

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The White Wolf**



A King rode out to hunt in a large forest and lost his way, and he wandered many days and many nights but still he could not find the right path, and he suffered hunger and thirst. Finally he met a little black mannikin, and the King asked him about the right way. "I will lead and escort you," said the mannikin, "but you must give me something in return, you must give me that which first comes towards you out of your house." The King was glad, and on the way he said, "You are a goodly soul, little man; truly, even if my favourite hound ran towards me, yet I would readily give it you as a reward." But the mannikin replied, "Your favourite hound, I don't want that; I want something more fair." Now when they arrived at the castle, the King's youngest daughter saw, through the window, her father riding up, and ran joyfully towards him. But when she had thrown her arms around him, he

said, "Oh, how I wish it had been my favourite hound running towards me!" The King's daughter was deeply shocked by these words, and she wept and cried, "How so, my father? Is your hound dearer to you than I, and does he bid you a heartier welcome?" but the King comforted her with the words, "Oh dear daughter, I didn't mean it like that!" and told her everything. However, she stood perfectly steadfast and said, "It is better this way than that my father should perish in the wild wood," and the mannikin said, "I'll fetch you in eight days."

And eight days later, a white wolf duly came into the King's castle, and the King's daughter had to sit down on its back, and heyday! off they went through thick and thin, up hill and down dale, and the King's daughter could not endure the ride on the wolf, and she asked, "Is there far to go?" – "Be silent! It's a long, long way yet to the glass mountain – if you don't keep silent, I'll throw you off!" And now the journey went on until the poor King's daughter once again became dejected and protested and requested to know if there were far to go? And the wolf gave her the same threatening words and raced ever onwards, on and on, until she ventured the question a third time, when he abruptly threw her down off his back and raced away.

Now the poor Princess was all alone in the dark forest and she walked and walked, thinking: I have to come upon people eventually. And she did eventually come to a hut where a little fire was burning and an old forest-mother was sitting, and she had a pot on the fire. And the King's daughter asked, "Little Mother, have you by any chance seen the white wolf?" – "No, you'll have to ask the Wind, he sweeps all around; but first stay here a little longer, and eat with me. I'm cooking a chicken broth." The

Princess did this, and when they had eaten, the old woman said, “Take the chicken bones with you, they’ll prove very useful for you.” Then the old woman showed her the right way to the Wind.

When the King’s daughter arrived at the Wind’s, she found him too sitting by a fire cooking himself a chicken broth, but to her question about the White Wolf he replied: “Dear child, I have not seen him, I just didn’t go out today, I wanted to have a nice rest. Ask the Sun, she rises and sets every day, but first do as I do, take a rest, and eat with me; afterwards you can take all the chicken bones with you, I think they’ll prove very useful for you.”

When this was done, the young girl went to the Sun, and everything happened there just as it had with the Wind; the Sun was just then cooking a chicken broth with her own heat so as to bring it to the boil very quickly, had also not seen the White Wolf, and invited the Princess to eat with her. “You must ask the Moon, for the White Wolf probably runs only by night, and the Moon sees everything then.” Now when the King’s daughter had eaten with the Sun and gathered up the bones, she went on her way and asked the Moon. He too was cooking a chicken broth, and he said, “This is embarrassing, but I did not shine today, or I rose too late; I know nothing at all about the White Wolf.” Then the girl wept and cried, “O Heaven, whom shall I ask now?” – “Now just have patience, my child,” said the Moon, “no dance comes before a meal – sit down and eat the chicken broth with me first, and take the bones with you, they’re sure to come in useful. But I do have some news for you; on the Glass Mountain the Black Mannikin is celebrating his wedding today, and the Man in the Moon is among those

invited.” – “Oh, the Glass Mountain, the Glass Mountain! That is precisely where I want to go, that is where the White Wolf should have taken me!” cried the King’s daughter. “Now I can certainly shine for you and show you the way there,” said the Moon, “otherwise you could easily go astray, for I, for example, consist entirely of mountains of sheer glass. Be sure to take all your chicken bones with you.” The Princess did so, but in her haste she forgot one bone.



Soon she was at the Glass Mountain, but it was smooth and slippery all over and there was no way to climb up; but then the King’s daughter took all the chicken bones from the old Forest-Mother, from the Wind, from the Sun and from the Moon, and made a ladder from them which became very long – but alas! in the end a single rung was lacking; one more bone was needed. So the Princess cut off the upper joint of her little finger, and so made all good, and now she could swiftly clamber to the summit of the Glass Mountain. Up on the top was a large opening with a handsome flight of steps leading down, and all was resplendence and opulence, and there

was a hall filled with wedding-guests, with many musicians and lavishly-laid tables. And there sat the Black Mannikin and at his side sat a woman, she was his bride, but the Black Mannikin seemed sad. And the Princess's heart was so sore, so sore, because she had come too late, and because the Black Mannikin was so sad, and she thought to herself: I shall sing a song of the White Wolf, perhaps he will know me then – for he had not even looked at her yet, and consequently not recognised her. And there was a harp on the wall, which the Princess played well, so she took it and sang:

“Your favourite hound, I don't want that,
I want something more fair!
The youngest Royal daughter.
The White Wolf ran away from her
And went the Lord knows where,
The youngest Royal daughter.”

Then the Black Mannikin pricked up his ears, and the Princess continued to play and to sing:

“She went after the wolf, and cut
Her finger for a rung,
The youngest Royal daughter.
Now she is here – you know her not,
This song is sadly sung
By the youngest Royal daughter.”

Then the Black Mannikin sprang up from his seat and was suddenly a very handsome young Prince, and he rushed to her and took her in his arms.

All had been a magic spell. The Prince had been bound by this spell to be the mannikin and the White Wolf and to stay on the Glass Mountain until such time as a Princess, in order to reach him, would sacrifice a joint of her little finger; however, if that did not happen by a certain time, he would have to wed another and remain a black mannikin for the rest of his life. Now the spell was broken, the other bride disappeared, the unbewitched Prince married the King's daughter, and travelled with her to her father, who was overjoyed to see her again; and they all lived happily together until their dying day. Should this not, however, have ensued, then it is somewhat probable that they are living still today.