

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Wandering Journeyman**

There was once a butcher's widow who had only the one son, and he had already begun to learn the family trade when his father died. The mother had her son complete his apprenticeship and then she sent him out into foreign parts, where he was to travel for three years, take a look at the world, and learn something that would stand him in good stead. She fitted her son out as well as her means allowed and gave him her best dog, who was called Gripper, to take along.

While on his travels, the young butcher's journeyman came into a dense forest where robbers had their haunt, and they attacked him with the intent of robbing – even killing – him. But the young journeyman defended himself stoutly, and his Gripper stood by him valiantly and wounded the robbers with furious bites, sending one of them into such a rage that he shot faithful Gripper dead. However, the young butcher escaped the robbers and ran ever deeper into the forest, which was immense, and he completely lost his way and his bearings. Finally he espied, in the distance, a little cottage in the depths of the forest, which he hurried towards and, after knocking, entered. A grey-haired old grandma was sitting inside, who did not shift nor stir, but the young journeyman frankly told the old woman everything that had befallen him, and he asked her to show him the way out of this forest; at the same time, he sorely lamented poor Gripper, whom the robbers had shot dead. Then the old woman said, "I've fine dogs too, you can choose one and take him with you." And she called, "Gripandrip!"

At this call, a large dog entered the cottage at this call, and the old woman asked, "Do you like him?"

"That is a fine dog," the journeyman replied, "but mine was finer."



Then the old woman called out again: “Burstallbonds!” And then an even larger and even finer dog came in, and the old woman asked, “How do you like him?”

“I like him very much,” the young butcher replied, “but I liked mine more, that’s all.”

Then the old woman called out once again: “Fastandfleet!” and now an extremely large and mettlesome, very finely-built hound leapt in – and the journeyman did not even wait for the old woman to ask him if he liked this dog – he rather cried out at once, “Now that’s the hound I want! My dog looked exactly like him, and if they had not shot good Gripper dead before my eyes, I would have sworn that this was he.”

“I have something to say to you, my young wanderer,” the old woman began, “I’ll give you all three excellent dogs, but in the future, once you are beholden to them for your good fortune, you must remember this poor old forest-woman and not be ashamed of my poverty.”

As the young lad made this promise, the old woman pulled out a whistle and gave it to him, with the words: “Look after this whistle very carefully, for with it you can call the three dogs to your aid, wherever they may happen to be; that will be essential when you find yourself in trouble.”

Leaving the cottage, the wandering journeyman parted from the good old woman with many thanks, and he cheerfully took the path she had pointed out to him to be the right one, and the three sterling dogs bounded briskly now before, now behind him, and chased and played with one another, to the journeyman’s great delight.

When the evening began to darken, the traveller arrived with his three dogs at a secluded inn, which yet lay within the great forest that really seemed to be never-ending. In front of the house the butcher found a young maid who was scouring wooden vessels, and when she caught sight of the handsome young journeyman she seemed to be alarmed, and she made a repulsing gesture to him: she motioned to him, so it seemed, to turn back and not enter here. Indeed, she was opening her mouth to cry out a warning when the door opened and the innkeeper stepped out, and he invited the benighted traveller to be so good as to stay the night at his inn, all the more so because he, the host, was a butcher too.

A suspicious feeling began to stir in the youth’s heart, but he was there now, he was hungry and thirsty, and night was near. He consequently took a seat in the parlour and his three dogs settled down around him, and

then he ordered something to eat. He did not have long to wait before a large chunk of meat in a thick broth was brought in, and there was good bread to go with it.

The wandering journeyman ate, and the innkeeper, who had sat down on the fireside bench, watched to see how his solitary guest liked the food, there being no other travellers in the house.

But it was not to the guest's liking, the innkeeper could see, and he said, "Companion, I think you don't like the food! I suppose you're used to eating nothing but roasts back home?"

"It's not that, master," the guest replied. "But I have eaten pork before, and this meat in my bowl is none of that; I have eaten mutton, and this is none; I have eaten beef and veal, and this is neither. I also know the taste of every kind of game, and this is none. Nor is it from any variety of bird – it seems to me quite a peculiar food!"

