

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Cinder-Blower and the Wishing-Wand**



Once upon a time there was a rich man, and he had a beautiful only daughter whom he loved beyond measure. His wife had died. The daughter was extraordinarily beautiful, and whatever she wished for, her father gave her, because he knew no greater happiness than giving pleasure to his little girl; also, perhaps, because she was a wish-maiden, whose every wish came to pass – “Give me a dress, father, that is made of silver, and I’ll give you a kiss for it!” the daughter said to her father one day, and she soon received the dress, and the father received his kiss.

“Give me a dress, dear father, that is made of gold!” the daughter said soon afterwards, “and I’ll give you two kisses.”

The father agreed to this pleasant barter too.

“Give me a dress that is made of diamonds, dearest father, and I’ll give you three kisses!” the daughter asked again, and her father told her, “You shall have it, but you’re making me poor.”

The father got the dress and his daughter gratefully threw her arms around his neck and kissed him three times and cried, “Now, beloved father, darling father, give me a Rod of Fortune, a Wishing-Wand, and I’ll always be your little darling and do anything to please you!”

“My child,” said the father, “I do not have such a wand, and it will be hard to obtain; yet I will try my luck to make your happiness complete.”

Then the father went on a journey, taking the last of his fortune with him, and searched for a Wishing-Wand, but no merchant had such a thing for sale. So the man travelled far into a distant land, where an old sorcerer chanced to live, and heard tell that he possessed a Wishing-Wand. The all-too-good father sought out this sorcerer, presented his request to him, and asked what the wand would cost.

The old sorcerer spoke: “If people could buy Wishing-Wands with *money* then there would soon be no forests left on Earth, even if every little tree and every little branch were such a rod. He who receives such a wand gives up his soul and dies three days after he has handed it on, unless he gives it to someone who is willing to, and vows to, sacrifice his very soul for it. Then the first possessor’s soul goes free.”

“Fine,” said the father of that daughter. “For my child’s sake, I shall not shrink from the required sacrifice. Give me the wand!” – The old sorcerer had the man write his name in a book then fulfilled his request. The far journey for the wand had exhausted the last remnants of the rich man’s fortune – he had spent everything on his daughter – but it did not matter to him. Just seeing her made happy by the fulfilment of her every wish was his only thought and desire. It is well, he thought, that I die, for she would keep wishing for yet more, and if I were unable to fulfil any more of her wishes, I myself would be most unhappy.

With the greatest delight did the daughter receive from the hand of her father, whose return she had awaited with longing, the Wishing-Wand, and she did not know how to thank him.

But three days later the daughter had a new wish. She had heard tell of an exceedingly handsome Prince who lived in a faraway land and was very rich and worthy of all one's love. She wanted him as her husband.

The father, however, said: "My beloved daughter, I have given you everything I own, and for your Wishing-Wand I gave up my life, even my soul. I must part from you; you procure for yourself this Prince whom you wish to marry, live happily, and remember me with love." With these words the father bent his head and passed away. His daughter shed sincere and bitter tears over him and said: There never was a better father! – And she was very right about that.

Now, when the father of this daughter had been consigned to the grave, she had no relatives left, nor money nor possessions. So she put on a cloak of crow's feathers for her everyday outfit, took her silver dress, her gold dress, and her diamond dress, and slung all three over her shoulder, then she picked up the Wishing-Wand and waved it, wishing herself near to the castle in which the renowned Prince lived. Then it was as if a wind were gently raising her, and borne by the air she floated speedily into distant parts, soon arriving in a park-forest, where she could see the Prince's castle shimmering nearby through the thick oak-trunks. She struck the thickest of these oaks with her wand and wished that there was a wardrobe inside in which she could hang up her clothes, and a little room to change her clothes in; and all this came about straight away. She now disguised herself to look like a boy and walked, wearing the crow's pelt, into the Prince's castle. The aroma of choice dishes led her to the kitchen; there she offered her services to the cook as a parentless, homeless boy.

