

19. Bluebird Song (Jean Ritchie)

Jean Ritchie made up this song about 40 years ago with her then-little boys as part of their bedtime story and song ritual. One night, she told them of a beautiful memory from when she was a little girl. They asked for the story again the next night, and in the telling and retelling it grew into this song. They changed the old fortune-telling counting rhyme to make it work for boys as well as girls.

A D A
When I was a young thing, once on a day
A E7
Dreaming under my apple tree
A D A
A great flock of blue birds sailing through the sky
A E7 A
Espied my tree as they passed by
A E7 D A
And oh! it was a wonderful sight to see
D A E7
When they settled down to rest on my apple tree
A D A
Count them, said my mother, How, said I
A E7 A
Out of the window came this reply:
A D A
One-you'll have sorrow, two-you'll have joy
A E7
Three-get a present, four-get a boy
A D A
Five-receive silver, six-receive gold
E7 A
Seven's a secret that's never been told
A E7 A
Eight-a love letter with promises three
A E7 A
Nine means your true love's as true as can be.

Only once in a lifetime, the old folks say
The vision of the bluebirds will come your way
And only if you're dreaming and only if you're still
And only in an apple tree on a green hill
So stop all your hurrying and worrying away
Take time for dreaming on a sunny day
Wait for the bluebirds, and when they come along
Tell your fortune with the Bluebird Song.

One-you'll have gladness, two-you'll have strife
Three-get a present, four-get a wife...

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