

## Hacon Grizzlebeard

by Sir George Webbe Dasent  
from *Popular Tales from the Norse*

Once on a time there was a princess who was so proud and pert that no suitor was good enough for her. She made game of them all, and sent them about their business, one after the other; but though she was so proud, still new suitors kept on coming to the palace, for she was a beauty, the wicked hussey!

So one day there came a prince to woo her, and his name was Hacon Grizzlebeard; but the first night he was there, the Princess bade the king's fool cut off the ears of one of the prince's horses, and slit the jaws of the other up to the ears. When the prince went out to drive next day, the Princess stood in the porch and looked at him.

'Well!' she cried, 'I never saw the like of this in all my life; the keen north wind that blows here has taken the ears off one of your horses, and the other has stood by and gaped at what was going on till his jaws have split right up to his ears.'

And with that she burst out into a roar of laughter, ran in, slammed to the door, and let him drive off.

So he drove home; but as he went, he thought to himself that he would pay her off one day. After a bit, he put on a great beard of moss, threw a great fur cloak over his clothes, and dressed himself up just like any beggar. He went to a goldsmith and bought a golden spinning wheel, and sat down with it under the Princess' window, and began to file away at his spinning wheel, and to turn it this way and that, for it wasn't quite in order, and, besides, it wanted a stand.

So when the Princess rose up in the morning, she came to the window and threw it up, and called out to the beggar if he would sell his golden spinning-wheel?

'No; it isn't for sale', said Hacon Grizzlebeard; 'but if I may have leave to sleep outside your bedroom door to-night, I'll give it you.'

Well, the Princess thought it a good bargain; there could be no danger in letting him sleep outside her door.

So she got the wheel, and at night Hacon Grizzlebeard lay down outside her bedroom. But as the night wore on he began to freeze.

'Hutetutetutetu! it is *so* cold; do let me in', he cried.

'You've lost your wits outright, I think', said the Princess.

'Oh, hutetutetutetu! it is so bitter cold, pray do let me in', said Hacon Grizzlebeard again.

'Hush! hush! hold your tongue!' said the Princess; 'if my father were to know that there was a man in the house, I should be in a fine scrape.'

'Oh, hutetutetutetu! I'm almost frozen to death; only let me come inside and lie on the floor', said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

Yes! there was no help for it. She had to let him in, and when he was, he lay on the ground and slept like a top.

Some time after, Hacon came again with the stand to the spinning-wheel, and sat down under the Princess' window, and began to file at it, for it was not quite fit for use. When she heard him filing, she threw up the window and began to talk to him, and to ask what he had there.

'Oh! only the stand to that spinning-wheel which your royal highness bought; for I thought, as you had the wheel, you might like to have the stand too.'

'What do you want for it?' asked the Princess; but it was not for sale any more than the wheel, but she might have them if she would give him leave to sleep on the floor of her bedroom next night.

Well! she gave him leave, only he was to be sure to lie still, and not to shiver and call out 'hutetu', or any such stuff. Hacon Grizzlebeard promised fair enough, but as the night wore on he began to shiver and shake, and to ask whether he might not come nearer, and lie on the floor alongside the Princess' bed.

There was no help for it; she had to give him leave, lest the king should hear the noise he made. So Hacon Grizzlebeard lay alongside the Princess' bed, and slept like a top.

It was a long while before Hacon Grizzlebeard came again; but when he came he had with him a golden wool-winder, and he sat down and began to file away at it under the Princess' window. Then came the old story over again. When the Princess heard what was going on, she came to the window, and asked him how he did, and whether he would sell the golden wool-winder?

'It is not to be had for money; but if you'll give me leave to sleep to-night in your bedroom, with my head on your bedstead, you shall have it for nothing', said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

Well! she would give him leave, if he only gave his word to be quiet, and make no noise. So he said he would do his best to be still; but as the night wore on, he began to shiver and shake so, that his teeth chattered again.

'Hutetutetutetu! it is so bitter cold! Oh, do let me get into bed and warm myself a little', said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

'Get into bed!' said the Princess; 'why, you must have lost your wits.'

