



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The story of Honey and Sunny

Evelyn Sharp

There once was a wonderful country in which everything was beautiful. All the trees, and the flowers, and the birds, and the animals were as beautiful as you could imagine; and so were the shops, and the houses, and the palaces. Of course all the little girls and boys were beautiful too; but that is the same everywhere. Now, whether it was because of the beauty of his kingdom, or whether it was because of his royal birth, it is impossible to say, but the King was extremely anxious and unhappy.

"I cannot bear anything noisy," he said. "Noise is so very alarming." So when the baby Princess cried, he sent her away to another King's country, to be brought up in a village nobody had ever heard of, so that her royal father would not be disturbed. And when he heard that the Queen, his wife, had gone after her, he hardly raised his royal eyebrows. "She laughed too much anyway," he observed, thoughtfully.

The palace grew quieter day by day. The servants were forbidden to wear high heels because they made such a clatter on the marble floors; so everybody knew for the first time how short everybody else was. Every courtier whose boots creaked was instantly banished, and if someone coughed he was beheaded; but the climate was so warm that this rarely happened. As time passed, everybody at court started to whisper, so that they wouldn't annoy the King and eventually it became the fashion to talk as little as possible. The King was very pleased. "Anybody can talk," he said; "but it is a sign of great refinement to be silent." The King of course talked whenever he felt like it.

The silence of the court soon spread over the country. Laws were made to forbid the people to keep chickens, or pigs, or cows, or anything that was noisy; and the children were ordered never to laugh, and never to cry, and never to quarrel, so that when the King rode around the country everything was silent. But this wasn't all; the birds were so frightened by the stillness of everything that they stopped singing and the leaves on the trees ceased to rustle when the wind blew; and even the frogs and the toads were startled at the hoarseness of their own voices and did not croak anymore, which was the most remarkable thing that ever happened, for it takes a very great deal to persuade a frog or a toad that his voice is not charming. The only sound that broke the silence was the occasional humming of bees, for the King still allowed the people to keep bees if

they liked. "Bees are not noisy," he said. "They do not grunt, or bark, or croak. I can bear to listen to the humming of bees." But even the bees did not hum so much as bees normally do; because the sun soon realised that nobody laughed when he was shining his very best, so he went behind a cloud in a temper and stayed there for years and years and years; and bees can't live without sunshine. So the country grew less beautiful and more gloomy every year.

But the village without a name in the other King's country, where the little Princess was being brought up, was a very different kind of place. It was full of happy people, who made as much noise as they pleased, and laughed when they were glad, and cried when they were sad, and never bothered about anything at all. And the chickens ran in and out of the cottages with the children, and the birds sang all the year round, and the sun had never been known to stop shining for a single minute. It was the jolliest country imaginable, for nobody interfered with anybody else, and the King never made any laws at all, and the only punishment that existed was for grumbling. Everybody was happy and jolly, and that was the great thing.

Little Sunny the Princess grew up without knowing that she was a Princess and nobody else knew that she was a Princess either and even the Queen had almost forgotten that she was a King's wife. They lived in the tiniest cottage of all. They had called her Sunny because she could look straight at the sun without blinking and it was such a good name for her that she was never called anything else.

One fine day, Sunny sat up in the chocolate tree, listening to one of the stories that Honey the gardener's son was so fond of telling her; and Honey the gardener's son lay on the grass below, and tried to catch the chocolate drops with which she was pelting him.

"Why are all your stories so much alike, Honey?" asked Sunny the Princess. "Why does the Prince always go out into the world to find a Princess? Why shouldn't the Princess go and find the Prince, for a change? I wish I was a Princess; I would start tomorrow. What fun!"

She laughed her very happiest laugh and found an extra large chocolate drop and threw it into his mouth. Honey laughed as well as any one could laugh with a chocolate drop in his mouth, and tried to think of an answer to her question. Honey was not his real name either, but it was the one they had given him because he knew the language of the bees, as, indeed, every true son of a gardener should.



"Perhaps the stories are wrong," he said. "I only tell them to you as I have them

from the bees. Or perhaps none of those particular Princesses ever wanted to go out into the world to find anybody."

"Or perhaps," added Sunny, "they were just found before they had time to look for a Prince themselves. Do you think that was it? Anyhow, I don't want to wait for a Prince, for Princes never come this way at all; so I am going out into the world to seek my own fortune, and I shall start this very moment!"

