

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Haughty Bride**

A parish priest had a beautiful daughter who was so inordinately vain and haughty that she looked down her nose at every young lad who fell for her baby-doll face; for such high airs did she carry that she imagined some rich Count or even a Prince would surely come and take her away as his wife. This sorely saddened the priest, because he would have liked to marry her to a worthy man, most of all to a fellow clergyman. But if one were to think that the priest's beautiful daughter was never on the lookout for a man, one would be much mistaken; with surreptitious glances did she scrutinise every handsome young man, so long as he was elegantly dressed, to see if she could not find any hint of a prince in disguise. This grieved the father even more, and he did not have nearly enough eyes to keep watch over her. One day, he had to depart on a necessary journey and leave his daughter in the care of the old maid. He charged her in the strictest manner to stay nice and demure at home, indeed not even to look out the window; but it is a well-known fact that you need only forbid many a woman to do something for her to be certain to do it. No sooner had the father turned his back than the obedient daughter was at the window looking out, and behold! As chance would have it, a handsome young gentleman came thundering along on a proudly prancing steed; she could not have her fill of looking at him, and he, for his part, had noticed her, for he turned his head towards her several times. She suddenly began to feel a quite singular sensation, as if she were smitten, and she had neither rest nor respite; and she could have shouted out loud for joy when she received a delicately folded note in which she was requested to present herself at a certain place at such and such an hour. The bell had still to strike the hour when she was on her way,

dressed in her best, the old maid having been placated with a white lie; and soon the priest's daughter was standing before the handsome young man whom she had taken to her heart. He too was not shy, but confessed to her that he was in love with her, kisses and oaths were exchanged, and the stranger, who gave himself out to be a baron, promised her to return in the next few days and take her back home to his castle, the name of which he told her.

From this time on the priest's daughter swam in joy and rapture; to become a baroness would admittedly not be to attain the goal of her wishes, but the Baron was so handsome and refined, which many a prince was certainly not. But one day passed after another and he did not come for her, nor did her father yet return from his journey. This made the fair young bride impatient, and she shortly resolved to pay the baron himself a visit. So she decorated herself with her finest garments and all her jewellery, tucked a large piece of ham in her pocket, and set out on her journey at night-time. But before the door there lay a large bandog, which began to growl as she tried to cautiously sneak away, and it grumbled:

"If you stay, you'll be discreet;

If you go, you'll see deceit!"

However, she paid no attention to this but cut off a chunk of ham and threw it to the guard-dog, and while he snapped at the meat and started to chew it she hurried away. She had to walk a long, long way before she could see her beloved's castle rising before her; with a pounding heart she climbed the mountain and walked without let or hindrance through the door, which stood open. It was guarded by a large, powerful dog which looked upon her

with fiery eyes and growled:

“Turn around, it’s better so;

If you stay, you’ll see blood flow!”

But she threw him, too, a chunk of ham and he let her enter. But everything in the castle was so strangely quiet that she almost shuddered. She walked up the spiral staircase and entered the first apartment she came to, where various items of men’s clothing lay untidily around; from this room into a second one, which was filled with all kinds of weapons; so into a third, which still bore the traces of a wild carousal; and finally into a fourth, which had large barrels on both sides. She was just about to enter the next apartment when she heard voices; quickly she hid behind a barrel, and soon she saw the Baron entering with several wild-looking companions who were dragging along a young, beautifully adorned woman. The woman whimpered softly and wrang her hands imploringly when the Baron told her in a rough voice: “Prepare for death!” She implored him, by his love, to spare her; he might take all her jewellery and she would swear to him not to betray anything, if he would only let her return home to her poor father. The Baron said coldly: “You must die! And you will soon have company, the daughter of a priest, another haughty thing, just like you, will follow you!” Of course, the hidden girl’s blood ran to ice in her veins, but she had enough presence of mind not to betray herself through the sound of a breath. And soon she heard the death rattle of the young woman, whose blood flowed over the floorboards into her hiding-place, and she had to see the wild companions eagerly taking the jewellery off her arms and trying to pull the rings from her fingers; however, the fingers were swollen, so the murderers

reached for an axe and hacked them off. O horror! One of them flew into the lap of the priest's daughter. She would have screamed out loud if the shock had not paralysed her tongue. The robbers looked for the fingers and found that one was missing. Alas for her if they sought it carefully; and this did in fact seem to be their intention, indeed, one of them was even now walking up to the barrel behind which the priest's daughter was hiding. In her terror, she prayed fervently to Heaven and made a vow to cast off all pride if she were freed from the murderer's den just this time. Then the Baron spoke: "That's enough for today; there's always tomorrow; I'm tired and sleepy." The companions abandoned the search and betook themselves to the adjoining apartment, through which the priest's daughter had come. Soon she heard the sound of deep snoring and thought it now time to secretly leave the castle. She crept on tiptoe out of her hiding-place, but alas! the sleepers were lying right next to the threshold, and so close together that she could not stride over them without touching them. However, she took heart by thinking: If you stay here, you're lost for certain, but if you venture to flee now, you might just succeed! – She strode, boldly and with God, over the sleepers. They stirred, bumped against one another, and one of them said to his neighbour, "What are you kicking me for?" "Devil requite it you, it was you who kicked me!" the other replied, and they were on the point of coming to blows but they fell asleep again. All this time, the girl had been crouching down, but once they were fast asleep she hurried through the other apartments, down the spiral staircase, threw what was left of her ham to the dog, and fled away as fast as she could. She arrived at her father's house deadly exhausted. He had returned, and she found him deeply

worried about her. She tearfully confessed everything to him and showed him the finger, which she had brought with her; and thanking God for her deliverance, he resolved to expose the villain.

After several days had passed, the handsome young baron rode through the village again and summoned the priest's daughter. The priest instructed her what she should do, and she went, beautifully adorned, to the trysting place. He said he had come to take her to his castle; but she feigned anxiety and said she had had a bad dream. When he pressed her to tell him her dream, she described everything that had really happened to her, and the Baron looked at her in consternation; but he sought to reassure her with the words, "Dreams are but bubbles, dear child!" "But this dream was too realistic," she replied, "so realistic, that I even have with me the finger which flew into my lap." And with those words, she took the finger from her pocket. When the Baron saw it, he drew a dagger and would have run it through her body; however, he had not the time, for he found himself surrounded by bailiffs and held fast. The castle was diligently searched, the entire gang of robbers caught, and a hoard of stolen valuables found. The barrels were all filled with human flesh. Justice was served on the Baron and his companions, while the priest's daughter was completely cured of her haughtiness, and she later become the worthy housewife of a country priest.