



# *The Fellow Traveler*

Hans Christian Andersen

DanishScandinavian

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*Intermediate*

*40 min read*

Poor Johannes was sorely afflicted, for his father was ill, past all hope of recovery. Besides their two selves, not a soul was present in the little room. The lamp on the table was flickering, and it was late at night.

“You have been a good son, Johannes,” said the sick father, “and God will, no doubt, help you on in the world.” And he gazed at him with mild and thoughtful eyes, fetched a deep sigh, and then died—though he only looked as if he had gone to sleep. But Johannes wept; for now he had nobody in the wide world—neither father, mother, sister, nor brother. Poor Johannes! He knelt down beside the bed, kissed his dead father’s hand, and shed many, many bitter tears! But at length his eyes closed, and he fell asleep against the hard bedpost.

He had then a strange dream. He thought the sun and moon came down to him, and he saw his father again in full health and freshness, and heard him laugh as he used to do when he was pleased. A pretty girl, with a gold crown on her long, shining hair, presented her hand to him; and his father said: “Look what a bride you have won. She is the loveliest maid upon earth.” He then woke, and all these fine things vanished; his father lay dead and cold in his bed, and nobody was near them. Poor Johannes!

In the following week, the dead man was buried. The son followed close behind the coffin, for he was never again to behold the father who had loved him so dearly. He heard them fling the earth down upon the coffin, and still saw a little corner of it left; but, at the next shovelful, even that disappeared. Then he felt as though his

heart would break, so afflicted was he. They sang a psalm round the grave, and it sounded so beautiful that it brought tears into Johannes' eyes. He wept, and felt relieved. The sun shone down gloriously on the green trees, just as if it meant to say: "You must not be so mournful, Johannes. Look how beautifully blue the sky is yonder! Your father is up above, and is begging of the All-merciful that you may thrive at all times!"

"I will always be good," said Johannes, "then I shall join my father in heaven; and what joy it will be to meet him again! How much I shall have to tell him, and how much he will have to teach me about the delights of heaven, just as he used to teach me here on earth. Oh, what joy that will be!"

He fancied it all so plainly that he smiled, while the tears still ran down his cheeks. The birds in the chestnut trees kept twittering, "Twit! twit!" They were gay, although they had been at the funeral; but they knew that the dead man was now in heaven, and had wings much larger and more beautiful than their own; and that he was happy, because he had been good here on earth: and, therefore, they were pleased. Johannes saw how they flew from the green trees out into the wide world, and then he wished to fly away also. But he first cut out a large wooden cross to place on his father's grave; and when he brought it thither in the evening, he found the grave decked with gravel and flowers. This had been done by strangers, who all esteemed the worthy man who had gone to his last home.

Early the next morning, Johannes packed up his little bundle, and put into his girdle his whole legacy, consisting of fifty dollars and a couple of silver shillings, with which he meant to wander forth into the world. But first of all he repaired to his father's grave in the churchyard, where he repeated the Lord's Prayer, and then said, "Farewell!"

Abroad in the fields through which he passed, all the flowers looked fresh and lovely in the warm sunshine. And they nodded in the wind, just as if they meant to say: "Welcome to the greenwood! Is it not delightful here?" But Johannes turned round to give a last look at the old church, in which he was christened as an infant, and where he used to go with his father every Sunday to hear the service, and to sing his psalm; and in so doing he perceived, in one of the upper loopholes of the church tower, the little goblin belonging to it, who stood with his little pointed, red cap on his head, shading his countenance with his arm, so that the sun might not stream into his eyes. Johannes nodded farewell to him; and the little goblin waved his red cap, laid his hand on his heart, and then kissed his hand to him, to show that he was kindly disposed towards him, and wished him a

happy journey.

Johannes now thought of how many beautiful things he should see in the wide world, so large and so magnificent as it was; and he went on and on much further than he had ever been before. He did not know the places through which he passed, nor the people whom he met. He was now abroad in a foreign land.

