



The Dwarf Long-Nose

Wilhelm Hauff

German

Advanced
55 min read

Many years ago, in a certain city in Germany, there lived an honest cobbler and his wife. The good man sat all day and mended boots and shoes; he made new ones too, if he could get a customer to trust him with the job, but then he had first to buy the leather, for he was too poor to keep a stock in hand. His wife sold fruit and vegetables, which she grew in a little plot of ground outside the city gates. She had many customers, for she was clean and tidy, and had a knack of setting out her wares to be best advantage. The cobbler and his wife had a beautiful little boy, named Jacob. Although he was eight years of age he was tall and well-grown, and so he sat by his mother's side in the market-place, and acted as errand boy to the house-wives and cooks who made large purchases from his mother, carrying the fruit and vegetables home for them.

Very often he came back with a piece of money in his pocket, or at least with a cake, or some sweetmeats, for he was so pretty and obliging that people liked to see him in their homes. One morning the cobbler's wife was sitting in her accustomed place in the market. She had a supply of cabbages and other vegetables, fresh herbs and seeds, and a smaller basket of early pears and apricots. Little Jacob sat beside her and called out in his shrill little voice: "Come buy, come buy, fine cabbages, fresh herbs, early pears, fine ripe apples and apricots. Come buy, buy, buy, my mother's goods are cheap today."

An old woman came slowly across the market-place. She was dressed in rags and tatters and had a little, pointed face, all wrinkled and furrowed with age, red-rimmed eyes, and a sharp hooked nose that nearly met the pointed chin. She helped herself along with a stick, and it is difficult to say how she moved, for she

stumbled and limped and rolled along almost as though her legs were broken-down wheels which would soon give way. The cobbler's wife stared hard at her, for although she had been sitting in the market-place every day for the last sixteen years she had never noticed the queer old creature before. But she shuddered involuntarily when the old woman hobbled towards her and stood still before the baskets.

"Are you Hannah, the vegetable dealer?" she said in a cracked unpleasant voice, her head shaking as though with palsy. "Yes, that is my name," replied the cobbler's wife, "is there anything I can serve you with?"

"To must see, I must see," she replied. "Let me look at our herbs and see if you have anything I require." She plunged her brown skinny fingers into the basket of herbs which had been so neatly set out, and, grasping handful after handful, put them to her long hooked nose and smelt them. The cobbler's wife was much put out to see her rare herbs handled in this way, but she did not like to say anything, for it was the customer's right to examine the goods, and besides she was half afraid of the old woman. When the whole of the basket of herbs had been handled and turned over the old woman muttered — "Rubbish, rubbish, the whole lot of it. Fifty years ago I could have bought what I wanted; this is good for nothing."

These words angered little Jacob. "You are a rude old woman," he said angrily; "first you take up our beautiful fresh herbs in your nasty between fingers and crush them, then you put them to our long, hooked nose, so that nobody else who had seen you, would want to buy them, and then you miscall our wares, as bad stuff and rubbish when even the Duke's cook does not disdain to buy from us."

The old woman looked fixedly at the spirited lad and laughed in a repulsive manner. Then said she, in a hoarse croaking voice, "Ah, my little man, do you like my nose, my nice long nose? Then you shall have a nice long nose too, one that shall reach from the middle of your face right down below your chin."

As she talked she shuffled along to the other basket in which the cabbages were placed. She took the finest creamy crisp heads and crushed them in her hands until they creaked and cracked, then threw them back into the basket anyhow. "Bad goods, bad cabbages," she said.

"Don't shake your head to and fro like that," cried the little boy, beginning to feel frightened. "Your neck is as thin as a cabbage stalk and looks as though it might snap in two, and if your head rolled off into our cabbage basket, who would buy from us then?"

"So you don't like thin necks, eh?" muttered the old woman. "Very well, then, you shall have none at all. Your

head shall stick close down to our shoulders so that there will be no danger of its falling off your little body.”

“Come, come, don’t talk such rubbish to the child,” said the cobbler’s wife, vexed at length, “if you wish to buy anything make your choice for you are frightening other customers away.”

“Very well,” answered the old woman grimly, “I will buy these six cabbages. But you must let your little son carry them home for me, for I have to support myself on my stick and can carry nothing myself. I will reward him for his trouble.”

The little boy did not want to go and began to cry, for he was afraid of the ugly old woman, but his mother bade him go quite sternly, she would’ve been ashamed to let the weakly old creature carry such a heavy burden, so he put the cabbages in a cloth and followed the old woman from the market-place. She walked so slowly that it was about three-quarters of an hour before they reached her home, which was in a very out-of-the-way part of the town, and which was a miserable-looking little house.

The old woman drew a rusty key from her pocket and slipped it into the keyhole, and the door sprang open. But what was little Jacob’s astonishment on entering the house to find it most beautiful. The walls and ceiling were of marble, the furniture of ebony, inlaid with gold and polished jewels, and the floor was of glass and so slippery that the little boy fell down several times. The old woman drew a little silver whistle from her pocket and blew it so shrilly that the tones resounded all through the house. A number of guinea-pigs at once came hurrying down the stairs, and Jacob was astounded to see that they were walking erect on their hind legs and had their feet thrust into nut-shells instead of shoes. They wore men’s clothing and had hats on their heads made in the newest fashion.

