

# THE LORD'S DAUGHTER AND THE BLACKSMITH'S SON



**A**n old lord had a young daughter, and she was the most spoiled girl in all the world. Her father indulged her and her mother petted her till it was a wonder she could be tolerated. What saved her from being a horror was that she was so sunny and sweet by nature, with such a merry way about her, that she won all hearts. The only thing wrong with her was that once she set her mind on something, she wouldn't give up till she'd got what she wanted.

It wasn't much of a problem when she was a little girl, but as she was getting to be a young lady, that's when the trouble began. Her father decided it was time to find a husband for her, so he and her mother began looking around for a suitable match. It didn't take long for the girl to find out what they had in mind. So she began to do a bit of looking around on her own. Then one day as she was looking out her bedroom window, she saw a boy she might fancy in the courtyard below.

She called to her maid, "Come quick to the window! Who is the lad down below?"

The maid came and looked. "Oh, it's only the son of the blacksmith," she said. "No doubt the lord sent for him to shoe the new mare."

"Why have I never seen him before?" asked the girl.

"The blacksmith's shop is not a place for a young lady. Come away from the window now! Your mother would be in a fine state if she saw you acting so bold."

And no doubt she was right, for the girl was hanging over the windowsill in a most unladylike way.

She came away from the window, but she made up her mind to go down to the village for another look at the blacksmith's son. She liked the way he walked and the way his yel-

low hair swept back from his brow, and she had a good idea she'd like a lot of other things about him if she could get a better look at him.

She knew her mother would never let her go if she asked, so she just went without asking. To make sure nobody would know her, she borrowed the dairymaid's best dress. She didn't ask to borrow it, either; she just took it when nobody was around to see.

The blacksmith's shop was a dark place, but not so dark that she couldn't see the blacksmith's son shoeing the lord's horse. His coat was off and he had a great smudge of soot on his cheek, but she liked him even better than before.

"Good day," she said.

"Good day," he said, looking up in surprise. And he gave her a smile that turned her heart upside down.

So she gave him one as good in return. "I'm from the castle," she said. "I just stopped in to see how you were coming with the new mare."

"I've two shoes on and two to go," he said. "Wait here a bit and I'll give you a ride back to the castle as soon as I'm done."

"Oh, no!" said the lord's daughter. "I just stopped by. I can't be late coming home."

He begged her to stay, but she would not. He wasn't pleased to see her go, for he liked her terribly and wanted to know her better.

When he took the mare back, he tried to find out which of the maids from the castle had been in the village that day. But no one could tell him, for there were plenty of maids, and who knew which one might be coming or going? But whoever she was and wherever she was, she'd taken his heart along with her.

The lord's daughter came home and put the dairymaid's dress back where she'd found it. After she'd made herself tidy, she went to find her father and said, "You can just stop looking for a husband for me, because I've found the one I want myself. I'm going to marry the blacksmith's son."

At first the lord thought she was joking, but then he saw she was not. He flew into a terrible rage, but no matter what he said, it was of no use. His daughter had made up her mind, and he couldn't change it.

Well, the lord could only sputter and swear, and his lady could only sit and cry. They sent the girl to bed without her supper, but the cook smuggled it up to her on a tray, so that was no punishment at all.

The next morning the lord told her that she and her mother were going off to the city in a week's time. There she'd stay until she was safely married to her second cousin twice-removed. The lord had finally picked him to be her husband, and there were to be no questions about it.

"I'll go if I must," said the girl. "But you can tell my cousin I won't be marrying him. I've made up my mind to marry the blacksmith's son."

The blacksmith's son soon had his own troubles.

When the lord and his family came out of church that Sunday morning, they passed by the blacksmith and his son at the gate.

"Who's the lass with the lord and his lady?" he asked his father.

The blacksmith turned and looked. "You ninny!" he said in disgust. "Can't you see that's no lass you're looking at? That's a young lady. That's the lord's own daughter."

The blacksmith's son had been building cloud-castles about the girl he thought was one of the maids in the castle, and now they all tumbled down. His heart was broken.