The innkeeper laughed and replied, "My dear journeyman, in your life you will come to hear, see, smell, taste, and feel a great deal that you have never yet heard, seen, smelt, tasted, or felt. The strangest things come to pass in this world."

After receiving this instruction, the journeyman continued his meal in silence, although he ate with distaste; and as he ladled himself some broth, a bone fell out from the spoon, and when he looked at it closely, he saw it was a finger. Then the youth was frightened to death, and this repast made him feel very sick; and just then the door opened and the innkeeper's wife walked in carrying a plate with pieces of bread and dripping on it, perhaps her own supper, and the innkeeper stood up from the bench and spoke quietly with his wife. Then the journeyman quickly set down his plate and

his bowl of meat for his dogs, who rapidly cleared everything.

"I trust that went down well?" the hostess asked the journeyman, and he replied, "Many thanks, mine hostess, it went down," but it will not stay down, he added in thought.

"Now we'll show you your bedroom!" the hostess said, giving her husband a light. "The dogs will go to the stable."

"I'd like my dogs to stay with me," the young butcher rejoined.

"That will sort itself out," the hostess replied.

The innkeeper now opened the door to an adjoining room and led the way with the light, while his wife walked behind the guest, still carrying the three pieces of bread and dripping, which she surreptitiously showed to the stranger's dogs to rouse their desire for this bread.

They entered a room whose walls were hung all over with weapons, rifles, pistols, carbines, sabres, hunting knives etc., beside which there also hung chains, ropes, handcuffs, and more such things that render people defenceless.

"What a load of weapons you have!" the guest remarked in amazement.

"Yes, we live so alone here in the forest," the innkeeper pointed out, "we have to take precautions; I also have my servants, and they know how to handle these weapons."

While he was speaking the innkeeper opened a second door and strode on ahead through it, but his wife threw one of the pieces of bread on the ground. Gripandrip snapped at it, but while the dog was eating the bread the hostess slammed the door shut and Gripandrip was locked inside the Weapons Chamber.

The second room was magnificently furnished, and the single light which the innkeeper was carrying did not nearly suffice to fully illuminate its splendour: it contained barrels full of money, and sumptuous clothes were hung on the walls, and there were glass cabinets stuffed with jewellery, with golden and silver utensils, and with precious stones. The young butcher had never seen the like, and he simply could not stop wondering about it, nor figure out how all this came to be here in this isolated forest inn. The innkeeper now unlocked a third chamber, and his wife threw down the second piece of bread, which Burstallbonds hastily snapped at, and while he was chewing it the hostess slammed the door shut and Burstallbonds was trapped in the Treasure Chamber. The master of the three dogs, however, did not notice that only one of the three was still with him. Curious to see yet more wonders, he followed the innkeeper into the third chamber, but it was utterly abominable and ghastly to behold. The walls were bespattered with blood; in the centre of the room there was a block with a sharp butcher's axe lying on top; severed human limbs could be seen lying around, inflated entrails for sausage filling hung on the walls, and there were chopping knives and copper filling funnels in readiness for this work – and the journeyman shuddered. The innkeeper said in a harsh voice, “Young man, here is the workshop. Here you will make your masterpiece, and stay with me; if not, you need to know that you yourself will be slaughtered here. Either you hack to pieces here and cut crackling and chop, or you yourself will be hacked up, cut up, and chopped into sausages.”

The poor journeyman was shaken to the core at the choice allowed him, yet he plucked up courage and said, “I'd rather die than be your

companion!”

“As you wish!” said the innkeeper. “Follow me!” – And he opened another door, and now his wife threw down the third piece of bread, Fastandfleet hastily and hungrily fell on it, and slam! the door was shut and the good dog trapped in the Bloody Chamber, while the innkeeper entered a gloomy hall with the journeyman, to whom he said: “Now we are in the slaughterhouse, and now make yourself ready, my journeyman, for a far journey into the world beyond.”

The journeyman was alarmed, for he clearly saw that the innkeeper was not joking, and he looked around for his three dogs, but not a single one of them was there, and he was alone and helpless.

“Will you die standing up or lying down?” asked the innkeeper, and he raised a flashing, heavy axe. The journeyman answered, “I want to die standing; grant me just enough time to say the Lord’s Prayer.”