She jumped down from the chocolate tree as she spoke, and danced round Honey, clapping her hands with excitement. Honey was not surprised, for nobody was ever surprised at anything in that country, but he was just a little bit sad.

"And I shall ask the first Prince I meet if he will come back with me," continued Sunny; "just as the Princes always ask the Princesses in the stories. He won't know I am not a Princess, will he? And you won't tell him Honey?"

"No, I won't" Honey said a bit sad.

"I will come back some day, when I have found my Prince, and then you shall be my gardener," she went on. "And you don't mind me going away without you Honey?"

"The Princes in the stories always went alone," answered Honey.

So that was how Sunny the Princess went out into the world, without knowing that she was a Princess. And of course everybody in the village missed her; but the Queen, her mother, and Honey, the gardener's son, missed her most of all. Before she went, however, Honey taught her a song which she was to sing if she ever found herself in trouble; and this was the song:— "Friends of Honey, Come to Sunny; Whizzing, whirring, Stillness stirring, Sunlight blurring; Friends of Honey, Fly to Sunny!" And this she learned by heart before she started.

She travelled for many days without having any adventures at all. It was such a delightful country that everybody was pleased to see her, and she never had any difficulty in getting enough to eat, she only had to smile and that was all the payment that anybody wanted. But one day, as she was walking through a wood, a great change suddenly came over everything. Every sound was hushed, and the birds stopped singing, and the wind stopped playing with the leaves; there was not a rustle or a movement anywhere, and the sun had gone behind a cloud. In the whole of her short life the little Princess had never seen the sun go behind a cloud, and she felt like crying. The further she went, the darker and gloomier it grew, and at last she could not bear it another minute; so down she sat by the side of the road and wept.

"You must stop that noise or else you will be banished," said a voice. Sunny was so astonished that she stopped crying at once and looked up to see a little old

man with a white beard staring at her. He was a very sad-looking little man, and his mouth was drawn down at the corners as though he had been on the point of crying all his life and had never quite broken down.

"Why must I stop?" asked Sunny. "If you feel unhappy you have to cry, right?"

"No, no, no," said the sad little man, in a tone of deep gloom. "I am always unhappy, but I never cry. The whole country is unhappy, but nobody is allowed to cry. If you cry, you must go away."

"What a funny country!" cried Sunny, and she at once began to laugh at the absurdity of it.

"Don't do that!" said the little man. "If you go on making any noises, you will get beheaded. Why can't you be quiet? You can do anything you like, as long as you do it quietly."

"I can't laugh?" exclaimed Sunny. "What is the use of feeling happy if you can't laugh?"

"It's of no use," said the sad little man. "Nobody is happy in this country. Nobody ever has been happy since the King was bewitched and the sun went away in a temper, and that was sixteen years ago. Nobody ever will be happy again, unless the spell is broken; and the spell cannot be broken until a Princess of the royal blood comes this way, without knowing that she is a Princess."

"How absurd!" said Sunny. "As if a Princess could be a Princess without knowing she is a Princess!"

"Why not?" asked the sad little man. He had lived alone in the dark, silent wood for such a long time that he began to find the conversation tiring.

"Oh, because there are bands and flags and balls and banquets and cheers and Princes and lots of fun, wherever there is a Princess," replied Sunny.

The sad little man looked more sad than before.

"Then the spell will never be broken," he said; "because all that noise would be stopped at once. If you are done talking you better go, or else we will both be banished; and I advise you to take off those wooden shoes of yours, unless you want to be put into prison. But, first of all, tell me if you can look straight at the sun without blinking."

He always asked every girl he met that question, in case she should happen to be a Princess; for he was really a very wise little man in spite of his sadness, and he knew that only eagles, and Princesses who did not know they were Princesses, could look straight at the sun without blinking. And he was so tired of feeling sad without being allowed to cry, that he longed to have the spell

removed from the country, so that he wouldn't have to keep his tears back any longer.

"Why, of course I can, if there is a sun," laughed Sunny. And to her astonishment the sad little man dropped straight to the ground, and put his fists in his eyes, and began to cry at the very top of his voice, just like a baby.

"What's wrong?" exclaimed Sunny.

"Wrong?" shouted the little man, who was shaking with sobs from head to toe. "I've never been this happy in my life! I have been longing to cry for sixteen years."

As soon as the old man began to weep, the trees began to rustle, and the birds began to sing, and the frogs began to croak; and over it all came a faint glimmering of white light, as though the sun were beginning to stretch himself behind the cloud.

