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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep

Hans Christian Andersen

Have you ever seen an old wooden cabinet, quite worn black with age, and ornamented with all sorts of carved figures and flourishes?

Just such a one stood in a certain parlor. It was a legacy from the great-grandmother, and was covered from top to bottom with carved roses and tulips. The most curious flourishes were on it, too; and between them peered forth little stags' heads, with their zigzag antlers. On the door panel had been carved the entire figure of a man, a most ridiculous man to look at, for he grinned—you could not call it smiling or laughing—in the drollest way. Moreover, he had crooked legs, little horns upon his forehead, and a long beard.

The children used to call him the "crooked-legged field-marshal-major-general-corporal-sergeant," which was a long, hard name to pronounce. Very few there are, whether in wood or in stone, who could get such a title. Surely to have cut him out in wood was no trifling task. However, there he was. His eyes were always fixed upon the table below, and toward the mirror, for upon this table stood a charming little porcelain shepherdess, her mantle gathered gracefully about her and fastened with a red rose. Her shoes and hat were gilded, and her hand held a shepherd's crook; she was very lovely. Close by her stood a little chimney sweep, also of porcelain. He was as clean and neat as any other figure. Indeed, he might as well have been made a prince as a sweep, since he was only make-believe; for though everywhere else he was as black as a coal, his round, bright face was as fresh and rosy as a girl's. This was certainly a mistake—it ought to have been black.

There he stood so prettily, with his ladder in his hand, quite close to the shepherdess. From the first he had been placed there, and he always remained on the same spot; for they had promised to be true to each other. They suited each other exactly—they were both young, both of the same kind of porcelain, and both equally fragile.

Close to them stood another figure three times as large as themselves. It was an old Chinaman, a mandarin, who could nod his head. He was of porcelain, too, and he said he was the grandfather of the shepherdess; but this he could not prove. He insisted that he had authority over her, and so when the crooked-

legged field-marshal-major-general-corporal-sergeant made proposals to the little shepherdess, he nodded his head, in token of his consent.

"You will have a husband," said the old mandarin to her, "a husband who, I verily believe, is of mahogany wood. You will be the wife of a field-marshal-major-general-corporal-sergeant, of a man who has a whole cabinet full of silver plate, besides a store of no one knows what in the secret drawers."

"I will never go into that dismal cabinet," declared the little shepherdess. "I have heard it said that there are eleven porcelain ladies already imprisoned there."

"Then," rejoined the mandarin, "you will be the twelfth, and you will be in good company. This very night, when the old cabinet creaks, we shall keep the wedding, as surely as I am a Chinese mandarin." And upon this he nodded his head and fell asleep.

But the little shepherdess wept, and turned to the beloved of her heart, the porcelain chimney sweep.

"I believe I must ask you," she said, "to go out with me into the wide world, for here it is not possible for us to stay."

"I will do in everything as you wish," replied the little chimney sweep. "Let us go at once. I am sure I can support you by my trade."



"If we were only down from the table," said she. "I shall not feel safe till we are far away out in the wide world and free."

The little chimney sweep comforted her, and showed her how to set her little foot on the carved edges, and on the gilded foliage twining round the leg of the table, till at last they both reached the floor. But, turning for a last look at the old cabinet, they saw that everything was in commotion. All the carved stags stretched their heads farther out than before, raised their antlers, and moved their throats, while the crooked-legged field-marshal-major-general-corporal-sergeant sprang up and shouted to the old Chinese mandarin, "Look! they are eloping! they are eloping!"

They were not a little frightened at this, and jumped quickly into an open drawer in the window seat.

Here lay three or four packs of cards that were not quite complete, and a little doll's theater, which had been set up as nicely as could be. A play was going on, and all the queens sat in the front row, and fanned themselves with the flowers which they held in their hands, while behind them stood the knaves, each with

two heads, one above and one below, as playing cards have. The play was about two persons who were not allowed to marry, and the shepherdess cried, for it seemed so like her own story.

"I cannot bear this!" she said. "Let us leave the drawer."