“As you wish – pray away!” the evil innkeeper callously replied.

And the journeyman prayed with true devotion, and then, in the midst of his prayer, he remembered the whistle that had been given him by the good old woman who had made him a present of the three dogs and said that, in time of need, if the dogs were not by him, he had but to blow the whistle – and so he did not shilly-shally but blew the whistle, to the astonishment of the innkeeper and his wife.

“Do you call that praying, boy?” yelled the innkeeper in a fury, and he raised his murderous axe – but before he could deal the deadly stroke Fastandfleet, who had flown into the slaughterhouse like a flash of lightning, had seized him by the nape and pulled him to the ground, and now Burstallbonds and Gripandrip were there as well, and the three of them tore

the innkeeper into a thousand pieces.

His wife fell to her knees and cried, “God be praised! God be praised! Now I am free!”

“No, woman!” the journeyman angrily cried. “Your hour has also struck, abettor of the butcher of men, who secretly trapped my dogs so I would be defenceless and in your power, you firebrand from Hell!”



“O have mercy!” the hostess implored. “I had no choice but to do the will of that brute, who captured me, too, long ago, and held me here as a perpetual prisoner. O let me live! I’ll give you a golden snuffbox!”

“Thanks all the same, I don’t take snuff!” the journeyman retorted.

“And you don’t need to,” the hostess replied. “But anyone who takes snuff from this box after you have turned the lid to the right must stay as they are, standing, lying, or sitting, powerless to move, until such time as you turn the lid back to the left. Spare my life, good journeyman, for God’s sake and for your own, for you are not yet out of all danger. Only I know the retreat of my husband’s companions, a whole band of robbers, murderers, and cannibals, whom you would not be safe from in spite of your dogs.”

“Very well, I’ll spare your life, Mistress!” said the youth, “but mind that you don’t try to deceive me!”

In truth, the hostess did not think of deceiving the young journeyman, for she really owed her liberation to him, she and her servants, who were likewise delighted to no longer have to bear the dreadful burden of being subservient to butchers of men. The lady of the house now showed her liberator the entrance to the secret hiding-place of the band of murderers, which was reached by means of a trap-door. The young butcher opened the trapdoor and let in his three dogs, who were irresistible, and they bit through the throats of every member of the Society for Robbery and Murder, thus re-emerging with very bloody muzzles. The journeyman now manifested himself as the master and regarded the forest inn as his conquest. He gave some of the treasures to the servants, in particular to the compassionate maid who had warned him, sent a serving-lad with costly gifts to the old woman in the forest who had gifted him with the three dogs, and sent just as much home to his mother; the hostess he let take whatever and however much she wanted, while he had the trap-door to the murderers’ den walled up and the forest inn burned to the ground; then he

took his leave of the hostess and went on his way with his three dogs. He could actually have turned his steps homewards, for he had goods and money in abundance, and he had forsworn the butcher's trade for the rest of his life – but he had promised his mother to wander around foreign parts for three years, and besides, he wanted to see more of the world and learn something that would stand him in good stead.

Now as the good journeyman was walking along the road with his three dogs, Gripandrip, Burstallbonds, and Fastandfleet, having wandered a fair way into foreign lands, he met one day a carriage entirely covered with black crêpe, with the coachman in the same state and the horses likewise – a very sad sight to behold. And so the wandering journeyman stopped, and his heart was moved with sorrow, and he mused: what could his meeting such a vehicle possibly signify? Now the coachman was an insolent clod and he called to the journeyman: “Well, you rascal, what are you gawping at? Why don't you clear out of the way when a Princess comes driving along?” – This impolite salutation vexed the good journeyman, and he called on Fastandfleet to teach the coachman some *mores* (that is, good manners). Then Fastandfleet, whom no man, not even the strongest, could withstand, sprang up onto the boxseat, caught the coachman by the collar, shook him like a coney, tore him down from the seat, and dunked every inch of him in a large puddle by the roadside, making him filthy and dripping wet, and then neatly placed him back on the boxseat. After this, the coachman was as pliant as an earwig, and he would have readily raised his gold-braided hat to the journeyman were this article not was lying down below in the yellow puddle. The journeyman now gave the coachman a short speech on the rules of polite behaviour, which people

