



Kari Woodengown

Andrew Lang's Fairy Books

Norwegian

Intermediate
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There was once upon a time a King who had become a widower. His Queen had left one daughter behind her, and she was so wise and so pretty that it was impossible for any one to be wiser or prettier. For a long time the King went sorrowing for his wife, for he had loved her exceedingly; but at last he grew tired of living alone, and married a Queen who was a widow, and she also had a daughter, who was just as ill-favoured and wicked as the other was good and beautiful. The stepmother and her daughter were envious of the King's daughter because she was so pretty, but so long as the King was at home they dared do her no harm, because his love for her was so great.

Then there came a time when he made war on another King and went away to fight, and then the new Queen thought that she could do what she liked; so she both hungered and beat the King's daughter and chased her about into every corner. At last she thought that everything was too good for her, and set her to work to look after the cattle. So she went about with the cattle, and herded them in the woods and in the fields. Of food she got little or none, and grew pale and thin, and was nearly always weeping and sad. Among the herd there was a great blue bull, which always kept itself very smart and sleek, and often came to the King's daughter and let her stroke him. So one day, when she was again sitting crying and sorrowing, the Bull came up to her and asked why she was always so full of care? She made no answer, but continued to weep.

`Well,' said the Bull, `I know what it is, though you will not tell me; you are weeping because the Queen is unkind to you, and because she wants to starve you to death. But you need be under no concern about food, for

in my left ear there lies a cloth, and if you will but take it and spread it out, you can have as many dishes as you like.'

So she did this, and took the cloth and spread it out upon the grass, and then it was covered with the daintiest dishes that any one could desire, and there was wine, and mead, and cake. And now she became brisk and well again, and grew so rosy, and plump, and fair that the Queen and her scraggy daughter turned blue and white with vexation at it. The Queen could not imagine how her step-daughter could look so well on such bad food, so she ordered one of her handmaidens to follow her into the wood and watch her, and see how it was, for she thought that some of the servants must be giving her food. So the maid followed her into the wood and watched, and saw how the step-daughter took the cloth out of the Blue Bull's ear, and spread it out, and how the cloth was then covered with the most delicate dishes, which the step-daughter ate and regaled herself with. So the waiting-maid went home and told the Queen.

And now the King came home, and he had conquered the other King with whom he had been at war. So there was great gladness in the palace, but no one was more glad than the King's daughter. The Queen, however, pretended to be ill, and gave the doctor much money to say that she would never be well again unless she had some of the flesh of the Blue Bull to eat. Both the King's daughter and the people in the palace asked the doctor if there were no other means of saving her, and begged for the Bull's life, for they were all fond of him, and they all declared that there was no such Bull in the whole country; but it was all in vain, he was to be killed, and should be killed, and nothing else would serve. When the King's daughter heard it she was full of sorrow, and went down to the byre to the Bull. He too was standing there hanging his head, and looking so downcast that she fell a-weeping over him.

'What are you weeping for?' said the Bull.

So she told him that the King had come home again, and that the Queen had pretended to be ill, and that she had made the doctor say that she could never be well again unless some of the flesh of the Blue Bull was given her to eat, and that now he was to be killed.

'When once they have taken my life they will soon kill you also,' said the Bull. 'If you are of the same mind with me, we will take our departure this very night.'

The King's daughter thought that it was bad to go and leave her father, but that it was worse still to be in the same house with the Queen, so she promised the Bull that she would come.

At night, when all the others had gone to bed, the King's daughter stole softly down to the byre to the Bull, and he took her on his back and got out of the courtyard as quickly as he could. So at cock-crow next morning, when the people came to kill the Bull, he was gone, and when the King got up and asked for his daughter she was gone too. He sent forth messengers to all parts of the kingdom to search for them, and published his loss in all the parish churches, but there was no one who had seen anything of them.

In the meantime the Bull travelled through many lands with the King's daughter on his back, and one day they came to a great copper-wood, where the trees, and the branches, and the leaves, and the flowers, and everything else was of copper.

But before they entered the wood the Bull said to the King's daughter:

`When we enter into this wood, you must take the greatest care not to touch a leaf of it, or all will be over both with me and with you, for a Troll with three heads, who is the owner of the wood, lives here.'

So she said she would be on her guard, and not touch anything. And she was very careful, and bent herself out of the way of the branches, and put them aside with her hands; but it was so thickly wooded that it was all but impossible to get forward, and do what she might, she somehow or other tore off a leaf which got into her hand.

`Oh! oh! What have you done now?' said the Bull. `It will now cost us a battle for life or death; but do be careful to keep the leaf.'

Very soon afterwards they came to the end of the wood, and the Troll with three heads came rushing up to them.

`Who is that who is touching my wood?' said the Troll.

