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The edition used as base for this book contained the following errors, which have been corrected:

Page 34: thinking it was Little Cluas => thinking it was Little Claus

Page 35: that's a good price," said Big Clause => that's a good price," said Big Claus

Page 35: "It's my grandmother," said Big Claus => "It's my grandmother," said Big Claus.

# **Little Claus and Big Claus**

by

# Hans Christian Andersen

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

There were two men in a town, who both had the same name, both were called Claus; but one of them owned four horses, and the other only one. Now, in order to be able to tell one from the other, people called the one who had four horses Big Claus, and the one who had only one horse, Little Claus. Now we must hear how these two got on, for it makes a regular story.

All the week through, Little Claus had to plough for Big Claus, and lend him his one horse; and in return Big Claus used to help him with all his four horses, but only once a week, and that was on the Sunday. Hurrah! how Little Claus did crack his whip over all the five horses, that were as good as his own for that one day. The sun shone bright, and all the bells in the church tower rang for church, and the people were dressed out and going past with their hymn books under their arms to hear the clergyman preach; and they looked at Little Claus ploughing away with five horses, and he was so pleased, he cracked his whip again and called out, "Hup, all my horses!"

"You mustn't say that," said Big Claus, "it's only the one horse that's yours."

But again, when somebody else went by going to church, Little Claus forgot that he wasn't to say that, and he called out, "Hup, all my horses!"

"Now then, I'll ask you kindly to leave off," said Big Claus. "For if you say that once more I shall knock your horse on the head, so that it'll die on the spot, and that'll be the end of it."

"To be sure, I won't say it any more," said Little Claus. But when some people went by and nodded him good morning, he was delighted; and he thought it looked so fine, his having five horses to plough his field with, that he cracked his whip and called out, "Hup, all my horses!"

"I'll hup your horses," said Big Claus, and he took the tether-peg mallet and hit Little Claus's only horse on the forehead, so that it tumbled down quite dead.

"Oh! now I haven't got any horse at all!" said Little Claus, and began to cry. Later on he flayed the horse, took the hide and let it dry well in the open air, and then stuffed it into a bag which he put on his back, and went off to the town to sell his horse-hide.

He had a long way to go, which took him through a large dark forest, and there a terrible bad storm came on and he quite lost himself, and before he could find the right road, it was evening, and too late to get either to the town or home again before night fell.

Hard by the road there stood a big farmhouse. The shutters outside were closed in front of the windows, but still the light shone out at the top of them. "I expect I can get leave to stay there for the night," thought Little Claus, and he went and knocked at the door.

The farmer's wife opened the door, but when she heard what he wanted, she told him to go along: her husband wasn't at home and she wouldn't take in any strangers.

"Oh, well then, I must lie out of doors," said Little Claus, and the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Close by there stood a large haystack, and between it and the house a little shed had been built, with a flat roof of thatch.

"I can lie up there," said Little Claus when he saw the roof. "It makes a beautiful bed. I don't suppose the stork will fly down and peck my legs"; for there was a live stork up on the roof, where it had its nest.

So Little Claus climbed up on the shed, and there he lay down, and rolled about in order to lie comfortably. The wooden shutters in front of the windows did not reach up to the top of them; so he could look right into the room. There was a big table laid out with wine and a roast joint, and such a splendid fish! The farmer's wife and the parish clerk were sitting at table, and nobody else; and she helped him to wine, and he helped himself to fish: a thing he was very fond of.

"If only one could get some of that!" said Little Claus, and poked his head right close to the window. Gracious! what a beautiful cake he could see in there! Really it was a feast.

Just then he heard someone coming, riding along the highroad towards the house. It was the woman's husband coming home.

He was an excellent man, but he had this very odd ailment, that he could never bear to see a parish clerk; if he caught sight of a parish clerk he went quite mad with rage, and this was why the clerk had come in to say how-do-you-do to the woman, because he knew her husband wasn't at home; and so the kind woman had got out all the best victuals she had for him. But now when they heard the husband coming they were terribly frightened, and the woman begged the clerk to creep into a great empty chest that stood in the corner; and so he did, for he knew well enough that the poor husband couldn't bear to see parish clerks. The woman made haste to hide all the good victuals and the wine in her oven, for if her husband had caught sight of them he would have been certain to ask what it all meant.

"Ah dear!" sighed Little Claus on the top of the shed, when he saw all the victuals taken away. "Is there somebody up there?" asked the farmer, and looked up at Little Claus. "What are you lying up there for? Better come indoors along of me."

Then Little Claus told him how he had lost his way, and asked if he might stay there for the night.

"Yes, to be sure," said the farmer, "but first we must have a bit to eat."