The day before the girl and her mother were to leave for the city, the girl rose from her bed at the break of dawn and tiptoed downstairs. Since this was her last day at home, she wanted to have a little time to herself.

The cook was in the kitchen as she passed by, picking something up off the floor.

"What have you there?" asked the girl.

"It's a baby's shoe," said the cook. "One of the lord's dogs brought it in and dropped it on the floor. It's a pretty little shoe, isn't it?"

"Give it to me," said the girl. "I'll find the baby who owns it." She took the shoe and put it in her pocket.

Around the stables and through the kitchen garden she went, to the lane that led to the gardener's house. Halfway there she saw a little man sitting by the side of the lane with his head in his hands. He was crying as if his heart would break. He was no bigger than a child, and indeed, he looked like a child, sitting there and crying so hard, and she sat down and put her arms around him to comfort him. "Don't be sad," she said. "Tell me your trouble, and if I can I'll fix it."

"It's my shoe!" wailed the tiny little man. "I took it off to take a stone out of it, and a great dog came and snatched it out of my hand and ran off with it. I can't walk over the briars and brambles and cruel sharp stones without my shoe, and I'll never get home today."

"Well, now!" said the girl with a laugh. "I think I can fix your troubles easier than my own. Is this the shoe you're looking for?" And she put her hand in her pocket and took out the shoe she'd taken from the cook.

"Yes, yes, that's it!" cried the little man. "It's my pretty little shoe!" He grabbed it from her hand and put it on and, springing into the road, he danced for joy. But in a minute he was back, sitting on the bank beside her.

"Fair is fair," he said. "What are your troubles? Maybe I can mend yours as you did mine."

"Mine are past mending," sighed the lord's daughter. "For they're taking me off to the city in the morning, to wed my second cousin twice-removed. But I won't do it. If I can't marry the blacksmith's son, I won't marry anyone at all. I'll lie down and die first."

"So you want to marry the blacksmith's son," said the little man thoughtfully. "Does the blacksmith's son want to marry you?"

"He would if he knew me better," the girl said.

"I could help you," the little man said. "But you might have to put up with a bit of inconvenience. You might not like it."

"I'll put up with it," said the girl. "I wouldn't mind anything if it came out all right in the end."

So the little man gave her two small berries and told her to swallow them before she went to sleep that night. "You can leave the rest to me. You won't be going off to the city in the morning!" he said with a grin.

Early the next morning, the maid came up with the girl's breakfast tray. When she opened the door and went in, the tray dropped out of her hands. The girl's mother came running in, and when she saw what was in the room, she screamed and fainted right away. The lord heard all the racket and rushed in. There was his wife on the floor, and the maid, with the tray and dishes all at her feet, wringing her hands. He looked at the bed. His daughter wasn't there!

"Where could she have gone?" he shouted.

His wife raised her head from the floor. "Have you looked in the bed?" she said in a weak voice.

"I have!" said the lord grimly. "She's gone! The bed's empty."

"My love," said his wife, "it's not empty."

The lord went over to the bed and his lady came with him. The bed was not empty, though his daughter was not in it. In her place, with its head on the pillow and its forelegs on the silken coverlet, lay a little white dog.

"What's a dog doing in my daughter's bed?" shouted the lord. "Put it out in the hall at once!" And he started to do it himself. But his wife caught his arm.

"I don't think it's a dog," she said. "I very much fear it's our daughter."

"Have you gone mad?" the lord said angrily.

But his wife pointed out to him that the dog was wearing the blue silk nightgown that she had put on their daughter the night before. And hadn't the maid braided her hair with a blue satin ribbon? And wasn't the dog's little forelock all braided and tied exactly the same? It was plain to see that someone had put a spell on the girl and turned her into a dog. Just then the little dog chuckled with the daughter's own pleased chuckle and patted the lord on the cheek with its paw, just as his daughter always did with her hand.