`The wood is just as much mine as yours!' said the Bull.

`We shall have a tussle for that!' shrieked the Troll.

`That may be,' said the Bull.

So they rushed on each other and fought, and as for the Bull he butted and kicked with all the strength of his body, but the Troll fought quite as well as he did, and the whole day went by before the Bull put an end to him, and then he himself was so full of wounds and so worn out that he was scarcely able to move. So they had to wait a day, and the Bull told the King's daughter to take the horn of ointment which hung at the Troll's belt, and rub him with it; then he was himself again, and the next day they set off once more. And now they journeyed on for many, many days, and then after a long, long time they came to a silver wood. The trees, and the boughs, and the leaves, and the flowers, and everything else was of silver.

Before the Bull went into the wood, he said to the King's daughter: `When we enter into this wood you must, for Heaven's sake, be very careful not to touch anything at all, and not to pluck off even so much as one leaf, or else all will be over both with you and with me. A Troll with six heads lives here, who is the owner of the wood, and I do not think I should be able to overcome him.'

`Yes,' said the King's daughter, `I will take good care not to touch what you do not wish me to touch.'

But when they got into the wood it was so crowded, and the trees so close together, that they could scarcely get forward. She was as careful as she could be, and bent aside to get out of the way of the branches, and thrust them away from before her with her hands; but every instant a branch struck against her eyes, and in spite of all her care, she happened to pull off one leaf.

`Oh! oh! What have you done now?' said the Bull. It will now cost us a battle for life or death, for this Troll has six heads and is twice as strong as the other, but do be careful to keep the leaf.'

Just as he said this came the Troll. `Who is that who is touching my wood?' he said.

`It is just as much mine as yours!'

`We shall have a tussle for that!' screamed the Troll.

`That may be,' said the Bull, and rushed at the Troll, and gored out his eyes, and drove his horns right through him so that his entrails gushed out, but the Troll fought just as well as he did, and it was three whole days before the Bull got the life out of him. But the Bull was then so weak and worn out that it was only with pain and effort that he could move, and so covered with wounds that the blood streamed from him. So he told the

King's daughter to take the horn of ointment that was hanging at the Troll's belt, and anoint him with it. She did this, and then he came to himself again, but they had to stay there and rest for a week before the Bull was able to go any farther.

At last they set forth on their way again, but the Bull was still weak, and at first could not go quickly. The King's daughter wished to spare him, and said that she was so young and light of foot that she would willingly walk, but he would not give her leave to do that, and she was forced to seat herself on his back again. So they travelled for a long time, and through many lands, and the King's daughter did not at all know where he was taking her, but after a long, long time they came to a gold wood. It was so golden that the gold dripped off it, and the trees, and the branches, and the flowers, and the leaves were all of pure gold. Here all happened just as it had happened in the copper wood and silver wood. The Bull told the King's daughter that on no account was she to touch it, for there was a Troll with nine heads who was the owner, and that he was much larger and stronger than both the others put together, and that he did not believe that he could overcome him. So she said that she would take great care not to touch anything, and he should see that she did. But when they got into the wood it was still thicker than the silver wood, and the farther they got into it the worse it grew. The wood became thicker and thicker, and closer and closer, and at last she thought there was no way whatsoever by which they could get forward; she was so terrified lest she should break anything off, that she sat and twisted, and turned herself on this side and on that, to get out of the way of the branches, and pushed them away from her with her hands, but every moment they struck against her eyes, so that she could not see what she was clutching at, and before she knew what she was doing she had a golden apple in her hands. She was now in such terror that she began to cry, and wanted to throw it away, but the Bull said that she was to keep it, and take the greatest care of it, and comforted her as well as he could, but he believed that it would be a hard struggle, and he doubted whether it would go well with him.

Just then the Troll with nine heads came, and he was so frightful that the King's daughter scarcely dared to look at him

`Who is this who is breaking my wood?' he screamed

`It is as much mine as yours!' said the Bull.

`We shall have a tussle for that!' screamed the Troll.

`That may be,' said the Bull; so they rushed at each other, and fought, and it was such a dreadful sight that the

King's daughter very nearly swooned. The Bull gored the Troll's eyes out and ran his horns right through him, but the Troll fought as well as he did, and when the Bull had gored one head to death the other heads breathed life into it again, so it was a whole week before the Bull was able to kill him. But then he himself was so worn out and weak that he could not move at all. His body was all one wound, and he could not even so much as tell the King's daughter to take the horn of ointment out of the Troll's belt and rub him with it. She did this without being told; so he came to himself again, but he had to lie there for three weeks and rest before he was in a state to move.

Then they journeyed onwards by degrees, for the Bull said that they had still a little farther to go, and in this way they crossed many high hills and thick woods. This lasted for a while, and then they came upon the fells.

