



Christobel & the Fairy

Penny Garnsworthy

Humor

Once upon a time there lived a beautiful young woman named Christobel. Her long golden hair tumbled in curls across her shoulders and her vivid blue eyes sparkled. All the young men wished she was theirs, and all the young women were green with envy.

Although they were poor, Christobel lived happily with her brother Jonas in a tiny cottage on a laneway at the edge of a forest. Jonas loved his sister dearly and although Christobel longed to find her true love, Jonas feared for her and protected her against the admiring glances of the shallow young men who fell in love with her beauty.

One day, as Christobel was picking daisies in the garden, a carriage drawn by two magnificent stallions stopped outside the cottage. Christobel looked up as a handsome young man stepped out of the carriage and walked over to her.

'I have loved you from afar,' he said as he dropped to one knee, 'and I have come to take you away from here.'

'But why would I want to leave?' Christobel asked.

'I have much to offer,' the young man said. 'A big house with many rooms and closets full of the most wonderful clothes.'

Christobel smiled and said, 'But I don't need those things. I am happy here with my brother Jonas.'

'But I must have you!' the man persisted.

When Christobel resisted he picked her up and carried her to his carriage. Christobel screamed as he bundled her inside and locked the door. Then he jumped up onto the front and took the reins. Christobel's arms flailed helplessly out the window as the carriage sped off.

Jonas, who had been chopping wood for the fire, hadn't heard his sister's cries. Loaded up with timber, he came around to the front garden and was surprised to see Christobel wasn't there.

'Christobel?' he called but there was no answer.

Jonas walked across to the cottage and looked inside.

'Christobel?' he called again. There was still no answer.

Dropping the timber Jonas ran inside, through the tiny living room to the kitchen and finally the bedrooms. But Christobel was nowhere to be found.

As Jonas came outside he noticed a trail of yellow and white daisy petals on the path and began to follow them. The petals continued out to the laneway and then down, away from the town.

Jonas, who was very fit, began to run. Soon he was racing along a dirt track in the forest. The trees were getting thicker and the light was fading. He slowed to a jog, his eyes never leaving the trail of petals on the ground. But finally they dwindled and he found himself at the edge of a clearing.

Christobel must be here, he told himself, as he stared up at a magnificent stone house. It had two storeys, a turret and was covered in thick green vines. Jonas hid behind an enormous tree trunk as he searched the house with his eyes. The forest was so still he could hear his own heart beating. And then he heard voices coming from within.

Christobel!

Jonas threaded his way through the trees until he was level with the house and then tiptoed across, dropping to the ground and crawling silently along beneath the windows. Occasionally he looked up, but there was no-one in sight.

Then he heard voices again. He looked up and saw Christobel's long golden hair at the window of the turret.

Christobel!

Jonas took hold of one of the thick green vines and started to pull himself up. Within seconds he was almost to the window of the turret.

Just then a wolf bounded out of the forest, stopped in front of the house and stood up on his back legs. As he preened his fur and adjusted the red spotted cravat around his neck, he looked up and saw Jonas perched halfway up the wall.

'I say,' he called, 'what the devil are you doing up there?'

Jonas glanced down at the approaching wolf as the door of the house burst open and a young man raced

outside, straight into the unsuspecting wolf, knocking them both to the ground.

Jonas wasted no time. He quickly climbed to the turret where he found Christobel tied to a chair. He whipped away her ropes and she jumped up and threw her arms around him. Jonas carried her across the room, out the window and back down the vines to the ground.

The wolf was holding the young man off as Jonas and Christobel raced away from the house and into the forest.

'You stupid wolf,' cried the young man, 'you've let her escape!'

The wolf let him go and brushed the dirt and dust from his fur.

'Escape eh?' he said, 'I say, you weren't holding her against her will were you?'

The young man grunted in disgust and trudged back inside his house.

The wolf turned towards the forest in time to see Jonas and Christobel disappearing into the trees.

Mmm, he thought to himself.

'Oh Jonas, you saved me!' Christobel cried as they reached the laneway and their tiny cottage came into view.

Meanwhile, the wolf, who had followed at a distance, watched as they went into the cottage. He walked across to the door and knocked.

'I say old chap,' said the wolf to Jonas, 'that was a bit of good luck back there, if I might say so.'

'Your timing was perfect,' Jonas replied. 'That young man was holding my sister captive.'

'Won't you invite me in for some tea then?' said the wolf, 'as a reward, old chum.'

