

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Godmother Toad**



Once a pretty country lass was walking past a pond when she saw a big fat toad sitting on the edge, and it was staring so very intently and hideously. “Well! I’m sure I’d like to stand godmother to *your* child!” the girl cried, filled with abhorrence. And the toad raised its right forefoot in the air, as if it wished to shake hands. This gave the girl the creeps, and she hurried on her way.

When the maiden stepped into her bedroom that evening, the toad was sitting squat in the middle of the floor. The girl screamed. "Don't scream!" said the toad. "Didn't you promise to stand godmother to my child? I am taking you at your word! Follow me, or you will not live to see the morrow!" In mortal fear, the young girl followed the toad as it hopped ahead, through the village, through the night, to the pond; there in the reeds was an opening with a flight of steps leading down. The toad hopped on ahead, and the girl followed. Down below, the toad turned into a beautiful woman and showed the astonished girl her godchild, a cute, pretty little nixie. "You will not regret this service!" she said. And then began a great and glorious feast in the rooms of the subterranean waterworld, and the young maid was highly honoured and served by the loveliest nixies, and she was shown around all the grottoes, which sparkled like pure ice and silver. Finally, she received from her godmother, the toad, three marvellous gifts, the possession of which brought her happiness for the rest of her life, then she was taken back home safe and sound; and if she had not seen the gifts, there before her, on awakening the next morning, she would have believed that everything had happened to her only in a dream. But in her remembrance, her delight was tempered by a secret horror, and never again in her life could she bring herself to walk past that pond.