“Where have you put my slippers, you ragamuffins?” asked the old woman, striking them with her staff, so that they began to whine and jump about. “How much longer do you expect to keep me standing here?”

The guinea-pigs bounded up the stairs and soon returned with a pair of cocoa-nut shells, lined and bound with leather. These they put on the old woman’s feet and at once she ceased to hobble and limp, flung away her staff, and began to glide about over the slippery floor with the greatest rapidity, dragging Jacob after her. She came at length to a room bearing some resemblance to a kitchen, though the tables were of mahogany, and the couches and chairs covered with exquisite tapestries.

“Sit down,” said the old woman in friendly tones, pushing him as she spoke into a corner of a sofa and then

rolling a table in front of him, so that he could not get out again. "You must be tired, walking so far, and carrying such a heavy burden," she said, "now I am going to reward you for your trouble and make you some soup such as you have never tasted before, and will remember all your life long."

She again blew her whistle and again a number of guinea-pigs appeared, dressed in human attire. They wore cook's aprons, and had cooking spoons and carving knives stuck in their waistbands. After them came a crowd of squirrels, clad in wide Turkish trousers, with little green velvet caps on their heads. They appeared to be the kitchen servants, for they at once began to clamber up and down the walls and brought pots and pans, eggs and butter, herbs and flour, and carried them to the firepice, where the old woman seemed to be very busy with her cookery. The fire burned merrily and the contents of the pans began to steam and hiss and send forth a very pleasant smell.

At length the soup was cooked and the old woman poured some into a silver dish and set it before little Jacob, "Eat, my little man," said she, "and you will have all that you have coveted in me. You shall become a clever cook too, but you shall never, never find the herb that was missing in your mother's basket."

The boy did not understand what she was talking about; but he went on eating his soup, which was delicious. His mother often cooked tasty dishes for him, but never anything like this. An odour of fine herbs and vegetables arose from it, it was both sour and sweet and very strong. As he finished the last of it the guinea-pigs set light to some incense, which rose in a blue cloud and was wafted through the room. Thicker and thicker the incense rose and the little boy began to feel stupefied. He tried to rise, telling himself that he must hasten back to his mother, but he only fell back again, and at length, quite overcome, he fell fast asleep on the old woman's sofa. Then he began to dream, such strange dreams!

It seemed to him as though the old woman took off all his clothes and dressed him up in a squirrel's skin and he was at once able to jump about like the other squirrels in the house and began to take his place with them and the guinea-pigs, and that, like they, he too became one of the old woman's servants. At first he was the shoe-black and it was his duty to polish the cocoa-nut shells the old woman wore instead of shoes. He had learnt to polish shoes in his own home, and as his father was a cobbler he had been particularly well taught, so that he was clever at his work.

A year seemed to pass and then he dreamt that he was given more important duties. He and some other squirrels were set to work to catch the sunbeam dust and sift it through fine sieves. This dust was used instead

of flour to make the bread the old woman ate, for she had no teeth, and sunbeam dust makes the very softest and finest of bread.

Another dream year passed and then he was promoted to be one of the water-carriers. You must not imagine the old woman kept a water-cistern or a water-butt handy. Oh! dear no! Jacob and the squirrels had to draw the dew from the roses into hazel-nut shells; this was the old woman's drinking water, and as she was always thirsty it was hard work to keep her supplied with it. At the end of another year he was appointed to do the indoor work. His particular duty was to keep the glass floor in order. He had to sweep it over and then, wrap soft polishing cloths round his feet and slide up and down the room until the glass shone brilliantly.

At the end of the year he was promoted to the kitchen; this was a place of honour, only to be reached after long training. He began at the beginning as a scullion and advanced rapidly until he was head cook. Sometimes he could not but wonder at his own skill, for he could cook the most difficult dishes and could make no less than two hundred different kinds of pastries. Then he was a first-rate hand at soups, and could make every kind that had ever been heard of, and knew the use of every kind of vegetable that grew. Several years had now passed away in the service of the old woman and one day she put on her cocoa-nut shoes, took her staff and basket in her hand, and prepared to go out.

Before leaving she told Jacob to cook a chicken for her dinner on her return and be sure to stuff it well with seasoning. When he had prepared the chicken, he went to the room where the herbs were kept to collect some to stuff it with, and to his surprise saw a little cupboard that he had not noticed before. The door was ajar and he peeped curiously in and saw a number of little baskets from which issued a strong and pleasant odour. He opened one of them and saw that it contained a very curious-looking plant. The leaves and stalks were of a bluish-green colour and it bore a flower of a deep red hue, flecked with yellow.

He looked closely at the flower, then smelt it and noticed it had the same scent as the soup which the old woman had once cooked for him. It was a very strong scent, so strong indeed that it made him sneeze, and he went on sneezing again and again until at length — he awoke. He lay on the old woman's sofa and looked around him in surprise.

"How real dreams do seem sometimes," he said to himself. "I could have been certain that I was a squirrel just now, and had guinea-pigs and squirrels for my companions, also that I had learnt to be a first-rate cook. How Mother will laugh when I tell her all about it, but she will scold me, too, for having fallen asleep in a stranger's

house instead of helping her in the market-place.”

He jumped up in a hurry but his limbs were stiff from sleeping so long, especially his neck; he could not turn it about very easily, and he seemed so sleepy still that he kept striking his nose against the walls and cupboards. As he stood upon the threshold the guinea-pigs and squirrels came whimpering round him as though they would like to go with him and he begged them to come, for they were dear little creatures, but they went clattering back in their nutshell shoes and he could hear them squeaking away in the house.

