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THE SHADOW

and Other Tales

by
Hans Christian Andersen

WITS II No. 1

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AND OTHER TALES

BY

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
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INTRODUCTION

In Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* (1953) — a satire on American academic life — there is a brief reference to Hans Christian Andersen as "the bedside Dane." It is impossible to glean what subtleties Nabokov intended with that phrase, but to most readers of *Pnin* the characterization will undoubtedly reinforce a general impression of that Dane as an amiable spinner of tales that can safely be read to a child at bedtime. The myth of Andersen as an amusing, childlike, somewhat sentimental, albeit "wise" and at times sharp-witted, storyteller ("The Emperor's New Clothes") is a persistent one, and it has been perpetuated by numerous publications of his selected tales — often poorly translated and bowdlerized — as well as by biographies that have tended to sugarcoat his life. Although it can be granted that many of Andersen's tales may well ensure pleasant dreams for child and adult alike, some of his other tales take his readers into a much more complex and disturbing realm.

The above comments should provide a partial answer to those readers who may wonder why these five texts have been chosen among Andersen's one hundred and fifty-six tales and stories. No five tales can be representative of Andersen's tales, and the five chosen are not intended to be so, for they belong to Andersen's "philosophical tales," — which show that the author was by no means a naive storyteller. With the exception of "The Nightingale," these tales have generally been neglected by the eager publishers who continue to reissue Andersen's works in English translations meant for children.

Fortunately for the English-speaking world, two recent translations of Andersen's tales — those by Haugaard and by Conroy and Rossel (see the bibliography) — have rejected the tendency to bowdlerize the texts or to omit the darker tales. In addition, the biographies by Book and Bredsdorff (see the bibliography) are very reliable accounts of the author's life, both show that the author, who created the marvellous tale "The Ugly Duckling," a projection of his life story, was a much less harmonious man than the tale leads one to believe.

For the sake of the reader who has only a peripheral knowledge of Andersen's artistic career, a few facts shall be recounted: Hans Christian Andersen (1805—75) has gained a remarkable reputation, even beyond the Western World, for his genius as a storyteller. He was, however, also a fairly accomplished novelist, dramatist, and poet; and in addition, he

wrote some very lively and enjoyable chronicles of his many travels in Europe. Quite early in his career, in fact from 1835, the year in which he published his first novel *(The Improvisatore)* and his first collection of tales, he was recognized in his homeland as an artist of stature. Many of his works, particularly his novels, were widely translated; thus, quite early in his life, Andersen enjoyed a substantial international reputation.

But if Andersen had not composed his tales, he would have suffered the fate of many other, once highly regarded, writers: he would be read only in literature classes at the traditional institutions of higher learning in his native country. It was with his tales that he found his "genre" and made his mark on modern Danish prose. Like the American "Frontier Humorists" — notably Mark Twain — he discarded the complex humanistic syntax of contemporary literary language for a diction that simplified sentence structure and that seemed to approximate spoken language. This is not to say that Andersen consistently used an oral, simple style, for he could — as some of these texts demonstrate — turn to a language that is anything but folksy. Although it is true that he attuned his diction to the ears of children, he made it clear that his tales were also intended to catch the imagination of the adult reader. Children may enjoy much in the tales in this modest anthology: they will delight in the foolishness and ignorance of the emperor's court in "The Nightingale"; they may vividly recall their last visit to the dentist when hearing "Auntie Toothache"; and they may also shudder over the nightmarish situations in all five tales. The mature readers may share all these reactions, but, especially, the latter, for in these texts Andersen brings up issues that not only were disturbing to contemporary readers, but that may as surely be disturbing to modern adult readers.

Many of Andersen's tales were of his own invention, but the traditional tale, which he used and transformed, was one he knew intimately. In the beginning of the Romantic era, an interest awakened in the age-old international tale — often called the folktale — which had flourished for centuries quite independently of changing literary tastes. The guardians of art judged such anonymous literature — including fabliau and legend — to be primitive and ignored it; but the common, illiterate peasantry, which lived in blissful ignorance of the literature of the cultured classes, kept this "sub-literature" alive. The tale belongs to oral-formulaic literature, i.e., a literature that is passed on orally and that can easily be remembered and retold, since it relies on certain formulae (stock-phrases, motifs, persona, plot elements, and basic structure — one that takes the hero or heroine through many hardships and tests toward an inevitable happy ending). During the Age of Romanticism these tales, as well as related genres, were finally recorded, edited — often

harshly — and published (e.g., the Brothers Grimm in Germany and Asbjørnsen and Moe in Norway). In oral-formulaic literature, Romantic readers found echoes of a lost state of innocence, in which humanity had not been corrupted by civilization, and thus the tales became a part of the reading of the educated public, and many Romantic writers (e.g., E.T.A. Hoffman, Ludwig Tieck, and Adalbert von Chamisso) imitated, more or less freely, the tales of that older tradition. These imitations are generally termed synthetic tales or art tales.

As a child Andersen had heard tales told; and later, he became familiar with the imitations written by his Romantic colleagues. He used his knowledge of the original genre, but from the very beginning he gave it a certain, unmistakable twist. The oral-formulaic tale takes place in never-never land, whereas Andersen's art tales bring the reader to a world quite close to contemporary society. By adding whimsical, humorous, and humanizing details, Andersen gives his characters and settings individuality and leaves the world "east of the sun and west of the moon" for a more complex world, in which hero or heroine may not necessarily live happily forever after.

Although a principle of order or providence can be said to rule in the optimistic oral-formulaic tale, Andersen at times takes his protagonists into a world whose contours are much less defined, not to say chaotic. It should be added that many of Andersen's tales do seem to create a world of moral order, but in several of them that feeling of harmony is only precariously maintained. In particular, Andersen's wistful Christianity seems at times to intrude near the end of a text (e.g., "The Little Mermaid" or "The Snow Queen") and to impose a sense of harmony that may be inconsistent with the premise of the text itself.

It is extremely difficult to offer a brief summary of Andersen's philosophy, for if one uses a certain number of tales as evidence for Andersen's belief in the immortality of the soul or for his Romantic faith in the wisdom of the artist, a number of other tales will question the validity of that evidence. Tale often opposes tale, and thus the reader receives an impression, if not of inconsistency, then at least of restless fluctuation. As the Romantic artist was expected to do, Andersen offers many answers to existential problems, but he also questions many of those answers.

It would be presumptuous to offer an explanation for that fluctuation, for such "definitive" theories are bound to be reductive. A few suggestions can, however, be made: (1) Some Romantic writers shared Andersen's indecision, for even though Romantic ideology in theory gave very definitive and harmonious answers to the riddles of existence, the authors in their works often testify, consciously or

unconsciously, to feeling relegated to a realm of epistemological confusion. (2) Andersen's social situation left him in a state of insecurity and homelessness: against all odds, he had risen, in an age without much social mobility, from the lowest rungs of society to a position close to the very top; but this consort of European royalty and of the wealthy patricians of his native country, retained — so to speak — a proletarian consciousness that made him highly critical of those upper classes that adopted him and to whose values he seemed to adapt (e.g., "She Was No Good," "Everything in Its Right Place," and "The Gardener and His Master"). The issue of Andersen's divided loyalties is by far too complex to be treated in this context; thus, it may suffice to suggest that Andersen — in contrast to most of his contemporary Danish colleagues — had a profound knowledge of the poverty of the masses, and although in some tales he painted a picture of "noble poverty," he knew that the lower classes endured miserable lives ("The Little Match Girl" and "The Story Old Johanna Told").

Andersen wanted to be a constructive critic. True to Romantic ideology, he posed self-awareness (as did Goethe, Kierkegaard, and Ibsen) as a means of coping with individual and social problems. Time and again, he sends his heroes and heroines out on a quest for self-understanding, and in many tales they gain that knowledge of themselves and of life which will grant them personal happiness and the wisdom to guide others (in "The Nightingale," the emperor initially is a nonentity with a good, but misguided, heart; but upon learning that he has been a fool, he is reborn as a true emperor).

In other tales, however, Andersen shows the other side of the coin; his protagonists embark on a quest, but in "The Wind's Tale of Valdemar Daae and His Daughters" and initially in "The Story of a Mother," their striving is seen as egotistic and misdirected. Valdemar Daae is punished for his myopia and pride, and the grieving mother eventually realizes that her obstinance was a sinful challenge to God.

If these stories leave the reader with a sense of justice fulfilled or of divine, if severe, guidance, "The Shadow" and "Auntie Toothache" have much less comfortable undertones. The shadow goes on a quest that brings him riches and power; he is undeniably a person without morals, and it may be his complete disregard of the good, true, and beautiful that makes him stronger than the naive scholar, the embodiment of the Romantic dreamer. The student in "Auntie Toothache" gives up any quest for knowledge, for in the face of physical pain — no matter how mundane it may be — he must admit that such spiritual quests amount to nothing. Even without being hounded by toothaches, the student has earlier admitted that human beings cannot figure out the riddles of

existence. He is, in fact, echoing Death in "The Story of a Mother," who — in contrast to the chastened mother — does not refer to the Christian paradise, but to "the unknown land."

The tales included in this volume should serve to emphasize the complexity of Andersen's thinking — and the editor hopes, of course, that this little anthology (which is insufficient in classes devoted exclusively to Andersen) will find its way into survey classes of Scandinavian or European Literature, in which the paradoxes, agonies, and complexities of Romanticism are to be discussed.

Romanticism was a highly self-conscious movement; the artists often fell to pondering their own vocation and, thus, wrote *meta literature,* i.e., works in which the nature of the creative act, the function of art, and its effect upon the audience were debated. Although offering other, equally significant themes, "The Nightingale," "The Shadow," and "Auntie Toothache" belong in that category, and they reveal Andersen's fluctuating views of himself as an artist.

"The Nightingale" is a consummate Romantic statement as to the power of art; the singing bird grants the emperor both renewed life and moral knowledge. "The Shadow," on the other hand, shows that the believer in the Nightingale doctrine of "the true, the good, and the beautiful," can easily become a naive dreamer who fails to comprehend the nature of reality. The good-hearted idealist is devastatingly outwitted by the nihilist, who knows that the true is not necessarily identical with the good or the beautiful. It has been suggested (by Peer E. Sørensen, *H. C. Andersen og Herskabet,* 1973) that the shadow represents the rising middle class of Andersen's time, a group — according to the old patrician power structure — that with its lust for economic gains and political power will stop at nothing to reach its selfish goals. The shadow ends as the dictatorial ruler of society; the man representing Romantic ideals is eliminated, and in a sense, he deserves that fate, for in his naivete he woke up too late to protest against the shadow's schemes.

If "The Shadow" can be read as a scathing indictment of Romantic art, "Auntie Toothache" removes the reader even further from the belief in Romantic art voiced in "The Nightingale." The student-poet of that story cannot stand the pain of poetic insight and, thus, willingly rescinds his claim to being an artist. Before his last confrontation with Auntie Toothache — a devilish incarnation of the poetic muse — he has, however, told his audience that he has no special knowledge or answers to offer. His adoring, but uncomprehending, audience, embodied by Aunt Mille, nevertheless does not listen to his earnest protestations but encourages him to write Romantically. Andersen seems sadly to maintain that his

audience pays no attention to his own admission that human knowledge is too limited to offer any answers to life's existential questions.

One may detect the same authorial admission of ignorance as to the issue of life after death in "The Story of a Mother"; and in "The Wind's Tale of Valdemar Daae and His Daughters." The narrator, the wind, merely informs readers that everything passes away. Neither of these dark stories promises readers a world of harmony or meaningfulness; Andersen refuses to offer his reader easy answers.