"What is happening?" asked Sunny.

"Go on to the palace and see," sobbed the sad little man. And Sunny ran as fast as she could in her wooden shoes which made a lot of noise. For the first time in sixteen years there was this much noise in the town. People fell down in heaps, from sheer amazement at hearing such a noise after sixteen years of silence. So nobody tried to stop her; and she ran faster and faster and faster, and the light grew brighter and brighter and brighter, until at last she stood in the courtyard of the King's palace. She ran up the steps, and into the palace and Sunny went clattering along the great hall until the sound of her coming reached the King's ears.

Now the King sat on his throne with cotton wool stuffed in his ears, in case there would be by accident sound in the palace. But he still heard the clatter of Sunny's shoes coming closer and closer, and he began to feel terribly nervous.

"What is that noise? Take it away and behead it at once!" he said to the Prime Minister, in his most distinct whisper. But the noise outside was now so loud that the Prime Minister could not hear a word; and the next moment the door flung open, and Sunny the Princess ran into the room. And the King looked so funny as he tried to make the Prime Minister hear his whispers, and the Prime Minister looked so funny as he tried to hear the King's whispers, that Sunny had to laugh; and when she begun she found she couldn't stop, so she laughed and laughed and laughed; and when the poor, nervous old King turned again to the Prime Minister to tell him to behead the girl at once, he found that the Prime Minister was laughing too; and immediately all the courtiers in the courtyard, and the cooks in the kitchen, and the townspeople in the streets, and the children in the nurseries, were all laughing as hard as they could. And when the sun heard all

this laughter, he came out from behind the cloud and shone his very best once more. So there was the sunshine again, and there was everybody laughing, except the King.

Now, when the King found that no one was paying any attention to his royal whispers, he began to grow angry, and without thinking any more about it he shouted at the very top of his royal voice. And this was so remarkable, after sixteen years of whispering, that the laughter was instantly hushed; and even Sunny the Princess became silent, because she wanted to see what was going to happen next.

"Who are you?" demanded the King, pointing at her with his sceptre.

"I am Sunny, of course," she said, stepping up to the throne in quite a friendly manner.

"She is the little Princess, your daughter," said a voice from the doorway. And there stood the Queen. When the King saw her, he forgot that she used to laugh too much, and he came down from his throne in a hurry and he kissed her.

So that was how Sunny found out she was a Princess; and there were bands and flags and balls and banquets and cheers and Princes and lots of fun. For that evening the King gave a magnificent ball, to celebrate the return of his daughter Sunny; and all the Princes in the kingdom were invited to it.

"Now," said the Queen, as she carefully put on Sunny's beautiful new crown, "you will be able to find your Prince, as you said you would."

But Sunny shook her head and wondered why she felt so sad when everything seemed to be going so well. She went to the open window and looked out into the garden. As she did, she heard a faint buzzing and humming, and three beautiful bees flew down and settled on her arm. And Sunny gave a cry of joy and knew all at once why she had been feeling so lonely; and she began to sing the song Honey the gardener's son had taught her.

Everybody wondered why the Princess was so disdainful to all the Princes who danced with her, that night. But nobody wondered anymore when Honey the gardener's son arrived. And he came, all in his gardener's clothes; and he walked straight into the palace, just as Sunny had done; and she met him in the great hall. And they both shouted with happiness and ran straight into each other's arms; and they kissed and kissed and kissed. Then they sat down on the steps of the King's throne, just because it happened to be there, and Sunny told him everything that had happened to her.

"It is very boring being a Princess," said Sunny. "And I don't like palaces; they are such stuffy places! The people who live in them are rather stuffy, too. And there isn't a chocolate tree in the whole of the garden; have you ever seen such

a stupid garden? Oh, I am so glad you're here Honey!"

"Have you found your Prince?" was all that Honey said.

"Princes are boring too," said Sunny. "It is much nicer in the village, under the chocolate tree."

"Of course it is," said Honey. "Let's go back."

In the end the Queen stayed with the King; and Honey and Sunny were married that very same day and went back to live in the village without a name. And there they built a very small house in a very big garden, and they planted it with rows of chocolate trees and the fairies came and filled it with flowers from Fairyland that had no names at all, but were the most beautiful flowers that anyone has ever seen, for they never faded or died but just changed into something else when they were tired of being the same flower.

So no wonder that Honey and Sunny were happy for ever and ever!

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