

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Of the Boy who did not want to Wash**

Once upon a time there was a boy who, even as a tiny tot, never wanted to be washed, and when he became bigger, his horror of water knew no bounds, and he was more afraid of getting wet than he was of being burnt. And so the Unclean Spirit, the Devil, gained power over the boy, and told him he would take him to a place where he would not need to wash for as long as he lived; and if he served him for seven years, he would have a good life.

That was all right by the boy, and he went with the Devil, who took him away so that not a soul either heard or saw any more of him, and he was completely forgotten.

However, seven years later there appeared in the boy's hometown a fellow who looked like the Devil's sooty brother. His skin was black, his hair tangled and unkempt, and his temper reticent. But when he saw children, he warned them against uncleanness and exhorted them to have themselves washed very thoroughly. Afterwards, it also happened that he recounted how he had had to keep watch at the Gates of Hell, in the service of the Unclean Spirit, because he himself had been so unclean, and he told the names of all those who had come through the gates from the village and the entire surrounding area. Now when the people heard from their children the tales the Devil's former gatekeeper was telling, they called him a black fiend, ran to him in great numbers, and gave him lots of money to keep silent and not say whose father, grandfather, mother, sister, aunt, and every dear relation he had seen moving into Hell. Then he took the money, but when someone started to chide him again, he said, "I wash my hands of it, I can't help it if your kith and kin strolled into Hell instead of into Heaven."

And he began to wash himself thoroughly, more than once in the day; and he earned a great deal of money by *tying* his tongue, while others have to earn it by *plying* their tongues.