The first night he was obliged to lie on a haycock in the open fields, for he had no other bed. But this he thought was so nice a bed that the king himself could not be better off. The field, and the haycock, with the blue sky above, certainly formed a very pretty bed-chamber. The green grass, dotted with little red and white flowers, was the carpet; the elder bushes and hedges of wild roses were the nosegays that decorated the room; and his washing-basin was the brook, with its clear, pure waters, where the reeds were nodding to bid him good night and good morning. The moon was a large lamp, high up in the blue ceiling, and one that could not set fire to the curtains. Johannes might sleep in peace, and he did so, nor did he wake till the sun rose, and all the little birds around were singing: "Good morrow! Good morrow! Are you not yet up?"

The bells were ringing for church, for it was Sunday. The people were going to hear the preacher, and Johannes followed them, sang a psalm, and heard the word of God. He felt just as if he were in his own parish church, in which he had been christened, and where he sang psalms with his father.

In the churchyard were several graves, some of which were overgrown with very high grass. And he thought how his father's grave would grow to look the same in the end, as he would not be there to weed it and deck it. So he fell to work and tore up the grass, and set up the wooden crosses that had fallen down, and replaced the wreaths that had been blown away by the wind, thinking all the time, "Perhaps some one is doing the same for my father's grave, as I am unable to take care of it."

Before the church door stood an aged beggar, leaning on a crutch. Johannes gave him his silver shillings, and then went forth on his way, lighter and happier than he had felt before.

Towards evening there arose a violent storm, which made him hasten to find a shelter. Darkness soon came on; but at length he reached a small and lonely church that stood on a little hill.

"I will sit down in a corner," said he, as he went in; "I am so tired that I need rest." He then sat down, and folded his hands, and said his evening prayer; and before he perceived it, he was fast asleep, and dreaming,

while a thunderstorm was raging abroad.

When he awoke, it was in the middle of the night, but the fearful storm was over, and the moon shone in through the window to greet him. In the middle of the church stood an open coffin, in which lay the body of a man, that was awaiting burial. Johannes was not fearful, for he had a good conscience; and, besides, he knew that the dead never injure any one. It is only living, wicked men that do any harm. Two such bad characters stood beside the dead man that was lying in the church awaiting burial, and they wanted to vent their spite, by not letting him rest in his coffin, and casting his poor body outside the church door.

“Why do you want to do so?” asked Johannes. “It would be very wicked. In Christ’s name, let him rest in peace!”

“Oh, stuff and nonsense!” said the two hideous men; “he has taken us in. He owed us money, and couldn’t pay it; and now he is dead into the bargain, and we shan’t recover a penny! Therefore we will take our revenge, and he shall lie outside the church door like a dog.”

“I have nothing in the world but fifty dollars,” said Johannes, “which form my whole patrimony; yet will I willingly give them to you, provided you promise truly to leave the dead man in peace. I shall manage without the money. I have strong and healthy limbs, and a merciful God will assist me in times of need!”

“Of course,” said the ugly men, “if you pay his debt, we will neither of us lay a finger upon him—that you may depend upon.” And hereupon they took the money which he gave them, laughed aloud at his simple good nature, and went their ways. Then he laid the body carefully back into the coffin, folded the dead man’s hands, took leave of him and continued his way through a large forest, in a contented frame of mind.

All around him, wherever the moon shone through the trees, he saw numbers of elegant little elves at play. His presence did not disturb them, for they knew him to be a good and harmless son of the earth; for it is only bad people who are not privileged to see the elves. Some of them were not taller than the breadth of one’s finger, and wore their long yellow hair fastened up with gold combs. They were rocking themselves, two by two, on the large dewdrops that sparkled on the leaves and the tall grass. Now and then the drop would roll away, and down they fell between the long blades, occasioning a deal of laughter and merriment amongst the tiny folk. It was a pretty sight. Then they sang, and Johannes recognized distinctly all the pretty songs he had learned as a little boy. Large speckled spiders, with silver crowns upon their heads, were set to build suspension bridges

and palaces from one hedge to another, which, when spangled by the dew, glittered like glass in the moonshine. These frolics continued till sunrise, when the little elves crept into the flower-buds and the wind took possession of their bridges and palaces, which were tossed upon the air as cobwebs.