The old woman had brought him a long distance from the market-place, and he had some difficulty in finding his way back through the narrow lanes, especially as there seemed to be a great crowd of people. Somewhere near he thought there must be a dwarf to be seen, for the people were pushing and craning their necks and calling out to one another, “Just look, what a hideous dwarf! Where can he come from? What a long nose he has, and how his head is sunk between his high shoulders; he has no neck at all, and see what great brown hands he has.”

Jacob would have liked to have seen the dwarf himself, for he always liked to see anything extra-ordinary but he could not wait, because he knew he ought to hurry back to his mother. He felt frightened and nervous when at length he reached the market-place, for his mother looked so altered. He felt sure he could not have slept very long, for she had still a quantity of fruit and vegetables unsold, but she sat with her head leaning on her hand, never calling out to the passers-by to buy her wares. She was paler too, and looked very sad. He hesitated as to what he should do, but at length he took heart and crept up behind her and, laying his hand caressingly upon her arm, said: “Mother dear, what ails you? Are you angry with me?”

She turned to look at him, but started back with a cry of horror. “What do you want with me, you hideous dwarf,” she cried. “Such jokes are out of place.”

“But, Mother,” said Jacob in alarm, “you cannot be well. Why do you drive your son away?”

“Have I not told you to go away,” said Hannah angrily, “you will get nothing from me by such jokes, you ugly creature.”

“She must be out of her mind,” said the little one, “however shall I get her back home? Mother dear, look well at me, I am your own little son Jacob.”

“Now you have gone too far with your impertinence,” cried the woman. “Not content, you hideous dwarf, with

standing there and frightening my customers away, you must needs make game of my grief and sorrow.

Neighbours, listen to this fellow, who dares to say he is my son Jacob.”

Her neighbours all came crowding round her and began to abuse poor Jacob in no measured terms, telling him it was cruel to joke with a bereaved mother who had had her lovely boy stolen away seven long years ago and they threatened to tear him limb from limb if he did not go away at once. Poor Jacob knew not what to make of it all. He had gone that morning with his mother to the market-place, or so he believed, had helped her set out her wares of fruit and vegetables, had carried home the old woman’s cabbages, taken a little soup and fallen asleep for a short time, and yet his mother and the neighbours declared he had been absent seven years. And they called him a horrible dwarf! What could have taken place?

When he saw that his mother would have nothing to do with him the tears came into his eyes, and he turned sadly away and went up the street towards the little shop where his father sat and mended shoes during the day-time. “I will see if he will recognise me,” he said to himself. “I will just stand in the doorway and speak to him.”

When he reached the cobbler’s shop he stood in the doorway and looked in. The old man was so busy that he did not notice him at first, but presently, on looking up, he dropped the shoe he was mending and cried out: “Good gracious me, what is that?” “Good evening, master,” said the little man, as he entered the shop, “how is trade just now?”

“Bad, very bad, little gentleman,” said the cobbler, “I cannot work as well as I did, I am getting old and have no one to help me, for I cannot afford an assistant.” Jacob was astounded that his father should not have recognised him either, so he answered: “Have you no son whom you could train to help you?”

“I had one, Jacob by name; he should be a tall, well-grown youth by now, who would have been able to be my right hand, for even as a little fellow he was handy and clever at my trade. He was so handsome too, and had such pleasant manners, that he would no doubt have brought me more customers; very likely by this time I might have given up cobbling shoes and have made new ones instead. But alas! such is life!”

“Where is your son then?” enquired Jacob with trembling voice.

“No one can tell,” replied the old man, “for seven years ago he was stolen from us.”

“Seven years ago,” cried Jacob in horrorstricken tones.

“Yes, little gentleman, seven long years ago. I remember it as though it were yesterday. My wife came home from the market weeping and wringing her hands, the child had been absent all day, and though she had searched for him everywhere she had not been able to find him. I had warned her many a time to keep a careful eye upon our pretty boy, telling her there were bad folks in the town who might steal him for the sake of his good looks. But she was proud of him, and often, when the gentry bought fruit and vegetables of her, she sent him to carry home their purchases. But one day an ugly old woman came into the market and began to bargain with her. In the end she bought more than she could carry, and my wife, being a kind-hearted woman, let her take the boy with her, and from that hour to this he has never been seen again.”

“And that was seven years ago?” asked Jacob. “Seven years, alas! We sought him high and low, and our neighbours, who had all known and loved the dear little fellow, helped in the search; but without avail. Neither could we hear any news of the old woman who had taken him away. No one seemed to know anything about her except one old woman who was over ninety years of age, and she said she must be the wicked Fairy Herbina, who visited the town once every fifty years to buy things she required.”

Thus spoke Jacob’s father, as he hammered away at his shoe and drew the thread backwards and forwards busily, and the poor little fellow began to understand at last what had happened to him. It had been no dream, but, transformed into a squirrel, he had really served the wicked fairy for seven years. His heart was well-nigh ready to burst with rage and grief. Seven years of his youth had been stolen from him and what had he received in return? He had learnt to polish cocoa-nut shoes and glass floors. Also he had learnt all the secrets of the art of cookery from the old woman’s guinea-pigs!