But when she had again reached the floor she looked up at the table and saw that the old Chinese mandarin was awake, and that he was rocking his whole body to and fro with rage.

"The old mandarin is coming!" cried she, and down she fell on her porcelain knees, so frightened was she.

"I have thought of a plan," said the chimney sweep. "Suppose we creep into the jar of perfumes, the potpourri vase which stands in the corner. There we can rest upon roses and lavender, and throw salt in his eyes if he comes near."

"That will not do at all," she said. "Besides, I know that the old mandarin and the potpourri vase were once betrothed; and no doubt some slight friendship still exists between them. No, there is no help for it; we must wander forth together into the wide world."

"Have you really the courage to go out into the wide world with me?" asked the chimney sweep. "Have you considered how large it is, and that if we go, we can never come back?"

"I have," replied she.

And the chimney sweep looked earnestly at her and said, "My way lies through the chimney. Have you really the courage to go with me through the stove, and creep through the flues and the tunnel? Well do I know the way! we shall come out by the chimney, and then I shall know how to manage. We shall mount so high that they can never reach us, and at the top there is an opening that leads out into the wide world."

And he led her to the door of the stove.

"Oh, how black it looks!" she said. Still she went on with him, through the stove, the flues, and the tunnel, where it was as dark as pitch.

"Now we are in the chimney," said he; "and see what a lovely star shines above us."



There actually was a star in the sky, that was shining right down upon them, as if to show them the way. Now they climbed and crept—a frightful way it was, so steep and high! But he went first to guide, and to smooth the way as much as he could. He showed her the best places on which to set her little china foot, till at

last they came to the edge of the chimney and sat down to rest, for they were very tired, as may well be supposed.

The sky and all its stars were above them, and below lay all the roofs of the town. They saw all around them the great, wide world. It was not like what the poor little shepherdess had fancied it, and she leaned her little head upon her chimney sweep's shoulder and wept so bitterly that the gilding was washed from her golden sash.

"This is too much," said she; "it is more than I can bear. The world is too large! I wish I were safe back again upon the little table under the mirror. I shall never be happy till I am there once more. I have followed you out into the wide world. Surely, if you really love me, you will follow me back."

The chimney sweep tried to reason with her. He reminded her of the old mandarin, and the crooked-legged field-marshal-major-general-corporal-sergeant, but she wept so bitterly, and kissed her little chimney sweep so fondly, that he could not do otherwise than as she wished, foolish as it was.

So they climbed down the chimney, though with the greatest difficulty, crept through the flues, and into the stove, where they paused to listen behind the door, to discover what might be going on in the room.

All was quiet, and they peeped out. Alas! there on the floor lay the old mandarin. He had fallen from the table in his attempt to follow the runaways, and had broken into three pieces. His whole back had come off in a single piece, and his head had rolled into a corner. The crooked-legged field-marshal-major-general-corporal-sergeant stood where he had always stood, reflecting upon what had happened.

"This is shocking!" said the little shepherdess. "My old grandfather is broken in pieces, and we are the cause of it," and she wrung her little hands.

"He can be riveted," said the chimney sweep; "he can certainly be riveted. Do not grieve so! If they cement his back and put a rivet through his neck, he will be just as good as new, and will be able to say as many disagreeable things to us as ever."

"Do you really think so?" asked she. Then they climbed again up to the place where they had stood before.

"How far we have been," observed the chimney sweep, "and since we have got no farther than this, we might have saved ourselves all the trouble."

"I wish grandfather were mended," said the shepherdess; "I wonder if it will cost very much."

Mended he was. The family had his back cemented and his neck riveted, so that

he was as good as new, only he could not nod.

"You have become proud since you were broken to shivers," observed the crooked-legged field-marshal-major-general-corporal-sergeant, "but I must say, for my part, I don't see much to be proud of. Am I to have her, or am I not? Just answer me that."

The chimney sweep and the shepherdess looked most piteously at the old mandarin. They were so afraid that he would nod his head. But he could not, and it would have been beneath his dignity to have confessed to having a rivet in his neck. So the young porcelain people always remained together, and they blessed the grandfather's rivet and loved each other till they were broken in pieces.



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