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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Little Claus and Big Claus

Hans Christian Andersen

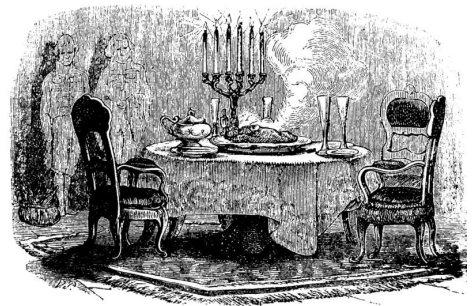
Long ago, in a village far away, there lived two people with the same name. That is why they called one Big Claus and the other one Little Claus. Big Claus had four horses and Little Claus had only one. During the week, Little Claus had to help Big Claus with ploughing. On Sundays, Little Claus could borrow the four horses of Big Claus to plough his land. Every time someone walked by, Little Claus shouted “Hup, my horses”, so everyone thought he had five horses.

Big Claus said, “Don't tell me they are your horses, or I'll kill your horse.” But Big Claus couldn't help himself. So Big Claus beat Little Claus's horse to death. Little Claus looked at it with open mouth. “Now I have no horse,” he cried.



In order to have something to show for his horse, Little Claus went to town to sell the horsehide. On the way, he came to a farm where he wanted to spend the night, but the farmer's wife sent him away. Disappointed, Little Claus looked around and decided that he could sleep on the roof of the barn.

From the roof, Little Claus could see into the farmhouse. There sat the farmer's wife and the sexton at a set table. The most delicious dishes were on the table. Then the farmer came home. Hey, what are you doing on that roof? Come inside. Inside the house, the farmer's wife quickly hid the delicious food and had the sexton crawl into a coffin. Her husband hated sextons.



Inside, the farmer and Little Claus were given a large plate of porridge. The farmer started to eat, but Little Claus thought of the delicious food. He kicked the bag with the horsehide and it squeaked. He said, “Be quiet”, but at the same time he kicked the bag again. “What's in that sack?” the farmer asked. “Oh, that's a magician,” said Little Claus, “he says he has conjured the whole oven full of delicious food and drink. The farmer immediately went to see and could not believe his eyes. The farmer's wife did not dare say anything.

Many glasses of wine later, the farmer asked: "Can your magician conjure up the devil?" I'd like to see him! "Of course," said Little Claus, "but he looks like a sexton." Good that you warned me, because I hate sextons. But I am curious. "Then look in the coffin." And so the farmer did, and he was startled, for there indeed was a sexton there. Impressed, the farmer said, "You must sell me that magician! I'll give you a lot of money for it." So Little Claus left the farm a lot richer than when he arrived.



With his cart full of money, Little Claus drove past the house of Big Claus. How did you get to be so rich? That's what I got for my horse skin, which I sold yesterday. Big Claus wanted that too, so he killed his own horses and went to town with the skins. But no matter how hard he tried, no one would pay that much for the skins.

Angry, Big Claus returned home. "You tricked me and now my horses are dead," he shouted at Little Claus. He picked up Little Claus and put him in a bag. Now I will drown you! But the way to the river was long and the sack was heavy, so Big Claus stopped at the church. While he was inside, an old drover came by. His cattle ran over the sack with Little Claus. "I'm so young and I have to die already," cried Little Claus. "And I'm so old and I'm still not allowed to go to heaven," said the drover, "We should swap." And so they did. Little Claus quickly ran on with the cattle and the old drover was thrown into the river by Big Claus.



Not much later Big Claus came across Little Claus with his cattle. Big Claus didn't understand a thing. Little Claus should have drowned! I did drown, but these are water cattle! That's what I got when I hit the bottom of the river'. That is what Big Claus wanted too. So he voluntarily crawled into a bag and let himself be thrown into the river by Little Claus. He sank to the bottom immediately. "I don't think he will find any cattle," thought Little Claus, as he walked home satisfied with his new possession.

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