He stood so long considering what had been said, that his father asked him at length: “Can I do anything for you, sir? Do you require a pair of shoes, or,” he added with a smile, “perhaps a covering for your nose would be useful to you.”

“What is the matter with my nose?” asked Jacob, “why should I require a covering for it?”

“A’ell,” replied the cobbler, “ever}’one to his taste. But I must say if I had a nose like yours I would make a case for it of bright red leather. See, I have just such a piece by me. A good stout cover for your nose would be most useful, for I am quite sure you must be constantly knocking- it against everything that comes in your way.”

The little fellow’s heart sank with fear. He felt his nose and found it was very thick and quite two spans in length. And so the old woman had altered his appearance too! That was why his mother had not known him and why everyone called him “an ugly dwarf.”

” Master,” he said to his father, ” have you a mirror you could lend me?”

“Young sir,” said the father earnestly, “your figure is hardly such as to give you cause for conceit, and you have no reason to look into a glass constantly. Break yourself of the habit, in your case it is a foolish one.”

“Believe me it is not out of conceit that I wish to see myself,” said Jacob, “and I do beseech you to lend me a glass for a moment.”

“I do not possess such a thing,” said the cobbler. “My wife had one somewhere, but I do not know where she has hidden it. If you really do wish to see yourself, you had best go across the road and ask Urban, the barber, to let you take a look in his. He has one about twice the size of your head, so go and admire yourself by all means.”

With these words his father took him by the shoulders and pushed him gently from the shop, locked the door upon him and went on with his work. Jacob, who had known the barber well in days gone by, crossed the road and entered his shop. “Good-morning, Urban,” he said, “I have come to ask a favour of you. Will you be so good as to allow me a glance into your looking-glass?”

“With pleasure, there it stands,” he said laughing heartily, and the customer who was being shaved laughed also. “You are a handsome little fellow,” the barber went on, “tall and slim, a neck like a swan, hands as dainty as a queen’s, and as pretty a little nose as one could see anywhere. It is no wonder that you are conceited, and wish to take a glance at yourself. Well, you are welcome to the use of my mirrors, for it shall never be said of me that I was so jealous of your good looks I would not lend you my mirror to admire them in.”

Shrieks of laughter greeted the barber’s words, but poor little Jacob, who had seen himself reflected in the mirror, could not keep the tears from his eyes. “No wonder you did not recognise your son. Mother dear,” he

said to himself, "in the happy days when you were wont to parade him proudly before the neighbours' eyes, he bore little resemblance to the thing he has now become."

Poor fellow, his eyes were small and set like a pig's, his nose was enormous and reached beyond his chin, his neck had disappeared altogether, and his head had sunk down between his shoulders, so that it was painful to attempt to move it either to the right or left. He was no taller than he had been seven years before, but his back and his chest were bowed out in such a manner that they resembled a well-hulled sack supported upon two weak little legs. His arms, however, had grown so long that they hung down almost to his feet, and his coarse brown hands were the size of those of a full-grown man, with ugly spider-like fingers. The handsome, lively little Jacob had been changed into an ugly and repulsive-looking dwarf.

He thought once more of the morning on which the old witch had fingered his mother's goods and when he had twitted her with her large nose and huge hands. Everything he had found fault with in her she held given him now, with the exception of the thin neck, for he had no neck at all.

"Surely you have admired yourself sufficiently," said the barber laughingly. "Never in my dreams have I seen such a comical fellow as you, and I have a proposal to make to you. It is true I have a great many customers, but not quite as I had at one time for my rival, Barber Lather, has come across a giant and has engaged him to stand at his door and invite the people to enter. Now a giant is no very great wonder, but you are, my little man. Enter into my service, and I will give you board and lodging and clothing free, and all you will have to do is to stand at my door and ask folks to come in and be shaved, and hand the towels, soap and so on to the customers. I shall get more customers and you may be sure you will receive a good many coins for yourself."

The little fellow was inwardly very much hurt that he should have been invited to act as a barbers decoy; but he answered quite politely that he did not wish for such employment and walked out of the shop. His one consolation was that, however much the old witch had altered his body, she had had no control over his spirit. He felt that his mind had become enlarged and improved, and he knew himself to be wiser and more intelligent than he had been seven years previously. He wasted no time in bewailing the loss of his good looks, but what did grieve him was the thought that he had been driven like a dog from his father's door, and therefore he determined to make one more effort to convince his mother of his identity.

He returned to the market-place and begged her to listen quietly to him. He reminded her of the day on which the old woman had taken him away and recalled to her many incidents of his childhood. Then he told her how,

transformed into a squirrel, he had served the wicked fairy for seven years, and how his present hideous features had been given him because he had found fault with the old woman's features. The cobbler's wife knew not what to believe. Every detail he had told her of his childhood was correct, and yet she could not believe it possible that he could have been changed into a squirrel, besides which she did not believe in fairies, good or evil.

When she looked at the ugly little dwarf she found it impossible to accept him as her son. She thought the best thing that could be done was to talk the matter over with her husband, and so she collected her baskets and she and Jacob went back to the cobbler's shop. "See here," she said, "this fellow declares he is our lost Jacob. He has described to me exactly how he was stolen away seven years ago and how he has been bewitched by a bad fairy."