The best of Andersen's tales are a far cry from the optimistic oral-formulaic tales, in which the protagonist is the master of his or her own fate. In the last analysis, the body of Andersen's work offered more questions than answers and thus left his readers in a tantalizing, frustrating, and challenging world of ambiguity. In that sense he makes a drastic departure from the oral-formulaic tale, and an affinity can be ascertained between his tales and those by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Franz Kafka, Pär Lagerkvist, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Niels Ingwersen

THE NIGHTINGALE

In China as you know the Emperor is Chinese, and all the people he has around him are Chinese. It happened many years ago, but that is exactly why it is worthwhile to hear the story before it is forgotten! — the emperor's palace was the most magnificent in the whole world, built entirely out of fine porcelain, so precious, but so fragile, so delicate that you had to be very, very careful. In the garden the most marvelous flowers were to be seen, and tied to the most magnificent of them were silver bells that rang so you could not pass by without noticing them. In fact, the emperor's garden was so artfully laid out and it spread so far that the imperial gardener himself didn't know where it ended: if you kept on walking you entered into the most beautiful forest, full of high trees and deep lakes. The forest reached all the way to the sea, which was deep and blue; big ships could sail right up under its branches, and in those branches there lived a nightingale which sang so divinely that even the poor fisherman who had so much else to do lay quietly and listened when he heard the nightingale as he pulled up his nets at night. "Good Lord, how pretty it is!" he said, but then he had to attend to his business and forgot the bird; still, the next night, when it sang again and the fisherman came out, he said the same thing: "Good Lord, how pretty it is!"

From all the countries in the world travelers came to the emperor's city and admired it, with its palace and garden; but when they happened to hear the nightingale they all said: "That is the best of all!"

And the travelers told about it when they got home, and scholars wrote many books about the city, the palace and the garden, but they didn't forget the nightingale; it was put at the very top. And those who could write poetry wrote the most beautiful poems, all of them about the nightingale in the forest by the deep sea.

The books went out all over the world, and some of them even got to the emperor. He sat on his golden throne and read and read, and he nodded his head from time to time, for it pleased him to hear the magnificent descriptions of the city, the palace and the garden. "But the nightingale is the very best of all!" the books said.

"What's this!" said the emperor, " 'nightingale!' and I know nothing about it! Is there such a bird in my empire, and in my garden to boot! I never knew that! Such things I must find in books!"

So then he called for his *Cavalier,* who was so imposing that when anyone less distinguished than himself dared to speak to him or ask him about anything, he always just answered "P!" and that doesn't mean anything.

"There's supposed to be an exceedingly exceptional bird here called the nightingale!" said the emperor; "they say that it is the best of all in my great empire! Why has no one ever told me about it!" —

"Never before have I heard it mentioned!" said the Cavalier; "it has never been introduced at the court!" —

"I want it to come here this evening to sing for me!" said the emperor. "Everyone in the whole world knows what I have, except me!"

"Never before have I heard it mentioned!" said the Cavalier; "I shall search for it, and I shall find it!"

But where was it to be found; the Cavalier ran up and down all the stairs, through the rooms and corridors; none of the people he met had heard about the nightingale, and the Cavalier ran back to the emperor and said that it must just be a fable thought up by people who write books. "His Imperial Majesty must not believe what people write! It is full of inventions and something called the Black Art!"

"But the book I read it in," said the emperor, "was sent to me by the Exalted Emperor of Japan, so it can't be untrue! I want to hear the nightingale! It shall be here this evening! by my supreme grace! and if it doesn't come, everyone in the court shall be thumped on the stomach after supper!"

"Tsing-Pe!" said the Cavalier, and again ran up and down all the stairs through all the rooms and corridors; and half the court ran with him, because they really didn't want to be thumped on the stomach. They asked all over about this strange nightingale that everyone in the whole world knew about, except at court.

Finally they found a little poor girl in the kitchen; she said: "O my God yes, the nightingale! I know it very well! and how it can sing! every evening I am allowed to take some left-overs home to my poor sick mother, she lives down by the beach, and then when I am walking back and I get tired and stop to rest in the woods I hear the nightingale sing! My eyes fill with tears; it's just like my mother was kissing me!"

"Little kitchen-maid!" said the Cavalier, "I shall arrange for you permanent employment in the kitchen and you shall be permitted to see the emperor eat, if you can lead us to the nightingale, for it has been summoned to appear this evening!" —

And so they all started out into the forest where the nightingale usually sang; half the court went along. As they were walking a cow began to low.

"Oh!" said the courtiers, "there it is! There is an astonishing power in such a small creature! I have decidedly heard it before!"

"No, that is the cows lowing!" said the little kitchen-maid; "we still have far to go!"

The frogs croaked in the pond.

"Beautiful!" said the Chinese Imperial Chaplain, "now I hear her, it sounds just like small church bells!"

"No, that is the frogs!" said the little kitchen-maid. "But I think it won't be long now before we hear it!"

Then the nightingale began to sing.

"That's it," said the little girl; "listen! listen! and there it sits!" and she pointed to a little gray bird up in the branches.

"You don't say!" said the Cavalier. "I'd never imagined it like that! How plain it looks! It seems to have become quite pale, no doubt owing to the many distinguished people who have come to see it!"

"Little Nightingale!" called the little kitchen-maid quite loudly, "our gracious emperor wants you to come and sing for him!"

"I'd be most happy to!" said the nightingale, and it sang so it was a joy to hear.

"It's like glass bells ringing!" said the Cavalier, "and see how its little throat is throbbing! It is odd we never heard it before. It shall undoubtedly be an unqualified success at court!"

"Shall I sing one more time for the emperor?" asked the nightingale; it thought the emperor was there.

"Most excellent little nightingale!" said the Cavalier, "I have the great pleasure to summon you to a festival at court this evening, where you shall charm His High Imperial Grace with your entrancing song!"

"It sounds best out in the open," said the nightingale, but it went along willingly when it heard the emperor desired it.

At the palace everything had been thoroughly polished up! The walls and the floors, which were porcelain, shone in the light of thousands of golden lamps! the most beautiful of the chiming flowers were placed in the corridors; there was so much running hither and thither, that it set all the bells to ringing so you couldn't hear yourself think.

Right in the middle of the great hall, where the emperor sat, a golden perch had been set up for the nightingale to sit on; the whole court was present, and the little kitchen-maid was allowed to stand behind the door, because she had been promoted to Cook. They were all in their best finery, and they all stared at the little gray bird, as the emperor nodded to it.

And the nightingale sang so beautifully that tears came to the emperor's eyes, tears trickled down his cheeks, and then the nightingale

sang even more sublimely, so it touched your heart. And the emperor was so happy and said that the nightingale should be honored by having his golden slipper hung around its neck. But the nightingale thanked him, and said it had already been well enough rewarded.

"I have seen tears in the emperor's eyes, and to me they are the richest treasure! An emperor's tears have a marvelous power! God knows, I am well enough rewarded!" and then it sang again with its sweet, sublime voice.

"Never have I known anything so delightfully coy," said all the ladies; then they put water in their mouths to burble when anyone spoke to them: they thought they were nightingales too. Yes, even the lackeys and the chambermaids reported that they were satisfied as well, and that says a lot, for they are the most difficult of all to please. The nightingale pleased them all beyond expectations.

It had to remain at the court now; it was to have its own cage, as well as the freedom to go for a walk twice during the daytime and once at night. It had twelve servants along, and all of them held on tightly to silk ribbons that were tied to its leg. There was not the slightest pleasure to be had from such walks.

The whole city talked about the remarkable bird, and when two people met then the first would say "night—!" and the other would say "gale!" and then they sighed and knew they understood each other; in fact, the children of eleven butchers were named after it, though they were all tone-deaf.

One day a large package came for the emperor; on the outside was written: Nightingale.

"Here we have a new book about our famous bird!" said the emperor; but it wasn't a book, it was an artful little device lying in a box, a make-believe nightingale, that was supposed to resemble the living one, except it was covered all over with diamonds, rubies and sapphires; as soon as you wound up the make-believe bird it could sing one of the songs the real one sang, and then the tail went up and down, its gold and silver glimmering. Around its neck hung a little ribbon, and on it was written: "The nightingale of the Emperor of Japan stands but poorly beside that of the Emperor of China."

"It is lovely!" they all said, and the one who had brought the make-believe bird was immediately given the title of Supreme Imperial Nightingale Bringer.

"They must sing together now! What a duet it will be!"

And so they had to sing together, but it didn't really work, for the real nightingale sang in his own way while rollers and gears made the make-believe bird go; "it's not its fault," said the Master Musician, "it

holds the beat perfectly and entirely in accord with my theories!" So then the make-believe bird had to sing alone — it pleased them all just as much as the real one, and besides it was so much more dazzling to look at; it glittered like bracelets and brooches.

Thirty-three times it sang exactly the same song, and still it wasn't tired; people wanted to hear it again from the beginning but the emperor thought it was time to hear the living nightingale sing a little — but where was it? No one had noticed that it had flown out the window, away to the open air of its green woods.

"Now, what's this!" said the emperor; and all the people of the court scolded, saying that the nightingale was an utterly ungrateful creature. "But the best bird is still with us!" they said, and so the make-belive bird had to sing again, and that was the thirty-fourth time they heard the same song, but they still didn't have all of it down pat, because it was so difficult; and the Master Musician praised the bird so extravagantly, in fact he assured them all that it was better than the real nightingale not just with regard to its attire and the many lovely diamonds, but also internally.

"For you see, Lords and Ladies, and His Imperial Majesty above all! with the real nightingale one can never calculate what will happen, whereas with the make-believe bird everything is highly predictable! Thus it shall be and never otherwise! One can explain it, one can tear it open and show the human thought that went into making it, and show how the rollers are arranged, how they work, how one thing follows another — !"

"Precisely my view!" they all said, and the Master Musician was permitted the next Sunday to show the bird to the people; they should hear it sing too, said the emperor; and they heard it and were just as pleased as if they had drunk themselves silly drinking tea, which is of course so typically Chinese, and then they all said "Oh!" and pointed in the air with the finger that is called the "pointer," and they all nodded; but the poor fishermen who had heard the real nightingale said "it sounds very lovely, and it resembles it, but something's missing, I don't know what!"

The real nightingale was banished from the length and breadth of the empire.

The make-believe bird perched on a silk cushion right next to the emperor's bed; all the presents it had received, gold and gemstones, lay round about it, and it had achieved the title of Archimperial Nighttable Singer, ranking Number One on the left side, for the emperor held the side on which the heart is found to be the most distinguished, and even an emperor's heart is on the left side. And the Master Musician wrote

twenty-five volumes about the make-believe bird; the work was so scholarly and so long and filled with the very most difficult Chinese words, that everyone said they had read and understood it, because otherwise they would of course have been stupid and would have been thumped on the stomach.

So it went for a whole year; the emperor, the court, and all the rest of the Chinese knew by heart every little peep in the make-believe bird's song, but that was exactly why they thought the very most of it; they could sing along themselves, and they did; the street urchins sang "zeezeezee! cluckcluck-cluck!" and the emperor sang it too — ! Yes indeed, it was certainly very lovely!

But one evening as the make-believe bird was singing and the emperor lay in his bed listening it went "zoop!" inside the bird; something popped: "surrrrr!", all the wheels whirred around, and then the music stopped.

The emperor jumped straight out of bed and called for his Imperial Physician, but what could he do! then they called for the watchmaker and after much talking and poking around he got the bird more or less fixed, but he said that it had to be used sparingly because it was so worn out in its joints, and it was not possible to replace them with new ones so that the music would play properly. It was a great disappointment! Only once a year did they dare to make the make-believe bird sing, and even that was overdoing it; but then the Master Musician gave a little speech with difficult words and said that it was just as good as before, and so it was just as good as before.

Now five years passed by, and a very great sorrow befell the country, for they were all actually very fond of their emperor; now he was sick and had not long to live, it was said; a new emperor was already elected, and people stopped in the street and asked the Cavalier how the emperor was.

"P!" he said and shook his head.

Cold and pale the emperor lay in his great, magnificent bed; the whole court thought he was dead, and each one ran over to pay his respects to the new emperor; the menservants ran out to talk about it, and the palace maids had a big coffee party. All around in all the rooms and corridors cloth was laid down so that no one could be heard walking, and because of it, it was so quiet, so quiet. But the emperor wasn't dead yet; stiff and pale he lay in the magnificent bed with the long velvet curtains and the heavy gold tassels; high up a window was open, and the moon shone in on the emperor and the make-believe bird.