of his kind should not and must not disregard when speaking to persons who go by foot, for one or the other person of this kind might possibly hold his own against a – against *ten* coachmen, and actually it was only fitting that every coachman's curse be met with such a bath in a puddle besides some palpable thumps in the ribs. When this speech had been made, which did not in the least meet with the coachman's approbation, full of meaning though it had been, the journeyman looked into the glass-coach draped with crêpe and saw a Princess dressed all in black sitting inside. She had been weeping profusely, and as he asked her very humbly, the Princess told him her fateful history.

"I am," the black-clad lady began, "the daughter of the King of this land, which the Devil has stricken with a great dearth and famine, and when he was asked if there were not some condition on which he would remove both of these from the land, he made the condition that I be his. Now, as my father loves his land and his people more than he loves me or himself, so did he agree to this dreadful condition, and you find me, the most wretched of girls, on a road going straight to the Devil."

"But fair Princess, in that case, why are you so utterly alone?" asked the travelling journeyman.

"Well, my good youth," the Princess replied, "the reason for that is no one wanting to accompany me, even though my servants had constantly avouched devotion to me unto death; that was nothing but empty talk. Only the coachman was willing to drive me, because he already belongs to the Devil."

"I noticed that from his boorishness, fair Princess," the journeyman said, "and your good father, if you will allow me to make this observation, is

not quite in his right mind, other people would not do such a thing. But if you will allow me to accompany you, for the sake of propriety, as a chamberlain in attendance, I just may, in truth, be able to do you the best service of all by freeing you from the Devil's clutches."

"Oh, I'm very happy to hear that!" the Princess replied. "Yes, you shall be my dear chamberlain, now climb in and join me; in any case, it is better to travel in a pair than alone."

Then the travelling journeyman took his seat in the black coach with the fair Princess and entertained her well, and made her laugh, and they rode very merrily together to the Devil. Who was sitting on a wooden block, having been waiting for some time, and was astonished to see that the Princess did not come alone. The youth said, "Highly esteemed Lord Devil, I trust you will permit me to speak reasonably with you. I feel very sorry for this poor, fair Princess – set her free and take my soul instead."



The Devil swung his tail about him, several times to the right and several times to the left, as though trying to flick the gnats away, and said: "This once, that can be managed," but he was thinking to himself, 'A year from now, I'll get the Princess in any event' – "so, done!"

“Done!” said the journeyman. “And as there is nothing to drink here, let us take snuff on it!” Saying which, he took out his golden snuffbox, turned the lid to the right, flipped it with his finger, opened the box, and offered it to the Devil.

“I don’t typically take snuff!” said the Devil.

“Well, take a pinch untypically! It is Fijne Rotterdammer!” replied the journeyman, and his heart leapt with delight when the Devil really put his hairy claw into the box and took a substantial pinch.

“Now, dear Devil!” the journeyman spoke again, closing the lid of the box and putting it into his pocket, “We can have a reasonable discussion, now that you are a perfectly staid man.”

“*Staid?* How is that?” asked the Devil.

“Because you have to *stay* where you are,¹ and you cannot stand up again until I choose that you should,” he received by way of reply.

“That really is the limit! You blockhead!” yelled the Devil, and he tried to start up and go for the speaker’s neck, but he could not; he had to remain sitting fast, as if nailed to the wooden block.

“And how long are you going to keep up this stupid joke?” the Devil asked in an extraordinarily ill temper. “I’ve had quite enough of sitting. Make it quick – the Devil put up with this – if he can!”²

“I have something to say to you, but be *steadfast*, Your Right-Honourable Satanic Majesty!” the journeyman scoffed. “Help is at hand for you. You will give this Princess her liberty – that goes without saying; you will also give me my liberty and renounce your claim to my soul;

¹ Do not blame me for these puns. I am only the messenger.