'Hutetutetutetu!' said Hacon; 'do let me get into bed. Hutetutetutetu.'

'Hush! hush! be still for God's sake', said the Princess; 'if father knows there is a man in here, I shall be in a sad plight. I'm sure he'll kill me on the spot.'

'Hutetutetutetu! let me get into bed', said Hacon Grizzlebeard, who kept on shivering so that the whole room shook.

Well! there was no help for it; she had to let him get into bed, where he slept both sound and soft; but a little while after the Princess had a child, at which the king grew so wild with rage, that he was near making an end of both mother and babe. Just after this happened, came Hacon Grizzlebeard tramping that way once more, as if by chance, and took his seat down in the kitchen, like any other beggar.

So when the Princess came out and saw him, she cried, 'Ah, God have mercy on me, for the ill-luck you have brought on me; father is ready to burst with rage; do let me follow you to your home.'

'Oh! I'll be bound you're too well bred to follow me', said Hacon, 'for I have nothing but a log but to live in; and how I shall ever get food for you I can't tell, for it's just as much as I can do to get food for myself.'

'Oh yes! it's all the same to me how you get it, or whether you get it at all', she said; 'only let me be with you, for if I stay here any longer, my father will be sure to take my life.'

So she got leave to be with the beggar, as she called him, and they walked a long, long way, though she was but a poor hand at tramping. When she passed out of her father's land into another, she asked whose it was?

'Oh! this is Hacon Grizzlebeard's, if you must know', said he.

'Indeed!' said the Princess; 'I might have married him if I chose, and then I should not have had to walk about like a beggar's wife.'

So, whenever they came to grand castles, and woods, and parks, and she asked whose they were? the beggar's answer was still the same: 'Oh: they are Hacon Grizzlebeard's.' And the Princess was in a sad way that she had not chosen the man who had such broad lands. Last of all, they came to a palace, where he said he was known, and where he thought he could get her work, so that they might have something to live on; so he built up a cabin by the woodside for them to dwell in; and every day he went to the king's palace, as he said, to hew wood and draw water for the cook, and when he came back he brought a few scraps of meat; but they did not go very far. One day, when he came home from the palace, he said: 'To-morrow I will stay at home and look after the baby, but you must get ready to go to the palace, do you hear! for the Prince said you were to come and try your hand at baking.'

'I bake!' said the Princess; 'I can't bake, for I never did such a thing in my life.'

'Well, you must go', said Hacon, 'since the Prince has said it. If you can't bake, you can learn; you have only got to look how the rest bake; and mind, when you leave, you must steal me some bread.'

'I can't steal', said the Princess.

'You can learn that too', said Hacon; 'you know we live on short commons. But take care that the Prince doesn't see you, for he has eyes at the back of his head.'

So when she was well on her way, Hacon ran by a short cut and reached the palace long before her, and threw off his rags and beard, and put on his princely robes.

The Princess took her turn in the bakehouse, and did as Hacon bade her, for she stole bread till her pockets were crammed full. So when she was about to go home at even, the Prince said:

'We don't know much of this old wife of Hacon Grizzlebeard's, I think we'd best see if she has taken anything away with her.'

So he thrust his hand into all her pockets, and felt her all over, and when he found the bread, he was in a great rage, and led them all a sad life. She began to weep and bewail, and said:

'The beggar made me do it, and I couldn't help it.' 'Well', said the Prince at last, 'it ought to have gone hard with you; but all the same, for the sake of the beggar you shall be forgiven this once.'

When she was well on her way, he threw off his robes, put on his skin cloak, and his false beard, and reached the cabin before her. When she came home, he was busy nursing the baby.

'Well, you have made me do what it went against my heart to do. This is the first time I ever stole, and this shall be the last'; and with that she told him how it had gone with her, and what the Prince had said.

A few days after Hacon Grizzlebeard came home at even and said:

'To-morrow I must stay at home and mind the babe, for they are going to kill a pig at the palace, and you must help to make the sausages.'