The poor emperor could hardly breathe, it was as if something was sitting on his chest; he opened his eyes and then he saw that it was Death that was sitting on his chest. Death had put on the emperor's crown and

held his gold sword in one hand and his magnificent banner in the other; and all around the emperor, sticking out of the folds of the great velvet bed-curtains, were strange faces, some of them horribly foul, others so divinely mild: they were all of the emperor's evil and good deeds that stared at him as Death sat now on his heart.

"Do you remember?" whispered each one in turn. "Do you remember!" and then they told him so much that sweat began to pour off his brow.

"I never knew about it!" said the emperor; "music, music, the great Chinese drum!" he called, "so I don't have to hear what they are saying!"

And they went on, and Death nodded slowly, like a Chinaman, at everything that was said.

"Music, music!" screamed the emperor. "You little blessed golden bird! Sing, you, sing! I have given you gold and precious things, I myself hung my gold slipper around your neck; sing, sing, sing!"

But the bird remained silent; there was no one to wind it up, and otherwise it didn't sing; and Death kept on staring at the emperor with his big, empty, hollow eyes, and it was so quiet, so terrifyingly quiet.

Suddenly, right by the window, the loveliest song began: it was the little, living nightingale that sat on a branch outside; it had heard of the emperor's distress, and so it had come to bring him comfort and hope with its song; and as it went on singing, the figures became paler and paler; the blood began to move ever more swiftly through the emperor's weak body, and Death himself listened and said "keep singing, little nightingale! keep singing!"

"Yes, if you will give me the magnificent gold sword! Yes, if you will give me the rich banner! if you will give me the emperor's crown!"

And Death traded each treasure for a song, and the nightingale kept on singing, and it sang about the quiet graveyard where the white roses grow, where it smells of the elderberry bush, and where the green grass is watered by mourners' tears; then Death began to long for his garden, and floated like a cold, white mist out of the window.

"Thank you, thank you!" said the emperor, "you heavenly little bird, I know who you are! It was you I banished from the length and breadth of my empire! and yet you sang the evil spirits away from my bed, you lifted Death from my heart! How can I repay you?"

"You have paid me!" said the nightingale; "I got tears from your eyes the first time I sang, I will never forget you for that! They are the jewels that gladden a singer's heart — ! But sleep now and become healthy and strong! I shall sing for you!"

And it sang — and the emperor fell into a sweet sleep, which was so mild and refreshing.

The sun shone in through the windows on him when he awakened, strengthened and cured; none of his servants had come back yet, for they thought he was dead, but the nightingale was still there singing.

"You must always stay with me!" said the emperor; "you shall sing only when you please, and the make-believe bird I will smash into a thousand pieces."

"Don't do that!" said the nightingale; "it has done what good it could! keep it as always! I cannot settle and build my nest at the palace, but let me come when I wish, and I will sit on the branch there by the window in the evening and sing for you so you may be both happy and thoughtful! I shall sing of happy people, and of those who suffer! I shall sing about the evil and good that are kept hidden round about you! the little songbird flies far and wide, to the poor fisherman, to the peasant's roof, to everyone who is far away from you and your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet the crown has a holy scent about it! — I will come, I will sing for you! — but you must promise me one thing!" —

"Anything!" said the emperor, who stood there dressed in his imperial robes, which he had himself put on, holding the heavy golden sword against his heart.

"One thing I ask of you! Say to no one that you have a little bird that tells you everything; then it will work even better!"

And then the nightingale flew away.

The servants came in to attend to their dead emperor; — and there they stood, and the emperor said: "Good Morning!"

(1843)

Translated by Timothy Cole

THE SHADOW

In hot countries the sun can really burn! People turn quite mahogany-brown; in fact, in the hottest countries of all they are burned to black. Yet, it was, you know, only as far as to the hot countries that a learned man from the cold ones had come. Now he thought he could run about there just as at home; of course, he was soon made to give that up. He, like all sensible people, had to stay inside; shutters and doors were closed the entire day, and the whole house looked as if everyone were asleep or as if no one were at home. He lived in one of the tall houses on a narrow street that was situated in such a way that the sunlight filled it from morning to night, and that was more than a person could stand!

The learned man from the cold countries was a young man and an intelligent man. He felt that he sat in a glowing oven, and that took its toll of him, and he became quite thin. Even his shadow shrank; it became much smaller than at home, for the sun had also affected it. The two of them first revived in the evening when the sun was down.

What a joy it was to watch! As soon as the candle was brought into the room, the shadow stretched itself right up the wall; yes, even made itself so long that it went across the ceiling. It had to stretch itself to get its strength back. The learned man walked out on the balcony to stretch himself there, and as the stars began to appear in that lovely, clear air, it seemed to him that he came to life again. People came out on all the balconies along the street, and in warm countries every window has a balcony, for you must take a bit of air even though you are used to being the color of mahogany. Things grew quite lively both upstairs and down. Cobblers and tailors and everyone moved out to the street; tables and chairs appeared and candles burned; in fact, more than a thousand candles were ablaze. And while one person talked, another sang; and people strolled about, carriages rolled, and asses wearing bells passed by with a "tingalingling."

While the dead were buried to the singing of the psalms, street urchins set off fire crackers, and church bells rang. Oh, yes, it was really lively down on the street.

It was quiet only in the house that lay just across from the one in which the learned man lived, and yet someone lived there, for there were flowers on the balcony. They grew beautifully in the heat of the sun, and that was something they could not do without being watered, so someone,

of course, had to be watering them. People had to be living there. That door also opened later in the evening, but it was dark inside the house, at least in the first room. From further in came sounds of music. The learned stranger thought it quite matchless, but, of course, he may have only imagined it to be so, for he found everything matchless there in the warm countries — if only it had not been for the sun. The stranger's landlord said that he did not know who had rented his neighbor's house; there was no one to be seen, and as far as the music was concerned, he thought it was terribly boring. "It is just as if someone sits practicing a piece he can't manage, and it's always the same piece. 'I will get it right,' he probably says, but he doesn't manage, no matter how long he plays."

One night the stranger awoke. He slept with his balcony door open, and when the curtain hanging before it lifted in the wind, he thought that there was a wondrous radiance coming from his neighbor's balcony. All the flowers shone like flames of the loveliest colors, and just in the midst of the flowers stood a beautiful, slender maid. It was as if she, too, shone. The light actually hurt his eyes, but then he had just awakened and was holding his eyes open terribly wide. With one bound he was standing on the floor. He went behind the curtain very quietly, but the maid was gone, and the radiance was gone. The flowers were not shining at all but, as always, seemed to be thriving. The door was ajar, and from far within music rang so softly and prettily that, listening to it, one could really fall into a reverie of sweet thoughts. It was surely just like magic. But who lived there? Where was the real entrance? The whole ground floor consisted of shop after shop, and, after all, people surely could not always be running through them.

One evening the stranger was sitting on his balcony while the candle burned in the room behind him, and so it was quite natural, of course, that his shadow should make its way to his neighbor's wall. Indeed, there it sat, just opposite, among the flowers on the balcony. When the stranger moved, the shadow moved too, for that is what a shadow does.

"I believe my shadow is the only living thing to be seen over there," said the learned man. "See how dapperly it sits among the flowers! The door is ajar; now, my shadow ought to be clever enough to go inside, look around, and then come tell me what it has seen. You should make yourself useful!" he said jokingly. "Please step inside. Well, are you going?" and then he nodded to the shadow, and the shadow nodded back. "Well, go along then, but don't stay too long." The stranger got up, and, over on his neighbor's balcony, his shadow rose too. The stranger turned around, and the shadow also turned. In fact, if anyone was paying attention properly, he would have clearly been able to see

that the shadow went in by the neighbor's half-open balcony door, just as the stranger went into his room and let the long curtain fall into place behind him.

The next morning the learned man went out to a cafe to drink coffee and to read the newspapers. "What's this?" he said when he had come out into the sunshine. "Why, I don't have a shadow! Then it actually left last night and didn't return; how bothersome!"

And it annoyed him, but not so much because his shadow was gone, but because he knew that there was another story about a man without a shadow. Why, all the people who lived in the cold countries knew it, and if the learned man now went there and told his, they would surely say that he was just imitating and that his doing so certainly wasn't necessary. He decided therefore not to talk about it at all, and that was a sensible idea.

In the evening he again went out on his balcony. He had duly placed a candle behind him, for he knew that the shadow always wanted its master to serve as a blind, but he could not lure his shadow. Whether he made himself small or made himself large, there was no shadow, and none appeared. He cleared his throat with a "harumph, harumph!" but it didn't help.

It was annoying, but in warm countries everything really grows fast. A week later, whenever he came out into the sunshine, he was delighted to notice that a new shadow was growing out from his feet. The old root must have been left behind. After three weeks he had a rather acceptable shadow, and when he set out for his home in the northerly countries, the shadow grew more and more, until, at last, it was so long and so large that a half of it would have been more than enough.

The learned man reached his home, and he wrote books about what was true in this world and what was good and what was beautiful. Days passed into years, and the years were many.

Then, as he was sitting one evening in his room, there was a quiet knocking at his door.

"Come in!" he said, but no one did. He then opened the door, and standing there before him was such an extraordinarily thin person that he felt quite strange. As a matter of fact, the person was so particularly well dressed that he had to be a man of distinction.

"With whom do I have the honor of speaking?" asked the learned man.

"Well, that's what I thought," said the distinguished-looking man, "that you, sir, wouldn't recognize me. I have become so very corporal; I have got properly fleshed and clothed. You had probably never thought to see me doing so well. Don't you know your old shadow, sir? Indeed,

I dare say that you had not thought that I would ever return. Things have gone particularly well for me since I was last with you, sir. I have become very well-to-do in every way, and if I am to buy my freedom from your service, I can do so!" He then jingled a whole bunch of costly fobs that hung by his pocket watch, and he touched his hand to the heavy gold chain that he wore about his neck. Oh, how all his fingers sparkled with diamond rings! And everything was genuine.

"Well, I just can't pull myself together!" said the learned man; "what is all this, anyway!"

"Certainly, it's out of the ordinary," said the *shadow,* "but, of course, neither are you yourself ordinary; and as you know, sir, from childhood I have followed in your footsteps. As soon as you thought that I was mature enough to go out into the world alone, I went my way. Although my situation is the brightest possible, a sort of longing had come over me to see you once more before you die; after all, you will die, sir! I also wanted to see this region again, for surely one is always fond of his native land. . . . Sir, I know that you now have obtained another shadow, and if I owe anything to it or to you, you have only to be so good as to say so."

"Why, is it really you!" said the learned man; "this is really extremely remarkable! I would never have believed that one's old shadow could come back as a human being!"

"Tell me what I am supposed to owe," said the *shadow,* "for I would rather not be in anyone's debt."

"How can you talk like that!" said the learned man. "There is no debt here to speak of! Feel as free as anyone else. I am extremely happy about your success. Sit down, old friend, and tell me just a little bit about how it all came about and what you saw over at the neighbor's down there in the warm southland."

"Certainly, I shall tell you, sir," said the *shadow* and sat down, "but then you must also promise me that, wherever you may meet me, you shall never tell anyone here in town that I have been your shadow! I am thinking of becoming engaged; I can support more than one family ..."

"You don't have to worry," said the learned man. "I will tell no one who you actually are; here is my hand on it. I promise and a man is as good as his word!"

"A word is as good as a shadow!" said the *shadow,* and that, after all, was how it had to talk.

It was otherwise really quite remarkable how very human it was. It was clad completely in black: clothing of the finest black cloth, patent-leather boots, and a hat that could pop down flat, so that it became just a shadowy pool — not to mention the watch fobs, gold necklaces, and

diamond rings about which we already know. To be sure, the *shadow* was extremely well dressed, and that was precisely what made it so very human, for clothes make the man.