² The expression, “Das halte der Teufel aus!” has the sense, “Let the devil put up with it (because I sure as hell won’t / because I’m damned if I will).”

you will promise to never again bring about and instigate dearth, famine and turmoil or suchlike devilish doings in the realm of this fair Princess's father, and never again to demand a soul in ransom, but rather to content yourself with the souls that come running to you into the jaws of Hell voluntarily and of their own accord. Finally, you will give me all of this in person, in writing – for let the Devil trust the Devil – and ensure that I never clap eyes on you again.”

The Devil moaned and groaned, and sweated and squirmed, but none of this did him any good. Always accustomed to being on the loose, he found it terribly tormenting to be, for once, rooted to the spot, and so he resigned himself to agreeing to the demands made by the Princess's liberator, whereupon the latter took out the golden snuffbox once again, turned the lid to the left, and politely asked: “Would you care for another pinch? It's Morocco.” But the Devil gave a blow that sent all the snuff flying into the air, and rising from his wooden block, he stormed away like a tempest.

Then the Princess and her liberator climbed into her coach again, and the Princess was so brimming with gratitude that she said to her companion, “Now listen, I want to marry you, because you saved me!”

“That is very pleasing to hear,” the youth replied, “I would only wish to wait a little while beforehand, for first I must see the world and learn something out there that will stand me in good stead. So release me for now, my fair Princess; I shall return in several years' time, you may depend on that.”

Well, the Princess had to agree to this, although it was not at all agreeable to her, and when they came to the first crossroads her liberator

got out, gave her his hand and kissed hers, and said, "We are betrothed, and so we shall remain! Keep firm faith, fair Princess, in your bridegroom."

The coachman who drove the Princess had seen everything, and he had looked on disgruntled and peeved. He had an utterly worthless soul. He would most have liked to see the King dead, and would have liked to become King himself; however, as coachmen are not made into Kings, even though they pride themselves on being able to drive the finest state coaches so beautifully, so his black heart had rejoiced that at least the innocent Princess was to perish; and when this did not come to pass, he thought of his own advantage, if nothing else, so he stopped the coach, climbed down off the boxseat, opened the coach door and spoke to the Princess inside:

"Most gracious Princess! Since and because Your Highness is now liberated, I too have a small request, therefore please do not take it amiss if I just burst out with it: I would love to get married!"

"I have absolutely no objections to that, my dear coachman. So does someone want you, then?"

"The estimable person whom I wish to marry has told me she has no objections!" the coachman replied.

"All right, then take her!" retorted the Princess.

"All right, then I'll take *you*!" the coachman replied.

"Take *who*?" asked the Princess.

"*You*, of course! Didn't you say it?" the coachman rejoined.

"I do believe you're mad!" cried the Princess, beside herself with horror.

"Ha, Heaven forbid!" retorted the coachman. "On the contrary,

Princessie, I don't believe that in the slightest. What need for many words? At home you will say it was / who liberated you, and marry me! If you will not do that, I won't drive you home, but back to the Devil. And that's that!"

Then the poor Princess gave in and cried and was driven back home. The jubilation at her homecoming was boundless, and when it became generally known that the coachman had freed the Princess and she would wed him to show her gratitude, then the jubilation really knew no bounds. Never yet had there been a Princess so accommodating and with such a common touch; neither ancient nor modern, neither sacred nor secular history furnished a counterpart to such an alliance – palaces and huts were illuminated, there was no end of *Vivas!* and many passengers in coaches were overturned at that time, because all the coachmen were intoxicated with joy and had got themselves so pie-eyed that they took curbstones to be smooth carriage tracks.

Now the preparations were made for the wedding, which the Princess, however, kept postponing from one time to the next. She spoiled her bridal outfit, she fell ill, she had to observe pious vows, she was waiting for an item of jewellery that was to come from the Orient someday soon – and she hoped with a longing soul, ever and ever more ardently, for the return of her beloved, true bridegroom. The coachman became very impatient and frequently cracked his whip from frustration. At last a day for the wedding really had to be appointed, and its eve came, but the travelling journeyman did not come. Heartache and lamentation. The Princess had the moving drama *Lenore*³ performed in the Court theatre, and her tears

³ An 1828 drama by Karl von Holtei, based on the extremely influential ballad "Lenore" (1773) by Gottfried August Bürger.

poured forth at the heartbreaking song:

“Upon the altar burning,
The candles feyly flare;
The bride waits, wreathed and yearning –
Why is the groom not there?”