"Indeed," cried the cobbler angrily, "he has told you exactly what I told him an hour ago, and has tried to take you in with his story. Bewitched was he, well, I will disenchant this little son of mine." So saying, the cobbler took a bundle of leather strappings and, seizing poor Jacob, whipped him mercifully, until the poor fellow, screaming with pain, managed to make his escape. It is strange how little sympathy is ever shown to an unfortunate being who happens to have anything ridiculous about his appearance.

This was the reason that poor Jacob was obliged to pass all that day and night without tasting food and that he had no better couch than the cold steps of a church. But, notwithstanding, he slept until the morning sun rose and wakened him, and then he set himself earnestly to consider how he was to earn a livelihood for himself, seeing that this father and mother had cast him off. He was too proud to serve as a barber's sign post, or to exhibit himself in a show for money. But, remembering how excellently he had learnt to cook when he was in his squirrel form, he thought it possible that he might make use of his art now; at any rate he determined to try.

He remembered to have heard that the Duke who owned that country was said to be very fond of good living, and so, as soon as the day was sufficiently advanced, he made his way to the palace. The porter at the great gateway laughed at him in scorn when he said he wished to see the chief cook, but on his persisting he led him across the courtyard; all the servants who were about the place stared at him, and then followed in his train, laughing and jeering at him. They made such an uproar that the steward came out to see what all the noise was about. He carried a whip in his hand and with it he laid about him right and left. "You hounds," said he, "how dare you disturb your master's slumbers? Don't you know that he is not awake yet?"

"But, sir," cried the servants, "look what brings us here. Is that not excuse enough? Look at the queer little

dwarf we are bringing you?”

As the steward saw poor Jacob he had hard work to keep from laughing, too, but as he considered it would be beneath his dignity to join in the mirth with the other servants he managed to restrain himself, and driving them off with his whip, led Jacob into his own apartments and asked him what he wanted. Jacob begged to be conducted to the head cook, but the steward could scarcely believe him.

“Surely, my little man, it is to me you wish to apply for a situation. Do you not wish to become the Duke’s jester?”

“No, sir,” replied the dwarf. “I am a first-rate cook and understand how to prepare all sorts of delicacies. I thought the head cook might be willing to make use of my art.”

“Every man to his own liking, little man ; but it seems to me you are rather a foolish fellow. As the Duke’s jester you would have had no work to do, fine clothes to wear, and plenty of good food to eat and drink. Still, we will see what we can do for you, though I doubt if your cookery is sufficiently good to suit the Duke’s table, and you are too good to be made a mere scullion of.”

The steward then led him to the head cook, to whom Jacob hastened to offer his services. The head cook took a good look at him and burst out laughing. “You a cook indeed!” he said scornfully. “Why, you could not reach the top of the stove to stir a pan. Someone has been making game of you in sending you here.”

But Jacob was not to be put off in this way. “Of what account are a few eggs, syrup and wine, flour and spices in a house like this?” he said; “order me to make any tasty dish you can think of and allow me to have the ingredients I require and you shall soon judge whether or no I am a good cook.”

“Well, so be it,” said the head cook, and, taking the steward’s arm, he led the way to the kitchen. “Just for the joke of the thing we will let the little man do as he wishes.”

The kitchen was a magnificent place. Fires burned in twenty huge stoves, a stream of clear water, which served also for a fish-pond, flowed through the apartment, the cupboards which contained the stores mostly in use were of marble and costly wood, and there were ten large pantries containing every kind of delicious foods from both Eastern and Western countries. Numbers of servants were running to and fro, carrying kettles and pans and spoons and ladles. As the head cook entered they all stood still and there was not a sound to be heard but the crackling of the fires and the rippling of the stream.

“What has the Duke ordered for his breakfast to-day?” the great man asked of one of the inferior cooks. “My lord has been pleased to order Danish soup and red Hamburg patties,” replied the man. “Very well,” said the head cook, turning to Jacob, “you hear what his Highness has ordered. Will you undertake to prepare such difficult dishes? As to the Hamburg patties, you will never be able to make them, for the recipe is a secret.”

“There is nothing easier,” replied the dwarf, for as a squirrel cook he had often been called upon to prepare these dishes. “For the soup I shall require herbs, spices, wild boar’s head, certain roots, vegetables, and eggs, and for the patties (here he lowered his voice so that only the steward and the head cook could hear him) I require four kinds of meat, ginger, and a sprig of a herb that is known by the name of ‘trencher-man’s mint.’”

“By my honour as a cook, you must have learnt your trade from a magician,” said the head cook, “You have hit upon the right ingredients, and the mint is an addition I never thought of, but which will certainly add to the flavour of the dish.”

“Well,” said the steward, “I would not have believed it possible; but by all means let him have the things he asks for, and see how he will manage to prepare the breakfast.”

As it was found that the dwarf could not reach up to the table, a slab of marble was laid across two chairs, and all the things he asked for were set upon it. Steward, head cook and all the rest of the servants stood around and watched in amazement the clever, cleanly and brisk manner in which he prepared the food. When he had mixed everything, he ordered the pots to be placed upon the fire and allowed to boil until he said they were to be taken off. Then he began to count “One, two, three,” and so on right up to five hundred, and then he cried, “Stop! off with the pots!”

They were immediately taken off the fire, and the dwarf begged the head cook to taste the contents. A golden spoon was brought and the head cook approached the stove, lifted the lid of one of the pots, helped himself to a

spoonful of soup, then, closing his eyes, smacked his lips with pleasure and enjoyment.