"Very well," said the cook, "you shall be my cinder-blower, you'll

stoke the fire up early on, and keep it burning during the day, and see to it that no ashes fall out, and for that you can eat your fill every day. But you must also brush our Master the Prince's coats and clean and polish his boots." – The girl attended to her duties as a boy, and several days later she saw the Prince; having come back from the hunt, he strode along the kitchen passageway and threw a bird he had shot into the kitchen, that the same be roasted. The Prince was so handsome and splendid of figure and appearance that Cinder-Blower instantly fell violently in love with him. She would really have liked to approach him, but that would not have been seemly. Then she heard that a princely wedding was to be celebrated, over at a neighbouring castle, that would last for three days, and the Prince was to be the most distinguished guest, and he would travel over to dance there every day. All the local people, and those castle servants who were at all able, hurried over to see the splendour of the festivities. Then Cinder-Blower asked the cook to allow her to go over and watch the dance too, for the kitchen was all in order, with every fire extinguished, every spark dead, and the cinders kept. The cook allowed his servant to obtain the requested pleasure. Cinder-Blower hurried towards her oak, changed into the silver dress, and transformed her boy's figure into her own, then she struck a stone with her Wishing-Wand and it became a gala-coach, and she touched a couple of dor beetles¹ which became fine-bodied pitch-black horses, and a grass frog became the coachman and a green tree-frog the liveried huntsman. Cinder-Blower took her seat in the coach and off they went, as fast as flight. Into the ballroom walked the stately maiden, and everyone was dazzled by her beauty. The Prince lost his heart to her at

¹ In German, "Roßkäfer" (literally "horse-beetle").

once and asked her to dance; she danced delightfully and was very happy, but after several rounds she disappeared from the ballroom, climbed into her coach, which was waiting for her outside, waved her wand, and cried:

“Darkness behind me, before me light,
The road I travel be lost to sight!”

And the road she travelled was indeed lost to sight. The Prince was very uneasy at the rapid disappearance of his beautiful dancing-partner, and as no one was able to give any information in response to all his questions – who was she? where was she from? – he passed the night with great restlessness, which in the morning transformed itself into a dreadful sullenness and that foul mood which can seize even Princes every now and then.

The cook brought the Prince’s boots into the kitchen and complained about his ill-humour while handing them over to Cinder-Blower to be cleaned and polished. She undertook this duty and polished the boots so beautifully that the tomcat looked at his reflection in them with great satisfaction and gave a kiss to his mirrored ego; and the shine disappeared from the spot the cat had kissed.



Now when Cinder-Blower walked into the Prince's room in the figure of a boy, wearing the cloak of crow's feathers, and put the boots down, the Prince saw the dull spot at once, and taking that boot he threw it at her head, shouting: "You rascally cinder-blower! Couldn't you learn to polish boots properly?"

Cinder-Blower picked up the boot and again made it shine all over and said nothing.



In the evening the Prince drove to the dance again, and Cinder-Blower once more asked for leave. As Cinder-Blower had returned promptly the previous evening and not stayed out too long, as many domestics like to do, so the cook granted the request once again – and now Cinder-Blower went to her closet and little chamber in the oak-tree and put on the golden dress, procured herself a new coach, new horses, and new servants with her Wishing-Wand, and drove over to the castle. The Prince was already there, but out of humour. He found nothing pleasant, for *she* was not present. Then she walked in, radiant as a Queen. He rushed over to her and led her to the dance. Oh, how happy her fair smile, her intelligent conversation, her bright, mischievous inclination to tease made him! Today he had many questions to ask, among others – where was she from? Cinder-Blower replied with a laugh: “From Bootchuck!”

Cinder-Blower whiled away a brief hour at the dance – all of a sudden she had disappeared from the ballroom, and she quickly took her seat in her coach and spoke her spell:

“Darkness behind me, before me light,
The road I travel be lost to sight!”

The Prince’s gaze sought the beloved figure in vain. Asking after her, he turned to this one and that one of the wedding guests, but no one knew her. He asked his Privy Councillor, who had come with him as his attendant: “Pray tell me, my dear Privy Councillor, where the town or the castle *Bootchuck* is to be found?”

The Privy Councillor made a deep bow and replied: “Most serene Prince! May it please Your Highness to – Bootchuck – oh yes, it lies – it lies – in – in – how embarrassing, right this moment I cannot think where it lies.

Is there really a village or a castle with that strange name? Where should said place lie, Your Highness?”

The Prince turned his back on the speaker and muttered angrily through his teeth: “I pay this Privy Councillor a salary of three thousand dollars every year, and now he does not even know where Bootchuck lies! – It is shocking!”