"Now, I shall explain," said the *shadow,* and it then stamped its patent-leather boots down as hard as it could on the arm of the learned man's new shadow, which lay like a poodle at his feet. It was done either in arrogance or in an effort, perhaps, to make it stick fast. The reclining shadow kept still and quiet in order to listen carefully; it very likely wanted to know how one could ever get free and advance to being one's own master.

"Do you know who was living in the house across the way?" said the *shadow.* "It was the loveliest of all beings, *Poetry!* I was there for three weeks, and that is just the same as living for three thousand years and reading everything being composed and written. I say so, and it's true. I have seen everything and I know everything!"

"Poetry!" shouted the learned man. "Yes, of course — she is often a hermit in large cities. Poetry! Well, I have seen her for a single, short moment, but sleep filled my eyes. She stood on the balcony and sparkled as the northern lights do. Tell, tell! You were on the balcony; you went in at the door, and then . . . !"

"Then, I was in an anteroom," said the *shadow.* "You, sir, always had sat looking at the anteroom. There was no light at all, but a sort of dusk. One door after another stood open, however, into a long series of rooms and salons, and they were lighted. I would clearly have been killed by light if I had gone in all the way to the maid, but I was sensible. I took my time, and that is what one should do!"

"And what did you see then?" asked the learned man.

"I saw everything, and I shall tell you about it, but... it is not at all a matter of pride with me . . . but — being free and having the learning I have, not to mention my good position, my excellent circumstances — I could wish that you would say 'sir' to me!

"Pardon me!" said the learned man; "informality is an old habit that hangs on. You, sir, are completely right, and I shall remember it. But now, sir, tell me everything you saw ... !"

"Everything!" said the *shadow,* "for I saw everything and I know everything."

"How did it look in the innermost salons?" asked the learned man. "Was it like being in a refreshing wood? Was it like being in a holy church? Were the salons like the star-bright heavens when one stands on high mountains?"

"There was everything!" said the *shadow.* I did not go quite all the way in, you know; I stayed in the dusk in the foremost room, but,

there, I was particularly well positioned. I saw everything; and I know everything! I have been at Poetry's court, in the anteroom."

"But what did you see? Were all the ancient gods walking through the great salons? Were the heroes of old fighting there? Were sweet children playing and telling of their dreams?"

"I tell you I was there, and, as you can imagine, I saw everything, whatever there was to see! If, sir, you had gone over there, you could not have become a human being, but I became one. Besides, I came to know my innermost nature, what was inborn: the family tie I had with Poetry. Of course, when I was with you, sir, I didn't think about it; but, as you know, whenever the sun rose or set, I grew surprisingly large. In moonlight I became nearly more distinct than you yourself. I didn't understand my nature then, but in the anteroom it dawned on me! I became a human being. I came out matured, but you, sir, were then no longer in the south. As becomes a human being, I was ashamed to go around as I was; I needed boots, clothes, and all that polish that makes one recognizable as being human ... I made my way — well, I'll tell you, for you're certainly not going to write a book about it — I made my way to the skirts of the pastry-monger and hid there. The woman didn't imagine how much she concealed. I came out only in the evenings. I ran about in the street in the moonlight, and I stretched myself up the walls, That really tickles one's back delightfully! I ran up and down, peeking in at the highest windows, in the salons, and on the roof. I peeked where no one else could peek, and I saw what no one else saw, what no one else should see! The world is basically vicious, and I wouldn't even want to be a human being if it really weren't already accepted that it was something to be one. I saw the most unimaginable things among wives, among husbands, among parents, and among the sweet, matchless children — I saw," said the *shadow,* "what no one ought to know about, but what everyone would like so much to know about; the worst of one's neighbors. If I had written a newspaper, you can bet it would have been read! Instead, I wrote directly to the person concerned. In all the cities I went to, people were dismayed and grew afraid of me, and yet they were extraordinarily fond of me. Professors gave me an honorary degree; tailors gave me new clothes — I am well supplied — the master of coinage stamped coins for me, and women said how handsome I was. And that's how I became the man I am! Now I will say goodbye. Here is my calling card; I live on the sunny side and am always at home during rainy weather." The *shadow* then left.

"That was really remarkable!" said the learned man.

The days passed into years; then, the *shadow* came back.

"How are things going?" it asked.

"Oh, dear!" said the learned man, "I write about the true and the good and the beautiful, but no one cares to hear about such things. I am desperate, for I am so upset by it all."

"But I'm not!" said the *shadow.* "I'm putting on weight, and that's what a person ought to do. Of course you, sir, don't understand the world, and that's beginning to make you unwell. You, sir, must travel! I am taking a trip in the summer; do you want to come along? I wouldn't mind having a traveling companion. If you would travel with me as my shadow, I would be pleased to have you along, and I'll pay for the trip!"

"That's going pretty far!" said the learned man.

"It's all in how one looks at it," said the *shadow.* "The trip would be awfully good for you. If you will be my shadow, you shall get everything on the trip free."

"That's too much!" said the learned man.

"But that's how the world is, you know," said the *shadow,* "and that's how it will continue to be!" And then the *shadow* left.

The learned man was not doing at all well; sorrow and trouble followed him. All that he said about the true and good and beautiful no more affected most people than roses would a cow ... At last he was quite ill.

"You really look just like a shadow of your former self!" people said to him, and the learned man shivered, for it made him think.

"You, sir, should go to a spa," said the *shadow,* which had come to visit him. "There is nothing else to do! I will take you along for old time's sake. I will pay for the trip, and you, sir, can write a description of it and thus be of some amusement to me on the road. I am going to a spa because my beard isn't growing as it should. That's also a malady, for a beard is something one must have. Do be sensible and accept my offer; after all, we'll be traveling as friends!"

And so they went. The *shadow* was the master, and the master was then a shadow. They went on drives, rode horseback, and took walks together, keeping side by side or one before and the other behind, all according to the position of the sun. Although the *shadow* always knew how to keep himself in a position of dominance, the learned man really gave little thought to such things. He was very kindhearted and most mild and amiable. One day he said to the *shadow,* "Since we now happen to be traveling companions and we, besides, have grown up from childhood together, why don't we drink to addressing each other informally. That, after all, would be much friendlier."

"There's something in what you say," said the *shadow,* which now was the actual master. "That was well-intended and frankly spoken. I will be just as kind and frank. You, sir, as a learned man, undoubtedly know

how strange nature is. Some people cannot bear to touch gray paper; if they do so, they become ill. Others feel it in every limb if one lets a nail scratch against a glass pane. I have just such a feeling when I hear you address me informally. I feel as if I were being ground down to the earth, into my first position with you. You see, sir, it's a feeling I have; it isn't pride. Sir, I cannot let you address me informally, but I shall be glad to address you informally; then, we will have met halfway."

And so the *shadow* addressed his previous master informally.

"It's really rather much," the learned man thought, "that I have to say 'sir' and he says only 'you'!" but now the learned man had to put up with it.

They came to a spa at which there were many foreigners and, among them, a lovely king's daughter who suffered the malady of seeing too clearly, and that was of course very alarming. Almost at once she noticed that the person who had arrived was quite different from all the others. "They say that he is here to get his beard to grow, but I see the real reason: he can't cast a shadow."

She had grown curious, and so, taking a walk, she immediately began to talk to the strange gentleman. As a king's daughter she didn't much need to stand on ceremony, and therefore she said, "You, sir, can't cast a shadow; that's your malady."

"Your Royal Highness must be growing significantly better!" said the *shadow*. "I know, Your Highness, that your trouble is that you see too well, but your sight has weakened. You are cured, for I have actually a quite extraordinary shadow! Your Highness, don't you see the person who always accompanies me? Other people have an ordinary shadow, but I don't care for the ordinary. A man gives finer clothes to his servant in livery than he himself wears, and, in the same way, I have had my shadow polished to the point of being human! And what's more, as you see, Your Highness, I have even given *him* a shadow. It's quite expensive, but I like having something original."

"What!" thought the princess, "have I actually recovered? This spa is the best there is! In our day water has quite amazing powers. But I won't leave, for now it's going to be fun here, and I think extremely well of that stranger. I only hope that his beard doesn't grow, for, if it does, he'll go away!"

In the evening the king's daughter and the shadow danced in the large ballroom. Although she was light on her feet, he was even lighter; she'd never had such a dancing partner. She told him where she was from; he knew the country and had even been there, but she had not been at home then. He had peeped in windows both upstairs and down, and he had seen a little of this and a little of that. He could therefore answer the

king's daughter about some things and hint about others until she was quite amazed. She felt such respect for his knowledge that she thought he had to be the wisest man on the whole earth. When they danced together once more, she fell in love. The *shadow* was quite aware of her feelings, for she was about to gaze right through him. When they had danced once again, she was just about to tell him how she felt, but she was sensible: she thought of her country and her realm and of the many people she was to rule. "It's a good thing," she said to herself, "that he's a wise man! It's also a good thing that he dances so beautifully, but does he really have a thorough education, for that's just as important! He will have to be tested." She then began, little by little, to ask him something about the most difficult questions of all. She herself could not have answered them and the *shadow* made a rather strange face.

"You can't answer that, sir!" said the king's daughter.

"That's child's play," said the *shadow*. "I believe that even my shadow over there by the door could answer that!"

"Your shadow!" said the king's daughter. "That would be extremely odd!"

"Of course, I can't say for certain that he can," said the *shadow,* but I should think so. He has followed me and listened to me for so many years now that... I do believe so. But Your Royal Highness must permit me to point out that he is so very proud of passing as a human being that, when he is to be in a good humor — and he must be so to answer well — he must be treated just like a human being."

"I certainly don't mind that," said the king's daughter. She then walked over to the learned man, who was standing by the door, and she talked to him about the sun and the moon and about people, both inside and out. He answered her wisely and well.

"What a man he must be to have so wise a shadow!" she thought. It would be a pure blessing for my people and my realm if I chose him as my consort . . . I'll do it!"

Both the king's daughter and the shadow had soon come to an agreement, but no one else was to know about it before she got home to her own realm. "No one, not even my shadow," said the *shadow,* and, of course, the *shadow* had its reasons for that.

They then arrived in the country over which the king's daughter ruled when she was at home. "Listen, my good friend," said the *shadow* to the learned man, "now that I am as fortunate and as powerful as anyone can be, I am ready to do something special for you. You shall always live with me at the palace, drive with me in my royal carriages, and have a hundred thousand dollars each year; but then you must allow yourself to be called a shadow by one and all. You must not say that

you have ever been a human being; and once a year, when I sit on the balcony in the sunshine in order to appear before the public, you must lie at my feet as a shadow should. I can now inform you that I'm marrying the king's daughter; the wedding will take place this evening."

"No! This is really too much," said the learned man; "I don't want to do it, and I won't do it. To do so would be to deceive the whole country and the king's daughter as well! I'll tell everything; that I am a human being and that you are a shadow, that you are merely dressed up!"

"No one will believe that," said the *shadow;* "be sensible, or I'll call the guard!"

"I'm going straight to the king's daughter," said the learned man. "But I am going first," said the *shadow,* "and you are going to jail!" And that's where the learned man had to go, for the sentries listened to the one that they knew the king's daughter wanted to marry.

"You're shaking!" said the king's daughter when the *shadow* came in to see her. "Has something happened? You musn't be ill this evening, now that we are to have the wedding!"

"I have experienced the most dreadful thing that can be experienced!" said the *shadow.* "Can you imagine — of course, such a poor shadow of a brain can't stand very much — can you imagine, my shadow has gone mad! He believes that he is a human being and that I — just imagine — that I am his shadow!"

"That's terrible!" said the princess. "Surely, he is locked up?"

"That he is. I am afraid that he'll never recover."

"Poor shadow!" said the princess; "he must be very unhappy. It would be a true kindness to release him from the little bit of life he has, and when I really think about it, I believe it will be necessary that he be done away with secretly!"

"That's rather hard!" said the *shadow,* "for he was a faithful servant!" and then he gave a sort of sigh.

"You, sir, have a noble character!" said the king's daughter.