The wife greeted them very friendly, both of them, and spread a long table and gave them a large dish of porridge. The farmer was hungry and ate with a fine appetite, but Little Claus couldn't help thinking about the beautiful roast joint and fish and cake, which he knew were there in the oven. He had laid his sack with the horse's hide in it under the table beside his feet; we remember, of course, that that was what he had come away from home with, to sell it in the town. He had no taste for the porridge, and so he trod on his bag, and the dry hide in the sack squeaked quite loud.

"Hush," said Little Claus to his sack; but at the same moment he trod on it again, and it squeaked much louder than before.

"Why, what have you got in your bag?" asked the farmer. "Oh, that's a wizard," said Little Claus. "He's saying that we mustn't eat porridge, for he's conjured the whole oven full of roast meat and fish and cake."

"What's that?" said the farmer, and in a trice opened the oven and saw in it all the good victuals which his wife had hidden there, but which—as he thought—the wizard in the bag had conjured into it. His wife durstn't say anything, but put the food on the table at once, and so they had their fill of the fish and the joint and the cake. Directly after, Little Claus trod on his bag again and made the hide speak.

"What's he saying now?" asked the farmer. "He's saying", said Little Claus, "that he's also conjured us up three bottles of wine, and they are in the oven too." Then the wife had to bring out the wine she had hidden, and the farmer drank and got quite merry. Such a wizard as Little Claus had in the bag he would dearly like to have.

"Can he call up the devil, too?" asked the farmer. "I'd like to see him, for I'm in spirits now."

"Yes," said Little Claus, "my wizard can do anything I require. Can't you?" he asked, and he trod on the bag and it squeaked. "D'you hear? he says 'Yes'. But the devil is very ugly to look at, and I wouldn't trouble about seeing him."

"Oh, I'm not a bit afraid. What do you suppose he looks like?"

"Why, he'll show himself for all the world like a parish clerk."

"Ugh!" said the farmer, "that is horrid; you must know that I can't abide to see parish clerks. But it don't matter; so long as I know it's the devil, I can put up with it better. I've got some courage in me, only he mustn't come too near me."

"Now I'll ask my wizard," said Little Claus. He trod on the bag and held his ear to it.

"What does he say?"

He says, "You can go over there and open the chest that stands in the corner, and you'll see the devil, where he's hiding, but you must hold the lid so that he can't slip out." "You come and help me hold it," said the farmer, and went over to the chest where his wife had hidden the real parish clerk, who was sitting there in a great fright.

The farmer lifted the lid a little and peeped in under it. "Ugh!" he screamed, and jumped back. "Yes, I did see him, and he's for all the world like our clerk. No, now, that was a dreadful sight!"

They had to have a drink on the strength of it, and still they sat and drank till late on at night.

"You must sell me that wizard," said the farmer. "Ask what you like for him. Why, I'd give you a whole bushel of money straight off."

"No, I can't do that," said Little Claus; "just think what profit I can make out of that wizard."

"Oh dear! I do so want to have him," said the farmer, and kept on begging.

"Well," said Little Claus at last, "as you've been so kind as to give me a night's lodging, I don't mind. You shall have the wizard for a bushel of money; but I must have full measure."

"So you shall," said the farmer, "but you must take that chest there away with you. I won't have it an hour longer in the house. Who's to know if he isn't sitting in it still?" Little Claus gave the farmer his sack with the dry hide in it, and got a whole bushel of money, full measure, in exchange. The farmer gave him a big wheelbarrow into the bargain to wheel off his money and the box.

"Good-bye," said Little Claus, and wheeled the barrow off with his money and the big chest in which the clerk was still sitting. On the other side of the forest there was a broad deep river, running so swift that it was hardly possible to swim against the stream. A fine new bridge had been built over it, and Little Claus stopped halfway across it and said, quite loud, so that the clerk in the chest could hear:

"Come, what do I want with this silly chest; it's as heavy as if it was full of stones! I'm quite tired of wheeling it. I'll heave it out into the river: if it floats down to me at home, that's all right, and if it doesn't, why, I don't mind." With that he took hold of it with one hand and lifted it a little as if he was going to throw it down into the water.

"No! Stop!" cried the clerk inside the chest. "Do let me get out!"

"O—oh," said Little Claus, pretending to be frightened. "He's in there still! I must get him into the river this minute and drown him." "O no, O no!" cried the clerk, "I'll give you a whole bushel of money if you'll only stop."

"Why, that's a different affair," said Little Claus, and he opened the chest. The clerk crept out quickly and pushed the empty chest over into the river, and went off to his house, where Little Claus got a whole bushel of money. He'd got one already from the farmer, so now he had his wheelbarrow quite full of money.