Johannes had just left the forest, when the full-toned voice of a man cried out to him, "Ho there, comrade! whither are you going?"

"Into the wide world," said he. "I have neither father nor mother, and am a poor boy; but the Lord will help me in time of need."

"I am likewise going into the wide world," said the stranger. "Shall we keep each other company?"

"Willingly," said he; and so they walked on together. They soon felt a mutual liking for each other, for both were good; only Johannes soon found out that the stranger was much wiser than himself. He had traveled throughout nearly the whole world, and could tell of everything that existed.

The sun was already high when they sat down under a tree to eat their breakfast, just as an old woman was coming up to them. She was very aged, and almost bent double, and supported herself on a crutch-stick, while she carried on her back a bundle of firewood, which she had gathered in the forest. Her apron was tucked up, and Johannes saw three large rods of fern and willow twigs peeping out at each end. When she was quite close to our travelers, her foot slipped, and she fell with a loud scream, for she had broken her leg—poor old woman!

Johannes at once proposed that they should carry the old woman home; but the stranger opened his knapsack, and took out a box, saying that he had an ointment which would immediately make her leg whole again, and so strong that she would be able to walk home by herself, just as if the accident had never happened: only he required that she should give him in return the three rods she carried in her apron.

"That would be well paid," said the old woman, nodding her head in a peculiar manner. She did not like giving up the rods; but, on the other hand, it was still more disagreeable to be lying there with a broken limb. So she gave him the rods, and the moment he had rubbed her leg with the ointment the old dame got up, and walked much better than before. Such were the effects of the ointment; and truly it was not of a sort to be purchased at the apothecary's.

“What do you want with these rods?” asked Johannes of his fellow-traveler.

“They are three very pretty herb-brooms,” said he, “and I like them, because I am a foolish fellow.”

They then went on a good deal further.

“Look how overcast the sky appears!” said Johannes, pointing before them. “Those are frightfully heavy clouds.”

“No,” said his fellow-traveler, “they are not clouds; they are mountains—fine, large mountains—at the top of which one may overlook the clouds, and breathe fresh air. And delightful it is, believe me, to stand there! Tomorrow we shall assuredly be far out in the wide world.”

But they were not so near as they looked, and it took a full day before they had reached the mountains, where the black forests were towering up to the sky, and where blocks of stone might be found as huge as a large town. It seemed a somewhat difficult undertaking to cross them; therefore, Johannes and his fellow-traveler turned into an inn, in order to rest and gather strength for the next day’s excursion.

A number of persons were assembled in the tap-room of the inn, where a man was exhibiting a puppet-show. He had just set up his little theater, and the people were sitting round to see the play. But, right in front, a stout butcher had sat himself down in the very best place, while a great bulldog by his side—who looked wondrously snappish—sat staring like the rest of the audience.

The play now began. It was a very pretty piece, with a king and queen, who sat on a splendid throne, with gold crowns on their heads and long trains to their robes; for their means allowed them to indulge in such luxuries. The prettiest little puppets, with glass eyes and large mustaches, stood at all the doors, and opened and shut them, to let in fresh air. It was a very agreeable play, and not at all mournful. But, just as the queen got up, and passed across the stage, no one knows what the huge bulldog took into his head; but, being no longer held by the butcher, he jumped right into the theater, and seized the queen by the middle of her slender waist, so that it cracked again. It was quite shocking to hear.

The poor man who exhibited the show was both frightened and sorry for the loss of his queen, for she was the most elegant puppet in his stock, and the ugly bulldog had bitten her head off. But when the rest of the spectators had retired, the stranger who traveled with Johannes said that he would set her to rights, and taking

out his box, he smeared the puppet with the same ointment that had cured the old woman's broken leg. The moment this was done, the puppet was whole again, and could even move all her limbs of herself, and no longer required to be pulled by wires. The puppet was like a human being, except that it could not speak. The showman was vastly delighted, for now he had no longer any occasion to hold this puppet, who could dance of her own accord, which none of the others could do.

