

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Tiny, Tiny Little Man**



Once upon a time there were three merry companions, a blacksmith, a tailor, and a hunter, who were good friends to one another, often met up, and discussed going out into the world together, for their homeland was no longer so much to their liking. Now when they had executed their resolution and set forth, their road led them into a deep forest, but it did not lead them out; they lost their way and wandered around in the wood until night fell and they could see neither road nor path. Finally, the blacksmith climbed a tree and spotted a light some distance away, marked the direction, climbed down from the tree, and went towards the light with his companions. All three of them came to a house which stood open but was empty – at least, there was no one to be seen, yet there was a light shining inside.

“Whoever lives here won’t hold it against us if we spend the night here –we really can’t go any further!” the three said to one another, and each one of them laid himself down just where he could find a suitable place. The three companions slept the whole night through without any disturbance, and they woke up, when morning had dawned, in a happy and cheerful mood.

“It is pleasant in this house,” said the blacksmith. “I think we should not leave it so soon, so we may thank the owner for the hospitality we have appropriated.”

“Perhaps I can darn something for him,” said the tailor.

“I too am not averse to resting here,” said the hunter, “but if that is our intention, then we’ll need to have something to eat, because this house seems to have Mother Hubbard’s cupboards. Therefore, I propose that one of us stay here and the other two go into the forest and catch or shoot something for us to subsist on.”

“That is good counsel,” said the blacksmith. “Outside there is a well; let the one who stays at home light a fire in the meantime and set a pot of water on it, so we can cook ourselves a good soup afterwards.”

The blacksmith and the hunter went out and the tailor remained in the house, lit a fire, set the pot of water on it, then sat himself next to it. Then all of a sudden a tiny, tiny little man appeared and said:

“Tailor, tailor, have no doubt,

“I’ll blow your little fire out.”

“Yeah, just you dare!” the tailor cried boldly, for the little man was so tiny – but he went Phhhh! and the fire was out and the little man had vanished.

Soon the hunter and the blacksmith returned, bringing a piece of game and tasty herbs; the tailor told them what had happened to him, and now they had to light the fire and set the water on all over again.

When the game was consumed, the blacksmith and the tailor went into the wood and the hunter kept the house; and he lit a lovely fire, set the pot of water on it, and sat himself beside it. Then the tiny, tiny little man

came once more and whispered:

“Hunter, hunter, have no doubt,
I’ll put your little fire out.”

“Just you try it! I’ll break your neck!” cried the hunter, but – Phht! – and the fire went out and the little man vanished.

When the comrades returned, they had no game and no fire; to be sure, the tailor, to whom the hunter had lent his rifle, boasted that he had almost shot a buck – but only almost, for the rifle was faulty and the bullet had flown to the left.

“Now I’ll have a go!” cried the strong blacksmith. “Just you watch – I’ll pay the little squirt out.” Now he stayed in the house and the hunter went hunting with the tailor.

The blacksmith had not been sitting long by the fire, which he had kindled after setting up a vice, when the tiny, tiny little man appeared for the third time and whispered:

“Blacksmith, blacksmith, have no doubt,
I’ll put your little fire out!”

But instead of answering, the blacksmith seized the little man by the collar, gave him a thorough shaking, and jammed him in the vice, at which he wriggled and howled wretchedly. But that did him no good, for the blacksmith worked him very palpably, and when the hunter and the tailor came back, the former gave the tiny little man a scouring, and the tailor delightedly handed him a good and proper cuffing.

The little magic man in the vice wailed most pitifully and said, “Let me go, and one of you go with me! I can and will make one of you happy. Tailor, you go with me!”



“Little man, I won’t go with you!” replied the tailor. – “Hunter, then you go with me!” besought the tiny, tiny little man. – “Ha, may the Devil go with you!” replied the hunter. – “Smith, smith, you go with me!” the little man begged so very miserably, and the blacksmith said, “Fine, I’ll go with you, but don’t think that I’ll let you loose, for you would lead me up the garden path. And the other two must follow a little way behind us.”

“If you like – I agree to everything!” the tiny, tiny little man whimpered.
“Just let me out of this vice!”

The blacksmith did this, but he held the little man firmly by the collar, and now they passed through a door in the room and through a cellar corridor into a large, dimly lit vault. In this vault sat an ogre on an ivory chair, and behind him stood his wife, and she was combing his long, shaggy, tousled hair with a comb made of bone.

Now the ogre said, “Hey hey! There’s a smell of human flesh! Hey hey – human flesh,” and he snapped his mouth contentedly. “Oh,” his wife replied, “God knows what you smell!”

The blacksmith held the tiny little man doubly fast by the collar, for if he had released him, he would have delivered him and his companions up to the ogre – but being held, he led the blacksmith into a side passage, with the others following, and they came to a hole in the rock wall before which lay a large stone. Here the little man said, “Roll this stone away, then crawl out through the opening and cry, ‘Viva! I’m free!’”

“But I’ll need both my arms to roll this stone,” said the blacksmith; and he gave the wriggling little man to the hunter to hold fast by the collar, not wanting to entrust this task to the tailor, for he did not think him strong enough. The tailor helped to hold nevertheless; he kept a firm grip on both the little man’s legs. Now the blacksmith rolled the stone away; there was such a cracking and crashing in the vault as if the roof were caving in, but before them shone a dazzling light, the light of day, and before their eyes there lay a majestic castle. Swiftly, all three – actually, all four – of them crept out. First the blacksmith, then the hunter with the little man, and finally the tailor, who was holding the tiny little man’s legs, and every one of them

shouted, "Viva, I'm free!"

And behold, the tiny little man shouted with them, and disappeared from out of their hands. Out from the castle stepped a sumptuously attired music corps playing a beautiful dance, then three majestic princesses came dancing towards the blacksmith, the hunter, and the tailor; and then a little man, but attired like a King, with a sceptre and crown in a purple robe trimmed with ermine, and his features were those of the tiny little man. "Thank you for setting us free!" said the little King with solemn dignity. "We thank and reward you!"



Hereupon the King raised each of the three merry companions to the dignity of a Prince, and they were married to the three beautiful Princesses; they all lived happily together in the beautiful castle, waited on by a host of court servants, and never again did any of them have his little fire blown out.