That evening the whole city was illuminated. The cannons fired with a "boom!" and the soldiers presented arms. What a wedding it was! The king's daughter and the *shadow* went out on the balcony to appear before the public and to receive still one more "hurrah!"

The learned man heard nothing of it all, for they had taken his life ...

(1847)

Translated by Faith Ingwersen

THE STORY OF A MOTHER

A mother sat by her little child. She was so sorrowful and so afraid that it would die. It was very ill, and its little eyes had closed. It breathed very softly but, once in awhile, drew so deep a breath that it seemed to sigh. And then the mother looked even more mournfully at that little soul.

There was a knock on the door, and in came a poor old man wrapped in something like a large horse-blanket, for it gave warmth. That was what he needed since it was, after all, in the cold of winter. Everything outside was covered in ice and snow, and the wind blew so sharply that it cut one's face.

Since the little child slept for the moment and the old man shook with cold, the mother went over to put a small pot of beer into the oven to warm it for him. The old man sat rocking, and the mother seated herself on a chair close to him and looked at her sick child, who breathed so heavily, and she lifted one of its little hands.

"You believe that I'll get to keep him, don't you?" she said. "Our Lord wouldn't take him from me!"

And the old man, who was Death itself, nodded so strangely that it could just as well mean yes as no. The mother looked down at her lap, and tears ran down her cheeks . . . Her head grew very heavy; she had not closed her eyes for three days and nights, and now she slept, but only for a moment. Then she started up, shaking with cold.

"What was that!" she said and looked all around. The old man was gone, and her little child was gone. He had taken it with him. And over in the corner, the old clock whirred and whirred; its great lead weight ran all the way to the floor with a thud! And then the clock stopped.

The poor mother ran out of the house and called for her child.

Out there, right in the snow, sat a woman in long black clothing: "Death has been in your hut; I saw him hurry off faster than the wind, and he never brings back what he has taken!"

"Just tell me which way he went!" said the mother; "tell me, and I will find him!"

"I know the way," said the woman in black clothing, "but before I tell, you must sing me all the songs that you have sung to your child. I am fond of them; I have heard them before. I am Night; I saw your tears while you sang them."

"I shall sing them all to you, all!" said the mother, "but don't stop me; I must catch him; I must find my child!"

But Night sat silent and still; then, the mother wrung her hands, sang, and wept. There were many songs to be sung, but there were even more tears to be shed. Then, Night said, "Go to the right, into the dark forest of firs. I saw Death go off there with your little child."

Deep within the woods was a crossroads, and the mother no longer knew where she should go. Then she saw a thornbush. There were neither leaves nor blossoms on it — it was certainly no wonder in the cold of winter — and there hung a layer of ice on the branches.

"Have you seen Death pass by with my little child?"

"Why, yes," said the thornbush, "but I won't tell you which way he went, unless you warm me at your heart! I am freezing to death; I am turning into pure ice!"

And she clasped the thornbush to her heart firmly enough truly to warm it. Its thorns pierced straight into her flesh, and her blood flowed in great drops. The thornbush sprouted fresh green shoots, and it flowered in the cold winter night — so warm was it at the heart of a grieving mother. And the thornbush told her the path she should take.

Then she came to a large lake, where there was neither ship nor boat. The lake was not frozen hard enought to bear her, nor ice-free and shallow enough to be waded, and she had to cross it if she wanted her child: She then lay down to drink the lake dry, but that was impossible, of course, for a human being. The grieving mother thought, however, that, after all, a miracle could occur . . .

"No, that will never work!" said the lake. "Let the two of us come to an agreement, instead! I am fond of collecting pearls, and your eyes are two of the clearest I have seen. If you will cry them out for me, I will carry you over to the great greenhouse in which Death lives and tends his flowers and trees — each of them is a human life!"

"Oh, what would I not give to reach my child!" said the woman, whose face was worn from weeping, and she cried even more. Her eyes sank down to the bottom of the lake and became two precious pearls. The lake then lifted her as if she sat in a swing, and she flew on a wave to the opposite shore. There, stood a peculiar house that was miles wide. It was hard to tell whether it was a mountain with forests and caves or it was built of timber, but the poor mother couldn't see it; after all, she had wept out her eyes.

"Where shall I find Death, who went off with my little child?" said she.

"He hasn't come back here yet," said the old spading-woman, who was supposed to tend Death's great greenhouse. "How were you able to find your way here, and who has helped you?"

"Our Lord has helped me!" said the mother. "He is compassionate, and you will be so, too! Where am I to find my child?"

"Well, I don't know the child," said the woman, "and you, of course, can't see! Many flowers and trees have withered tonight; Death will soon come to transplant them. You probably know that every human being has his own flower or tree of life, each person according to his individual nature. They look like other plants, but they have a pulse. The hearts of children really beat! Listen for that; perhaps you can recognize your child's, but what will you give me to tell you what else you should do?"

"I don't have anything to give," said the mother, "but I would go to the end of the world for you!"

"Well, I have no business to be done there!" said the woman, "but you can give me your long, black hair. I'm sure you yourself know that it's beautiful, and I do like it! You shall have my white hair in return; that's at least something."

"Is that all you demand!" said the mother. "I will gladly give it to you!" And she gave away her beautiful hair and received the old woman's snow-white hair in return.

They then went into Death's great greenhouse, where flowers and trees grew together in strange confusion. There were delicate hyacinths under bell jars, great sturdy peonies, and aquatic plants — some quite healthy, other rather sickly, with watersnakes lying on them and black crayfish squeezing their stems. There were lovely palm, plane, and oak trees, as well as parsley and blooming thyme. Each tree and each flower had its own name, for each of them was a human life. Each person was still living — one in China, one in Greenland, and so on, round about the world. Some tall trees were so constricted by the small pots in which they stood that they were about to burst them. In many a place, too, a dull little flower that was pampered and cared for was set in rich soil and surrounded by moss. But the grieving mother leaned down to all the smallest plants and heard their human hearts beating within them, and among millions of them she recognized that of her child.

"There it is!" she cried and stretched out her hand above a little blue crocus that drooped to one side, as if quite ill.

"Don't touch the flower!" said the old woman. "Stay right here, and when Death does come — I expect him to be here before I have time to think about it — don't let him jerk the plant up, but threaten that you will do so to all the other flowers. Then, he'll be afraid! He must answer to Our Lord for them; none of them may be pulled up before He gives permission."

At once an icy cold whistled through the hall, and the blind mother could feel that it was Death who came.

"How have you been able to find your way here?" he asked; "how could you come more quickly than I?"

"I am a mother!" said she.

And Death stretched out his long hand toward the fragile little flower, but she held her hands firmly around it, so tightly and yet so afraid that she might touch a single leaf. Then Death blew on her hands, and she felt that his breath was colder than the cold wind, and her hands fell weakly down.

"You can do nothing against me!" said Death.

"But Our Lord can!" said she.

"I do only what He wills!" said Death. "I am His gardener. I take all His flowers and trees and transplant them into the great Garden of Paradise in the unknown land, but how well they grow there and what it's like there, I dare not tell you!"

"Give me back my child!" said the mother, and she cried and begged. Suddenly, with each hand, she grasped a beautiful flower close by and shouted at Death, "I am desparate enough to rip out all your flowers!"

"Don't touch them!" said Death. "You say how unhappy you are, and now you will make another mother just as unhappy

"Another mother!" said the poor woman and at once let go of both flowers.

"Here, these are your eyes," said Death. "They sparkled so brightly that I fished them up from the lake. I didn't know that they were yours; take them back, for they are clearer now than they were before. Now look down into the deep well right there. I shall give you the names of the two flowers you wanted to rip out, and you will see all that the future holds for them, their entire human lives, and see what you wanted to disrupt and destroy!"

And when she looked down into the well, it was heavenly delight to see how much of a blessing one of them was to the world, to see how much happiness and joy blossomed everywhere. But then she saw the other one's life, and it was made up of sorrow and deprivation, terror and misery.

"Both are the will of God." said Death.

"Which of them is the blossom of unhappiness, and which is that of blessedness?" she asked.

"That, I won't tell you," said Death; "but one thing I will tell you: one of the flowers was your own child's; you saw your child's fate, your own child's future!"

Then the mother shrieked in terror: "Which of them was my child? Tell me! Save my innocent child! Deliver my child from all that misery!

Take it away instead! Carry it into God's Kingdom! Forget my tears; forget my prayers and all that I have said and done!"

"I don't understand you!" said Death. "Do you want your child back, or shall I take it in there, to a place you do not know. . .!"

Then the mother wrung her hands, fell to her knees, and prayed to Our Lord: "Do not hear me when I pray against Your will, for You know what is best! Do not hear me! Do not hear me!"

And she lowly bowed down her head.

And Death went off with her child into that unknown land.

(1848)

Translated by Faith Ingwersen

THE WIND'S TALE OF VALDEMAR DAAE AND HIS DAUGHTERS

When the wind races over the fields of high grass, they murmur like a rippling stream. When it races through fields of wheat, they billow like waves on the ocean. That is the wind's dance. But listen to it speak. It sings out and its melody sounds quite differently in the trees of a forest than it does through the holes, cracks, and chinks, in the wall of a house. Look up into the heavens; see how the wind chases the clouds through the sky as if they were a flock of sheep. Listen down here on earth; hear how the wind howls through an open gate as if it were a watchman blowing his horn. Strange is the way it whistles down the chimney and into the hearth, so the fire blazes, flickers, and shines far out into the room. It is especially warm and cozy then to sit and listen to the sound. But let the wind speak. It knows many tales and stories — more than all of us together. Listen now, to what it is saying, "Ooo-oh! Move on!" This is the refrain of the tale.

"By the shore of the Great Belt lies an old manor-house with thick red walls," begins the wind. "I know every stone on it for I had seen them all before when they made up the walls of Marsk Stig's castle on the point. That castle had to be torn down! The stones were raised again in the new walls on a new estate in another place. This was Borreby Manor; it still stands today.

"I've watched and known the noble gentlemen and ladies of the changing families who have lived on this estate; now I'll tell the tale of Valdemar Daae and his daughters.

"He was an extremely proud man. His family was of royal descent; he could do more than hunt down a stag and empty a flagon of ale. 'All's well that ends well,' he would always say.

"His wife would glide erectly in her royal cloak. She would glide gracefully over her sparkling parqueted floors. The tapestries were magnificent and the furniture costly; it had been intricately-carved. She had collected silver and gold decorations for the house. There was strong

German beer in the cellar, whenever there was any beer, and high-spirited horses whinnied in the barns. Yes, there was great opulence at Borreby Manor in the days when they still had their wealth.

"And there were children — three delicate maidens — Ide, Johanne, and Anna Dorthea. I still remember their names.

"These were rich folk. They were fine people, born in splendor and accustomed to it. 'Oo-ooh! Move-on!' " sang the wind and continued its tale.

"Here I didn't see, as on other old estates, the noble lady sitting in the salon spinning cloth with her maids. She played the lute beautifully, and she sang — yet not always the old Danish songs, but songs in foreign tongues. Here there was life and hospitality, distinguished guests visited from far and near in those days. Music rang out. Flagons clanged. I simply could not drown out the noise," said the wind. "Here was pride with pomp and pageant, lordliness — but not Our Lord.

"So it was on the evening of Mayday," continued the wind. "I had just come from the West, had seen ships smashed into pieces along Jutland's westcoast. I had raced over the heaths and the forest-green coast, over Funen's countryside and across the strait — biting and blustering.

"Then I lay down to rest along Zealand's coast, close by Borreby Manor, I lay where the forest with its majestic oaks then stood.

"The young farmhands from the area came out here to collect twigs and branches — the largest and driest they could find. They took them into the village, laid them in a pile, and set fire to them. Then the boys and girls danced and sang around it.

"I lay still," said the wind, "but softly I breathed on one branch — that which has been laid-on by the handsomest boy; his branch was the first to blaze up; it burned the brightest. He was chosen to be the marshal of spring; he could choose any girl to be his for the rest of the evening. This was joy and happiness, much greater than anything at the wealthy Borreby Manor.