Late at night, when all the folks at the inn had gone to bed, somebody was heard to sigh so dreadfully deep, and so frequently, that the whole household got up, to see what could be the matter. The showman went to his little theater, for it was from thence the sighing proceeded. All the wooden puppets were lying in a heap; the king and his body-guard it was who were sighing so piteously, and staring with their glass eyes, because they wished to be smeared a little like the queen, in order that they might move of themselves. The queen knelt down and lifted up her pretty crown, saying, "Take this, but do smear my husband and my courtiers." The poor showman could not then help crying, for he was really sorry for his puppets. He immediately promised Johannes' fellow-traveler all the money he might earn on the following evening through his puppet-show, if he would only smear four or five of his prettiest puppets. But the fellow-traveler said he did not require anything but the large sword that he wore at his side, on receiving which, he besmeared six puppets, that immediately danced so gracefully that all living girls that beheld them were irresistibly impelled to dance likewise. The coachman and the cook began dancing, then the waiters and the chambermaids, and all the strangers present, as well as the shovel and the tongs—only the latter fell down at the very first leap. They had indeed, a merry night of it!

Next morning, Johannes started with his fellow-traveler, before any of the others were astir, and crossed the large forest of fir-trees, in their way up the high mountains. They climbed to such a height that the church steeples below looked like little blue berries in the green grass, and they could see for miles and miles around, where they had never yet been. Johannes had never before seen so much at once of the beauties of this lovely world. And then the sun shone so warmly through the fresh blue air, and the huntsmen's horns echoed so beautifully between the mountains, that tears came into his eyes, and he could not forbear exclaiming, "All-merciful God! what a kind Father Thou art to us, to have given us all the fine things to be seen in the world!"

His fellow-traveler likewise stood with folded hands, and gazed upon the forest, and the towns that lay in the bright sunshine. At the same moment, they heard a lovely sound above their heads, and on looking up, they

perceived a large white swan hovering in the air, and singing as no bird had ever sung before. But its voice grew weaker and weaker, till its head drooped, and it slowly dropped down to their feet, where the poor bird lay quite dead.

“Two such beautiful wings,” said the fellow-traveler, “so white and so large as this bird’s, are worth some money; so I will take them with me. You see it was well that I obtained a sword.” And he cut off the two wings of the dead swan at a single blow, and kept them.

They now traveled many miles across the mountains till they at length reached a large city containing hundreds of towers, that shone like silver in the sunshine. In the midst of the town stood a handsome marble palace, roofed with pure red gold, in which dwelt the king.

Johannes and his fellow-traveler did not care to enter the town immediately, but went into an inn, situated in the outskirts, in order to dress themselves; for they wished to look tidy when they walked through the streets. The landlord informed them how good a man the king was, and that he never injured anybody; but as to his daughter—heaven defend us!—she was a bad princess indeed! Beauty she possessed in abundance: nobody was prettier or more elegant than herself. But what of that? She was a wicked witch, and was the cause of many accomplished princes having lost their lives. She had given leave to everybody to woo her. Any one might present himself, be he a prince or a beggar; it was all the same to her. Only he must guess three things that she had thought of and questioned him about. If he succeeded, he was to marry her, and become king over all the land at her father’s death; but if he could not guess the three things, he was then to be hung, or to have his head struck off. Her father the old king, was deeply concerned at all this: but he could not forbid her being so wicked because he had once declared that he would never meddle with her lovers and that she might do as she liked about them. Every time a prince came to try his luck at guessing, in order to obtain the princess’s hand, he was sure to fail, and was, therefore, hung or beheaded. He had been warned betimes that it would be safer to desist from his suit. The old king was so afflicted at the mourning and wretchedness thus occasioned that, for one whole day in the year, he and all his soldiers used to kneel and pray that the princess might grow good; but she would not. The old women who tippled brandy used to color it quite black before they drank it; this was their way of mourning, and they could not well do more.

“What a shocking princess!” said Johannes. “She deserves the rod, and it would do her good. If I were the old



king, she should have been thrashed long ago.”

