got along all right.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 55-58)

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### The Dumb Supper

- 1 One time the old folks went to town and left three girls alone in the house,
- 2 (and) the girls set a dumb supper to see who they was going to marry.
- 3 To set a dumb supper you got to do everything backwards and not make no noise.
- 4 So the girls never said a work while they baked three little ponos of bread,
- 5 (and) set three plates on the table,
- 6 (and) drewed up three chairs.
- 7 Still walking backwards, they opened the door and both windows,
- 8 (and) then all three of them set down to wait for the change of the hour.
- 9 It was a plumb dark night,
- 10 (and) the wind was a-rising.
- 11 Just at midnight a regular gale tore through the house
- 12 (and) blowed out the light.
- 13 A minute later there come a flash of lightning,
- 14 (and) the girls all seen a tall man standing by the table.
- 15 The least girl she hollered "Oh my God!"
- 16 (and) of course that broke the spell.
- 17 They got the door and windows shut,
- 18 (and) lit the lamp, but the stranger was gone.
- 19 The girls was all talking at once now,
- 20 (but) nobody could tell much about the stranger except that he was tall, with a long coat, and he wore cowboy boots outside his pants.
- 21 All of a sudden, the oldest girl pointed to her place at the table.
- 22 The place was still there with the little pone on it, and the fork and spoon was there,
- 23 (but) the knife was gone.
- 24 There couldn't be no mistake about that knife, because it wasn't a common case-knife like the others.
- 25 It was a sharp steel knife that Pappy had the blacksmith make out of a file, with a fine deerhorn handle riveted on.
- 26 The old man missed his knife next morning,
- 27 (so) the girls had to tell about the dumb supper.

28 Pappy just grumbled about the knife,  
 29 (but) the old woman give the girls hell.  
 30 She says dumb suppers ain't Christian, and no better than prayers to the Devil.  
 31 She says all conjuring is wicked and terrible dangerous besides,  
 32 (and) she made the girls promise they would never do nothing like that again.  
 33 By and by the oldest girl she married a man who was on the public works and made pretty good  
 money,  
 34 (so) they moved in to town.  
 35 Then she got to working in a boarding house  
 36 (and) going to dances at night.  
 37 The next thing anybody knowed, she left her husband  
 38 (and) run off with a fellow from the Indian Territory.  
 39 He was a big tall fellow,  
 40 (and) he wore cowboy boots outside his pants.  
 41 Finally him and her got to fighting in a hotel somewheres,  
 42 (and) the hotel people found her laying dead, with a knife stuck in her belly.  
 43 It was a homemade knife with a deerhorn handle, the sheriff said. Looked like some blacksmith  
 made it out of a old file.

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 22-23)

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### **It Sure Won't Do No Harm**

1 One time there was some people up on Sugar Creek had a mighty sick young-un.  
 2 Her throat was stopped up pretty bad,  
 3 (and) she looked feverish,  
 4 (so) the folks sent after Doc Holton.  
 5 When Doc got there he seen old Gram French was ahead of him,  
 6 (but) he never let on.  
 7 Them granny-women can smell sickness ten mile off,  
 8 (and) old Gram French always run over and took charge before the doctor come.  
 9 And then when Doc got there he'd find the patient a-puking up slippery-elm bark, or maybe all  
 gaumed up with cow-dung poultice.

10 Doc Holton says Gram French has killed more people than the James boys, but what could he do  
about it?

11 Gram hated Doc worse'n a rattlesnake,  
12 (but) she always acted nice as pie when he was around.  
13 She'd just grin at him  
14 (and) say, "Well, Doctor, these home remedies of mine may not do no good, but they sure won't do  
no harm."

15 Mostly Doc never said much,  
16 (but) this time he'd been up all night, and wasn't feeling well nohow.  
17 When he found a dirty stinking rag tied round the girl's neck it made him pretty mad.  
18 "What the hell's this?" says he.  
19 Gram just grinned at him, same as always.  
20 "Just a old dirty sock, Doctor. The best thing I ever seen for throat sickness. It might not do no good,  
maybe, but it sure won't do no harm."

21 Doc didn't return no answer,  
22 (and) he never paid no more attention to Gram till the sick girl was took care of, and he seen she  
was going to be all right.  
23 Pretty soon Gram spoke up again.  
24 "I been havin' a misery in my stomach lately, an' catnip tea don't seem to take hold like it used to.  
What do you recommend for such as that, Doctor?"

25 Doc looked at Gram's tongue  
26 (and) asked her a few questions,  
27 (and) then he says for the girl's mother to fetch him a good big meat-rind, with plenty of fat on it.  
28 "My goodness, Doctor," says Gram, "I never heard tell of usin' a meat-rind for stomach trouble in all  
my sixty years of nursin' the sick!"

29 When the woman come back with the meat-rind, Doc passed it over to Gram.  
30 "Tie this on your old rump," says he, "and leave it there till it stinks as bad as this dirty sock.  
31 It may not do no good," he says, "but it sure won't do you no harm."  
32 The old granny just set there plumb flabbergasted,  
33 (and) Doc throwed the dirty sock in the fire,  
34 a-washing his hands careful with stuff out of a bottle.  
35 He looked mighty pleased about something.

36 But they do say that Gram French never spoke another word to Doc Holton as long as she lived.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 158-159)

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### A Pretty Girl in the Road

1 One time there was a fellow a-riding along  
 2 (and) it was getting dark and coming on to rain besides.  
 3 He seen a girl a-standing beside the road, where a old house had burnt down but the chimney was  
 still there.  
 4 She was a tall slim girl with a poke bonnet on, but he seen her face plain.  
 5 He stopped and says if you are going somewheres I will give you a ride, because my horse carries  
 double.  
 6 She says her name is Stapleton, and her folks live down the road a piece.  
 7 So then she jumped up behind him light as a feather.  
 8 Pretty soon he spurred the horse a little, so she had to put her arms round his waist.  
 9 They rode on about a mile  
 10 (and) he found out her first name was Lucy, and she wasn't married neither.  
 11 He could feel her breath on his neck while they was a-talking,  
 12 (and) he liked it fine.  
 13 He got to thinking this was the kind of a girl he'd like to marry up with, because he liked her better  
 than any girl he ever seen before.  
 14 So they rode another mile and it was pretty dark by this time,  
 15 (and) they come to a graveyard.  
 16 And there was a big house with lights in the windows just a little way off.  
 17 She says that's where my folks live, but I'd better get down here.  
 18 He figured she was going to take a short cut home, so her paw wouldn't know she had been riding  
 with a stranger.  
 19 Folks was awful particular about what their daughters did in them days.  
 20 The girl jumped off and walked over to the gate.  
 21 He says, "I'll be seein' you pretty soon,"  
 22 (but) Lucy just waved him goodbye and went into the graveyard.  
 23 The fellow waited awhile so she would have time to get home,  
 24 (and) then he rode up in front of the big house.

25      Soon as the dogs begun to bark an old man come out,  
 26      (and) he says "My name is Stapleton."  
 27      He says the fellow is welcome to have supper with them and stay all night, as they have got plenty  
 of room.  
 28      And then he hollered a boy out of the barn to take care of the traveler's horse.  
 29      They had a mighty good supper, but there wasn't nobody at the table only Judge Stapleton and his  
 wife.  
 30      The fellow kept looking for Lucy to show up any minute,  
 31      (but) she never come.  
 32      So after while he went to bed in the spare room.  
 33      It was a fine shuck mattress too, but he didn't sleep very good.  
 34      Next morning after breakfast they got to talking,  
 35      (and) the Judge says him and his wife just moved here a year ago.  
 36      "We used to live two miles down the road," he says, "but our house was lightnin'-struck and burnt  
 plumb down. There ain't nothing left now but the old chimney."  
 37      The fellow says yes, he seen the chimney when he rode by there last night.  
 38      "I didn't mind losing the house," says the Judge, "only our daughter was sick in bed. We carried her  
 out to the gate, but the shock was too much for her, and she died that same night."  
 39      The fellow just set there,  
 40      (and) the Judge went on a-talkin' about what a fine girl his daughter was, and how him and the old  
 woman was pretty lonesome nowadays.  
 41      "We buried her in that little graveyard," says the Judge. "You can see her stone from the front  
 gallery. There ain't a day goes by, rain or shine, that my wife don't walk over there an' set by the  
 grave awhile."  
 42      Everything was mighty still for a minute,  
 43      (and) then the traveler says, "What was your daughter's name?"  
 44      It sounded kind of funny, the way he said it, but he was obliged to know.  
 45      "Her name was Lucy," says the Judge.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 79-81)

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### **Strawberries are Easy Witched**

1      One time old Judge Culpepper set out a big patch of strawberries,

2 (and) they done fine at first.  
3 But the Judge's wife was mean and hard to get along with, always having trouble with the  
neighbors.  
4 Old Gram French come along the road selling sassafras roots,  
5 (but) Mis' Culpepper didn't want no sassafras roots,  
6 (and) she says Gram French don't know enough to dig sassafras anyhow.  
7 One word led to another, and pretty soon both of them women was cussing and blackguarding loud  
as they could.  
8 So Gram went out in the road and drewed a little circle in the dust.  
9 Then she marked a cross in the circle,  
10 (and) spit on the cross.  
11 Everybody knowed Gram French could talk the Devil's language,  
12 (and) they figured she was throwing a spell on Judge Culpepper's berry patch.  
13 Next morning the Judge got up early to look at his strawberries,  
14 (and) it looked like they was doing all right.  
15 The next day he was out again,  
16 (but) he couldn't see nothing wrong in the strawberry patch.  
17 Old Mis' Culpepper says this gabble about witching berries is all foolishness, and Gram French could  
draw circles in the dust every day if she wants to, and it won't make no difference.  
18 The Judge didn't say much,  
19 (but) when he went out the third morning he seen that the leaves didn't look right,  
20 (and) by four o'clock that evening every one of them fine strawberry plants was dead.  
21 Old Mis' Culpepper had changed her tune by this time,  
22 (and) she says Gram French is a witch sure enough, and the folks ought to run her plumb out of the  
country, or maybe shoot her with a silver bullet.  
23 But the Judge he says you come with me,  
24 (and) they went out to the patch,  
25 (and) he showed her some little white grains in the dirt.  
26 "Taste that stuff," says he.  
27 So Mis' Culpepper put some on her tongue,  
28 (and) she says it tastes like salt.

