



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Worsted Doll

Abbie Phillips Walker

Good Mother Munster and her husband Jacob had five daughters. Of course, they loved them dearly, but they often wished for a son.

"Then he could help me in the shop," said Jacob, who was a dollmaker. "Not that I would trade any of our daughters for a son," he added, "but I would like to have a son in addition to our five girls."

Whether the stork overheard this conversation between Jacob and his wife and took offense because they doubted his judgment, or whether he thought Jacob and his wife had enough children, I do not know. But the stork never came to their door again, and their daughters grew up to be women without a brother.

One day, Jacob rushed out of his shop, which was behind his house. He was very excited and spoke so quickly that Good Mother Munster understood only half of what he said.

"They want Worsted Dolls," he explained finally, "two dozen Worsted Dolls to be sent over the water in time for Christmas."

Jacob raised his hands with a gesture of despair, for they did not make Worsted Dolls in his shop, and he did not understand why anyone would want them.

"There is enough time to make them," said Good Mother Munster. "The girls and I can knit them, and we will make half girl dolls and half boy dolls." And so, Good Mother and her daughters began to work on the knitted dolls.

One day, when Good Mother Munster was knitting the last doll, a boy doll, she thought about how much she would miss the doll when it was finished and sent over the sea.

"I will make you extra big," she said to the doll as she added a few stitches to the length and width of the doll, "and if I could, I would knit a tongue for you so you could talk, and I would knit legs on which you could run, just like a real boy."

Good Mother Munster knitted as she had just thought, but she did not know that she had knitted all her wishes into the body of the boy doll, so that when he was finished, he could do all the things she had wanted.

But he was a wise little fellow and did not betray himself, for fear he would not be shipped over the water with the other dolls, as he wanted to see the world so

badly.

It was a long journey to the other side of the ocean, and the boy doll thought it would never end. But at last, he was taken out of the big trunk and placed with other dolls in a window of a big store.

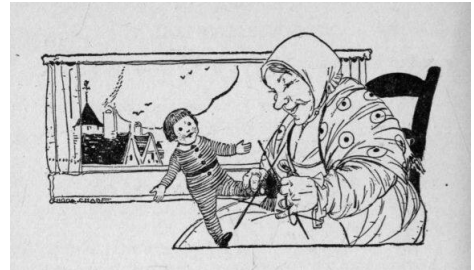
"I wish someone would talk to me," thought the boy doll, but the other dolls did not say a word, and because he did not want to attract attention, he remained silent too.

One day, a lady came into the store and took the boy doll with her. One evening, she placed him on a tree that was decorated with sparkling golden slings. After a while, a little girl entered the room, and when she saw the doll, she exclaimed, "Oh, I hope this boy doll is for me!"

"I hope so too," thought the boy doll, "because I am sure you will talk to me."

And sure enough, the doll was given to the little girl. "I am so glad you were for me," she said to the doll, "for I really need a father for my doll family."

"Heaven help me, oh no, poor me," thought the boy doll, "what a responsibility I suddenly have." And he was so amazed that he could not speak to her.



The little girl took him to a big room where her family of dolls lived. "Look Rosamond, this is your husband," she said to a big French doll. "His name is Theodor. And this is your father," she said to a group of small dolls. "He will live with you from now on."

"I hope you will be a good father to them," the little girl said to Theodor. But the boy doll was so overwhelmed that he still couldn't speak and so he didn't answer. Theodor was put in a big armchair and the little girl left him with his family.

His big, distinguished-looking wife held her head high and cast a contemptuous look at poor Theodor, because she was not happy to have a Calico doll as a husband. The children looked, in the same way as their mother, and giggled at their new father.

"Oh, why did I leave good mother Munster?" thought Theodor. "She wanted a son so much and she would have really loved me."

He sat very still for a while and thought about what he should do. He knew that as the father of a family he had to be respected, but his children were laughing at him. If he had not been a little afraid of his haughty French wife, Theodor

would have already exerted his authority.

"I'll start with the children," he said to himself finally, "that may impress Rosamond."

So while the children giggled and whispered, Theodor suddenly jumped up from his chair. Of course, he was very stiff in his movements because he had no joints. The children laughed and said, "Haha, our father doesn't even have joints in his legs."

But the stern look on Theodor's face soon calmed them down, and by the time he reached them, they were quite scared. Theodor cleared his throat, held his hands behind his back and said, "It is clear to me that you need a father, because your manners are shockingly bad." "What's your name?" he asked, grabbing one of the children by the shoulder. "Etta," she replied. "And what's your name?" he said, pointing to another. "May," was the answer.

"And yours, and yours, and yours, and yours, and yours, and yours?" he asked, receiving the names of Sally, Freda, Maude, Cora, Dora, and Ida in turn.

"I'll divide you into two groups of four," he said after hearing the names. "One will be the Etta-May-Sally-Freda group and the other will be the Maude-Cora-Dora-Ida group. That will make things easier for me and I can talk to four of you at once." "Yes father," they all said.