They now heard the mob cheering outside the inn. The princess was passing, and she was really so beautiful that everybody forgot how wicked she was, and therefore hurraed. Twelve beautiful maidens, dressed in white silk clothes and holding golden tulips in their hands, rode by her side on coal-black horses. The princess herself was mounted on a snow-white steed, with diamond and ruby trappings. Her riding-dress was of gold brocade; and the whip she held in her hand looked like a sunbeam. The gold crown on her head resembled the little stars twinkling in the heavens, while her mantle consisted of thousands of splendid butterflies' wings stitched together. Yet, in spite of this magnificence, she was herself far more beautiful than her clothes.

When Johannes caught sight of her, his face grew as red as a drop of blood, and he was struck completely dumb; for the princess exactly resembled the beautiful girl with the golden crown, whom he had dreamed of the night his father died. He thought her most beautiful, and could not help loving her passionately. It could not be possible, thought he, that she was a wicked witch, who ordered people to be hung or beheaded when they were unable to guess what she asked. “But since every one, down to the poorest beggar, is free to woo her,” said he, “I will repair to the palace, for I cannot resist doing so.” Everybody advised him not to attempt such a thing, as he must inevitably fail like the rest. His fellow-traveler, likewise, warned him to desist; but Johannes thought he should succeed. He brushed his shoes and his coat, washed his hands and face, combed his pretty flaxen hair, and then went alone into the town, and proceeded to the palace.

“Come in,” said the old king, when Johannes knocked at the door. Johannes opened it, and the old king came forward to meet him in his dressing-gown and embroidered slippers; he wore his crown on his head, and bore his scepter in one hand and his ball in the other. “Wait a bit,” said he, putting the ball under his arm, to leave one hand free to present to Johannes. But the moment he heard he came as a suitor, he began to weep so violently that both ball and scepter fell on the floor, and he was fain to wipe his eyes with the skirts of his dressing-gown. Poor old king!

“Think not of it,” said he, “you will fare as badly as all the others. Come, you shall see.”



“The wicked princess in her garden.” Illustration by Eleanor Vere Boyle, published in Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Andersen (1872), Sampson, Low, Marston and Low and Searle.

He then led him into the princess’s pleasure-garden, and a frightful sight was there to behold! From every tree hung three or four kings’ sons who had wooed the princess, but had been unable to guess her riddles. At every breeze that blew, all these skeletons rattled till the little birds were frightened, and never dared to come into the garden. All the flowers were propped with human bones; and human skulls might be seen grinning in flowerpots. It was an odd garden for a princess.

“Now, you see,” said the old king, “your fate will be just the same as that of all the othersid=”Page\_127”> whose remains you behold. Therefore give up the attempt. You really make me quite unhappy, for I take it so to heart.”

Johannes kissed the good old king’s hand, and assured him that all would be well; for he was quite enchanted with the lovely princess.

As the princess then rode into the palaceyard, accompanied by all her ladies, they went out to greet her. She was marvelously fair to look upon, as she presented her hand to Johannes. And he thought a great deal more of her than he did before; and felt certain she could not be a wicked witch, as everybody said she was. They then went into a room where little pages handed them sweetmeats and gingerbread-nuts. But the old king was so out of sorts, he could not eat at all. Besides, the gingerbread-nuts were too hard for him.

It was agreed that Johannes should return to the palace on the following morning, when the judges and the whole council would be assembled to see and hear how the guessing was carried on. If he succeeded, he was then to return twice more; but there never yet had been anybody who had been able to solve any question the first time, and in each case his life was forfeited.

Johannes felt no anxiety as to how he should fare. On the contrary, he was pleased, and thought only of the beautiful princess; and was quite confident that God would help him through his trials. Though how this was to be accomplished he knew not, and preferred not troubling himself to think about the matter. He capered along on the high-road, as he returned to the inn where his fellow-traveler was waiting his return.

Johannes could not cease expatiating on the gracious reception he had met with from the princess, and on her

extreme beauty. He quite longed for the morrow, when he was to go to the palace and try his luck at guessing.