`Do you see anything?' asked the Bull.

`No, I see nothing but the sky above and the wild fell side,' said the King's daughter.

Then they climbed up higher, and the fell grew more level, so that they could see farther around them.

`Do you see anything now?' said the Bull.

`Yes, I see a small castle, far, far away,' said the Princess.

`It is not so very little after all,' said the Bull.

After a long, long time they came to a high hill, where there was a precipitous wall of rock.

`Do you see nothing now?' said the Bull.

`Yes, now I see the castle quite near, and now it is much, much larger,' said the King's daughter.

‘Thither shall you go,’ said the Bull; ‘immediately below the castle there is a pig-sty, where you shall dwell. When you get there, you will find a wooden gown which you are to put on, and then go to the castle and say that you are called Kari Woodengown, and that you are seeking a place. But now you must take out your little knife and cut off my head with it, and then you must flay me and roll up my hide and put it there under the rock, and beneath the hide you must lay the copper leaf, and the silver leaf, and the golden apple. Close beside the rock a stick is standing, and when you want me for anything you have only to knock at the wall of rock with that.’

At first she would not do it, but when the Bull said that this was the only reward that he would have for what he had done for her, she could do no otherwise. So though she thought it very cruel, she slaved on and cut at the great animal with the knife till she had cut off his head and hide, and then she folded up the hide and laid it beneath the mountain wall, and put the copper leaf, and the silver leaf, and the golden apple inside it.

When she had done that she went away to the pig-sty, but all the way as she went she wept, and was very sorrowful. Then she put on the wooden gown, and walked to the King’s palace. When she got there she went into the kitchen and begged for a place, saying that her name was Kari Woodengown.

The cook told her that she might have a place and leave to stay there at once and wash up, for the girl who had done that before had just gone away. ‘And as soon as you get tired of being here you will take yourself off too,’ said he.

‘No,’ said she, ‘that I shall certainly not.’

And then she washed up, and did it very tidily.

On Sunday some strangers were coming to the King’s palace, so Kari begged to have leave to carry up the water for the Prince’s bath, but the others laughed at her and said, ‘What do you want there? Do you think the Prince will ever look at such a fright as you?’

She would not give it up, however, but went on begging until at last she got leave. When she was going upstairs her wooden gown made such a clatter that the Prince came out and said, ‘What sort of a creature may you be?’

‘I was to take this water to you,’ said Kari.

`Do you suppose that I will have any water that you bring?' said the Prince, and emptied it over her.

She had to bear that, but then she asked permission to go to church. She got that, for the church was very near. But first she went to the rock and knocked at it with the stick which was standing there, as the Bull had told her to do. Instantly a man came forth and asked what she wanted. The King's daughter said that she had got leave to go to church and listen to the priest, but that she had no clothes to go in. So he brought her a gown that was as bright as the copper wood, and she got a horse and saddle too from him. When she reached the church she was so pretty and so splendidly dressed that every one wondered who she could be, and hardly anyone listened to what the priest was saying, for they were all looking far too much at her, and the Prince himself liked her so well that he could not take his eyes off her for an instant. As she was walking out of church the Prince followed her and shut the church door after her, and thus he kept one of her gloves in his hand. Then she went away and mounted her horse again; the Prince again followed her, and asked her whence she came.

`Oh! I am from Bathland,' said Kari. And when the Prince took out the glove and wanted to give it back to her, she said:

`Darkness behind me, but light on my way, That the Prince may not see where I'm going to-day!'

The Prince had never seen the equal of that glove, and he went far and wide, asking after the country which the proud lady, who rode away without her glove, had said that she came from, but there was no one who could tell him where it lay.

Next Sunday some one had to take up a towel to the Prince.

`Ah! may I have leave to go up with that?' said Kari.

`What would be the use of that?' said the others who were in the kitchen; `you saw what happened last time.'

Kari would not give in, but went on begging for leave till she got it, and then she ran up the stairs so that her wooden gown clattered again. Out came the Prince, and when he saw that it was Kari, he snatched the towel from her and flung it right in her eyes.

`Be off at once, you ugly Troll,' said he; `do you think that I will have a towel that has been touched by your dirty fingers?'

After that the Prince went to church, and Kari also asked leave to go. They all asked how she could want to go to church when she had nothing to wear but that wooden gown, which was so black and hideous. But Kari said she thought the priest was such a good man at preaching that she got so much benefit from what he said, and at last she got leave.

She went to the rock and knocked, whereupon out came the man and gave her a gown which was much more magnificent than the first. It was embroidered with silver all over it, and it shone like the silver wood, and he gave her also a most beautiful horse, with housings embroidered with silver, and a bridle of silver too.