And so, it goes without saying that the Prince, when the sun rose rosily the next morning, was not in the rosiest of moods. He could find no rest, he wanted to go out very early, so he put on his coat, which Cinder-Blower had brushed clean, discovered a few specks of dust on it, called for a brush, and stamped his feet. Cinder-Blower hurriedly ran over in her crow’s pelt with the brush, but the Prince was so dreadfully angry that he tore the brush from her hand, threw it at her head, and shouted at her that she must brush *better* the next time.

On the last evening of the neighbouring wedding festivities, everyone again ran over to the castle, and the Prince drove there also. Then Cinder-Blower asked a third time for permission to go and watch, and the cook shook his head repeatedly at the youth’s great curiosity, but he thought: “Virtue is, in truth, seldom found in youth,” and he said: “Today’s the last day, run over!”

Cinder-Blower swiftly ran to the oak-tree in the park, put on the diamond dress, again conjured up coach and horses, coachman and lackeys for herself, and appeared at the feast like a living ray of beauty. The Prince danced with her above all, and only with her, and asked her tenderly what was her name? Cinder-Blower gave a mischievous smile and replied, “Cinerosa Brushathead.”



The first name, ending as it did with -rosa, the Prince found very beautiful, particularly as he knew no Latin, but the surname was odd – he had never yet heard mention of this undoubtedly rich and respected family; yet he said, compelled by love, while he slipped his ring onto her finger: “Whoever you may be, dearest Cinerosa! With this ring I betroth myself to you!” – With a deep flush of shame on her cheeks, Cinder-Blower looked down at the ground and trembled. Immediately afterwards she withdrew, when the Prince had turned his eyes elsewhere just for a second. In no time she was sitting in her coach, but the Prince just happened to have given the order for his coach to be driven up close behind hers, so he would be able to follow her. Cinder-Blower waved her wand and said:

“Darkness behind me, before me light,
The road I travel be lost to sight!”

And then she rolled away – the Prince swiftly sat down in his coach and rolled after her, and although her coach could no longer be seen, the rolling of its wheels could be heard, and so the Prince’s coach-driver followed this sound. This night of dancing had lasted the longest, and early morning was beginning to dawn; the hour had already arrived in which the kitchen-work began, so Cinder-Blower quickly conjured her coach and her

servants away, but not having time to change her clothes, she hastily hid her diamond dress under the crow's pelt and hurried into the kitchen. Now the Prince, who had followed the coach of the marvellous maiden, was amazed to find himself right in front of his own castle, and not knowing the meaning of it all, he was consequently very morose, and very unwell, and bleary-eyed to boot.

"Our Prince is not at all well!" the cook said to Cinder-Blower. He needs a nourishing broth or a hot chocolate – hurry and light a fire." The morning collation was quickly prepared, Cinder-Blower threw the Prince's ring into the cup, and the cook took it up to the Prince. He drank and found, to his astonishment, his ring at the bottom of the cup, and he hastily asked, "Who is in the kitchen at so early an hour?"

"Your Highness, no one but I and the cinder-blower," replied the cook.

"Send that lad in to me this instant!" commanded the Prince, and when Cinder-Blower came, the Prince looked at him very keenly, but the cloak of crow's feathers completely hid her beauty.

"Come here, step nearer, Cinder-Blower!" ordered the Prince. "Come, comb me, my hairdresser is still lying abed!"

Cinder-Blower obeyed: she walked up beside the Prince and raked an ivory comb through his soft, full hair. The Prince felt the cloak of crow's feathers, which was worn in several places and therefore somewhat fragile and threadbare, and through the worn threads there came flashes, as sparkling clear as the morning dew – those were the shining diamonds of the sumptuous garment Cinder-Blower was wearing under the crowskin cloak.

“Now I know you, my love!” the Prince cried, full of inexpressible joy. “Now you are mine, now I am yours! For ever!” And he clasped his bride in his arms and kissed her.

Shortly before the wedding, the beautiful bride requested one more favour of her beloved bridegroom. The good cook, who had received Cinder-Blower so benevolently, and treated her so kindly and benignly, was knighted by the Prince and elevated to Hereditary Seneschal. That suited him down to the ground; he no longer needed to cook the food, as formerly, but was able to help to consume it, in peace, at the princely table; and when the wedding was celebrated with great magnificence, he then, in the full splendour of his new dignity, decorated with order and star, served the princely couple their dishes with his own hands.