'I make sausages!' said the Princess; 'I can't do any such thing. I have eaten sausages often enough; but as to making them, I never made one in my life.'

Well, there was no help for it; the Prince had said it, and go she must. As for not knowing how, she was only to do what the others did, and at the same time Hacon bade her steal some sausages for him.

'Nay, but I can't steal them', she said; 'you know how it went last time.'

'Well, you can learn to steal; who knows but you may have better luck next time', said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

When she was well on her way, Hacon ran by a short cut, reached the palace long before her, threw off his skin cloak and false beard, and stood in the kitchen with his royal robes before she came in. So the Princess stood by when the pig was killed, and made sausages with the rest, and did as Hacon bade her, and stuffed her pockets full of sausages. But when she was about to go home at even, the Prince said:

'This beggar's wife was long-fingered last time; we may as well just see if she hasn't carried anything off.'

So he began to thrust his hands into her pockets, and when he found the sausages he was in a great rage again, and made a great to do, threatening to send for the constable and put her into the cage.

'Oh, God bless your royal highness; do let me off! The beggar made me do it', she said, and wept bitterly.

'Well', said Hacon, 'you ought to smart for it; but for the beggar's sake you shall be forgiven.'

When she was gone, he changed his clothes again, ran by the short cut, and when she reached the cabin, there he was before her. Then she told him the whole story, and swore, through thick and thin, it should be the last time he got her to do such a thing.

Now, it fell out a little time after, when the man came back from the palace, he said:

'Our Prince is going to be married, but the bride is sick, so the tailor can't measure her for her wedding gown. And the Prince's will is, that you should go up to the palace and be measured instead of the bride; for he says you are just the same height and shape. But after you have been measured, mind you don't go away; you can stand about, you know, and when the tailor cuts out the gown, you can snap up the largest pieces, and bring them home for a waistcoat for me.'

'Nay, but I can't steal', she said; 'besides, you know how it went last time.'

'You can learn then', said Hacon, 'and you may have better luck, perhaps.'

She thought it bad, but still she went and did as she was told. She stood by while the tailor was cutting out the gown, and she swept down all the biggest scraps, and stuffed them into her pockets; and when she was going away, the Prince said:

'We may as well see if this old girl has not been long-fingered this time too.'

So he began to feel and search her pockets, and when he found the pieces he was in a rage, and began to stamp and scold at a great rate, while she wept and said:

'Ah, pray forgive me; the beggar bade me do it, and I couldn't help it.'

'Well, you ought to smart for it', said Hacon; 'but for the beggar's sake it shall be forgiven you.'

So it went now just as it had gone before, and when she got back to the cabin, the beggar was there before her.

'Oh, Heaven help me', she said; 'you will be the death of me at last, by making me nothing but what is wicked. The Prince was in such a towering rage that he threatened me both with the constable and cage.'

Sometime after, Hacon came home to the cabin at even and said:

'Now, the Prince's will is, that you should go up to the palace and stand for the bride, old lass! for the bride is still sick, and keeps her

bed; but he won't put off the wedding; and he says, you are so like her, that no one could tell one from the other; so to-morrow you must get ready to go to the palace.'

'I think you've lost your wits, both the Prince and you', said she. 'Do you think I look fit to stand in the bride's place? look at me! Can any beggar's trull look worse than I?'

'Well, the Prince said you were to go, and so go you must', said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

There was no help for it, go she must; and when she reached the palace, they dressed her out so finely that no princess ever looked so smart.

The bridal train went to church, where she stood for the bride, and when they came back, there was dancing and merriment in the palace. But just as she was in the midst of dancing with the Prince, she saw a gleam of light through the window, and lo! the cabin by the wood-side was all one bright flame.

'Oh! the beggar, and the babe, and the cabin', she screamed out, and was just going to swoon away.

'Here is the beggar, and there is the babe, and so let the cabin burn away', said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

Then she knew him again, and after that the mirth and merriment began in right earnest; but since that I have never heard tell anything more about them.