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The Rose Elf

Hans Christian Andersen

Once there was a rose bush in a garden, full of roses. In the most beautiful rose lived an elf, the Rose Elf! He was so tiny that a human couldn't see him.

Behind every rose petal, he had a bedroom. The Elf was beautiful, as beautiful and pure as a child. His wings reached from his shoulders to his feet.

Oh, it smelled wonderful in his little house! Oh, the walls were so beautiful! He lived in the middle of the fragrant rose petals.

The Elf enjoyed himself all day in the sunshine. He flew from flower to flower and danced on the wings of a fluttering butterfly. He was also busy calculating how many steps he had to take to walk all the paths of a linden leaf. The paths he saw, we call the veins of the leaf. For him, they were infinitely long. The sun went down before the Elf finished. Well, he had started a little late...



It became cold. The dew fell and the wind began to blow. It was really time to go home. The Rose Elf hurried as fast as he could. But the rose had already closed its petals and was completely closed. He couldn't get into his house. He tried another rose, but all the roses were closed.

The poor Rose Elf was very frightened. He had never been outside at night before. He had always slept wonderfully warm between the safe, soft, rose petals. Oh, this could be his death...

He knew that on the other side of the garden was a garden house where sweet-scented honeysuckles grew against it. The flowers looked like big, painted horns, so beautiful. He would sleep in those flowers.

He flew there! Shhhh... he had to be quiet... there were two people in the garden house. A handsome young man and a very beautiful girl. They sat next to each other and wished to be together forever and ever. They loved each other so much.

"Still, we can't be together!" the young man said sadly. "Your brother doesn't

have the best intentions for us. He's sending me away on a distant journey over mountains and seas. Farewell, my dear bride, because for me, you are really my bride."

Then they kissed, and the young girl cried hard. She gave the boy a rose, but before she gave it, she kissed the rose. She kissed it so deeply that the flower opened up.

The Elf flew into the rose and laid his head against the delicate, fragrant petals to sleep. Meanwhile, he heard the goodbyes.

"Farewell, my dearest, farewell," said the handsome young man and the beautiful girl to each other.



The Elf felt the rose being placed against the young man's chest. Oh, how that heart beat inside. The Elf couldn't sleep; the man's beating heart pounded so hard. He could feel through the leaf how the man's lips burned. The rose had even opened up by the heat.

Just like flowers do in the blazing midday sun.

Then another man came. He looked angry and mean. He was the Angry brother of the beautiful girl. He took out a sharp, large knife from his pocket. While the handsome young man kissed the rose, the Angry man stabbed him with the knife. He even cut off his head.

He buried the head and body in the dug-up earth, under a linden tree.

"Now that young man is forgotten and gone, and I'm rid of him," thought the Angry brother.

"He'll never come back. He had to make a long journey over mountains and seas; it's easy to lose your life. My sister will never dare ask me about him again."

When he kicked through the dry leaves on the turned-up earth and headed home in the dark night, he thought he was alone. But he wasn't.

The Rose Elf was with him. He had nestled in a withered, rolled-up lime leaf that had fallen on the Angry Brother's hair while he was digging. The man had put his hat on, and it was very dark under the hat. The Rose Elf was terrified by the terrible act of the Angry Brother. He was also very angry with him.

When the man came home early in the morning, he took off his hat and went to his sister's bedroom. The beautiful girl was dreaming of the handsome young man she loved so much and who was walking far away over mountains and

through forests, or so she thought...

Her Angry Brother leaned over her and laughed wickedly. At that moment, the withered leaf fell out of his hair onto the blanket. He didn't notice it. He left the room to sleep a few more hours.

Meanwhile, the Elf crawled out of the withered leaf and into the sleeping girl's ear. He told her softly, as in a dream, about the terrible event. He also told her about the place where her brother had killed the man and that the head and body were hidden. The Elf also told her about the blooming lime tree that was there and said, "You will find a withered leaf on your bed so that you know you haven't dreamt this." When the girl woke up, she found the withered leaf.

Oh, how she cried! But she didn't dare tell anyone about her sorrow. The window was open all day. The Elf could easily come into the garden and fly to the roses and other flowers. But he couldn't bear to leave the grieving girl.