"Then, approaching slowly on its way to the estate, came the golden coach drawn by six horses; inside sat the noble lady and her three daughters. Each daughter was so delicate, so youthful — they were three graceful flowers: a rose, a lily, and the pale hyacinth. The mother herself was a resplendent tulip. She deigned to greet not one of the dancing flock, which had abruptly halted their play and were curtsying and cringing so that one might imagine the lady were a frail-stemmed flower.

"Rose, lily, and the pale hyacinth, yes, I saw all three of them. Whose darlings would they one day be?" I wondered. "Their choice

would no doubt be a glorious knight or perhaps a prince. Oo-oh! Move on! Move on!

"So the coach took them away, and the peasants took up their dancing. That evening there was much celebrating and welcoming of summer — in Borreby, in Tjaereby, and in all the nearby towns.

"But that night, when I arose," said the wind, "the noble lady lay down, never to rise again. Death came over her as it comes over all mortals. It is surely nothing to be surprised about. Valdemar Daae stood serious and thoughtful for awhile; a voice inside him said that the proudest tree can be bowed, but not broken. The daughters wept, and on the estate they all dried their eyes, but Lady Daae had moved on — and I'm moving on. Ooooh!" said the wind.

"I came again and I came again often. I flew over Funen's countryside and over the strait. I would rest at Borreby strand, close by the magnificent forest of oaks where ospreys, forest doves, blue ravens, and even the black stork had built their nests. It was early in the year, so some nests contained eggs, some held newly-hatched young. Oh, how they swarmed-up and screeched when they heard axe-strokes nearby — blow upon blow. The forest was to be cut down because Valdemar Daae wanted to build a priceless warship — a warship with three foredecks — one the king would surely buy. So the forest was felled. The seamen's landmark and the birds' home had to be cut down. The shrike flew up, frightened, as its nest was being destroyed. The osprey and all the others also lost their homes. These homeless birds flew about, screaming in fear and danger, and I could certainly understand their frenzy. During all this turmoil, the crows and'jackdaws called out loudly in scorn, 'Away from the nest, away from the nest! Away, away!'

"And in the middle of the forest with the group of workmen stood Valdemar Daae and his daughters. They laughed at the birds' wild cries: all, that is, except his smallest daughter — Anna Dorthea. In her heart she felt such pity that when they were going to fell a half-rotted tree upon whose naked branches the black stork had built its nest and from which three tiny heads poked out, she pleaded for them, she pleaded with tears in her eyes. Thus the tree with the black stork's nest was allowed to stand. However, this was but a small gesture.

"Much cutting and sawing followed; the ship with three foredecks was being built. The master-builder was of lowly birth, but highly-skilled; his features revealed his competence. Valdemar Daae enjoyed listening to him, and so did little Ide, the oldest daughter of fifteen years. So while he built a ship for the father, he built a dream-castle for himself, in which he and little Ide sat as man and wife. And they might

actually have been married if his castle had been of mortared stone with a garden and woods, surrounded by moats and embankments. But for all his ingenuity, the master-builder was just a common man, and what place had he in the society of nobility? Oh-ooh!

I flew away, and he flew away because he didn't dare stay, and little Ide got over her grief— for there was no other way!

"In the barns, the black horses neighed loudly and got the attention they deserved. When the admiral, sent directly by the king, arrived to inspect the new warship and discuss its purchase, he spoke with great admiration of the high-spirited horses. I heard it all very clearly," said the wind. "I followed the gentlemen through the barndoor and scattered bits of straw in their path. It looked like gold dust. Valdemar Daae demanded gold for the warship; the admiral wanted only the black horses. He praised them profusely, but Valdemar Daae refused to listen, so nothing was bought. The ship stood shining on the beach, covered over with planks — A Noah's Ark that would never sail. Ooh-oh! Move on! Move on! It was so pitiful.

"During the winter when the fields were covered with snow, drift-ice clogged the strait, and I drove it up onto the coast," said the wind. "The ravens and crows returned — each one blacker than the other. They arrived in huge flocks to perch upon the desolate, dead, and lonesome ship on the beach. There they screeched in hoarse cries about the forest that was gone, about the many precious nests that had been destroyed, about the many homeless old birds and homeless young birds, and all this misery caused for the sake of that large pile of lumber, that proud vessel which would never sail the seas.

"I swirled the snowdrifts. The snow lay like high seas surrounding the ship. It even covered the deck. I let the ship hear my voice — so it would know what a storm at sea might have been like. I know I did my best to initiate that vessel into shiplore. Oo-oh! Move on!

"The winter passed; winters and summers followed each other as they do now: just as I come and go, as the snow drifts, as appleblossoms swirl, and as leaves fall. Move on! Move on! All life moves on.

"However, the daughters were still young at this time. Little Ide was a rose, beautiful to look at — the very same as when the shipbuilder had been here. Often I caressed her long brown hair while she stood wistfully by the appletree in the garden, and she would not notice as I sprinkled flowers in her loosened hair. She would stand watching the setting sun on the golden horizon, while it was visible between the dark bushes and the tree crowns of the garden.

"Her sister was like a lily, erect and radiant — Johanne. She carried herself very proudly, was delicate like her mother. But she liked to

stroll in the large chamber where the family portraits were hung. The women were portrayed in velvet and silk with tiny pearl-sequined caps on their plaited hair. They were beautiful women. One saw their husbands in either armor or costly cloaks with squirrel-skin trim and blue-ruffled collars. Their swords hung low on their hips — ready for use and not simply for decorations. Where would Johanne's portrait hang one day, and what would her noble husband look like? Yes, she thought about this; she spoke softly to herself about it. I heard it all as I moved through the long hallways, as I went into the chamber and out again.

"Anna Dorthea, the pale hyacinth, only a fourteen-year-old child, was gentle and pensive. Her large, deep-blue eyes looked very thoughtful but her mouth betrayed the smile of childhood. I couldn't blow it away nor did I want to.

"I would meet her in the garden, on the roadway, and in the fields. She gathered herbs and flowers, which she knew her father could use to brew the drinks and potions he distilled. Valdemar Daae was a haughty and cocky man, but he was also skilled and knowledgeable; this was commonly whispered about. Even in the summertime a fire burned in his hearth; the door to his chamber remained closed for days and nights — but he would not say much about what he did. If one carefully and covertly seeks out nature's mysteries, he can expect to uncover its ultimate secret — red gold.

"So steam poured from his hearth and it crackled and blazed. Yes, I was there," explained the wind. "Move on! Move on! I sang down from the chimney. You'll only find smoke, embers, and ashes. You'll burn yourself up! Oooh! Move on! Move on! But Valdemar Daae wouldn't move.

"And the magnificent horses in the barns — whatever became of them? What became of the precious silver and gold in the closets and chests? Of the cows in the fields? Of the whole estate? Ah, yes, they were all melted, melted down in a gold crucible — only no gold ever came from them.

"The pantry and the barn were emptied, and the cellar and attic. Fewer people remained; more mice arrived. One windowpane cracked, another shattered. I no longer had to go through he door," said the wind. "When the chimney smokes, dinner is burning. One chimney smoked and consumed all their meals. All this for the sake of red gold!

"I wailed through the castle entry like a watchman blowing his horn, but there was no watchman," said the wind. "I spun the weathercock on the castle spire; it grated as if the watchman were snoring in his tower, but there was no watchman. There were rats and mice; poverty ruled the house. Poverty set the table, filled the clothes closets, and stocked the pantry. The front door had fallen off its hinges; there were

cracks and holes in the walls. I came and went at will," said the wind; "therefore, I know all about it.

"In smoke and ashes, in sorrow and sleepless nights, his hair and beard became gray; his skin became cloudy and faded; his eyes searched greedily for gold — that sought-after gold!

"I blew smoke and ashes into his face and beard. Debts piled up instead of gold. I whistled through the broken windows and open cracks. I blew into the daughters' bedroom, where their clothes lay faded and threadbare from continuous use. That lullaby had never been sung at their cradles. Their noble life had become a wretched life. I was the only one who sang in the castle in those times," said the wind. "I snowed them in — it was to provide shelter from the cold. They didn't have any firewood because the forest had been cut down, and where else could they get any wood? There was a bone-chilling frost; I swung through the crevices and hallways, over the gable and wall, just to give myself some exercise. Inside, they lay in bed to keep warm — the three noble daughters. Their father lay huddled under his skin comforter. To have nothing to eat and nothing to burn, that's a lordly life! Oo-oh! Move on! But Master Daae couldn't move on!

" 'As surely as spring follows winter,' he said, 'good times must follow bad, but they're awfully slow in coming. Now that the farm is completely mortgaged, this is my very last chance, and the gold will surely come by Easter!'

"I heard him mutter into a spider's web, 'You clever little weaver. You show me how to be patient. Whenever your web is torn apart, you start over to rebuild it. If it is torn apart again, unvexed you begin again. Over and over again. That's what one has to do, and he will be rewarded in the end.'

"It was Easter morning, the church bells were tolling, the sun was dancing in the heavens. He had awakened early in a fever, had boiled and cooled, mixed and distilled. I heard him sighing like a doubting soul; I heard him pray, I felt him catch his breath. The lamp had gone out, but he did not notice it. I puffed at the glowing embers; they lighted up his chalk-white face. It had a tinged glow; his eyes were pinched deeply into their sockets — but then they grew larger and larger as if they would burst.

"Look at the alchemist's beaker! Something is sparkling inside it. It's glowing, pure, and heavy! He raised it in his quivering hand. He shouted out with trembling tongue.'Gold! Gold!' Then he fainted momentarily; I could have blown him over had I wished," said the wind, "but I puffed only at the glowing coals in the hearth, followed him out of his door and into the room where his daughters were freezing. His

coat was layered with ashes; they covered his beard and tangled hair. He pulled himself up to his full height and lifted his precious treasure in the fragile beaker. 'Discovered! Victory! Gold!' he roared and raised the beaker higher as it gleamed in the sunlight. But his hand faltered; the alchemist's beaker fell to the floor and splintered into a thousand pieces. Thus burst the last shreds of his hope. Oo-oh! Move on! And I departed from the alchemist's estate.

"Later that year, when the days were short, when the fog had begun to coat the red-berry bushes and bare branches with moist drops, I returned in good spirits. I rose up into the sky to clear it of clouds, and I snapped off some rotten tree branches. It isn't very difficult work, but it has to be done. There had also been some clearing-out at Borreby estate — but of a quite different nature. Valdemar Daae's enemy, Ove Ramel from Basnaes, was there with the mortgage on the whole estate. I drummed on the splintered windowpanes, beat against the rotted doors, and whistled through the holes and cracks in the walls. Oo-oh! Master Ove would never want to live here. Ide and Anna Dorthea wept bitterly; Johanne stood erect and pale, biting her thumb so it bled — as if that would be of any help at all! Ove Ramel granted Master Daae the option of staying on the farm as long as he lived, but his offer was flatly rejected. I listened carefully, watched the now property-less man raise his head in proud defiance. Then I struck out against the estate and stormed through the row of old linden trees so the thickest branch snapped off—and this one wasn't rotten! It fell across the main entrance and lay like a dust-broom, in case anyone would care to sweep out the place. And, indeed, it was swept out that day, just as I had thought.

"It was a hard day. It was difficult to maintain one's composure, but they were a strong-willed and stubborn family.

"They owned nothing but the clothes on their backs — nothing, that is, except for a new alchemist's beaker, recently purchased and now filled with the residue scraped up from the floor — that treasure, once promising, but now lost forever. Valdemar Daae clasped it furtively to his breast, took his walking-stick in hand, and the once rich master departed from Borreby Manor, accompanied by his three daughters. I blew coldly upon his fiery cheeks. I stroked his gray beard and his long white hair. I sang what I knew. Oooh! Move on! Move on! Such was the end of their life in wealthy splendor.

"Ide and Anna Dorthea each walked by his side, while Johanne paused at the gate; but to what purpose? Fate would not reverse itself. She looked at the manor walls, made of the red stones from Marsk Stig's castle, and thought of his daughters:

'The oldest took the youngest by the hand,
and they travelled 'round the world!'