"Look here, I've got a very fine price for that horse," said he to himself when he got home to his own room and emptied all the money out in a great heap in the middle of the floor. "Big Claus won't like it a bit when he gets to know how rich I've become by the means of my one horse; but I can't tell him right out, all the same."

With that he sent a boy over to Big Claus to borrow a bushel measure.

"What ever does he want with that?" thought Big Claus, and he smeared some tar on the bottom of it, so that some of what was being measured should stick to it. And so it did, for when he got the measure back there were three new silver groats sticking there.

"What's the meaning of this?" said Big Claus. He ran straight across to the Little one. "Where did you get all that money from?" "Oh, that was for my horse's hide, I sold it yesterday." "Upon my word, that was a good price," said Big Claus. He ran off home, took an axe, knocked all his four horses on the head, got the hides off them, and drove to the town with them. "Hides! Hides! Who'll buy hides?" he went shouting through the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners came running up and asked what he wanted for them.

"A bushel of money, apiece," said Big Claus.

"Are you mad?" they all said. "Do you think we've got money in bushels?"

"Hides! Hides! Who'll buy hides?" he shouted again, and to everyone who asked what the hides cost, he answered: "A bushel of money!" "He wants to make fools of us," they all said; and then all the shoemakers got out their straps and the tanners their leather aprons and began to thrash Big Claus.

"Hides! Hides!" they sneered at him. "Yes, we'll give you a hide with nice red stripes on it. Out of the town with him," they cried, and Big Claus had to make off as quick as ever he could, he'd never been so thrashed in his life. "Very well," said he when he got home, "Little Claus shall be paid out for this. I'll kill him for it."

But now, at Little Claus's house it so happened that his old grandmother had died; true enough she had been very cross and nasty to him, but all the same he was very much grieved, and took the old woman and laid her in his own warm bed to see if she might possibly come to life again. She should lie there all night, and he would sit over in the corner on a stool and sleep there, as he had often done before. And as he sat there in the night the door opened and Big Claus came in with an axe. He knew well enough where Little Claus's bed stood, and went straight to it and hit the dead grandmother on the head, thinking it was Little Claus.

"There now," said he, "you won't make a fool of me again!" and off he went home.

"Now that's a real bad man," said Little Claus, "he meant to kill me; it's lucky for old mother that she was dead already, else he'd have had the life out of her." Then he dressed the old grandmother in her Sunday clothes, borrowed a horse of his neighbour, harnessed it to his cart and set the old grandmother up in the back seat so as she couldn't fall out when he drove; and then they rattled off through the forest. When the sun rose they were just by a big inn, and there Little Claus pulled up and went in to get something to eat.

The landlord had ever so much money, and he was a good sort of man, but very hot tempered, as if he was full of pepper and snuff.

"Good morning," said he to Little Claus, "you've got your best clothes on early to-day."

"Yes," said Little Claus, "I'm off to town with my old grandmother. She's sitting out there in the cart; I can't get her to come indoors. Would you mind taking her a glass of mead? But you must speak to her pretty loud, for she's hard of hearing."

"Yes, that I will," said the landlord, and he poured out a large glass of mead and went out with it to the dead grandmother, who was set up in the cart.

"Here's a glass of mead from your son," said the landlord; but the dead woman didn't say a word: she sat quite still.

"Can't you hear?" shouted the landlord, as loud as he could. "Here's a glass of mead from your son!"

Once more he shouted it out, and once again after that, but as she didn't stir at all from her seat, he lost his temper and threw the glass straight in her face. The mead ran down her nose and she tumbled over, backwards into the cart, for she was only propped up, and not tied fast.

"Now, now!" shouted Little Claus, rushing out of the inn and seizing hold of the landlord by the collar. "You've been and killed my grandmother! Just look! There's a great hole in her forehead!"

"Oh, dear, what a sad business!" cried the landlord, wringing his hands, "it all comes of me being so hot tempered. My dear friend Little Claus, I'll give you a whole bushel of money and have your grandmother buried as if she was my own, if only you'll hold your tongue; else they'll cut my head off, and that is so unpleasant!"

So Little Claus got a whole bushel of money, and the landlord buried his old grandmother as if she'd been his own.

Now when Little Claus got home again with all the money, he sent his boy over at once to Big Claus to ask if he would kindly lend him a bushel measure. "What's the meaning of this?" said Big Claus. "Haven't I killed him? I must look into this myself." So he went across to Little Claus with the bushel.

"Why, where did you get all that money from?" he asked, and opened his eyes wide when he saw all that had come in.

