



The Baker's Daughter

Folk-Lore And Legends: English

English

Intermediate
3 min read

A very long time ago, I cannot tell you when, it is so long since, there lived in a town in Herefordshire a baker who used to sell bread to all the folk around. He was a mean, greedy man, who sought in every way to put money by, and who did not scruple to cheat such people as he was able when they came to his shop.

He had a daughter who helped him in his business, being unmarried and living with him, and seeing how her father treated the people, and how he succeeded in getting money by his bad practices, she, too, in time came to do the like.

One day when her father was away, and the girl remained alone in the shop, an old woman came in—

“My pretty girl,” said she, “give me a bit of dough I beg of you, for I am old and hungry.”

The girl at first told her to be off, but as the old woman would not go, and begged harder than before for a piece of bread, at last the baker’s daughter took up a piece of dough, and giving it to her, says—

“There now, be off, and do not trouble me any more.”

“My dear,” says the woman, “you have given me a piece of dough, let me bake it in your oven, for I have no place of my own to bake it in.”

“Very well,” replied the girl, and, taking the dough, she placed it in the oven, while the old woman sat down to wait till it was baked.

When the girl thought the bread should be ready she looked in the oven expecting to find there a small cake, and was very much amazed to find instead a very large loaf of bread. She pretended to look about the oven as if in search of something.

“I cannot find the cake,” said she. “It must have tumbled into the fire and got burnt.”

“Very well,” said the old woman, “give me another piece of dough instead and I will wait while it bakes.”

So the girl took another piece of dough, smaller than the first piece, and having put it in the oven, shut to the door. At the end of a few minutes or so she looked in again, and found there another loaf, larger than the last.

“Dear me,” said she, pretending to look about her, “I have surely lost the dough again. There’s no cake here.”

“‘Tis a pity,” said the old woman, “but never mind. I will wait while you bake me another piece.”

So the baker’s daughter took a piece of dough as small as one of her fingers and put it in the oven, while the old woman sat near. When she thought it ought to be baked, she looked into the oven and there saw a loaf, larger than either of the others.

“That is mine,” said the old woman.

“No,” replied the girl. “How could such a large loaf have grown out of a little piece of dough?”

“It is mine, it is sure,” said the woman.

“It is not,” said the girl, “and you shall not have it.”

Well, when the old woman saw that the girl would not give her the loaf, and saw how she had tried to cheat her, for she was a fairy, and knew all the tricks that the baker’s daughter had put upon her, she draws out from

under her cloak a stick, and just touches the girl with it. Then a wonderful thing occurred, for the girl became all of a sudden changed into an owl, and flying about the room, at last, made for the door, and, finding it open, she flew out and was never seen again.

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