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Title: Hans Andersen Forty-Two Stories — The Pig Boy

Date of first publication: 1930

Place and date of edition used as base for this ebook: London: Faber and Faber, 1953

Author: Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875)

Translator: M. R. James (1862-1936)

Date first posted: xxxxx 2008

Date last updated: xxxxx 2008

Faded Page ebook#20081211xx

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Date last updated: 17 June 2014

Faded Page ebook#20081211

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The Pig Boy

by

Hans Christian Andersen

(from Hans Andersen Forty-Two Stories [1930], translated by M. R. James)

There was once a poor Prince who had quite a small kingdom: but it was big enough for him to marry on, and married he would be.

Now it was really rather bold of him to up and say to the Emperor's daughter: "Will you have me?" But he up and did it all the same, for his name was famous far and wide. There were a hundred princesses who would have said yes and thank you, too—but did she? Now we are to hear all about it.

In the Prince's garden there grew a rose tree. Oh, such a lovely rose tree! It only blossomed once in five years, and then had only a single flower; but that was a rose that smelt so sweet that anyone who only sniffed it forgot all his cares and troubles: and besides, he had a Nightingale which could sing as if all the beautiful tunes in the world were in its little windpipe. The Rose and the Nightingale the Princess should have, and accordingly both of them were put into large silver cases and sent to her.

The Emperor had them brought in before him, into the great hall where the Princess was playing at visitors with her ladies (they never did anything else) and when she saw the big cases with the presents, she clapped her hands with joy.

"Oh, if only it's a little pussy cat!" she said; but out came the beautiful rose.

"Why, how prettily it is made!" said all the ladies.

"It's more than pretty," said the Emperor, "it's nice." But the Princess felt it, and almost burst into tears. "Ugh, papa," she said, "it isn't made, it's real."

"Ugh!" said all the court people. "It's real!"

"Well, let's first see what is in the other case before we lose our tempers," said the Emperor: and out came the Nightingale. It sang so beautifully that for the moment nobody could say anything nasty about it.

"Superbe! Charmant!" said the court ladies (for they all spoke French, every one worse than the last).

"How that bird does remind me of our blessed Empress's musical box!" said an old nobleman. "Ah, dear me! The same tone, the same style, precisely!"

"Ah, yes!" said the Emperor, and wept like a little child.

"I don't suppose it can be real?" said the Princess.

"Yes, it is a real bird," said the people who had brought it. "Then you can let the bird fly," said the Princess, and wouldn't on any account allow the Prince to visit her. But he didn't let himself be put off: he stained his face brown and black, pulled his cap down over his ears, and knocked at the door.

"Good morning, Emperor," said he. "Could I get a situation here at the palace?"

"Well, there's a lot of people come asking for 'em," said the Emperor; "but let me see, I do want someone to look after

the pigs, we've got such a lot of them." So the Prince was appointed Pig Boy to His Majesty. He had a wretched little room given him down by the pigsty, where he was to live; but all day he sat and worked, and by the evening he had made a pretty little pot with bells hung all round it, and as soon as the pot boiled, they rang out beautifully and played the old tune:

*O my blessed Augustine!
Everything's gone.*

But the most ingenious part of it all was that when you held your finger in the steam of the pot you could smell at once what dish was being cooked in every fire-place in the town, and that, mark you, was quite a different thing from a rose.

Now the Princess came walking out with all her ladies, and when she heard the tune she stopped and looked quite delighted, for she too could play "O my blessed Augustine." It was the only tune she could play, and she did it with one finger.

"Why, that's the tune I know," she said; "this must be an educated Pig Boy. Look here! Go in and ask him the price of that instrument." So one of the ladies had to run in there (but she put pattens on first).

"What do you want for that pot?" said the lady.

"I want ten kisses from the Princess," said the Pig Boy.

"Preserve us!" said the lady.

"I can't take less," said the Pig Boy.