But his fellow-traveler shook his head mournfully. "I wish you so well!" said he. "We might have remained together a good deal longer, and now I must lose you! Poor, dear Johannes! I could weep, only I will not spoil your joy on the last evening that we may ever spend together. We will be merry—right merry! To-morrow, when you are gone, I shall be able to weep undisturbed."

All the inhabitants of the town had immediately heard that there was a new suitor for the princess's hand, and there prevailed universal consternation. The theater was closed; the pastry-cooks put crape round their sugar-husbands; and the king and the priests were on their knees in the church. This sadness was occasioned by the conviction that Johannes could not succeed better than all the other suitors had done.

Towards evening Johannes' fellow-traveler prepared a goodly bowl of punch, and said: "Now let us be merry, and drink the princess's health." But after drinking a couple of glasses, Johannes proved so sleepy, that he could not possibly keep his eyes open, and fell fast asleep. His fellow-traveler then lifted him gently out of his chair, and laid him in bed; and when it was quite dark, he took the two large wings he had cut off from the dead swan, and fastened them firmly to his own shoulders. He then put into his pocket the largest rod that he had obtained from the old woman who fell and broke her leg; and opening the window, he flew over the town, straight to the palace, where he placed himself in an upper corner of the building right under the princess's bed-chamber.

The whole town was perfectly quiet. The clock now struck a quarter to twelve, when the window opened, and the princess, wrapped in a flowing white mantle, and provided with a pair of black wings, flew over the city towards a large mountain. But the fellow-traveler made himself invisible; and as he flew behind the princess, he thrashed her with his rod till she bled. What a strange flight through the air it was! The wind caught her mantle, which swelled out on all sides like the large sail of a ship, and the moon shone through it.

"How it does hail, to be sure!" said the princess, at every blow she received from the rod; and such weather suited her. At last she reached the mountain, and knocked for admittance. Then came a noise like a clap of thunder, while the mountain opened, and the princess went in. The fellow-traveler followed her, for nobody could see him, as he was invisible. They went through a long, wide passage, where the walls shone brilliantly from the light of above a thousand glittering spiders that were running up and down and illuminating them

like fire.

They next entered a large hall built of silver and gold; red and blue flowers as large as sunflowers were beaming from the walls; but nobody could pluck them, for the stems were ugly, venomous serpents, and the flowers were the flames their jaws kept vomiting forth. The whole ceiling was covered with glow-worms and light-blue bats that were flapping their thin wings. It looked quite frightful. In the middle of the floor stood a throne that was supported by the skeletons of four horses, whose harness had been furnished by the red, fiery spiders. The throne itself was of milk-white glass, and the cushions were little black mice that kept biting each other's tails. Above it was a canopy of a deep-red cobweb, dotted with the prettiest little green flies that sparkled like precious stones. On the throne sat an old magician, with a crown on his ugly head and a scepter in his hand. He kissed the princess on her forehead, and placed her beside him on his splendid throne, and then the music struck up. Huge black grasshoppers played the jew's-harp, while the owl beat a tattoo on its own body, having no better drum. It was a ludicrous concert. Little dark-colored goblins, with a will-o'-the-wisp in their caps, danced about the room. But nobody could see the fellow-traveler, who had placed himself right behind the throne, where he could see and hear everything. The courtiers, who now came in, were very delicate and genteel. But anybody who could see what is what, would quickly perceive what they were made of. They were nothing better than broomsticks with cabbages for their heads, whom the magician had conjured into life, and whom he had tricked out in embroidered clothes. However, they did just as well, as they were only wanted for show.

After a little dancing, the princess related to the magician that she had a new suitor, and consulted him as to what she should ask him next morning when he came to the palace.

"I will tell you what," said the magician; "you must choose something easy, and then he'll never hit upon it. Think of one of your shoes. He'll never guess that. Then you will have him beheaded, and mind you don't forget to bring me his eyes to-morrow night."

The princess bowed, and said she would not forget to bring them. The magician then opened the mountain, and she flew back; but the fellow-traveler followed her, and struck her so smartly with the rod, that she sighed most deeply over such a hail-storm, and hastened all she could to reach her bed-chamber through the window. The fellow-traveler then returned to the inn, where Johannes was still asleep, took off his wings, and went to

bed likewise, for he might well be tired.