"Etta-May-Sally-Freda, if I ever hear you giggling again like you did when I appeared, you will be severely punished." "Yes, sir," replied the trembling dolls.

"Maude-Cora-Dora-Ida," said Theodor in a stern voice. "Yes, father," replied the second group. "If you behave again as you did when I first came to this house, you will be punished in a way that you will remember forever." "Yes, sir," replied the four dolls.

Theodor turned away and walked with all the dignity he could muster to his wife. Rosamond no longer held her head high, because the way her husband interacted with the children had shown her that he really meant to be in charge of the house.

"When are we going to eat?" he asked. "We don't have a set time," she answered. "From now on, we'll have dinner at seven o'clock," said Theodor. "Breakfast is at eight. You can choose the time for lunch yourselves, because I won't be there. And the children will not dine with us but separately," he added.

"And now, I would like to see my room."

Rosamond, who was just as impressed as the children, obediently did as she was told, and Theodor noticed that he was in charge without any further problems. But still, he could not forget the good Mother Munster, and although he knew he should be content with his family, he often thought of Mother Munster across the water.

It was not an easy thing to be the father of a family. If he felt like jumping or lying on the ground, there were the children, and he could not lose his dignity for a moment. "I would much rather be a son than the father of a family," he said. "If I could go back to Germany to the good Mother Munster, I would be really happy."

Of course, a husband and father should not have these feelings, but you must not forget that Theodor had all this responsibility before he had any pleasure from his youth.

One day, he heard the family he lived with talking about going abroad and saw that large suitcases were being packed. "Oh dear," thought Theodor, "I wonder if they will take me with them. Maybe they are going to Germany where the good Mother Munster lives."

And then Theodor had a bad thought. "I'll crawl into one of the suitcases and hide," he said, "and if I can find the German village where Mother Munster lives, I will not come back to be the father of a family, but I will stay with the good Mother Munster and be her little boy."

Of course, he was abandoning his family, but Theodor really didn't know how wrong that was. So, when he was left alone in the room with the suitcases one day, he climbed over the edge of a suitcase and hid between the folds of a dress without saying goodbye to his wife or children.

Theodor only felt safe when the men came to take the suitcases. Then his heart leapt for joy. After a long time, the suitcases were opened in a hotel, and Theodor wondered what they would say if they found him.

"Look now, here is Theodor," said the mother to her little girl, when she found him among her dresses. "I really wonder how he got into my suitcase."

The little girl had not brought any of her dolls, and she was so happy to see Theodor that she hugged him. Theodor felt guilty when he thought about what he planned to do, but his love for Mother Munster was deeper than his love for his family.

After visiting various places for many weeks, Theodor had almost given up hope of seeing Mother Munster again when he heard them say one day, "Tomorrow

we're going to Berlin."

"Berlin, Berlin," repeated Theodor. "Where have I heard that name before?" Then he suddenly realized that it was in Germany and that not far from there was the village where Mother Munster lived. He could hardly prevent himself from jumping for joy.

One morning, after they had been in Berlin for a week, the father of the little girl said, "Today we're going to visit a village where they make dolls."

"I'll take Theodor with me," said the little girl, "because I want a doll just like him, but a girl doll."

They traveled a long way by train, and then by carriage, and finally stopped at a house. The sight of the house made Theodor's heart pound so loud he was afraid they would hear it. This was the house of the good Mother Munster. There in the doorway stood the dear old lady herself!

They went to the kitchen, and the little girl put Theodor on a chest in the room. Excited by the sight of the doll shop, the girl forgot to take him with her, and as soon as Theodor was alone, he slid off the chest and hid behind it. When the little girl returned from the shop, she had a big doll in her arms and had completely forgotten about Theodor.

A few days later, when Mother Munster was cleaning her kitchen, she moved the chest and there was Theodor with his arms outstretched. Mother Munster picked him up. "Well, well, it's my boy!" she said. "How did you ever get here?" Then she thought of the little girl. "I hope she doesn't come back to get you," she said, holding Theodor tightly in her arms.

"I hope not too," said Theodor, and although he didn't speak out loud, Mother Munster seemed to understand.

"You would rather live here, wouldn't you?" she asked. "I'll put you on this chair in the corner, and you shall be my little boy. All the girls have their own homes now, and Jacob and I are very lonely."

"Look, Jacob," she said when he came in the door, "here is the worsted doll I made to send across the water. He's come back to live with us, so we finally have a son."

Jacob smiled. He didn't care much for worsted dolls, but he took Theodor by the hand. "You've been on a long journey since you left here, boy," he said. "You can tell Mother Munster and me everything you've seen when we sit by the fire on those long winter evenings." And so Theodor found a mother and father and lived a happy and peaceful life, free from the worries and responsibilities of a family.

But sometimes he dreams and wakes up calling out: "Etta-May-Sally-Freda" or "Maude-Cora-Dora-Ida." But then he realizes it's just a dream, turns over, and goes back to sleep with a contented smile on his face that says, "Theodor, you are a happy man."

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