29 "It *is* salt," says the Judge, "and salt is death on strawberries, and the ground won't grow nothing but sparrowgrass from now on.

30 That's what comes of cussing Gram French," he says.

31 So then Mis' Culpepper begun to holler how she is going to fix Gram,

32 (but) the Judge says you have done enough fixing already, and from now on you better keep your big mouth shut. And next time Gram French comes along selling sassafras, you just give her the nickel or dime or whatever it is she wants.

33 Fooling with them people is bad luck, he says.

34 Do you want my new barn to catch fire mysterious and burn plumb to the ground? How would you like to see all our chickens poisoned, and the ducks too? Maybe you would rather have a dead snake in the well every few days, or some buckeye juice throwed in to drive us both crazy, he says.

35 It was on a Wednesday the Judge told Mis' Culpepper all this,

36 (and) on Saturday morning here come Gram with a little bundle of sassafras roots.

37 They was not red ones neither, but thick white roots that ain't fit for nothing.

38 But old Mis' Culpepper she took them just the same,

39 (and) give Gram ten cents,

40 (and) says she is mighty glad to get some good sassafras roots.

41 So then Gram just grinned at her

42 (and) went on down the road.

43 The Judge he grinned too when he heard about it.

44 "I ain't educated like my wife is, but I know better than to cuss Gram French," he says. "It's a lot cheaper to buy the goddam sassafras."

45 Mis' Culpepper figured she better do what the Judge told her about things like that,

46 (and) they all been getting along pretty good ever since.

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 103-105)

### B.3 King Stories

#### Fill, Bowl, Fill!

1 One time there was a king,

2 (and) he had a daughter.

3 The hired man's name was Jimmy,

4 (and) he got to sparking the king's daughter, till the king seen he would have to do something about  
it.

5 They had a pet rabbit that always come to the king's house at night,  
6 (so) he says if Jimmy kept the rabbit for a week he could marry the king's daughter.  
7 Jimmy took the rabbit over to where he lived,  
8 (and) trained it so it would come when he rung a bell.

9 The king told his pretty servant girl if she would fetch the rabbit he'd give her five pounds, as money  
went by the pound in them days.

10 Jimmy got the best of her,  
11 (and) she give him half the money besides.  
12 She picked up the rabbit and started off,  
13 (but) Jimmy rung the bell  
14 (and) the rabbit broke loose  
15 (and) come back.  
16 So she went home  
17 (and) told the king she couldn't' get the rabbit.

18 Well, the king told his daughter if she would fetch the rabbit he'd give her two hundred pounds.  
19 The king's daughter went over  
20 (and) says to Jimmy, "We are going to get married anyhow, and two hundred pounds would be nice  
for us to have."

21 Jimmy got the best of her too  
22 (and) she give him half the money besides.  
23 She picked up the rabbit and started off,  
24 (but) Jimmy rung the bell  
25 (and) the rabbit broke loose  
26 (and) come back.  
27 So she went home  
28 (and) told the king she couldn't get the rabbit.

29 Next the king told his wife if she would fetch the rabbit, he'd give her three hundred pounds.  
30 The king's wife done her damndest,  
31 (but) Jimmy got the best of her too,  
32 (and) she gave him half the money besides.

33 She picked up the rabbit and started off,  
34 (but) Jimmy rung the bell  
35 (and) the rabbit broke loose  
36 (and) come back.  
37 So she went home  
38 (and) told the king she couldn't get the rabbit.  
39 Late in the night, here come the king himself  
40 (and) says he would give five hundred pounds for the rabbit,  
41 but Jimmy got the best of him too,  
42 (and) the king give him half the money besides.  
43 Then he picked up the rabbit,  
44 (and) he told Jimmy to come along.  
45 When they got to the king's house there was a great big bowl setting in the middle of the floor.  
46 The king says, "Jimmy, are you a good singer?"  
47 (and) Jimmy allowed he was pretty good.  
48 "Well, if you can sing that bowl full, you can marry my daughter," says the king, "and if you don't  
sing it full, I am going to cut your head off."  
49 So Jimmy done the best he could,  
50 (and) this is what he sung:  
The first come over was the king's own servant,  
To steal away my skill,  
I took and got the best of her,  
Fill, bowl, fill!  
The next come over was the king's own daughter,  
To steal away my skill,  
I took and got the best of her,  
Fill, bowl, fill!  
The next come over was the king's own wife,  
To steal away my skill,  
I took and go the best of her,  
Fill, bowl, fill!

The last come over was the king himself

To steal away my skill,

I took and-----

- 51 “Hold on, Jimmy,” says the king, “that’s enough! Don’t sing another word. The bowl’s plumb full, and you can have my daughter!”

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 17-19)

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### **The King’s Daughter Laughed**

- 1 One time there was a king had a pretty daughter,  
 2 (but) she was kind of sad all the time.  
 3 She looked healthy,  
 4 (and) the doctors couldn’t find nothing wrong with her.  
 5 Everybody says she must be witched, or maybe hippoed.  
 6 She just set there all day mute as a mouse,  
 7 (and) never said one word only if the king asked her a question.  
 8 Nobody seen her smile in seven years,  
 9 (and) some folks thought maybe she was losing her mind.  
 10 So finally the old king says that if any man makes the girl laugh he can marry her, and get a big farm  
 besides, and gold to go with it.  
 11 There was young fellows come from all over the country, a-trying to make the king’s daughter laugh.  
 12 They sung songs  
 13 (and) told stories  
 14 (and) danced jigs  
 15 (and) turned summersets  
 16 (and) done all kind of tricks.  
 17 But the king’s daughter just watched them awhile,  
 18 (and) then she would look out of the window.  
 19 Some of them boys fetched in clowns, and trained animals, and fireworks, and all kind of things like  
 that.  
 20 But it didn’t do no good.  
 21 The king’s daughter never laughed once.  
 22 There was a big farm boy come along one day,

23 (and) he had a pig that could stand on its hind legs and dance.  
24 The farm boy had brought some fancy clothes in a poke  
25 (and) a tin whistle he was going to blow while the pig was a-dancing.  
26 Some smart-alecks put the farm boy in a little closet to change his clothes,  
27 (and) they fed the pig a whole churnful of buttermilk.  
28 Then one of them put some turpentine under the pig's tail.  
29 The next thing anybody knowed, here come the pig right through the house, a-squealing fit to wake  
the dead, with buttermilk a-squirting out behind.  
30 And here come the big farm boy stark naked, with the tin whistle in his hand, hollering "Soo-ey! Soo-  
ey!" at the top of his voice.  
31 The king's daughter just took one look, with her mouth open and her eyes a-sticking out like  
doorknobs.  
32 Then she busted out a-laughing, and you could hear it all over the place, with the pig still a-squealing  
and the farm boy hollering "Soo-ey! Soo-ey!"  
33 The king's servants run in by this time and chased the pig out,  
34 (and) they hustled the farm boy back into the closet where his clothes was at.  
35 Pretty soon here come the old king himself to see what was going on,  
36 (but) his daughter was still a-laughing so hard she couldn't tell him nothing.  
37 Some of the servants was fixing to put the farm boy in jail, because they figured he has insulted the  
quality folks.  
38 But the king's daughter just laughed,  
39 (and) the old king stood there a-looking at her kind of thoughtful.  
40 Pretty soon she stopped laughing,  
41 (and) she says have that young man put his clothes on and come in here, because I got something to  
tell him.  
42 After while the big farm boy come in  
43 (and) he started a-talking how the whole thing was a accident, because them smart-alecks  
turpented his pig while he was changing clothes.  
44 The king's daughter says never mind the pig, the thing is do you want to marry me?  
45 And the farm boy says, "Yes, ma'am."  
46 The king's daughter says that's fine, because you are the only man in this country I would even think  
about marrying.

47 The old king he just looked at both of them for a minute,  
 48 (and) then they all laughed like fools.  
 49 And so the big farm boy married the king's daughter,  
 50 (and) they lived happy ever after.

(Randolph, *Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales*, [1955] 1993, pp. 83-85)

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### **Little Thumb and the Giant**

1 One time there was a fellow named Little Thumb,  
 2 (and) he used to slip into the old giant's house pretty often.  
 3 There was good things to eat over there,  
 4 (and) he liked the giant's wife besides.  
 5 The giant's wife told him to stay away, or else the old giant would kill him sure.  
 6 But little Thumb just laughed,  
 7 (and) kept right on a-coming.  
 8 It blowed up a big rain that evening,  
 9 (and) Little Thumb knowed the giant would be home any minute.  
 10 But he went to bed in the spare room anyhow,  
 11 (and) pretty soon he heard the old giant a-coming.  
 12 So Little Thumb slipped out of bed  
 13 (and) run to the fireplace.  
 14 There was a pile of chunk-wood beside the hearth.  
 15 Little Thumb put some wood in the bed  
 16 (and) pulled the quilt over it.  
 17 Then he hid over in the corner where it was dark, and he laid right still.  
 18 Pretty soon here come the giant,  
 19 (and) busted the wood in the bed with his big club.  
 20 When Little Thumb come down to breakfast next morning the giant was mighty surprised, because  
 he figured Little Thumb was dead sure.  
 21 "Did you sleep good last night?" says he.  
 22 "Yes, I slept fine," answered Little Thumb, "only there was a rat run across the bed, an' kind of  
 slapped me with his tail."  
 23 The giant just set there and goggled at him.