Johannes woke at an early hour next morning. His fellow-traveler got up, and told him that he had had a strange dream that night about the princess and her shoe, and therefore urged him to ask whether it was not her shoe that the princess was thinking about? For this he had learned from the magician in the mountain.

“I may as well ask that as anything else,” said Johannes. “Perhaps your dream may turn out to be the truth, for I trust in God to help me through. Still, I will take leave of you, because should I guess wrong, I shall never see you again.”

They then embraced one another, and Johannes went into the town, and walked to the palace. The whole hall was filled with people. The judges sat in their armchairs, with their heads propped up by eider-down cushions, because they had so much to think about. The old king stood wiping his eyes with a white pocket-handkerchief. The princess now entered. She looked more beautiful than even the day before, and saluted the assembly with charming grace. But she extended her hand to Johannes, saying: “Good morning to you.”

Johannes was now called upon to guess what she had thought of. Bless me! how kindly she did look at him! But no sooner had he pronounced the single word “shoe,” than she turned as pale as chalk, and trembled all over. Still, this did not serve her much, since he had guessed correctly.

But, goodness! how pleased the old king was—he cut a caper that was quite pleasant to behold! And all present clapped their hands, to cheer both him and Johannes, who had been successful in this, his first ordeal.

The fellow-traveler was likewise much rejoiced on hearing how matters had turned out. But Johannes folded his hands and thanked his God, who he felt certain would help him through the two next times. On the following day, he was to make a second attempt at guessing.

The evening passed much the same as the foregoing one. When Johannes had gone to sleep, his fellow-traveler flew after the princess to the mountain, and thrashed her more violently than before, having taken two rods with him. Nobody saw him, and he heard all that was said. The princess was to think of her glove, and this he repeated to Johannes, as if it had been a dream. So that he was able to guess correctly, which occasioned great joy amongst the inmates of the palace. The whole court cut capers as they had seen the king do the first time. But the princess lay on the sofa, and would not speak a word. All now depended on whether Johannes could

guess right the third time. If he succeeded, he was to marry the beautiful princess, and reign over the land at the old king's death. But if he guessed wrong, he was to forfeit his life, and the magician would have his beautiful blue eyes.

On the preceding evening, Johannes went to bed early, said his prayers, and then fell into a quiet sleep. But his fellow-traveler tied his wings to his back, and put his sword at his side, and taking the three rods with him, flew towards the palace.

It was as dark as pitch, and there was such a storm that the tiles were flying off from the roofs of the houses, and the trees in the garden, where hung the skeletons, bent like so many reeds beneath the wind. It lightened every moment, and the thunder rolled along as though it was a single clap that lasted through the whole night. The window now opened, and the princess flew out. She was as pale as death, but she laughed at the bad weather, and thought it was scarcely bad enough. And her white mantle fluttered in the wind like a large sail, while the fellow-traveler thrashed her with the three rods till her blood flowed, and she could scarcely fly any farther. She managed, however, to reach the mountain.

"This is a violent hail-storm," said she; "I was never out in such weather before."

"There may be too much of a good thing," observed the magician.

She now told him that Johannes had guessed aright the second time, and should he succeed again on the following morning, he would then have won, and she would never again be able to come to the mountain, or to practise magic arts as she had hitherto done; therefore was she quite out of spirits.

"He shall not be able to guess it," said the magician, "for I will find out something that he will never hit upon, unless he is a greater conjurer than myself. But now let's be merry!" And then he took both the princess's hands, and they danced about with all the little goblins, wearing will-o'-the-wisp lights, that were in the room. The red spiders jumped just as merrily up and down the walls; it looked as if the fiery flowers were emitting sparks. The owl beat the drum, the crickets whistled, and the black grasshoppers played on the jew's-harp. It was a frolicsome ball.

When they had danced enough the princess was obliged to go home, for fear of being missed in the palace. The magician said he would accompany her, that they might be together a little longer.

