

HANS MY HEDGEHOG

Once upon a time there was a couple with enough money and enough land to survive. However they were missing one thing - a child. Even when they went into the city, the other villagers would mock him for not having any children.

"I'll have a child, even if it's a hedgehog!" He said, assuming there would be no ironic repercussions.

And so, his wife had a baby. It had the bottom half of a boy, but the top half of a hedgehog. She blamed her husband and his stupid big mouth. The man said they still needed to baptize him and the only name the wife could come up with was Hans-My-Hedgehog.

When he was baptized, the pastor said, "Because of his quills he cannot be given an ordinary bed." So they put a little straw behind the stove and laid him in it. He could not drink from his mother, for he would have stuck her with his quills. For eight years he slept behind the stove.

His father grew tired of him, and thought, "if only he would die."

One day the fair was in town and the man asked his wife what he should bring her back. She asked for several things and then the man asked his hedgehog son what he would like from the fair. All Hans wanted was some bagpipes.

The man returned with all the items his wife requested and Hans' bagpipes. Hans told his father that if he went down to the blacksmith to get his riding gear for his rooster steed, he would ride away and never return. Of course the man loved this idea and immediately went to the blacksmith. Hans mounted his rooster steed and rode off, taking a few pigs and donkeys with him to tend.

In the forest the rooster flew into a tall tree with him. There he sat and watched over the donkeys and the pigs. He sat there for years, until finally the herd had grown large. For all those years, he played his bagpipes and made beautiful music.

One day a king came by. He was lost and heard the music. He was amazed to hear it, and sent a servant to look around and see where it was coming from. He looked here and there but only saw a little animal sitting high in a tree. A hedgehog on a rooster playing bagpipes.

The king sent his servant to ask Hans if he knew the way back to his kingdom. Hans climbed down from the tree and told him that he would show him the way if the king would promise in writing to give him the first thing that greeted him at the royal court upon his arrival home.

The king thought Hans was an animal and could not understand writing, and I can put down what I want to. So the king wrote something down with his royal pen. Hans showed him the way back to his kingdom. Upon arriving home, he was greeted by his daughter. She ran to meet and hug him. He worried about his promise to Hans, but told her all about the little hedgehog including the promise. He told her that he could not read so she had nothing to worry about.

Hans kept tending his animals and playing his bagpipes. Soon another king got lost in the woods. It was a large forest. This king also heard the music and sent his servant to find the man making it. Again, the servant asked Hans to escort them out of the woods. And again, Hans made the king promise he would give him the thing that he first met at home before the royal castle. The king said yes and signed a promise to Han.

When the king arrived at his court there was great joy. Now he had an only daughter who was very beautiful. She ran out to him, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, and was ever so happy that her old father had returned. She asked him where he had been during his long absence, and he told her how he had lost his way and almost not made it home again, but that as he was making his way through a great forest he had come upon a half hedgehog, half human astride a rooster sitting in a tall tree and making beautiful music who had shown him the way, but whom he had promised whatever first met him at the royal court, and it was she herself, and he was terribly sorry. This princess promised that she would go with him when he came, for the love of her old father.

Hans tended his pigs, and the pigs had more pigs, until there were so many that the whole forest was full. He let his father know that they should empty out all the stalls in the village, because he was coming with such a large herd of pigs that everyone who wanted to would be able to take part in the slaughter. It saddened the father to hear this, for he thought that Hans had long since died. Hans mounted his rooster steed and took the pigs into town to be slaughtered.

"Father, have my rooster's riding gear repaired and I will ride away and not come back again as long as I live." The father got the gear repaired and was happy to be rid of Hans again.

Hans rode into the first kingdom. However, the king had ordered anyone who was carrying bagpipes and riding on a rooster, should be shot, struck down, and stabbed, to prevent him from entering the castle. When Hans came towards the castle, they attacked him with bayonets. Hans spurred his rooster, making it fly over the gate and into the king's window. Landing there, he shouted to him, to give him what he had promised, or it would cost him and his daughter their lives.

Then the king told the princess to go out to him, in order to save his life and her own as well. She put on a white dress, and her father gave her a carriage with six horses, magnificent servants, money, and

property. She climbed aboard and Hans took his place beside her with his rooster and bagpipes. They said farewell and drove off.

The king thought that he would never see them again. Once they had traveled a short distance from the city, Hans jumped on top of her and stuck her all over with his quills until she was bloody.

"This is the reward for your deceit. Go away. I do not want you," he said. With that he sent her back home, and she was cursed as long as she lived.

Hans, atop his rooster steed and carrying his bagpipes, rode on to the second kingdom where This king had ordered that if anyone looking like Hans should arrive, he should be saluted and brought to the royal castle with honors and with a military escort. When the princess saw him she was horrified, because he looked so strange. She knew that nothing could be done about it, since she had promised her father to go with him. She welcomed Hans and they were married. Then he was taken to the royal table where they ate and drank together.

That evening when it was time to go to bed, she was afraid of his quills, but he told her to have no fear, for he would not hurt her. He told the old king to have four men keep watch by their bedroom door. They should make a large fire. He said that he would take off his hedgehog skin after going into the bedroom, and before getting into bed. The men should immediately pick it up and throw it into the fire, and then stay there until it was completely consumed by the fire.

When the clock struck eleven, he went into the bedroom, took off the hedgehog skin, and laid it down by the bed. The men rushed in, grabbed it, and threw it into the fire, and as soon as the fire consumed it he lay there in bed entirely human. The king sent for his physician, who washed him with good salves and balms until he was a clean, handsome, young gentleman. When the princess saw what had happened, she was overjoyed, and they got up and ate and drank. They celebrated their wedding again and Hans inherited the old king's kingdom.

Some years later he traveled with his wife to his father, and said that he was his son. The man said that he did not have a normal son. He had had one with quills, but he had gone off into the world. Hans told him that was him. The father was happy and Hans took him back to his kingdom.