24 Little Thumb didn't pay no attention,  
 25 (and) the old giant thought this fellow is a lot tougher than he looks.  
 26 The giant eat breakfast enough for twenty men,  
 27 (and) pushed big platters of stuff over to Little Thumb.  
 28 "Eat every bite of it," says the giant, "I cain't stand to see good victuals go to waste."  
 29 Little Thumb was ready for this, and he had a big sheepskin sack under his clothes.  
 30 He let on like he was eatin', but just slipped most of them victuals into the sack.  
 31 "By God," says the old giant, "I believe you can eat as much as me!"  
 32 Little Thumb just grinned at him,  
 33 (and) shoveled in some more ham and couple dozen fried eggs, and washed them down with a  
 gallon of coffee.  
 34 "Eatin' is easy," says Little Thumb, "but I can do somethin' else that you cain't do. You'd be scared to  
 try it, even."  
 35 The Giant begun to holler how he ain't scared of nothing,  
 36 (but) Little Thumb says, "Give me that knife, an' I'll show you."  
 37 So the old giant give him the knife.  
 38 Then Little Thumb stood up  
 39 (and) cut the big sack open right through his jacket, shirt and all.  
 40 It made a big hole,  
 41 (and) pretty near fifty pounds of ham and eggs and biscuits and coffee slosed right out on the  
 table.  
 42 "Well, by God!" says the giant, "if you can do it, so can I!"  
 43 And with that he grabbed the knife  
 44 (and) cut himself wide open.  
 45 So then the old giant begun to bleed like a stuck pig,  
 46 (and) pretty soon he fell down dead.  
 47 And from that time on Little Thumb just went to the giant's house whenever he felt like it,  
 48 (and) done whatever he wanted to.

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 53-55)

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### The Queen's White Glove

1 One time there was an old king,

2 (and) the queen was a lot younger than he was,  
3 (and) she was the prettiest woman in the whole country.  
4 They didn't have no children,  
5 (but) the king had a little dog that was trained, and could do all kind of tricks.  
6 Sometimes the king would hide his handkerchief or something like that,  
7 (and) then tell the little dog to go fetch it.  
8 The little dog would smell the king's hand just once,  
9 (and) away he went over hills and down hollers till he found the handkerchief,  
10 (and) then he would bring it back mighty proud and give it to the king.  
11 And all the people would brag about what a smart dog he was, and what a good nose he had, and  
how he could smell out everything and never made no mistakes.  
12 Well, one night the king and queen went to a big dance,  
13 (and) the queen says she has lost one of her white gloves.  
14 She wanted to go back home and look for it,  
15 (but) the old king says no, we will send the little dog instead.  
16 So the little dog smelled the queen's hand just once,  
17 and away he went over hills and down hollers.  
18 They waited awhile,  
19 (and) the queen says, "Maybe I better go back and look for the glove myself, because I know right  
where I lost it."  
20 But the king says, "Don't you worry, my little dog will fetch it pretty soon, because he has got the  
best nose of any dog in the world, and he never makes no mistakes."  
21 After while they could hear the people hollering outside  
22 (and) they knowed the little dog had got back.  
23 So here he come into the room with something in his mouth, but not the queen's white glove.  
24 No sir, it belonged to the young servant man that lived in the king's house,  
25 (and) it was not the kind of thing the queen ought to be putting her hand on, neither.  
26 The king stuck it in his pocket right quick, so the people did not get much chance to see what it was.  
27 The queen laughed and she says well, your little dog sure made a mistake this time!  
28 The old king just looked at her, but he did not laugh.  
29 "Somebody has made a mistake, all right," says he, "but I ain't sure if it was the little dog or not."  
30 So then him and the queen went out on the floor and led the dancing same as they always done,

31 (and) all the people had a good time.  
 32 But next day the young servant man that lived in the king's house was gone,  
 33 (and) the king got another fellow to take his place.  
 34 The new servant was pretty near seventy years old, and he was fat and bald-headed besides.  
 35 The king was a very smart man,  
 36 (and) he never said one word to anybody about the time his little dog made a mistake.  
 37 But from that day on if the queen lost anything the king just let her go and find it herself, which was  
 what she wanted to do in the first place.  
 38 And so they lived happy ever after.

(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 101-102)

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### Shoes for the King

1 One time there was a king,  
 2 (and) he got sick.  
 3 He couldn't eat very good, and something had went wrong with his head.  
 4 The people didn't know what to make of it.  
 5 You know if a common man goes crazy it don't make much difference,  
 6 (but) a king has got to keep his wits about him, or he is liable to ruin the whole country.  
 7 The king had lots of men to advise him,  
 8 (but) one smart fellow would say something and then some other smart fellow told him just the  
 opposite,  
 9 (so) the king couldn't make up his mind what to do about anything.  
 10 Sometimes it would take him all day to decide if he needed a hair-cut or not,  
 11 (and) the Government was going to hell in a handbasket.  
 12 Finally they got the best doctor in town,  
 13 (and) he says "Where do you hurt?"  
 14 The king says, "Doc, my feet is killing me."  
 15 So the doctor examined the king mighty careful,  
 16 (and) after while he says, "Well, if a man's feet hurt he don't feel good, so his head don't work right  
 neither, and that's what is the matter with you."  
 17 Then the people wanted to put medicine on the king's feet,  
 18 (but) the doctor told them it wasn't no use.

19 “Medicine won’t help none in this case, “ says he. “ you got to find some fellow that feels good all  
over, and take his shoes off, and put them on the king. That will cure him in no time.”

20 And so the king give the doctor a sack of gold.

21 Soon as the doctor was gone, the folks started out to get the king some shoes.

22 There was several fellows in the king’s house that wore the right size,  
23 (but) there didn’t none of them feel good all over.

24 One fellow has got a boil on his neck,  
25 (and) another one says he is ruined by the pox,  
26 (and) the rest of them suffers terrible with kidney trouble, or bellyache, or rheumatism, or  
something.

27 Next morning the king’s servants went into town  
28 (and) says to everybody, “What size shoe do you wear?”

29 And if the fellow says number ten, they ask him did he feel good all over?  
30 But every man of them says no.

31 So the servants come back  
32 (and) told the king the people in town was sick,  
33 (and) they couldn’t find nobody that felt good all over.

34 The third day the king sent his soldiers out,  
35 (and) they went to every settlement for miles around.

36 But after while the soldiers come back  
37 (and) says the people are sick everywhere and they couldn’t find nobody that felt good all over.

38 “Well by God,” says the king, “things is in a worse fix than I thought.”

39 So he had them saddle his horse,  
40 (and) he says he will go out and see about it himself.

41 Two soldiers come along with him  
42 (and) the king dressed up like a soldier too, so the people couldn’t tell who he was.

43 They rode and they rode till the horses was plumb give out,  
44 (but) they couldn’t get nobody to say he felt good all over.

45 The king had to camp out every night, because he looked just like a common soldier, and the people  
would not let him stay in the hotels or the tourist camps even.

46 “Just wait till I get home,” says he, “and I will make a new law so soldiers can get the best beds  
everywhere, and it will do them fat drummers good to sleep on the ground.”

47 It seemed like camping out done the king good, anyhow,  
48 (and) he eat as much as anybody.  
49 His head was working better too,  
50 (and) he says it is the most fun he has had for a long time.  
51 One day they rode up to a little shack out in the woods,  
52 (and) there was a fellow laying on the porch.  
53 The king says "Howdy,"  
54 (and) the fellow just grinned  
55 (and) says "Light down, and rest your saddle."  
56 So the king ask him if he is sick,  
57 (and) the fellow says hell no, ne never felt better in his life.  
58 "Do you feel good all over?" says the king.  
59 "You're goddam right I feel good all over, and what's it to you?" the fellow answers right back.  
60 "Well," says the king, "us soldiers has been sent out to find a good healthy fellow like you, because  
the king is sick and maybe you can help him."  
61 The fellow says he is sorry to hear about it, but why don't the king take a big dose of mayapple root,  
and if that don't do no good they better send for the doctor.  
62 "The doctor says he has got to get the shoes off of a man that feels good all over," says the king.  
63 "You just fetch me your best shoes, and I will give you a sack of gold."  
64 The fellow looked down at his bare feet for a minute, and he wiggled his toes,  
65 (and) then he busted out a-laughing.  
66 "Soldier," says he, "I ain't had leather on them feet in twenty years. Why, I can kick sparks out of a  
flint rock! A man like me don't need no shoes."  
67 The king he thought about this awhile,  
68 and then he pulled off his shoes  
69 (and) wiggled his toes.  
70 "Well, maybe you're right," says he.  
71 And so him and the two soldiers rode back home.  
72 They didn't have much to say, but pretty soon the word got around that the king was cured.  
73 "The main thing is to ride every day, and eat plenty of victuals, and sleep on the ground of a night,"  
he says.  
74 "And it's healthy for a man to go barefooted around the house, too."