They then flew away through the bad weather, while the fellow-traveler broke his three rods across their shoulders. The magician had never been out in such a hail-storm before. Just on reaching the palace, and on bidding the princess farewell, he whispered, "Think of my head." But the fellow-traveler heard him, and just as the princess slipped in at her bedroom window, and the magician was about to turn round, he seized him by the long black beard, and cut off his ugly head at a single stroke from his sword, so that the magician had not even time to see him. He then threw the body into the sea, to serve as food for the fishes; but he merely dipped the head in the waters, and then tied it up in his silk handkerchief, and took it to the inn, and went to bed.

Next morning he gave the bundle to Johannes, bidding him not open it till the princess should ask him what she was thinking of.

There were so many spectators in the large hall of the palace, that they stood as thick as radishes tied in a bunch. The council sat on their armchairs with the soft cushions, and the old king was dressed in new clothes; his golden crown and scepter had been furbished up; and the whole scene looked very solemn. But the princess was pale as ashes, and wore a coal-black dress, as though she were attending a funeral. "What have I thought of?" asked she of Johannes. And he immediately opened the silk handkerchief, when he was himself quite startled on beholding the ugly magician's head. Everybody shuddered, for it was frightful to look at; but the princess sat like a statue, and could not speak a word. At length she rose and gave her hand to Johannes, for he had guessed aright. She looked neither to the right nor the left, but sighed out: "Now you are my master! Our wedding will be celebrated this evening."

"So much the better," said the old king, "that's just what I wish." All present cried "Hurrah!" The soldiers on parade struck up their music in the streets, the bells were set-a-ringing, the pastry-cooks took the black crape off their sugar-husbands, and rejoicings were held everywhere. Three oxen, stuffed with ducks and chickens, and roasted whole, were placed in the middle of the market-place, and every one was free to cut a slice; the fountains spouted the most delicious wine; and if one bought a penny cracknel at the baker's one received six large biscuits as a present—and the biscuits had raisins in them!

Towards night the whole town was illuminated, the soldiers fired cannons, and the boys let off pop-guns; and there was a deal of eating, and drinking, and crushing, and capering at the palace. All the fine gentlemen and the beautiful young ladies danced together, and one might hear them from afar singing the following song:—

“Here are many maidens fair,  
Who twirl like any spinning-wheel,  
And tread the floor as light as air;  
Still round and round, sweet maiden, reel,  
And dance away the mazes through,  
Until the sole has left your shoe.”

But the princess was still a witch, and could not endure Johannes. This struck his fellow-traveler, and therefore he gave Johannes three feathers out of the swan’s wings, and a small phial containing only a few drops, and told him to place a large vat full of water in front of the princess’s bed, and when the princess was about to get into bed, he must give her a slight push, so that she should fall into the water, into which he must dip her three times, having taken care first to shake in the feathers and the contents of the phial. The magic spell would then be broken, and she would love him tenderly.

Johannes did all that his fellow-traveler suggested. The princess shrieked aloud when he dipped her into the water, and struggled out of his hands under the form of a coal-black swan with fiery eyes. The second time she rose to the surface the swan had become white, all but a black ruff round its neck. Johannes prayed to God, and made the bird dive down a third time, when it was suddenly transformed to the most beautiful princess. She was far lovelier than before, and thanked him, with tears in her eyes, for having broken the spell that bound her.



On the following morning, the old king came with all his court, and the congratulations lasted till late in the day. Last of all came Johannes' fellow-traveler, with his stick in his hand, and his knapsack at his back. Johannes embraced him affectionately, and said that he must not go away, but stay with him, for he was the cause of all his happiness. But his fellow-traveler shook his head, and said in a mild and friendly voice: "No; my time is now up. I have but paid a debt. Do you remember the dead man whom his wicked creditors would fain have ill-used? You gave all you possessed that he might rest in peace in his grave. I am that dead man!"

And at the same moment he vanished.

The wedding rejoicings now lasted a full month. Johannes and the princess loved each other dearly, and the old king lived to see many a happy day, and dandled his little grand-children on his knee, and let them play with his scepter. And Johannes became king over the whole land.

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