Jonas's eyes narrowed as he stared at the wolf.

'I don't think so,' said Jonas. 'My sister is weary from her adventure.'

'I say, that's not very sporting of you,' said the wolf as his eyes misted over. 'Just because I'm a wolf doesn't mean I am a danger to you both,' he sniffed. 'If only you knew what I have been through, if only you understood my pain. Oh, woe is me.'

Jonas put his arm around the snivelling wolf and said, 'Come in my friend and join us for tea.'

'I always thought wolves were dangerous,' Christobel said as she poured yet another cup for the whimpering animal.

'I'm afraid I have more than lived up to that reputation in the past. But I am a reformed wolf now. I could no more hurt a human child than one of my own.'

'Why? What have you done?' Christobel asked.

The wolf sighed and put down his cup.

'There was an incident, in the forest you see,' he muttered.

'What happened?' asked Jonas.

'Oh, how I wronged them,' he moaned, 'how I shamed myself and my family.'

'But what happened?' asked Christobel.

'I'd really rather not talk about it.' He looked up and a tear trickled down his cheek.

Christobel and Jonas stared at the wolf, as if they dared him to speak.

He sighed. 'It was a small herd of rabbits you see. They were building a summer warren in the woods. I wandered by, saw them and stopped behind an enormous tree to watch as they frolicked from burrow to burrow, singing as they worked.'

The wolf wiped away a tear and continued. 'I had every intention of going on, truly I did. But it was my instincts you see, they were too strong.'

He hung his head, 'And I was weak. I slunk over to one of the burrows and waited. Then, as they skipped out I pounced.' He swallowed. 'They didn't even see me coming, they didn't stand a chance.'

Christobel shuddered.

'It was many years ago now but still the guilt, it stalks me day and night.'

And as the wolf poured out his heart to Christobel and Jonas, they listened and didn't judge him and a strong friendship was forged that day.

But as time went by Christobel became sad and frightened to go outside unless Jonas was with her.

One day a tiny fairy flitted into the garden as Christobel was picking daisies under Jonas's watchful eye. The fairy, who wore a bright yellow tutu with matching golden wings landed on Christobel's hand.

'Why do you look so sad?' the fairy asked, 'you are so beautiful!'

'I am cursed,' replied Christobel. 'Just this past month I was taken captive by a young man who wanted me for his own.'

'What would you wish for then?' asked the fairy as she danced across the daisies.

Christobel thought for a moment and then sighed. 'I would wish to lose my beauty.'

'No!' cried the fairy. 'Why?'

'Young men are smitten with me, but only for my beauty. If I were plain, I could be sure my true love would love me for who I really am.' Christobel looked at the fairy. 'But why am I telling you this? Can you grant such a wish?'

The fairy stopped and hovered in front of Christobel.

'I have sought to find someone of your integrity for some years now. I believe you are sincere in what you ask. And yes, I can grant this wish. But, I am only a tiny fairy and my powers are limited. So there will be three conditions.'

'Anything,' Christobel replied.

'I will change you into any disguise you wish, at any time. But, when you find your true love you must change back into your real self and stay that way forever.'

Christobel, who deep down enjoyed being beautiful was actually quite relieved. She smiled. 'I agree.'

'I will always need your permission to disguise you.'

'Of course,' said Christobel.

'And finally, once you are disguised I must change you back to yourself before the clock strikes midnight, and disguise you afresh in the morning.'

'Why? What will happen if you don't?'

'You will stay disguised, forever.'

Christobel nodded. 'I understand,' she said. 'What is your name?'

'My name is Sybil. What is yours?'

'My name is Christobel. And in return for your magic I will always provide a home for you with me and my brother Jonas.'

Sybil, who had been living in her family's fairy glen for many years, was excited about finally moving out of home.

So it was that Sybil the fairy moved in with Christobel and Jonas. She talked to the bees that buzzed around the daisies and made friends with the butterflies that flitted from flower to flower.

The wolf bought the now unused bakery in town and set up business. Each week he visited the happy little family and brought with him freshly baked fruit buns to share with a pot of tea.

Each morning Sybil would change Christobel's appearance; sometimes she was a maid, other times she was a cook or a cleaner, and she was always plain. Each night Sybil would turn her back into her real self.

And Christobel was no longer afraid to go out, now that she attracted such little interest from the young men in town. And she was content.

Or was she?

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com