75 And so the king got along pretty good after that,  
76 (and) they all lived happy ever after.

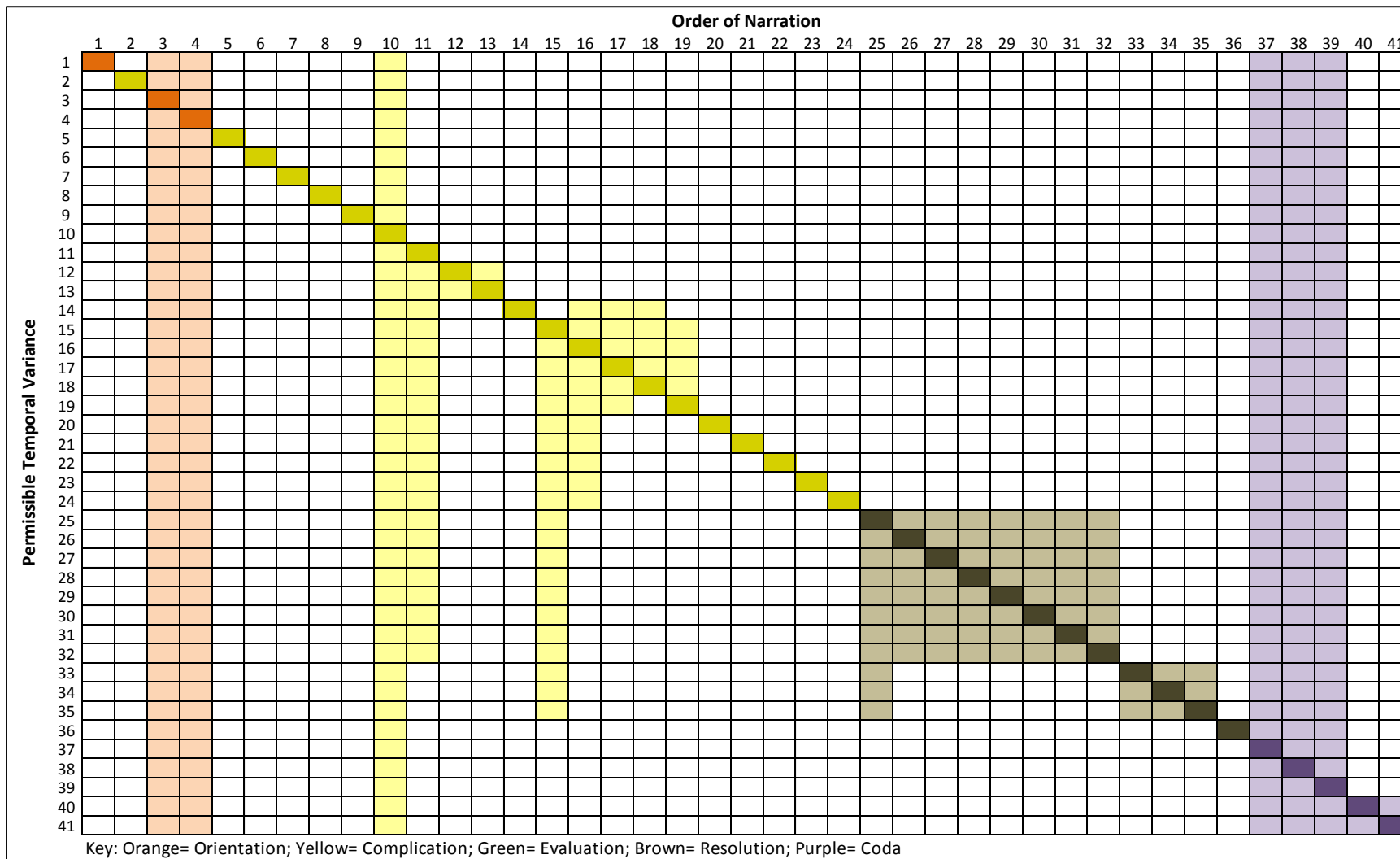
(Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1952, pp. 130-133)

**Appendix C: Sample Folktales in Charted Form**

**C.1 Home Stories**

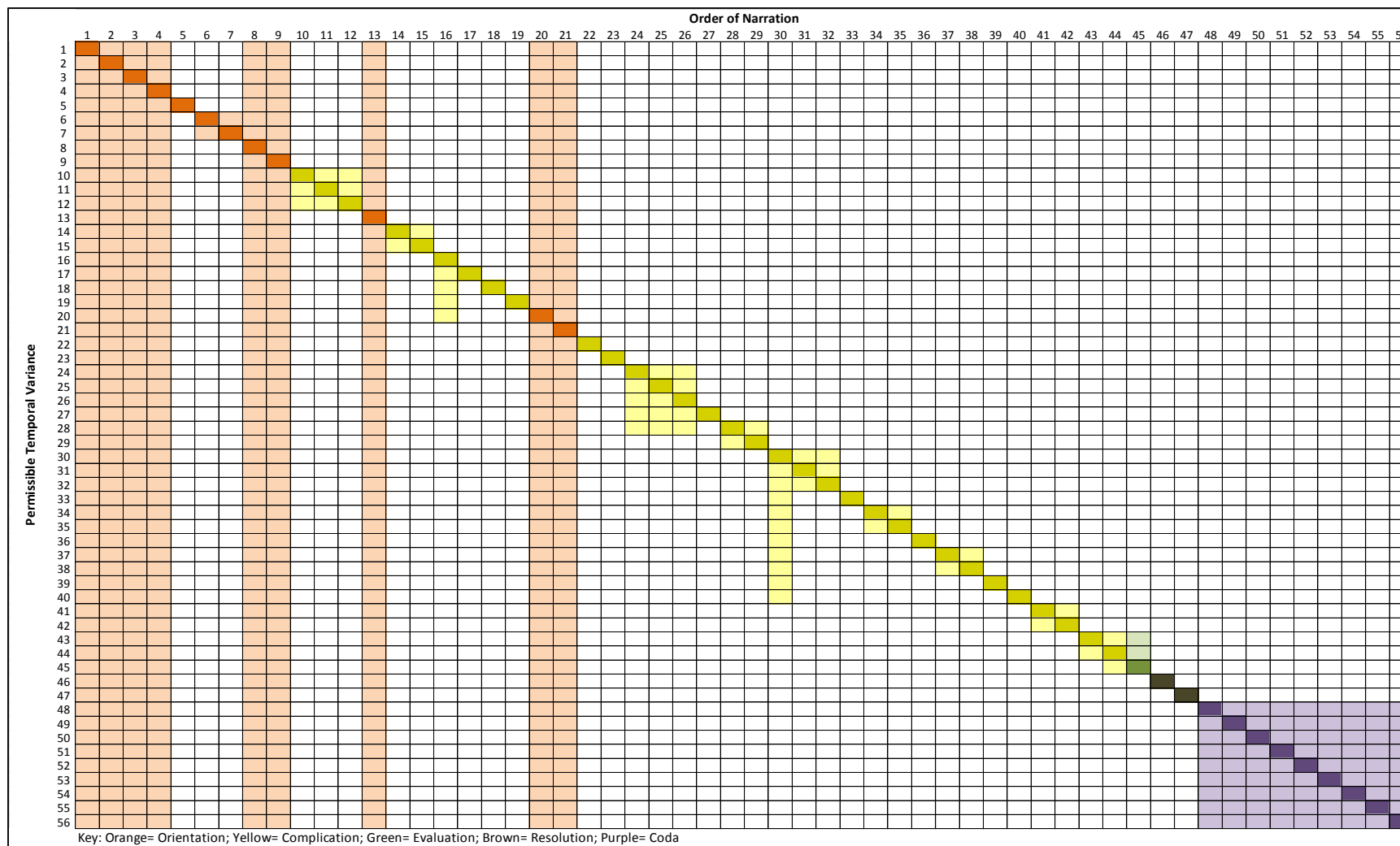
**The Bull Was Found Guilty**

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 97-98)



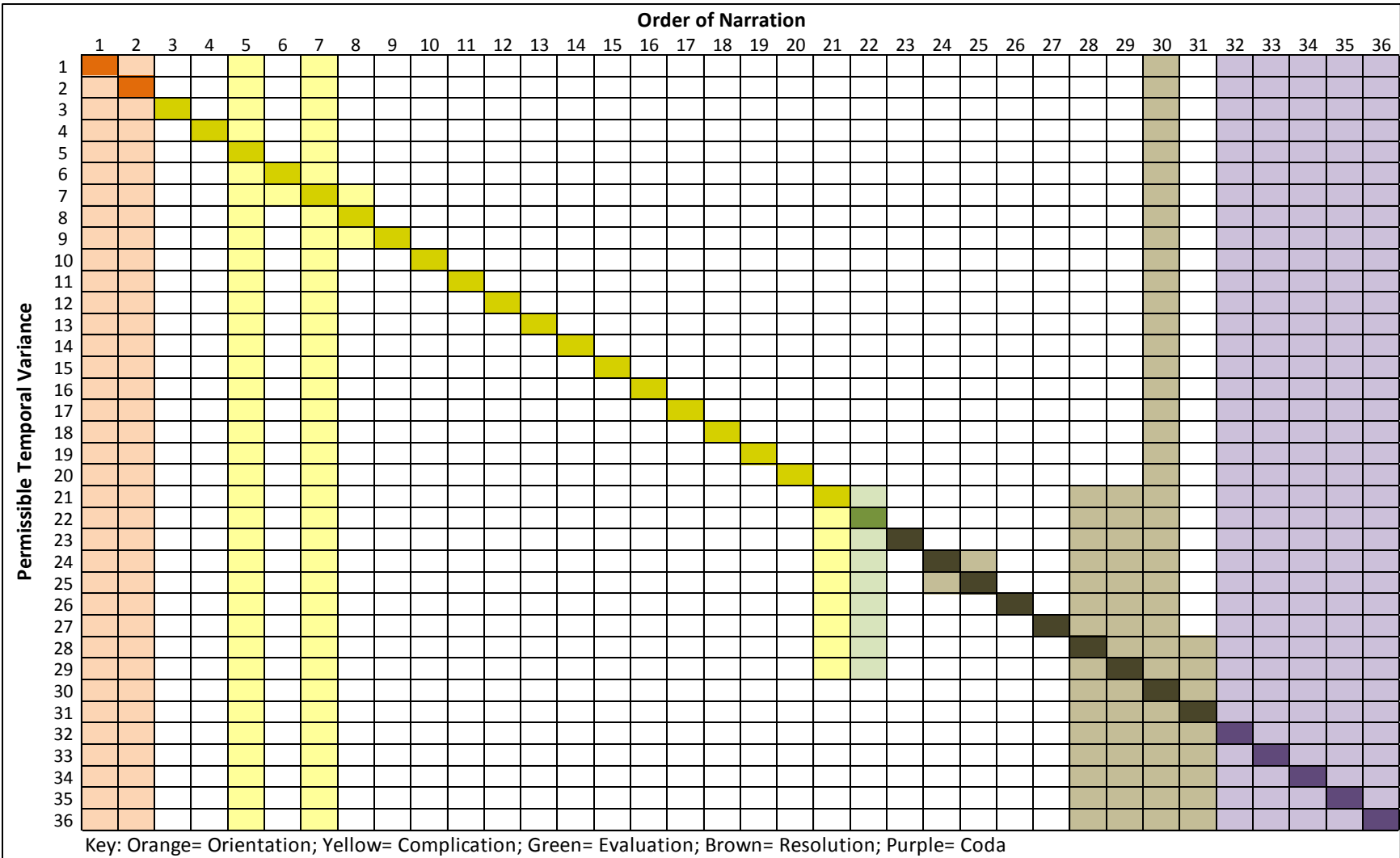
### The Dumb-Bull

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 42-44)