But while this heart-rending song was being sung the true bridegroom did come, stopping at first-class inn in the capital accompanied by his three dogs, not, admittedly, as a first-class guest, but rather as a ragged beggar and vagabond; and the innkeeper was almost of a mind to have his waiters kick him out the door when the ostensible beggar placed a ducat on the table and whispered to his host: “My friend, I am a wedding guest! Find me a tonsor and a tailor. On the wedding-day tomorrow I hope, God willing, to have the honour of drinking a glass of wine with the young queen.” The innkeeper’s eyes took the measure of the Lumpazivagabundus⁴ before him, from head to toe, and he said, “No offence, dear friend! You seem to me to come from a land where no dog taxes need to be paid, and where the dogs live on air. I will not venture to crack a bad joke and say that you have really gone to the dogs. All the same, your paltry ducat does not bribe me; God knows in which green pasture you may have found it; however, it will suffice for a cold supper for you and the three dogs, as well as a bed for the night. But tomorrow you will drink as little wine with the royal Princess bride as will I – indeed, you will

⁴ A shabby vagabond – the titular hero of a play by the Austrian actor and dramatist Johann Nestroy, “Der böse Geist *Lumpazivagabundus* oder Das Liederliche Kleeblatt” (1833; The Evil Spirit *Lumpazivagabundus*, or the Roguish Trio)

drink much less, for I am the Court's wine supplier, you see, so I *can* drink the said wine sooner – and I will wager all my worldly goods on it, together with my inn and privilege to sell liquors.”

“Innkeeper, do not prattle on so! Just run along and attend to my orders! The bet stands!” the guest said very curtly, and after demanding vellum-paper and the finest sealing-wax, he quickly wrote and sealed a letter to the Princess, held the superscription up before the astonished innkeeper's eyes, tucked the letter into a newspaper, and put this in between the teeth of Fastandfleet, who shot away with it at once.

Now the barber and the tailor arrived. The stranger had himself shaved clean and washed, and dressed in velvet and silk by the tailor, and he placed coins on the table, all of them gold, with an unspoken intimation that each man was free to take whatever he thought to be his due. The tailor thought he deserved a large amount, so he took a large amount, whereas the barber wanted to give change for the gold coin, but he had none; and then the guest motioned again, this time that he should just keep the change. The following morning, the whole royal capital was abuzz with the news that a gentleman was lodging in the best inn who was much more free-handed than the King – which (be it said strictly in confidence) required very little effort.

How happy the good Princess had been when she saw Fastandfleet bound into the hall and lay a letter in her lap, while everyone else shrank back from the huge and strange letter courier, particularly the wrong bridegroom, the coachman! He thought to himself: if *he* is here, his master will not be far away; so he very quietly withdrew, and it was well that he did so, for otherwise the dog would have torn him to shreds.

The next morning, a royal coach came to a halt before the inn; a court lackey opened the coach-door, a star-studded chamberlain climbed out and asked for the foreign gentleman who had arrived on the previous day – and the innkeeper's heart fell into his boots, for he had wagered away all his worldly goods as well as his privilege to sell liquors. The foreign gentleman rode to Court in the coach, sitting on the chamberlain's right.

Delight now reigned at the Court; the true bridegroom pleased the King with the common touch still more than the coachman had, as he knew how to comport himself properly, and he had already acquitted himself in the best possible way by liberating the Princess. In consequence, the wedding proceeded without any disturbance. The happy bridegroom waived the wager that the innkeeper had lost to him, and the coachman, whom he could very easily have had caught and fetched by Gripandrip, Burstallbonds, and Fastandfleet, a journey that would have left him much the worse for wear, the noble bridegroom allowed to run away.

He bestowed further opulent gifts on the old forest-woman, and he had his mother brought to him in a golden coach and kept her with him until the end of her days. When everything had come to a happy conclusion, the three dogs disappeared, and no one knew whither they had gone; the whistle also vanished, so that no one would ever be able to call the dogs back – which was indeed not necessary, as no devil would ever again meddle with the land of the Old King and the Young.