“Delicious,” he murmured, “by the Duke’s head, it is delicious. Steward, will you not taste it?” The Steward tasted both soup and patties, and then stroked his waistcoat gently with delight. “Head cook,” said he, “you are an experienced and first-rate cook, but never have you made such soup or such patties.”

The head cook tasted the food again, then he reverently shook the dwarf by the hand. “Little one,” said he, “you are a master of your craft. That pinch of trencher-man’s herb has given the patties an extra flavour that renders them quite perfect.”

At this moment the Duke’s special attendant came to say that his master was ready for his break- fast, so the food was served up in silver dishes. The head cook, however, took the little man into his room and was about to have a talk with him, when a message came from the Duke desiring his attendance. He dressed himself in his best clothes and hastened into his master’s presence. The Duke was looking extremely pleased. He had finished every morsel of the food set before him and was wiping his beard as the head cook entered.

“Cook,” said he, “I have always been well satisfied with your cooking and with the work of those under you; but tell me, who prepared my breakfast this morning? I declare it has never been so well served since I sat upon the throne of my fathers. I wish to know the cook’s name, so that I may reward him with a few ducats.”

“My lord, it is a most wonderful story,” answered the head cook, and proceeded to tell his master about the dwarf who had arrived that morning and who had insisted upon being engaged as a cook. The Duke was much surprised, and sent for Jacob and questioned him close as to his name, where he came from, and so on. Poor Jacob could not very well own that he had been bewitched and changed into a squirrel, but he was not far from the truth when he said he was now without parents and that he had learnt cooking from an old woman.

The Duke did not urge him to say more, being much taken up with staring- at the strange figure and features of his new cook. “If you will serve me,” he said, “I will pay you fifty ducats a year, give you a fine robe and two pairs of breeches. Your duties will be to cook my breakfast every morning, order and superintend the preparation of my dinner, and take over the entire management of the kitchen. As I always prefer to name my servants myself, I shall give you the name of Long-Nose, and your position will be that of second head cook.”

Long-Nose fell at the feet of his new master, kissed them, and vowed to serve him faithfully. The little fellow was thus provided for, and he certainly did honour to his position, for the Duke was a different man from the

time the dwarf entered his service. Before that time he had been in the habit of throwing the plates and dishes at the head of the cook who did not manage to please him; indeed, on one occasion he had flung a calf's foot at his head cook because it was not sufficiently tender, and, catching the poor man on the forehead had hurt him so much that for three days he had to keep his bed. It is true the Duke always paid for his acts of temper afterwards with a handful of ducats, but, nevertheless, his cooks were wont to set the dishes before him in fear and with trembling hands. But since the dwarf had been in the house all had been changed. The master took five meals a day instead of three, in order to thoroughly appreciate the skill of his little servant, and never had he been dissatisfied yet, but had found everything served to him both novel and excellent.

He was always in a good temper and grew fatter day by day. Sometimes as he sat at table he would send for his head cook and Jacob and bid them share the delicious food set before him, which was considered a very great honour indeed. The dwarf was the wonder of the whole city.. The head cook constantly received entreaties from various personages to be allowed to witness the dwarfs cooking, and some of the most distinguished men in the State asked and received permission from the Duke to allow their cooks to take lessons from the little man. They paid him well for the instructions they received, but Long-Nose divided the money between all the other cooks, for he did not wish them to become jealous of him. Two whole years the dwarf passed in the Duke's service and was well content with the treatment he received. It was only the thought of his estrangement from his parents that gave him the least unhappiness. Nothing out of the common had happened to him until the following occurrence took place. He was a better hand at a bargain than most, always seeing at a glance which were the best goods on sale, and for this reason, whenever he had the time, he used to go to market himself.

One morning he went to the goose fair to buy geese. He was no longer treated with scorn and laughter, for everyone knew him to be the Duke's favourite cook, and every good wife with geese to sell thought herself lucky if his long nose turned in her direction.

He went up and down the market-place, and at length purchased three live geese which were just the size he required. He lifted the basket in which they were placed upon his broad shoulders and turned towards home. It struck him as somewhat strange that only two of the geese cackled and gabbled as geese are wont to do; the third was silent, except when she heaved a sigh that sounded almost human.

"The creature must be ill," he said aloud. "I had better cook her quickly before she gets worse." Then to his astonishment the goose answered quite plainly — "Long-Nose, look thee, If thou cook me. No good 'twill do,

The deed thou'lt rue.”

Frightened out of his wits, Long-Nose set down the cage, and the goose looked at him with her beautiful wise eyes and sighed. “There, there,” said the dwarf, “have no fear, I would not harm such a wonderful bird as yourself, for it is not once in a lifetime that one meets a goose that can talk. I wager you have not always worn feathers; I myself have been bewitched, and turned into a squirrel, and I expect it is the same with you.”

“You are right,” said the goose. “Alas! I did not always bear this humble form, and at my birth who would have dared prophecy that Mimi, the daughter of the great magician Wetterbock, would end her days in a Duke’s kitchen.”

“Set your mind at rest, dear Miss Mimi,” said the dwarf consolingly ; “so sure as I am an honest fellow and second cook to his Highness, no one shall do you any harm. I will have a coop placed for you in my own apartment and you shall have as much food as you require and I will devote all my spare time to you. The rest of the kitchen servants will be told that I am fattening- you on some particular herbs to give you a specially good flavour, and I will take the first opportunity of setting you at liberty.”