"Oh, you little rascal," said the lord, never able to find it in his heart to be angry with his daughter for long. "Now what are we going to do?" One thing was clear and certain. They wouldn't be leaving the castle that day. So a messenger was sent to the second

*The Lord's Daughter and the Blacksmith's Son*

cousin twice-removed, to tell him not to expect them. The servants were told the girl was sick in bed with some sort of illness and nobody but the maid was to come in the room.

The lord called for his personal physician, though his wife and the maid told him it wouldn't do any good. The doctor looked at the dog and shook his head. "I don't see a young lady here," he said. "That's nothing but a dog."

The maid and his wife were right. The doctor was no use at all. An old woman came with herbs and powders, but all she could do was tell them the girl was bewitched. How to take the spell off, she didn't know.

The maids carried the news that the lord's daughter had taken sick to the village, and the blacksmith's son soon heard all about it. If he thought his heart was broken before, it was twice as bad when he thought the lord's daughter might die. He was hammering away at a bit of metal, not even noticing the iron had gone cold, when a shadow fell across the door. He looked up to see a little tiny man all dressed in green, with a red cap and red shoes.

"Have you seen the pretty daughter of the lord up at the castle?" the little man asked. The blacksmith's heart jumped as if it were stuck with a pin, but all he said was "Yes."

"Has anyone told you that she's mortally ill?" the little man continued.

The blacksmith's son gave a great big sigh, but all he said was "Yes."

"Have you been up to the castle to ask about the lord's pretty daughter?" asked the little man.

The blacksmith's son shot him a glowering look. "No," he said.

"Do you know what's wrong with her?" asked the little man.

"I do not," said the blacksmith's son, throwing his hammer to one side. "Now, will you leave me in peace?"

The little man stayed right where he was. "Not yet," said he. "Why don't you go up to the castle and cure the lord's pretty daughter yourself?"

"Cure her!" shouted the blacksmith's son. "I'd lay down my life to cure her, the pretty young lady. How could someone like me do any good when they've had the lord's own doctor there to see her and he couldn't do a thing?"

"I know a way to cure her, if you'd like to try it," said the little man. "But answer me this question first. Would you like to marry the pretty young lady?"

"Are you crazy?" groaned the boy. "How could a blacksmith's son marry the daughter of a lord?"

"That's not what I asked you," said the little man. "I asked would you like to marry her?"

"I'd lie down and die before I'd marry anyone else!" cried the blacksmith's son.

Then the little man gave him two little berries, just like the ones he'd given the girl.

## *The Lord's Daughter and the Blacksmith's Son*

"Here's the cure for her sickness," he told the blacksmith's son. "Now, dress yourself up in your Sunday best, and make sure you don't try to cure the girl till the lord has given his promise you can marry her if you do."

The blacksmith's son cleaned himself up and dressed in his best clothes, then went straight to the castle and asked to see the lord.

"Well, who are you and what do you want?" the lord asked him with a frown.

"I'm the blacksmith's son."

When the lord heard who it was, he jumped straight from his chair and went for the boy, ready to throw him out with his own two hands. After all, it was the blacksmith's son at the bottom of all this trouble.

The blacksmith's son sidestepped the lord and said quickly, "I've come to cure your daughter."

Well, that made a difference. Now the lord was all smiles.

"But before I do it, I want permission to marry her," said the blacksmith's son.

"Never!" thundered the lord.

"Then I'll be on my way," said the blacksmith's son, and started for the door.

What could the poor lord do? He had to give in, and he knew it. So he did. "You can have her," said the lord to the blacksmith's son.

The little dog jumped from the bed and ran up to the blacksmith's son the minute he and the lord came into the room. The boy took the berries from his pocket and popped them into her mouth. Before you could say "Two and two is four," there stood the lord's daughter in the little dog's place!

She took the boy's hand in her own, and she turned to the lord and said, "I'm going to marry the blacksmith's son."

"Marry him, then!" grumbled the lord, not too unhappy about it since he had his daughter back again.

So the spoiled girl got her way in the end and married the blacksmith's son. The lord wasn't too ill-pleased, for he soon found his son-in-law was as likable a person as any he'd ever known. It all ended well, and that's all there is to tell of the lord's daughter and the blacksmith's son.