Near the window, there was a bush of moon roses. He sat in one of those flowers and watched the poor girl. Her brother came into the room a few times, acting very cheerful but looking very mean. The girl didn't dare to speak a word about her grief.

When it became night, she snuck out of the house. She walked into the forest to the place where the lime tree was. She quickly moved aside the leaves and dug into the ground. She found her murdered lover right away. Oh, how she cried! She begged God if she could die soon too.

She would have liked to bring the body home, but she couldn't. So, she took the head with the closed eyes and put it in her lap. She kissed the cold mouth and shook the earth from his beautiful hair.

"This head is mine," she said. After she had put the earth and leaves back on the dead body, she took the head home. She also took a twig from the jasmine that was blooming in the forest.

As soon as she was home, she brought the biggest flowerpot she could find, put her lover's head in it, and covered it with earth. Then she planted the jasmine twig in the pot.

"Goodbye, goodbye! I'm leaving now," whispered the little Rose Elf. He couldn't bear to see all that sadness any longer. He flew outside to the garden, to his rose. But it had withered. Only a few pale leaves hung on the green rosehip.

"Ah, how everything beautiful and good goes by so quickly," sighed the Elf. But eventually, he found a new rose. He had a good home between the delicate, fragrant petals of the flower.

Every morning he flew to the window of the poor girl. There she was always

crying by the flowerpot. Her salty tears fell on the jasmine branch. As the girl grew paler and paler from sorrow, the branch became fresher and greener.

One young twig after another appeared and small white flower buds also emerged. The girl kissed them. But the Angry brother scolded her and asked if she had gone crazy. He did not understand why she always stood crying by the flowerpot. He did not know what was in the flowerpot, except for the plant.

She often rested her head against the flowerpot to find comfort. That's how the Rose Elf found her once, asleep. He climbed back into her ear. He told her about the evening in the garden house, about the scent of the rose, and about the love of the elves. She dreamed wonderfully. While she dreamed, life slipped away from her. She had left the earth. She was now in heaven with the man she loved.

The jasmine flowers opened their large white calyxes. They suddenly smelled wonderfully sweet.

That was their way of grieving over the deceased girl.

The Angry brother looked at the beautiful, blooming bush and decided to keep it as a memento. He even placed it in his bedroom, near his bed. The bush was beautiful and smelled sweet.

Now you should know that there is a Flower Soul in every flower. The Rose Elf flew from flower to flower and told them about the slain young man who was now buried in the earth.

He also told about the Angry brother and the poor sister.

"We know!" said the Flower Souls, "we know all about it! After all, we grew from the earth, with the dead man. We know how it is!" And they nodded wisely with their flower heads.

The Rose Elf could not understand how they could remain so calm after everything that had happened. He flew outside to the Bees collecting honey. He also told them the story of the Angry brother. The Bees told their Queen in turn. She ordered the Bees to kill the Angry brother the next morning.



The night before, the first night after the death of the sister, the Angry brother slept near the fragrant jasmine. During the night, the flower calyxes had opened, and the Flower Souls had emerged, this time with invisible poisonous arrows.

They first sat by his ear and whispered him bad dreams. Then they flew over his lips and stabbed his tongue with their poisonous arrows.

"So, this is your deserved punishment for killing a human," they said. Then they crawled back into the white jasmine.

When it was morning, the window of the bedroom was opened with a jerk.

The Rose Elf flew inside with the Bee Queen and the entire swarm of Bees. The Bees wanted to sting the Angry brother to death with their stingers. But he was already dead. People stood around his bed saying, "The scent of the jasmine killed him!"

Then the Rose Elf understood that it was the work of the Flower Souls. He told the Bee Queen. She buzzed with her whole swarm around the flowerpot. The Bees could not be driven away. A man wanted to remove the flowerpot, but one of the Bees stung him in his hand. This caused him to drop the pot into pieces.

Then the Bees saw the head of the handsome young man in the pot. Now they knew that the dead man in bed was the Angry brother.

The Bee Queen zoomed into the air and sang about the revenge of the flowers and the revenge of the Rose Elf. She also sang that behind the smallest petal of every rose can live a creature that can tell this whole story!

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