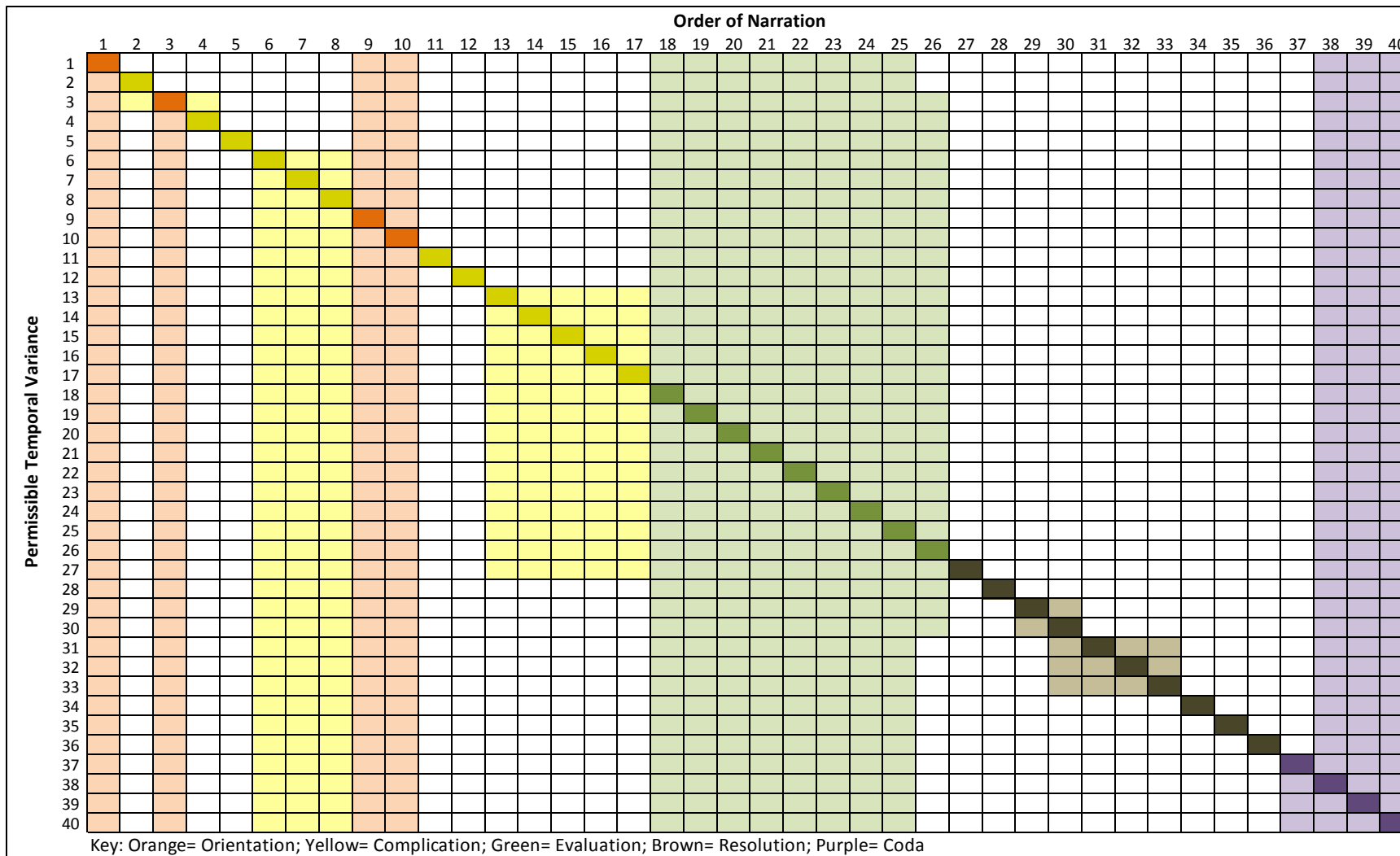
Gabe Says it Ain't So Bad

(Randolph, The Talking Turtle: And Other Ozark Folktales, 1957, pp. 72-73)



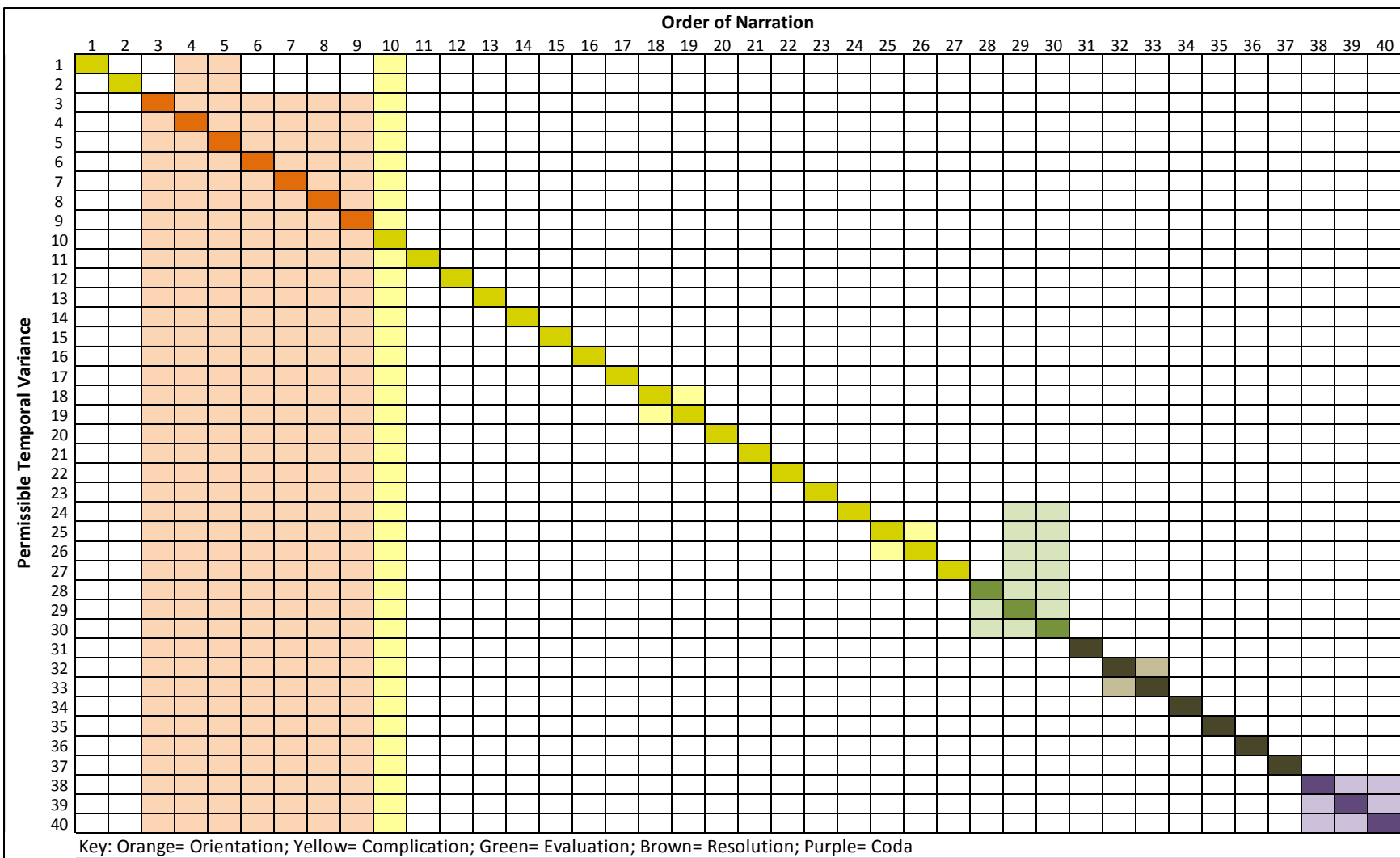
### No Respect for the Dead

(Randolph, Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales, 1952, pp. 50-52)