When the King's daughter got to church all the people were standing outside upon the hillside, and all of them wondered who on earth she could be, and the Prince was on the alert in a moment, and came and wanted to hold her horse while she alighted. But she jumped off and said that there was no need for that, for the horse was so well broken in that it stood still when she bade it and came when she called it. So they all went into the church together, but there was scarcely any one who listened to what the priest was saying, for they were all looking far too much at her, and the Prince fell much more deeply in love with her than he had been before.

When the sermon was over and she went out of the church, and was just going to mount her horse, the Prince again came and asked her where she came from.

'I am from Towelland,' said the King's daughter, and as she spoke she dropped her riding-whip, and while the Prince was stooping to pick it up she said:

'Darkness behind me, but light on my way, That the Prince may not see where I'm going to-day!'

And she was gone again, neither could the Prince see what had become of her. He went far and wide to inquire for that country from whence she had said that she came, but there was no one who could tell him where it lay, so he was forced to have patience once more.

Next Sunday some one had to go to the Prince with a comb. Kari begged for leave to go with it, but the others reminded her of what had happened last time, and scolded her for wanting to let the Prince see her when she was so black and so ugly in her wooden gown, but she would not give up asking until they gave her leave to go up to the Prince with the comb. When she went clattering up the stairs again, out came the Prince and took the comb and flung it at her, and ordered her to be off as fast as she could. After that the Prince went to church, and Kari also begged for leave to go. Again they all asked what she would do there, she who was so black and

ugly, and had no clothes that she could be seen in by other people. The Prince or some one else might very easily catch sight of her, they said, and then both she and they would suffer for it; but Kari said that they had something else to do than to look at her, and she never ceased begging until she got leave to go.

And now all happened just as it had happened twice already. She went away to the rock and knocked at it with the stick, and then the man came out and gave her a gown which was very much more magnificent than either of the others. It was almost entirely made of pure gold and diamonds, and she also got a noble horse with housings embroidered with gold, and a golden bridle.

When the King's daughter came to the church the priest and people were all standing on the hillside waiting for her, and the Prince ran up and wanted to hold the horse, but she jumped off, saying:

‘No, thank you, there is no need; my horse is so well broken in that it will stand still when I bid it.’

So they all hastened into the church together and the priest got into the pulpit, but no one listened to what he said, for they were looking far too much at her and wondering whence she came; and the Prince was far more in love than he had been on either of the former occasions, and he was mindful of nothing but of looking at her.

When the sermon was over and the King's daughter was about to leave the church, the Prince had caused a firkin of tar to be emptied out in the porch in order that he might go to help her over it; she, however, did not trouble herself in the least about the tar, but set her foot down in the middle of it and jumped over it, and thus one of her gold shoes was left sticking in it. When she had seated herself on the horse the Prince came running out of the church and asked her whence she came.

‘From Combland,’ said Kari. But when the Prince wanted to reach her her gold shoe, she said:

‘Darkness behind me, but light on my way, That the Prince may not see where I'm going to-day!’

The Prince did not know what had become of her, so he travelled for a long and wearisome time all over the world, asking where Combland was; but when no one could tell him where that country was, he caused it to be made known everywhere that he would marry any woman who could put on the gold shoe. So fair maidens and ugly maidens came thither from all regions, but there was none who had a foot so small that she could put on the gold shoe. After a long, long while came Kari Woodengown's wicked stepmother, with her daughter too, and the shoe fitted her. But she was so ugly and looked so loathsome that the Prince was very unwilling to do what he had promised. Nevertheless all was got ready for the wedding, and she was decked out as a bride, but

as they were riding to church a little bird sat upon a tree and sang:

`A slice off her heel And a slice off her toes, Kari Woodengown's shoe Fills with blood as she goes!'

And when they looked to it the bird had spoken the truth, for blood was trickling out of the shoe. So all the waiting-maids, and all the womenkind in the castle had to come and try on the shoe, but there was not one whom it would fit.

`But where is Kari Woodengown, then?' asked the Prince, when all the others had tried on the shoe, for he understood the song of birds and it came to his mind what the bird had said.

`Oh! that creature!' said the others; `it's not the least use for her to come here, for she has feet like a horse!'

`That may be,' said the Prince, `but as all the others have tried it, Kari may try it too.'

`Kari!' he called out through the door, and Kari came upstairs, and her wooden gown clattered as if a whole regiment of dragoons were coming up.

`Now, you are to try on the gold shoe and be a Princess,' said the other servants, and they laughed at her and mocked her. Kari took up the shoe, put her foot into it as easily as possible, and then threw off her wooden gown, and there she stood in the golden gown which flashed like rays of sunshine, and on her other foot she had the fellow to the gold shoe. The Prince knew her in a moment, and was so glad that he ran and took her in his arms and kissed her, and when he heard that she was a King's daughter he was gladder still, and then they had the wedding.

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