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The Travelling Companion

Hans Christian Andersen

When the father of Johannes passed away, the boy was terribly sad. He didn't have a mother and now he was left all alone. That's why he decided to hit the road the day after his father's funeral.

On his first night he had to sleep outside in the hay, but Johannes didn't mind. The weather was nice and the moon was shining bright in the sky. That night Johannes dreamt of a beautiful girl with a gold crown on her head. He also saw his father who said to him: 'Always live well, Johannes! Look what a beautiful bride you will have then.' The next morning Johannes woke up satisfied and intended to live his life good and kind.



The next evening the weather was terrible and Johannes couldn't sleep outside. He decided to take shelter in a small church. He sat down in a corner and fell asleep. Around midnight he was awoken by voices. In the moonlight he saw that there was a coffin in the middle of the church, but the man wasn't buried yet. Around the coffin were two bad men who wanted to hurt the man in the coffin. 'He! What are you doing?' said Johannes bravely. 'This man owes us money, but now he is dead and we get nothing. So as revenge we will throw him out of the church.' 'You can have my money,' said Johannes, 'it isn't much, but it is my entire inheritance. But you will have to leave the man alone'. The two evil men laughed, took the money and walked away.



When Johannes continued his travels the next morning he heard a voice call out to him. 'He friend, where are you going?' said the stranger. 'I am going into the

wide world,' answered Johannes. 'Me too,' said the stranger, 'shall we go together?' Johannes thought it was a good idea and soon they grew to be close friends.

The travelling companion turned out to be an odd man. Not only did he know a lot about the world, he also had a magic ointment. With this ointment he healed the broken leg of an old woman and he made the puppets from a puppeteer come alive. In exchange for this he got three brooms from the old woman and from the puppeteer a sword. The sword came in handy when they came across a dead swan, the travelling companion wanted to take the wings with him.

Not much later they arrived at a city where the king lived. They heard that the king was a kind man, but that his daughter was an evil princess. Every man who wanted to marry her, had to solve three riddles. If they didn't manage, she would kill them. Many men had tried, but none had succeeded.

The day after Johannes saw the princess riding through the streets. She was so beautiful and she looked just like the girl he had seen in his dreams! She couldn't be bad, could she? On the spot he decided that he wanted to marry her. And even though everybody tried to change his mind, he wanted to try.

While Johannes was sleeping, the travelling companion made a plan. He tied the wings of the swan to his back and took a broom from the old lady. Then he flew to the castle. Here he saw how the princess flew from her window with big, black wings. The travelling companion made himself invisible and flew behind her while hitting her with his broom. When she arrived at a big mountain, she dove into a cave. An ugly troll was having a party there. The travelling companion heard the princess tell the troll that a new suitor had arrived to ask for her hand in marriage and the troll answered that the suitor would have to guess what she was thinking. And she would have to think about her shoes.

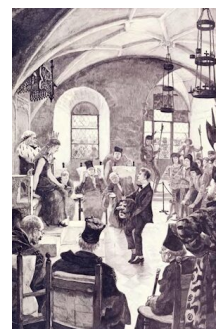


The next morning the travelling companion told Johannes that he had dreamt of the princess and that she would be thinking about her shoes. Johannes believed him immediately. This had to be a sign! He went to the castle and answered without hesitation to the question of the princess. Oh how surprised she was when he answered correctly.

That evening the travelling companion did the same thing and this time he heard that the princess would be thinking about her glove. And again Johannes was

right the next day. That evening the travelling companion returned to the castle again. He followed the princess, saw how she was dancing with the troll and followed them when they flew back to the castle. The troll whispered: 'Think about my head.' And when the princess returned to her room, the travelling companion chopped the head of the ugly troll right off. He put it in a handkerchief and told Johannes the next morning that he had to open the parcel in front of the princess.

Everybody was in shock when they saw the troll head, but Johannes had given the princess the right answer. That evening they got married. The princess was very unhappy, but luckily the travelling companion had told Johannes how to lift her spell. From that moment on the princess loved Johannes very much.



The day after the wedding the travelling companion came to say goodbye. 'I must go now,' he said, 'I have paid my debt to you. I am the dead man whose debt you paid to the bad men. Thank you so much.' And with those words he disappeared. And Johannes and his princess lived happily ever after.

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