**A Private Room**

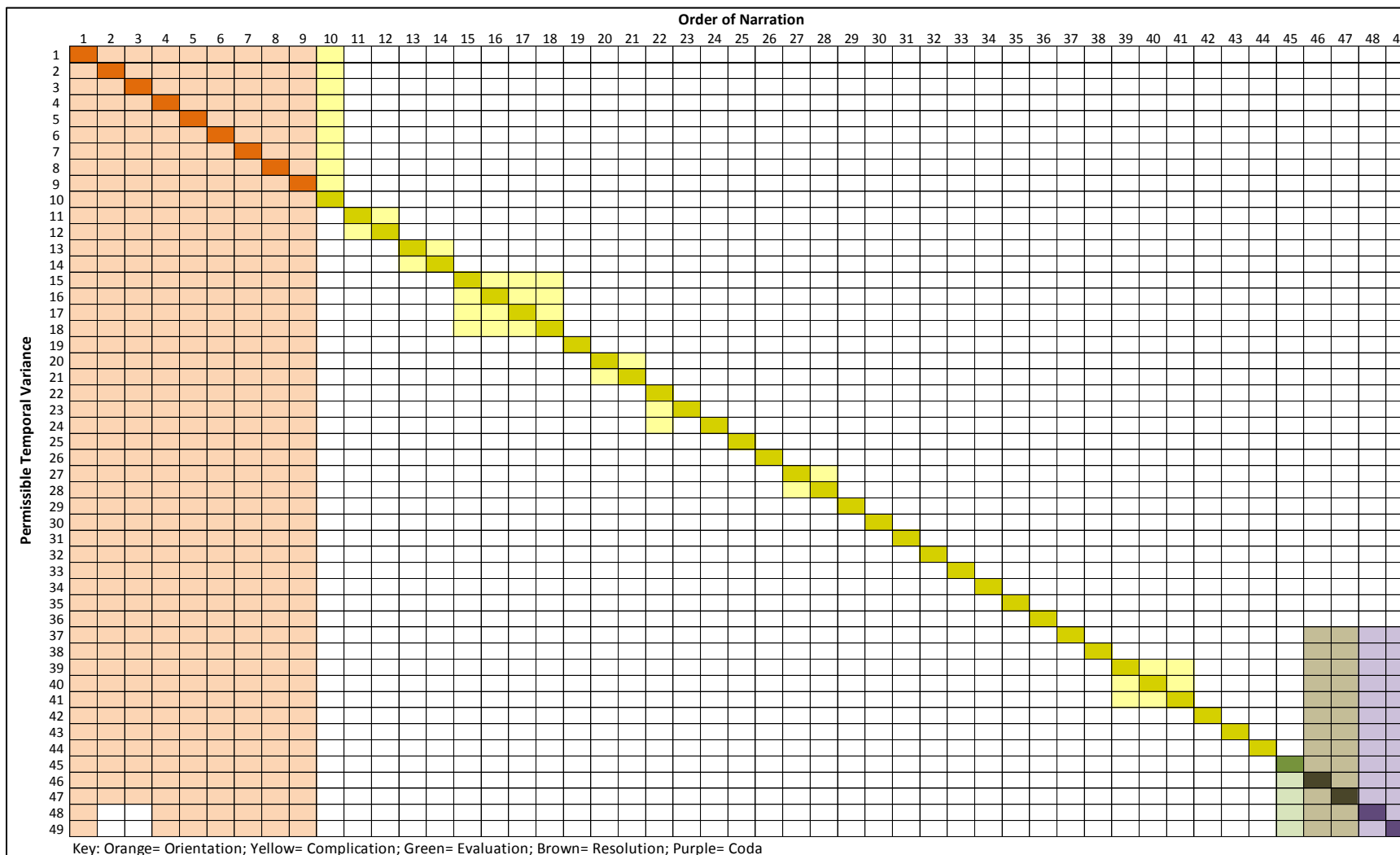
(Randolph, *The Talking Turtle: And Other Ozark Folktales*, 1957, pp. 86-87)



### C.2 Granny Stories

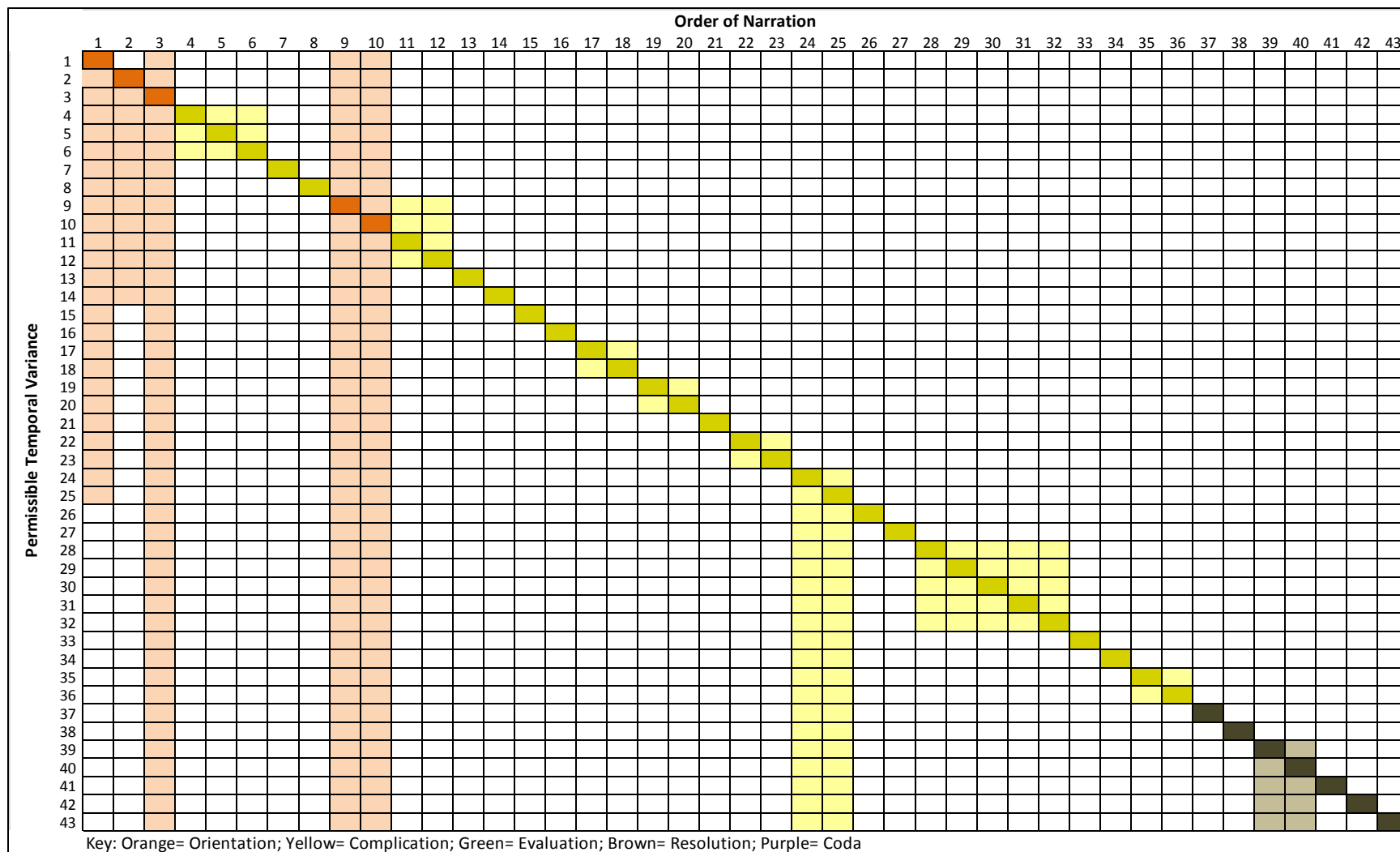
#### Bang Away, My Lulu!

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 55-58)



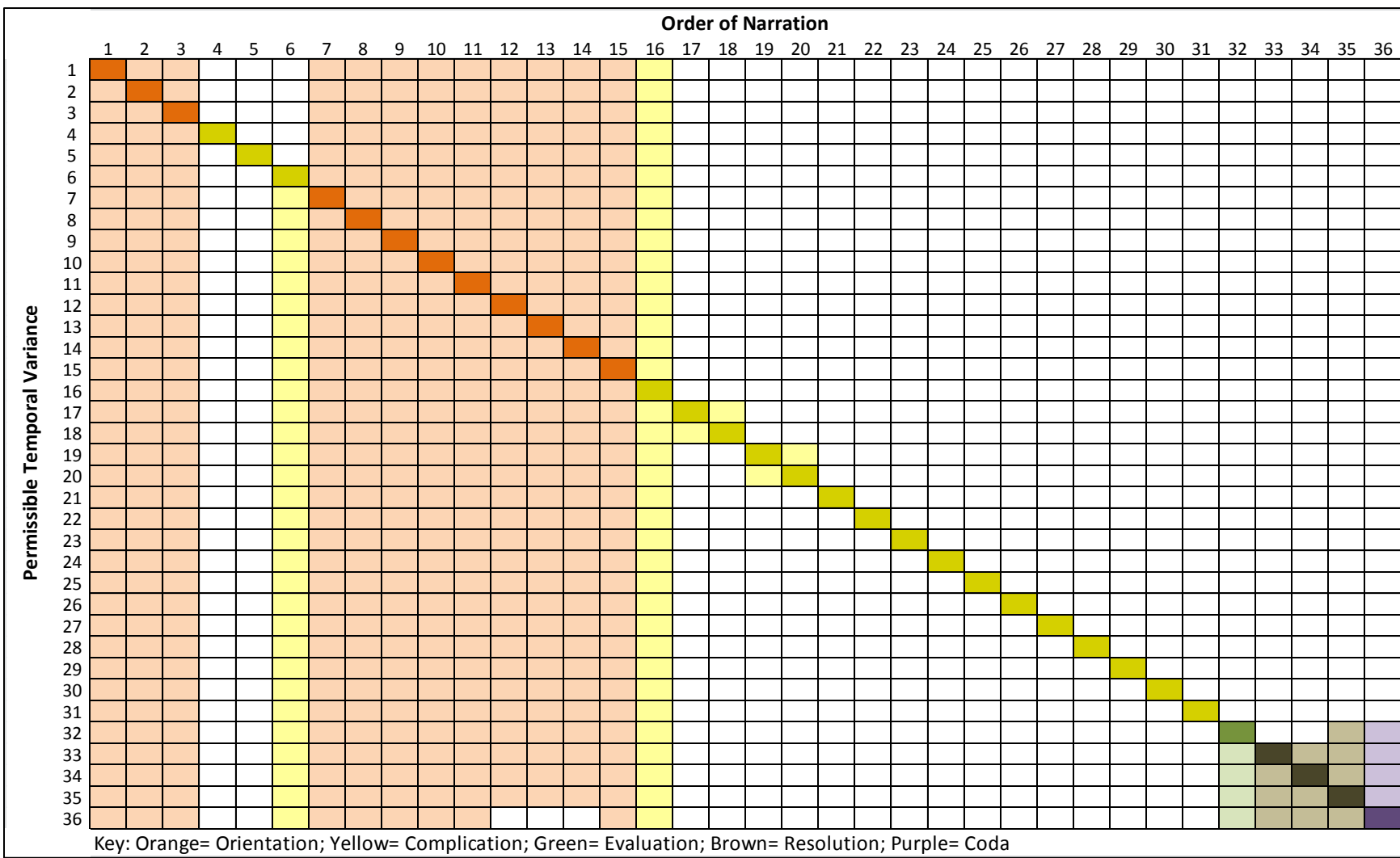
### The Dumb Supper

(Randolph, Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales, 1952, pp. 22-23)