She thought about this ballad. Here were the three of them and their father also. The four walked along the road on which they had earlier only ridden in a coach. Like beggars they walked with their father to Smidstrup field — to the clay hut that rented for only ten marks a year. This was to be their new manor house, with its bare walls and empty cupboards. Crows and grackles flew over them and cried, as if to taunt them, 'Away from the nest! Away, away!' It was the same refrain the birds from Borreby forest had cried the day it had been cut down.

"This time Master Daae and his daughters understood well what it meant, but I whistled around their ears, for it was not good for them to hear that mournful refrain.

"So they moved into the clay hut in Smidstrup field, and I took off across swamp and field, through leafless hedges and naked forests, off to open waters and to other lands. Oooh! Move on! This is what I do year in and year out."

"But what happened to Valdemar Daae? What happened to his daughters?" continued the wind.

"The last one of them I saw and then for the last time was Anna Dorthea — the pale hyacinth. She was old and stooped, for it was over fifty years later. She had lived the longest; she knew the whole story.

"Over on Jutland, nestled on the heath nearby the town of Viborg, lay the rector's new and stately manor — with its red masonry and its gradated gable. Smoke billowed up the chimney; the gentle mother and her fair daughters sat in the bay-window overlooking their garden's drooping nightshade-trees and the brown expanses of the heath. What did they see out on the heath? They could see a stork's nest built upon a ramshackle house. Its roof was a tangle of moss and wild-onion-vines — that is, if one could call it a roof. Most of it consisted of the stork's nest, and this was the only part that was cared for, and it, of course, was done by the stork!

"It was quite a place to look at but not to touch! I had to move carefully," said the wind. "It was solely for the sake of the stork that the house was allowed to stand. Otherwise it would have been torn down as an unsightly blemish on the heath. But the rector's family would simply not have the stork chased away, so the hovel was permitted to remain and the wretched woman who lived in it was allowed to stay. She could thank the Egyptian bird for this — or could it have been repayment for the time when she interceded for his wild black brother and his nest in Borreby forest? In those days she, the wretched soul, had been a young

girl, a delicate pale hyacinth in that noble paradise. She, Anna Dorthea, remembered it all.

" 'Ooh! Oooh!' Human beings can indeed sigh, just as the wind can sigh in reeds and rushes. 'Ooh! No church bells tolled over your grave, Valdemar Daae! The village schoolboys did not sing when Borreby's former master was laid to rest. Ooh! Everyone comes to the end of his misery. Sister Ide became a peasant's wife; that was the hardest burden for her father to bear. His daughter's husband was a lowly thrall, a man indentured to another man who could chastise him at will. But by now he must be dead, and you also, Ide? Oh yes! Oh yes! It isn't over yet for me though. Me, an old wretch, a poor wretch! Set me free, Dear Lord!'

"This was Anna Dorthea's prayer in that pitiful hut, in the hovel that remained standing only because of the stork.

"I, myself, disposed of the strongest of the sisters," said the wind. "Her clothes were cut as manly as was her disposition when, dressed as a boy, she was hired on to the crew of a ship. She spoke very little, had a sullen temperament, but was a diligent worker. Yet, she could not climb up into the ship's rigging, so I blew her overboard before anyone discovered she was a woman. I think I did the right thing. I believe that I saved her much misery," said the wind.

"It was an Easter morning, much like the one on which Valdemar Daae believed he had discovered gold, when I heard a psalm coming from within the flimsy walls below the stork's nest. It was Anna Dorthea's last song.

"There was no windowpane, only a hole in the wall; the sunlight radiated into the room like a beam of gold. That barren room was suffused with a brilliant glow! She closed her dying eyes and her heart finally broke! Yet, it would have happened that morning even if the sun hadn't shone upon her.

"The stork had provided her with a roof over her head until she died. I sang at her grave," said the wind. "I had also sung at her father's grave; I know where both are now — something no one else knows.

"New Times! Modern Times! The old roadway has become part of a field; the old graves have been covered by the new highway. Soon the trains will come and shower smoke and cinders over the graves of forgotten names. Oo-oh! Move on!

"This is the tale of Valdemar Daae and his daughters. I defy anyone to tell it better if they can!" concluded the wind, and turned away. It was gone.

(1859)

Translated by Rudolf J. Jensen

AUNTIE TOOTHACHE

Do you wonder where this story came from? Do you want to know?

It came from a barrel of scrap paper. Many a fine and rare book has turned up at a grocery store or shop, not for reading, but for a sensible, practical use. They need paper to pack starch and coffee beans, paper to wrap up pickled herring, butter and cheese with. Even handwritten things can be used.

Often things end up in the paperbin that really should not.

I know a grocery clerk, the son of a shopkeeper. In his career he has risen from the basement to a shop on the ground-floor. He is a well-read man; he has read wrapping paper, both printed and in pen. He has a fascinating collection which includes several important documents from the waste-baskets of various overworked, preoccupied officials; some confidential letters from one lady to another, secret reports of scandal that were not meant for other eyes. He is a one-man society for the preservation of a major portion of literature. His collection is quite broad, for he searches in the shops of both his parents and his employer. In fact, he has rescued many a book and fragment one could profitably read twice.

He has shown me his library of printed and handwritten things from the paperbin, most of which he acquired at the grocer's. As I looked my attention was caught instantly by the very clear and attractive handwriting on a few pages torn from a rather large journal.

"The student wrote that," he said, "the student who lived just across the street and who died just last month. People say he suffered terribly from toothache. This is very enjoyable reading! Here are a few pages left, written in longhand, you see. There was a whole book and then some. My parents got it from the student's landlady for a half pound of soft soap. This is all I managed to save."

I borrowed it and read it and now I pass it on. The title was:

AUNTIE TOOTHACHE

I

Auntie gave me sweets when I was little. My teeth held up just fine, I did not get cavities. Now I am older and a student. She still pampers me with candy and says that I am a poet.

As a matter of fact, there is something of a poet in me, but not enough. When I walk through the streets of the city I often feel I am in a huge library. The buildings appear to me as bookcases, and each story is a shelf of books. Here I see a tale about a family life, and there is a fine old comedy. Elsewhere I see learned works of all kinds, trashy novels and good reading too. I let my imagination and philosophical bent run wild at the sight of all those books.

There is something of a poet in me, but not enough. Many people certainly have as much of it in them as I do, and yet one does not hear about it or read it on their faces. They and I have a gift from God, a blessing that is sufficient for one person but all too small to be divided up with others. It comes like a sunbeam, filling the soul and mind. It comes like the fragrance of flowers, a melody one knows and yet cannot place.

The other evening sitting in my room I wanted something to read. But I had no book, not a single leaf. At that moment a leaf, fresh and green, fell from the linden tree. It wafted with the breeze through my window.

I studied the many branching veins. A tiny worm made its way across the veins as if it wanted to carry out a complete investigation of the leaf. This reminded me of human knowledge, for we too crawl on the leaf and really know nothing but it. But then we proceed to give lectures about the whole big tree: the roots, trunk and crown. We talk about the great tree of life: God, the world and immortality. But of all this we actually know only a little leaf!

As I sat there Auntie Mille dropped by to pay me a visit. I showed her the leaf with the worm and told her my thoughts. Her eyes brightened as I spoke.

"You are a poet!" she said, "perhaps the greatest we have! If I am alive when the country acclaims you, I will go a happy woman to my grave. Ever since the funeral of Brewer Rasmussen you have never ceased to amaze me with your marvelous imagination."

Auntie Mille said this and gave me a kiss. You ask who was Auntie Mille and Brewer Rasmussen?

II

We children called Mother's aunt Auntie as well, we had no other name for her. She gave us jam and sugar, even though these things were hard on

our teeth. She always said she could not refuse the wishes of darling children. It was cruel to deny them the little bit of sweets they love so much.

And for this reason we loved Auntie too.

She was an old maid as far back as I can remember. She was always old, her age stood still and never changed. Years before she had often complained of toothache, and that was why her witty friend, Rasmussen the brewer, called her Auntie Toothache.

In his last years Rasmussen did not work at the brewery; he lived off interest he had coming from his money. He was older than Auntie and often came to visit her. He had no teeth left whatsoever, just a few black stumps. He told us children that as a boy he had eaten too much sugar and that was how he came to look this way.

I am sure Auntie had never eaten sugar when she was a child. She had the most beautiful white teeth. Brewer Rasmussen said she used them only when necessary and took them out at night! Now we children knew that was not a kind thing to say, but Auntie said he meant nothing by it.

One day at lunchtime she told about a bad dream she had the night before: she dreamt that one of her teeth had fallen out. "That means," she said, "that I am about to lose a true friend!"

The brewer laughed and said "If that was a false tooth, then the dream must mean you will lose a false friend!"

"Sir, you are a coarse old man!" Auntie said angrily, such as I had never seen her before or since. Later she said that her old friend was simply teasing. He was, she said, the most noble person on earth and that when he died he would become one of God's little angels in Heaven.

I thought a great deal about this transformation and wondered whether I would be able to recognize him in his new shape.

The brewer proposed to Auntie when she was young and he was young too. But she took too much time thinking about it, she thought and thought far too long. She remained forever an old maid but always his true friend.

And then Brewer Rasmussen died. His coffin was driven to the cemetery in the most elegant hearse, and it was followed by a throng of people with many a medal and uniform.

Auntie stood, dressed in black, at the window to watch the procession with all of us children. All except for our little brother whom the stork had brought the week before.

Now the hearse and procession had passed, the street was empty and Auntie wished to go. But I did not want to, I was waiting for the angel, for Brewer Rasmussen who had now, I knew for certain, become a little winged child of God. He must appear before us.

"Auntie," I said, "don't you think he will come now? When the stork brings us another little brother, it will really be the angel Rasmussen."

Auntie was completely overwhelmed by the power of my imagination and said, "This child will become a great poet!" She repeated this prediction throughout my school years and even after confirmation and then when I went to the university.

She was and is my most sympathetic friend, both when I have the aches of artistry and in my teeth. You see, I have attacks of both kinds.

"Just write all your thoughts down," she said, "and keep them in a drawer. Jean Paul did that. He became a great writer, but one I do not care much for. He is not exciting! You must excite people! You will excite people!"

That night I lay in longing agony with a craving desire to be the great poet Auntie saw and felt I was to become. I was gripped by the aches of the artist! But there is a worse ache: toothache. It crushed and smashed me; I writhed in pain like a worm, doctoring myself as best I could with herbs and oils.

"I know what that's like!" said Auntie. There was a sorrowful smile on her lips. Her teeth shined so brightly.

But now I must begin a new chapter in the story of me and Auntie.

III

I had moved into a new room and had lived there for a month. I talked about it with Auntie.

"I live with a quiet family. They don't pay attention to me, even though I ring the bell three times. The fact of the matter is that the building is one big riot of noise and commotion from wind, weather and people. I live right above the main gate. Every wagon coming or going shakes the pictures on the walls. When the gate smacks shut the building shudders as if there were an earthquake. If I am in bed at the time, the shocks run through all my limbs (but people say that strengthens the nerves). If the wind is up — and there is always wind in this country — the long window hooks outside fly back and forth against the wall. At every gust of wind the bell rings in the neighbor's courtyard."

"My fellow lodgers come home one by one, late in the evening, far into the night, in fact. Latest of all of them is the roomer directly above me. This man gives trombone lessons all day and does not sleep at night before he has taken a little midnight promenade around his room in heavy, iron-soled boots."

"My room does not have double windows, but there is a broken pane which my landlady has papered over. But still the wind works its way through the crack, humming like a fly. That is music to sleep by. If I finally fall asleep, I am soon awakened by the crowing of a rooster. The rooster and hen down in the chicken coop at the rear of the house want to let the world know that morning will soon be here. The small horses make a racket too. They are tethered in the shelter under the stairway, where they kick the door and walls when they become restless."