The goose thanked him with tears in her eyes, and the dwarf took means to provide for her as he had promised. She was placed in a wicker cage and fed by Long-Nose alone, and he took care, instead of giving her the ordinary food required by geese, to serve her with dainty cakes and sweets. As often as he could he sat and talked to her and tried to comfort her. They told each other their sad stories, and in this way Long-Nose learned that Mimi was the daughter of the great magician Wetterbock, who lived on the island of Gothland. He had quarrelled with a very wicked fairy, who had managed to outwit him and, in revenge, to change Mimi into a goose, and bring her far away from her home.

The dwarf in return told her all his adventures, and she said: “I am not altogether ignorant of magic myself, having learnt some things from my father. What you tell me about the quarrel over the herb basket and your sudden transformation on smelling a certain herb proves to me that the old woman used some herb in her enchantment, and if you are able to find that herb you will probably regain your natural form.”

This was small comfort for Long-Nose, for he had not the least idea where he could find such a herb. Still, he thanked her, and tried to be a little more hopeful too. It was just at this time that the Duke had a visit from a neighbouring Prince, a friend of his. He sent for Long-Nose and said to him: “Now is the time to prove if you serve me faithfully, and are a true master of your art. This Prince, who is now my guest, lives better than

anyone I know, except myself. He prides himself upon the first-rate cooks he keeps and he is a very knowing man. Now be careful that my table is served daily with such dishes that may arouse his astonishment and envy. Never let the same kind of food appear twice during his visit. You may ask my treasurer for as much money as you require to purchase materials for your cooking. If you wanted to baste your roasts with gold and diamonds you should have them. I would sooner beggar myself than have to blush for the quality of my viands."

The dwarf bowed and promised the Duke that he would so manage that the dainty palate of the Prince could not fail to approve of the dishes set before him. The little cook exerted all his skill and spared neither his master's treasures nor himself. All day long he was enveloped in a cloud of steam, out of which issued his voice giving orders to the other cooks and scullions. It would take too long to recount all the delicious foods he cooked, suffice it to say that for a whole fortnight the Duke and his guest were served as they had never been served before, and a smile of enjoyment was constantly to be seen upon the face of the royal visitor.

At the end of that time the Duke sent for the dwarf and presented him to the Prince, asking him, at the same time, what he thought of him as a cook. "You are indeed a wonderful cook," said the noble visitor to the little man. "During- the whole of my stay here I have not had the same kind of dish twice. But I must own I have been surprised that you have never tempted our appetites with the queen of all dainties, a Souzeraine pasty."

The dwarf was rather upset, for it chanced that he had never heard of this before, but he managed to hide his discomposure. "Sir," said he, "I had hoped you were to honour this court with your presence for a long- time yet, and therefore did I delay setting this dish before you, for with what better dish could a cook serve you, as a parting greeting, than with that of a Souzeraine pasty?"

"Oh! indeed," said the Duke smiling, "so I suppose you were waiting for me to leave the world for ever before giving me the parting greeting, for I have never so much as heard of this pasty, much less tasted it. But we will wait for it no longer; to morrow morning we shall expect you to serve it up to us for breakfast."

“As my lord wills,” answered the dwarf, and bowing low he left their presence. He was terribly upset, for he had not the least idea how to make the pasty. He went to his room and there wept and bemoaned his sad fate. But the goose Mimi came to him and, after enquiring the cause of his sorrow, said: “Dry your tears, for I think I can help you in this matter. This dish was frequently set upon my father’s table and I know pretty well how it was concocted. Even if I cannot tell you every single ingredient, you will no doubt flavour the pie so deliciously that the Prince will not detect any omission.”

She then proceeded to name to the dwarf the various ingredients required. He was ready to jump for joy, and blessed the day upon which he had purchased the goose, and then set to work to make the pasty. He made a little trial one to begin with and it tasted delicious. He gave the head cook a piece to taste and he could not say enough in praise of it. The following morning he made a large one and sent it to table decorated with wreaths of flowers. He dressed himself in his state robes and entered the dining hall just as the carver had served the Duke and his guest with slices of the pasty. The Duke took a large mouthful and then cast his eyes up towards the ceiling. “Ah!” said he, as soon as he could speak, “this has been truly called the queen of pasties, and as for my cook, he is the king of cooks. What say you, dear friend?”

The guest took one or two mouthfuls before answering, and then, having tasted the flavour, he said rather scornfully as he pushed away his plate: “It is as I thought! It is an excellent pasty no doubt, hut not the Souzeraine.”

The Duke frowned and reddened with anger — “Dog of a dwarf,” cried he, “how dare you treat me so? I have a good mind to have your head chopped off as a punishment for your bad cookery.”

“My lord, I assure you I have made the pasty according to all the rules of the art of cookery,” replied the dwarf trembling.

“It is false, you rascal,” replied the Duke, kicking him away. “If it were right my guest would not say it was wrong. I have a good mind to have you made into mincemeat and baked in a pie yourself.”

“Have mercy,” cried the poor little man, prostrating- himself before the royal guest and clasping his feet in his arms. “I pray you tell me what I have left out of the pasty that it fails to suit your palate? Do not condemn me to death for a handful of meat and flour.”