**It Sure Won't Do No Harm**

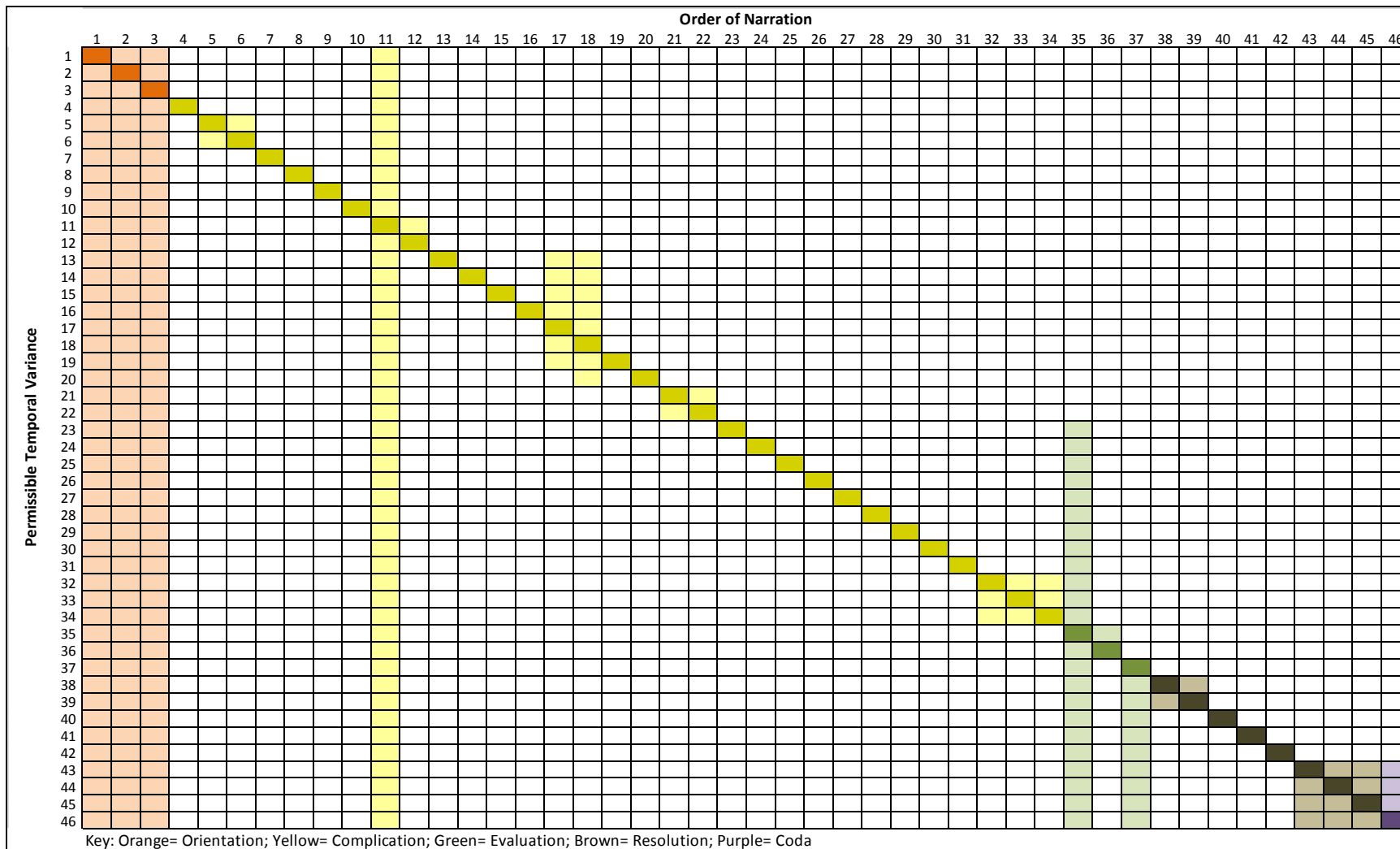
(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 158-159)





### Strawberries are Easy Witched

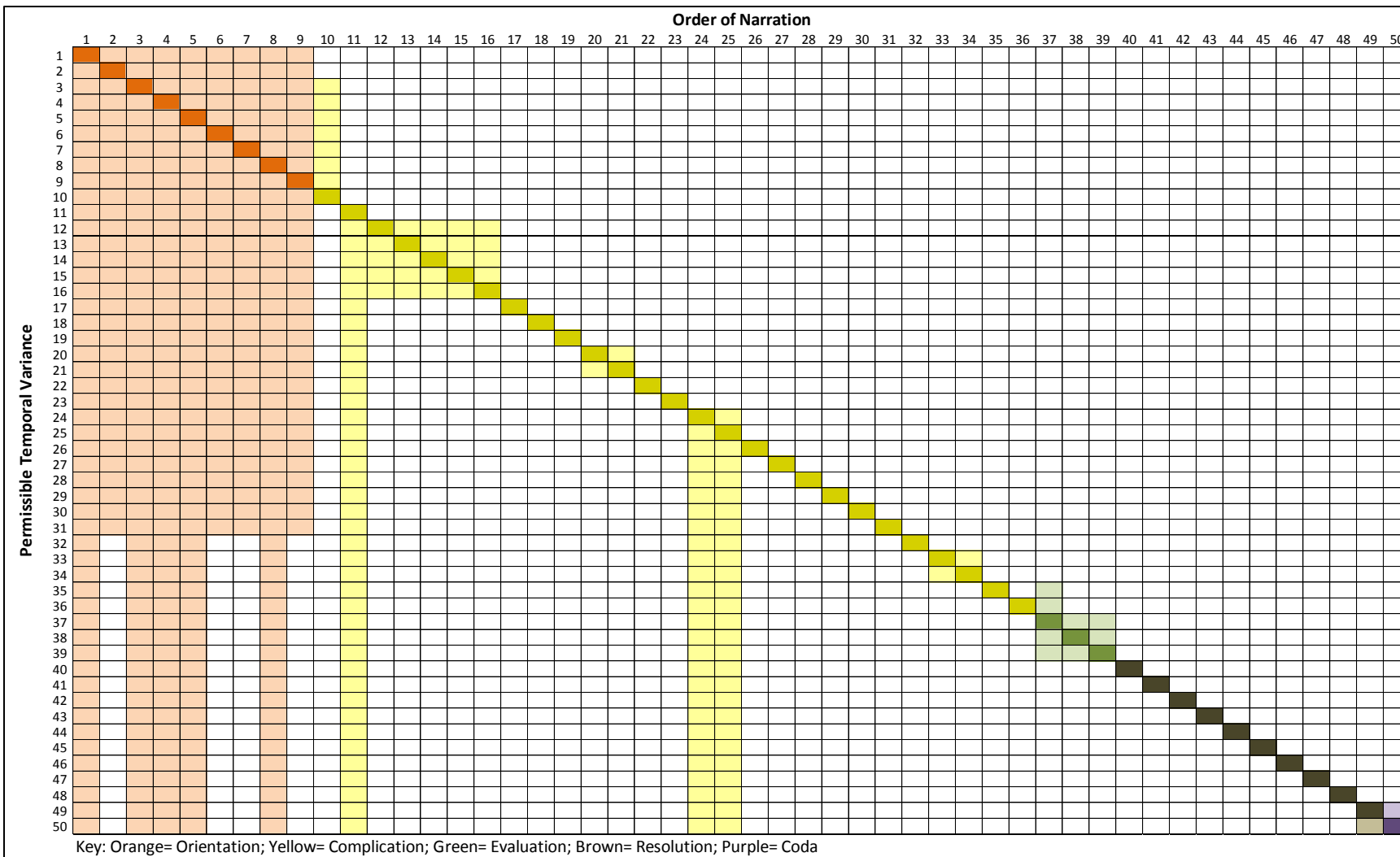
(Randolph, Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales, 1952, pp. 103-105)