"The day finally breaks. The porter tramps down the stairway from the attic where he and his family live. His clogs clatter, the gate smacks, the building shudders. When this round of noise has passed, the roomer upstairs begins his exercises. In each hand he lifts a heavy iron ball, but he can't manage it, and they fall to the floor again and again. At the same time the children in the building are starting off to school in a shouting tumult. I go to the window and open it to get some fresh air. It is truly invigorating when I do get air and not the odor of the lady across the courtyard who makes a smelly living tanning leather for gloves. All the same, this is a nice house and I live with a quiet family."

That was the report I gave Auntie about my room. It was more lively when I told it, the spoken words have a brisker ring than the written ones.

"You are an artist!" cried Auntie. "Just write that up, you'll be just as good as Dickens! The truth is that you interest me much more! Your words are the brush strokes of a painting! You describe your house and it leaps into view, it makes me shiver to think of it! Keep on writing! Put living things into it: yes, people, best of all, unhappy people!"

I really did write down the story of the house as it stands there with its noise and quirks, but I was the only person in it. There was no plot. That came later!

IV

It was winter and rather late in the evening. The bad weather had unleashed a snowstorm so fierce one could barely get around.

Auntie had been in the theater and I had come to take her home. Just walking by oneself was hard enough, not to mention escorting others. All the carriages had been hired and Auntie lived far out. But luckily my lodgings were very near the theater. If that had not been so we would have been forced to find shelter in a sentry box until who knows when.

Wrapped in the whirling flakes we plowed on through the deep snow. I lifted Auntie, I buoyed her up and pushed her onward. We fell only twice, but that was in the deep, soft snow.

We shook ourselves off when we reached my gate and then again on the stairway, and there was still enough snow on us when we entered the front hall to cover the floor. Off came our coats and as much clothing

as we could spare. My landlady was concerned for Auntie and loaned her dry stockings and a robe. Auntie could not possibly try to get home tonight, no, she should sleep in the sitting room. The kind lady offered to make a bed for Auntie on the sofa that stood in front of the locked door leading to my room. And so it was settled.

The fire burned in my stove, the teapot was set on the table, and cozy it was in the little room. Not as cozy, to be sure, as Auntie's home is in the winter. Then she hangs thick curtains in front of the door and the windows. Under one's feet is a double carpet and beneath that are three layers of paper. It's all like sitting in the warmth of a well-sealed bottle. But even my place was cozy as the wind howled outside.

Auntie talked and told many a story; many an old memory of her youth and of the brewer's visits came back to her.

She could remember when my first tooth came in and the family's joy at the sight, The first tooth! The tooth of innocence, shining like a tiny white drop of milk, a milktooth. One was followed by many more, and soon a whole regiment stood there in formation, above and below. They were the loveliest baby teeth, and yet this was only the advance party, not the regular troops who would be on duty throughout life. They arrived later, along with the wisdom teeth, the flankers that were mustered into service with painful difficulty. But they desert, every one of them! They leave before the tour of duty is over. The very last tooth deserts, and you can know for sure that is no day for celebration. That is a day of sorrow, for then old age has come, even if the spirit is young.

Such topics are not really fun, but nevertheless our talk turned this way, back to the years of childhood. We could hardly stop, and it was midnight before Auntie went to her sleeping place in the room next to mine.

"Good night, sweet boy," she exclaimed, "now I will sleep as snugly as in my very own bed."

Then she slept peacefully. But there was no peace in the house or outside. The storm shook the windows, swung the long window hooks against the wall, and rang the bell in the neighbor's yard. The roomer upstairs had come home as well. For a while he paced to and fro, then he noisily took off his boots and went to bed. But he snores so loudly that I heard him through the ceiling.

I could not sleep, I got no rest. Nor did the wind rest, on the contrary, it carried on rudely. The windy blast howled and sang in its high-pitched voice. Then my teeth began to carry on, they too howled and sang at a high pitch. A terrible toothache was in the making.

A draft crept in at the window. The moonlight fell onto the floor, casting first bright and then dark patterns as the storm clouds crossed

the sky. Shadows and light shifted restlessly. But then the shadow on the floor took on a definite shape. As I watched the moving shadow I shuddered at the touch of icy cold wind.

A shape sat on the floor, a tall and thin form such as a child's attempt to draw a person: a single thin line forms the body, other lines create the arms and legs, and on top sits an angular head. Soon the shape became clearer to the eye. I saw a kind of robe, very thin, very fragile. The shape was clearly that of a woman.

I heard a droning sound. Was it her or the wind buzzing like a fly through the cracked window?

No, it was the shape herself, Lady Toothache, her Diabolic Grace Satania infernalis! God protect and save us from her visit!

"It is good to be here," she hummed, "this is a fine place to stay! Built over marshland, swampland! Here mosquitoes once wielded their poisonous wands, but now I have the wand. I must whet it on human teeth. This fellow here in the bed has such shiny white ones. Yes, they have stood up nicely through it all, sweet and sour, hot and cold, nut shells and plum pits. But now I am going to rake and shake them, I am going to spice the roots with poison!"

She spoke horrible words, she was a horrible visitor.

"Well, so you think you are a poet. Then I'll compose some verse for you in the hexameter and pentameter of pain! I'll put metal in your body, I'll find where your nerves are!"

A redhot poker pierced my jaw. I writhed and turned in agony.

"What a magnificent set of teeth, teeth like the inviting ivories of an organ. Yes, a concert for mouth harp, wonderful! With snare drums and trumpets! Here is a piccolo, and this wisdom tooth will be a trombone. Great music for a great poet!"

The terrible lady struck up her terrible music, but all I could see of her was her hand. That gray, icy hand with the long, bony fingers. Each of them was an instrument of torture. The thumb and index finger sprouted sharp tongs and a drill, the ring finger was armed with a pick, and the last two fingers were an augur and needle filled with the venom of mosquitoes.

"I'll teach you verse!" she cried. "A great poet will have a great toothache, a paltry poet will have a paltry toothache!"

"Oh, let me be a paltry poet," I begged her, "let me not be one at all. I am not a poet, I just have poetic fits, like fits of a toothache! Go away, go away!"

"Do you admit then that I am greater than art, philosophy, mathematics and everything else? Greater than all these human perceptions that have been transformed into paintings and marble sculpture? I am

older than all of them, for I was born right by the Garden of Eden, outside the gate where the cold wind blew and the slimy toadstools grew. I was the one who made Eve, and Adam too, dress themselves warmly against the bitter cold. You can be sure there was strength in the first toothache!"

"I believe everything!" I cried. "Go away, go away!"

"Will you give up your wish to be a poet? Will you never set a single verse to paper or slate or anything else? If so, I will release you, but I will come again if you do!"

"I swear to it! Just leave my sight and body!"

"Oh, you will see me again, but in a shape with flesh on it, one you love more than me. You will see me in the shape of Auntie Mille, and I will say to you 'Write, my dear boy! You are a great poet, perhaps the greatest we have!' But if you believe Auntie Mille and begin to write poetry, then I will put your verse to music and play it on your mouth harp! Remember me, dear boy, when you see Auntie Mille!"

With this she vanished. As a parting gesture I felt a burning awl pierce my jaw. The pain soon released me from its grip, and I slid as if into a gentle pool where I was buoyed up by the broad, green leaves of white water lilies. They sank under my weight, they withered and fell apart, and I sank with them into the depths of peace and eternal rest.

"Die, melt like the snows," the water sang, "rise to the clouds and fleeting mists!"

From beneath the water I saw shining brightly above me famous names, the slogans on proud victory banners, proclamations of immortality — written on the wings of a short-lived fly.

My sleep was deep and dreamless. I did not hear the howling wind, the clatter of the gate, the neighbor's bell or the loud exercises of the roomer on the next floor. This was blessed sleep!

Then a gust of wind sprang open the door to Auntie's room.

She quickly rose, put on her shoes and clothing, and looked in to see how I fared.

I was sleeping, she said, like one of God's angels. She did not dare awaken me.

I awoke on my own. On opening my eyes I had completely forgotten that Auntie was in the house. But soon it all came back, I remembered my vision during the toothache. Dream and reality flowed one into the other.

"I suppose you didn't write anything last night after I went to my room?" Auntie asked. "I so wish you had! You are my poet and you always will be." There was something sly in her smile. I did not know

if before me was my nice Auntie Mille, who loved me, or the horrible Auntie to whom I had given a solemn promise the night before.

"Did you write something, my dear boy?"

"No, no," I shouted, "you are really Auntie Mille!"

"Who else should I be," she said, and she really was Auntie Mille.

She kissed me, went down to hire a cab, and drove home.

I wrote down what you are reading here. It is not in verse and will never be printed . . .

* Yes, this is the end of the manuscript. My friend the grocery clerk could not locate the other pages, for they had gone out into the world as wrapping paper for pickled herring, butter and soft soap. Their purpose had been accomplished.

The brewer is dead, Auntie is dead. And the student, whose brilliant thoughts landed in the paper barrel, he too is dead. This is the end of the story about Auntie Toothache.

(1872)

Translated by Donald K. Watkins

NOTES

The Nightingale. Death, who has usurped the emperor's crown, sword, and banner, "nodded strangely, like a Chinaman." Possibly a reference to the porcelain mandarins, imported to Denmark from China; these small figures were fashioned in such a way that the head, attached to the body with a spring, would constantly nod. In Danish, a person who always agrees with everybody, a "yes-person," is referred to as a mandarin. It can be suggested that, when the emperor earlier relied on the advice of his court, he was merely such a mechanical device and not a real emperor. In the tale "The Shepherdess and the Chimneysweep," one of the major figures is a porcelain mandarin.

The Shadow. It annoys the scholar that his shadow has left, for he knows that another story exists about a man who lost his shadow. A reference to Adalbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl* (1814). In folklore, generally, such a person is one of the living dead.

The story poses a problem to a translator, for the reversal of the roles of the scholar and the shadow is rendered by Andersen through the use of the Danish second-person pronoun in the singular. In Danish a distinction between formal and informal address exists: "De" (ye) and "du" (thou). The scholar says "du" to the shadow, who addresses the scholar with "De," but when they meet again after their long separation, the shadow asks the scholar to use "De." As they travel together to the resort, the scholar suggests that they use "du," and the shadow agrees to use the informal form when talking to the scholar, but informs his travel companion that he himself cannot bear to be addressed informally; thus, he uses "du," and the scholar must use "De." It should also be noted that, when the princess and the shadow have become engaged, they use the informal way of addressing each other, but at the very end; the princess addresses the shadow formally. The term "sir" has been used in this translation to convey Andersen's subtle indications of shifts in dominance.

The Story of a Mother. The story is related to Andersen's early poem "The Dying Child" (1830) and the tale "The Dead Child" (1859); although these two texts stress the child's happiness over going to be with God in paradise, the present text refers — through Death — to the garden of paradise as "the unknown land."

The Wind's Tale of Valdemar Daae and His Daughters. Marsk Stig is a historical figure; he was High Constable of Denmark during the reign of King Erik V. Several medieval ballads claim that in 1287 Marsk Stig killed the king for having seduced Stig's wife and then, with his fellow conspirators, lived out his life as a fugitive on a small, fortified island. The ballad about his daughters, from which a few lines are quoted in the tale, has, however, no historical foundation.

The Great Belt separates the island of Funen (Andersen's native island) and Zealand (on which Copenhagen is situated).

Auntie Toothache. Auntie Mille refers to Jean Paul (a pseudonym for Johann Paul Richter [1763—1825]), who was a popular German novelist, and to Charles Dickens (1812-70), who was a personal friend of Andersen. Elias Bredsdorff's *Hans Christian Andersen* (New York, 1975) discusses the relationship between Dickens and Andersen. See pp. 183-218.

In Andersen's notes to his tales he states that this tale was the last he composed, but as Helge Topsøe Jensen has pointed out *(Buket til Andersen: Bemerkninger til femogtyve Eventyr* [Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1971], pp. 272-93) that is not true. It may, however, be significant that the author wanted his reader to perceive of this tale as his last and he may have attempted to reinforce that impression by making "Auntie Toothache" the final story in the last volume of tales he ever published.