“It will be of little assistance to you to know, my dear Long-Nose,” answered the Prince with a smile, “I was

quite certain yesterday that you would not be able to make this pastry as well as my cook can, because the chief requisite is a herb which does not grow in this country. It is known as “The Cook’s Delight,” and without this the pastry is practically tasteless, and your master will never eat it with the same pleasure that I can in my own country.”

Then the Duke flew into the most terrible rage —“I vow by my honour that either you shall taste this pastry tomorrow morning, exactly as you are accustomed to have it, or else the head of this fellow shall pay for his blunder. Go, dog of a dwarf, I give you four-and-twenty hours to accomplish it in.”

The poor dwarf went to his room and told this fresh trouble to the goose. “Come, take heart,” said she, “fortunately I know every herb that grows and I am sure I can find this one for you. It is a happy thing that it chanced to be a new moon tonight, for only at the time of the new moon does this plant grow. But tell me, are there any ancient chestnut trees near the palace?”

“Oh ! yes,” replied the dwarf, with a lighter heart. “Two hundred paces from the palace, beside the lake, there is quite a large group of chestnut trees; but why do you ask?”

“Because the herb is only found at the root of very old chestnut trees,” answered Mimi. “Let us lose no time, but go and search for what you require. Take me under your arm and put me down when we have reached the spot, and I will help you search.”

He did as she bade him; but as he would have passed out of the gateway of the palace, the sentry barred the way with his lance. “My good Long- Nose,” said he, “I have the strictest orders not to let you out of the house. Your end has come, I fear.” “But surely I can go into the garden,” replied the dwarf. “Be so good as to send one of your comrades to enquire if I may go into the garden to search for herbs.”

The sentry did so and permission was given, for the garden had such high walls surrounding it that it seemed impossible for him to escape. As soon as he was in the open he placed Mimi carefully on the ground and she at once began to run towards the lake on the banks of which the chestnut trees grew. Long-Nose followed her with a sinking heart, for he had already made up his mind that, if the herb could not be found, he would drown himself in the lake rather than allow his head to be cut off. The goose sought in vain for the herb, she left not a blade of grass unturned, and at length she began to cry from sympathy. She would not give up the search until evening began to fall, and the darkness made it difficult to distinguish any surrounding objects.

Just as they were about to abandon the search the dwarf looked across the lake and then cried out: "Look, at the other side of the lake is a huge old chestnut tree. Let us go and search there, perhaps good fortune blooms yonder." The goose waddled and flew and waddled and flew, the dwarf hurrying after her as fast as his little legs would let him, until at length they had reached the other side of the lake. The chestnut tree cast a vast shade and it was so dark all around that it was difficult to distinguish anything, but suddenly the goose gave a cry of joy and flapped her wings with delight. She thrust her head into the long grass and plucked something which she deftly offered in her bill to Long-Nose.

"This is the herb," said she, "and it grows here in such quantities you will always have a plentiful supply." The dwarf looked at the herb thoughtfully. A sweet scent assailed his nostrils and reminded him of the scene of his transformation; the stalk, too, of the plant was of a bluish-green colour and it bore a bright red flower, flecked with yellow.

"Mimi," said he, "by great good fortune I do believe we have chanced upon the very herb that changed me from a squirrel into the creature I am now. Shall I make a trial of it?"

"Not yet," replied the goose. "Take a handful of the herbs with you and let us go back to your room. There you can collect your money and all that you possess and then we will try the power of the herb."

They returned to the dwarf's room, he with a heart beating- loudly with excitement. He took between fifty and sixty ducats he had saved, and tied them up in a bundle with some of his clothes, then saying- : "May good fortune aid me to be rid of my burden," he thrust his nose into the bunch of herbs and sniffed their fragrance. Then his limbs and joints began to crack and stretch, he could feel his head rising- from between his shoulders, squinting down his nose he could see it growing smaller and smaller, his back and chest straightened themselves out. and his legs became longer. The goose looked on in astonishment. "Oh! how tall and handsome you are," she cried, "there is not the faintest resemblance left to the dwarf Long-Nose."

As for Jacob, he was beside himself with joy; but he did not forget the thanks he owed to Mimi. His first impulse was to go to his parents, but gratitude urg-ed him to suppress this wish. "But for you," he said to Mimi, "I might have retained my hideous form all the days of my life, or I might even have lost my life. Now is the time to repay my debt. I will take you straightway to your father, whose magic powers will at once enable him to disenchant you."

The goose wept tears of joy and accepted his offer gratefully. Jacob passed the sentries safely, for they had only been ordered to bar the way to the dwarf Long-Xose. With Mimi beneath his arm he very soon reached the seashore, and before long her home was in sight. The great Wetterbock soon turned the goose into a charming young lady, and, having loaded her rescuer with valuable gifts, bade him farewell. Jacob hastened home, and his parents were only too delighted to accept the handsome young man as their long-lost son. With the presents he had received from Wetterbock he was able to purchase a shop, and he became a very rich man and lived happily all his days. But his disappearance from the Duke's palace caused a great hubbub.

When the morning came on which the Duke was to fulfil his vow and behead the dwarf if he had not found the herb, lo! the dwarf himself was missing. The Prince declared the Duke had allowed him to escape to avoid losing such a splendid cook, and said he had broken his word. They quarrelled so violently that a war ensued, which is known in all histories of those lands as "The Herb War," and when at length peace was declared it was called "The Pasty Peace," and at the reconciliation feast the Prince's cook served up a Souzeraine pasty, to which the Duke did full justice.

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com