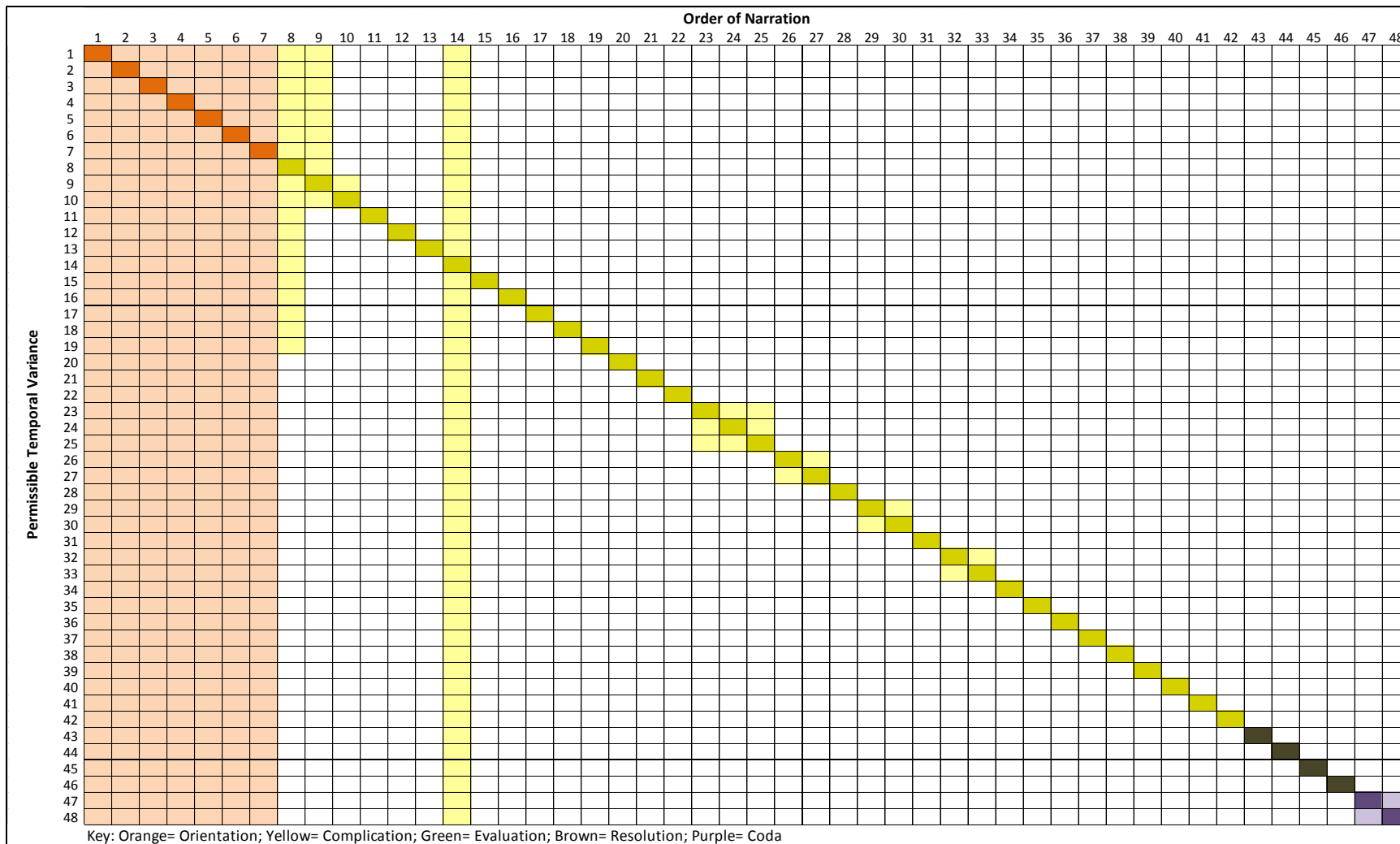
**The King's Daughter Laughed**

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 83-85)



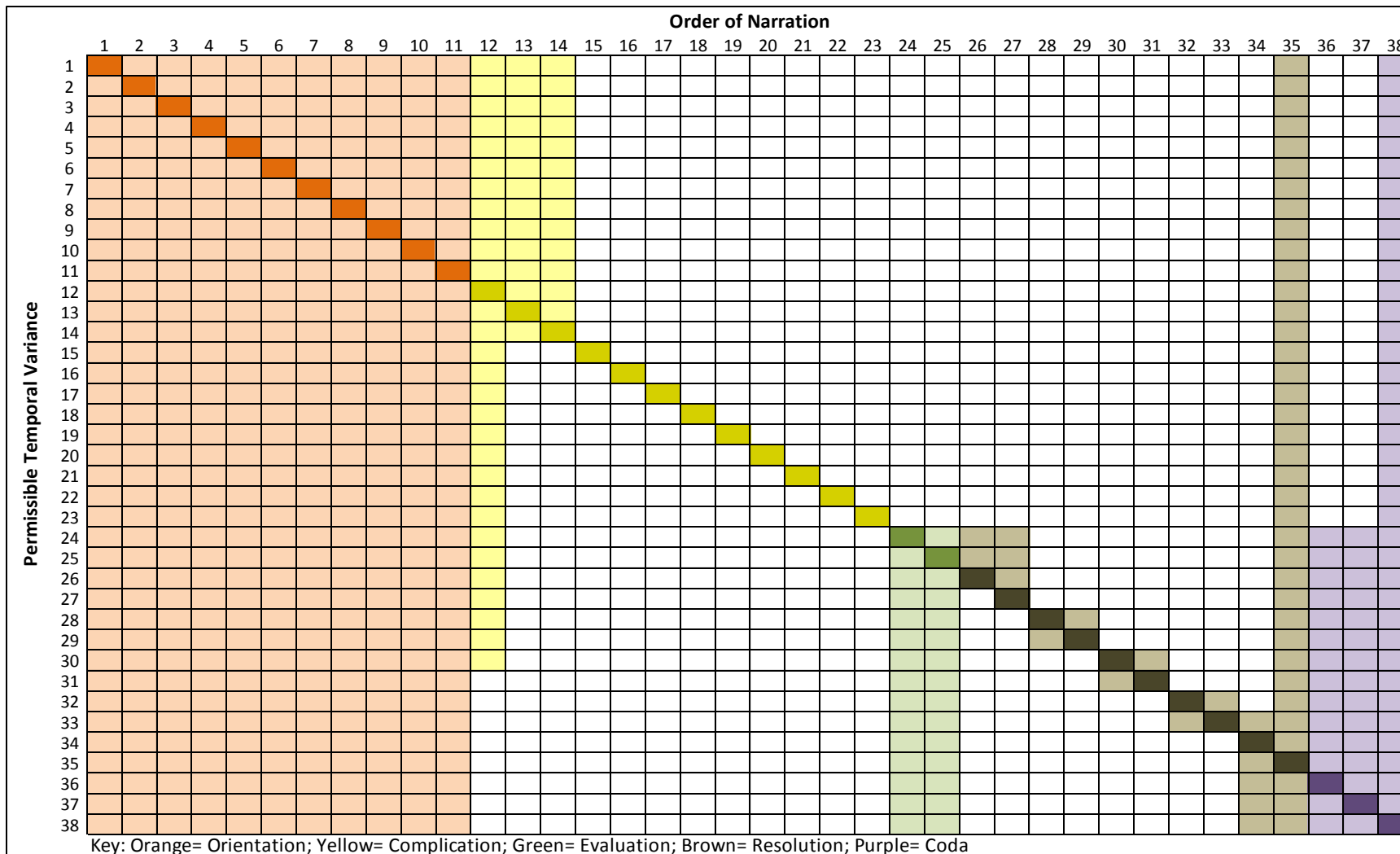
### Little Thumb and the Giant

(Randolph, Stiff as a Poker: And Other Ozark Folktales, [1955] 1993, pp. 53-55)



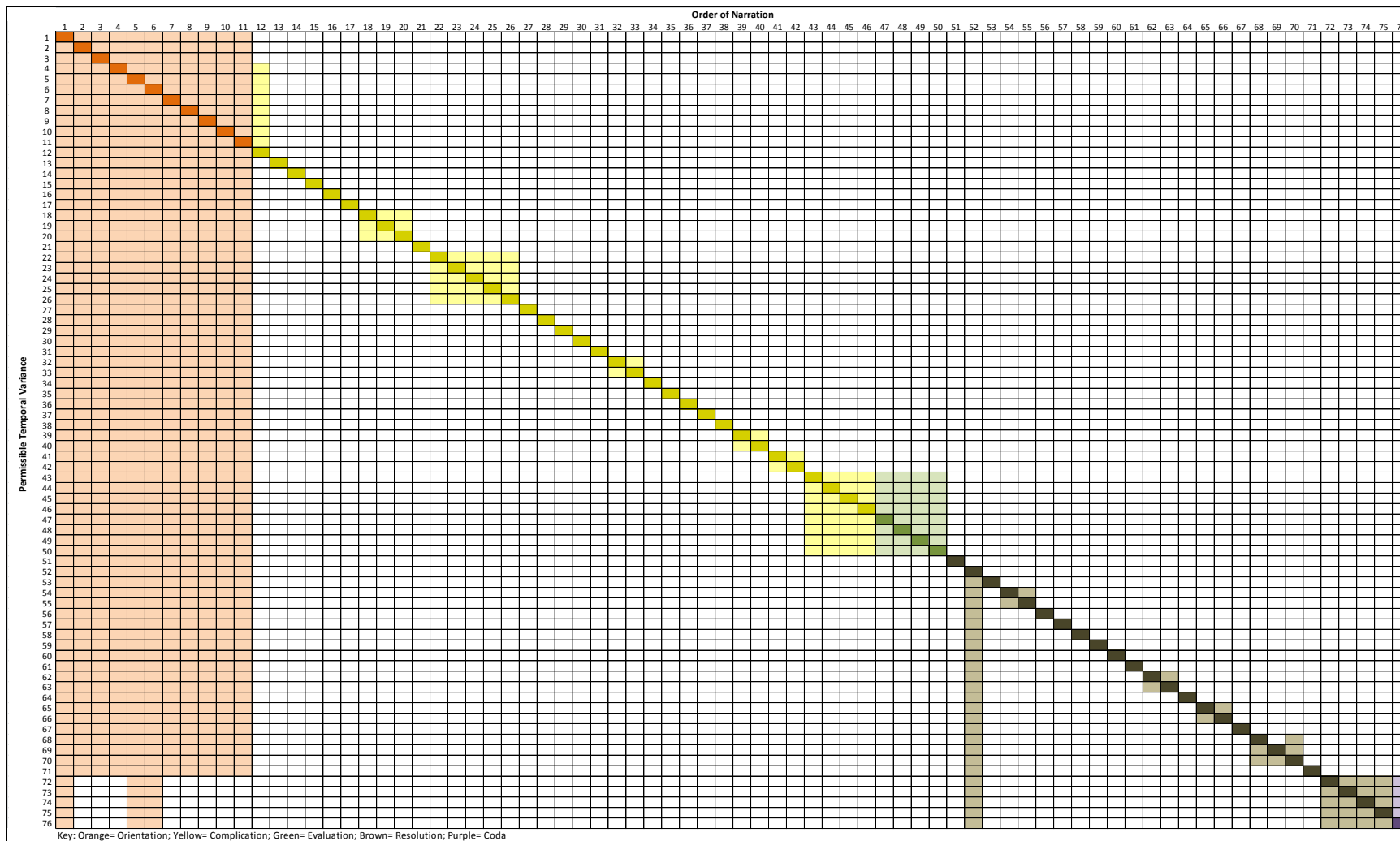
**The Queen's White Glove**

(Randolph, Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales, 1952, pp. 101-102)



### Shoes for the King

(Randolph, Who Blowed Up the Church House?: And Other Ozark Folktales, 1952, pp. 130-133)



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