"Well, what does he say?" asked the Princess.

"I really can't repeat it," said the lady, "it's too dreadful."

"Well, you can whisper it." So she whispered it.

"He's very rude indeed," said the Princess, and walked off alone, but when she had gone a little way the bells rang out so deliciously:

*O my blessed Augustine!
Everything's gone.*

"Look here!" said the Princess. "Ask him if he'll take ten kisses from my ladies."

"No, thanks," said the Pig Boy; "ten kisses from the Princess, or I keep my pot."

"How very tiresome!" said the Princess. "Well, then, you must stand in front of me so that nobody can see." And the court ladies placed themselves in front of her and spread out their skirts, and the Pig Boy took the ten kisses and she took the pot.

Well, that was a treat! The pot had to boil all that evening and all next day. There wasn't a single fireplace in all the town but what they knew what was being cooked there, from the Lord Chamberlain's to the Shoemaker's. The court ladies danced about and clapped their hands.

"We know who's going to have sweet soup and pancakes. We know who is going to have porridge and hash! How interesting!"

"Interesting in the highest degree," said the chief lady in waiting.

"Yes, but keep a tight mouth, for I'm the Emperor's daughter."

"Preserve us!" they all said.

The Pig Boy, in other words the Prince (but they knew no better than that he was a real Pig Boy), didn't let the day pass without doing something, and this time he made a rattle; when he whirled it round it played all the waltzes, galops and polkas that had been made since the creation.

"But this is superb," said the Princess, when she passed that way. "Never have I heard a more beautiful composition. Look here! Go in and ask him the price of that instrument: but no more kissing."

"He wants a hundred kisses from the Princess," said the lady who had been in to inquire.

"I think he must be mad," said the Princess, and off she went, but when she had got a little way she stopped. "One must encourage art," she said. "I am the Emperor's daughter. Tell him he can have ten kisses, as he had yesterday, and the rest he can take from my ladies."

"Yes, but we don't like that," said the ladies.

"Rubbish!" said the Princess. "If I can kiss him, you can too. Please remember that I give you your board and wages." So the lady had to go to him again.

"One hundred kisses from the Princess," said he, "or each of us keeps his own."

"Stand in front of me," said she. So all the ladies got in front of her and he began kissing.

"Now, what can all that running about mean down there by the pigsty?" said the Emperor, who had come out on the balcony. He rubbed his eyes and put his spectacles on. "It's the ladies in waiting at their tricks. I must go down to 'em." With that he pulled his slippers up—they were shoes which he had trodden down at heel. Bless him! How he did hurry!

As soon as he got down into the yard he walked very quietly, and the ladies in waiting were so busy counting the kisses (to see fair play and that he shouldn't get too many kisses nor yet too few) that they didn't notice the Emperor. He stood up on tiptoe.

"What's the meaning of this!" he cried, when he saw them kissing; and he smacked them on the head with his slipper just as the Pig Boy was taking his eighty-sixth kiss. "Out you go!" said the Emperor, in a passion. And both the Princess and the Pig Boy were turned out of his Empire.

There she stood crying, while the Pig Boy scolded her, and the rain came pouring down.

"Alas and alack a day," said the Princess; "if only I'd taken that handsome Prince! Oh dear, how wretched I am!" The Pig Boy went behind a tree, wiped the brown and black stains off his face, threw off his shabby clothes, and came out in his princely dress; so handsome was he that the Princess bowed down in wonder. "I have learnt to despise you," he said; "you would not have an honourable Prince. You could not appreciate the Rose or the Nightingale, but you could kiss a Pig Boy to get a plaything. I wish you joy of it." And with that he went into his Kingdom and shut the door and bolted it, and she might just stand outside and sing:

*O my blessed Augustine!
Everything's gone.*

[End of *The Pig Boy* by Hans Christian Andersen, from *Hans Andersen Forty-Two Stories*, translated by M. R. James]