"It was my grandmother you killed, not me," said Little Claus. "I've just sold her, and got a bushel of money for her."

"My word, that's a good price," said Big Claus; and he hurried off home, took an axe and killed his own old grandmother at once, put her in his cart, drove to town to where the doctor lived, and asked if he wanted to buy a dead person.

"Who is it, and where did you get it from?" asked the doctor. "It's my grandmother," said Big Claus. "I've killed her to get a bushel of money."

"God be good to us," said the doctor, "that's a madman's talk! For goodness' sake don't say such things. You might lose your head." And then he told him straight out what a fearfully wicked thing it was that he had done, and what a bad man he was, and how he deserved to be punished, and Big Claus got so frightened that he darted out of the doctor's shop and into the cart, whipped up the horses and hurried home. But the doctor and everyone else thought he must be mad, so they let him drive off whither he would.

"You shall be paid out for this," said Big Claus as he drove along the highroad. "Yes, you shall be paid out for this, Little Claus." And as soon as ever he got home, he took the biggest sack he could find, went across to Little Claus and said: "Now you've fooled me again! First I killed my horses, and then my old grandmother! It's all your fault, but never again shall you make a fool of me." With that he seized Little Claus by the waist, stuffed him into his sack, threw it over his shoulder and called out to him: "Now I'm off to drown you!"

There was a long bit to go before he came to the river, and Little Claus was not over light to carry. The road went close by the church where the organ was playing and the people singing very beautifully. So Big Claus put down his sack with Little Claus in it beside the church door, and thought to himself it might be quite a good thing to go in and listen to a hymn before he went any further. Little Claus couldn't get away, and everybody was in church; so in he went. "Oh dear! Oh dear!" sighed Little Claus inside the sack. He turned about and about, but he couldn't manage to get the string untied. At that moment there came by an old drover with snow-white hair and a great walking stick in his hand. Before him was a whole drove of cows and steers, and they ran against the sack where Little Claus was, so that it tumbled over.

"Oh dear!" sighed Little Claus, "I'm quite young, and I've got to go to heaven already!"

"And poor old me," said the drover, "I'm quite old and I can't get there yet!"

"Open the sack," cried Little Claus, "creep in instead of me, and you'll get to heaven straight off!"

"Yes, that I will, and glad to do it," said the drover. He untied the sack for Little Claus, who jumped out at once. "You'll take care of the cattle, won't you?" said the old man, creeping into the sack, which Little Claus tied up, and then went on his way with all the cows and steers.

Soon after, Big Claus came out of the church, loaded the sack on his shoulders again, and thought, rightly enough, it had become quite light, for the old drover weighed not more than half as much as Little Claus. "How light he has become to carry! That's just because I've been and listened to a hymn!" So on he went to the river, which was deep and broad, threw the sack and the old drover out into the water and shouted after him (for of course he thought it was Little Claus): "There now! You shan't make a fool of me any more."

Then he set off home: but when he got to where the roads crossed he met Little Claus coming along with all his cattle. "What's this?" said Big Claus. "Haven't I drowned you?"

"Yes," said Little Claus, "you threw me into the water all right not half an hour ago!"

"But where have you got all those lovely cattle from?" asked Big Claus.

"Why, they're sea cattle," said Little Claus. "I'll tell you the whole story, and very much obliged to you I am for drowning me. I'm on the top now, properly rich I am, I can tell you. I was terribly frightened when I was lying in the sack, and the wind whistled about my ears when you threw me down off the bridge into the cold water. I sank straight to the bottom, but I didn't bump myself, for down there the finest of soft grass grows, and on to that I fell, and the sack came open at once, and the most lovely girl in pure white clothes and with a green wreath on her wet hair, took my hand and said: 'Is that you, Little Claus? Here's some cattle for you to begin with, and four miles further up the road there's another whole drove waiting, which I'll make you a present of!' Then I made out that the river was a broad highway for the sea people. They were walking along down at the bottom and driving straight up from the sea, right inland to where the river comes to an end. It was so pleasant there with flowers, and the freshest of grass! And the fishes that swam in the water, they darted past my ears like the birds in the air up here. Dear! what fine folk there were, and what a lot of cattle going about along ditches and fences!"

"But why have you come up so quick to us again?" asked Big Claus. "I wouldn't have done that if it was so nice down there." "Why," said Little Claus, "that was just my cleverness! You recollect I told you the sea girl said that four miles along the road (and by the road she meant the river, for she can't get along any other way) there was a whole drove more of cattle for me; but I know how the river goes in bends, first this way and then that way, it's a regular roundabout. No, you can make it shorter by coming up on land if you can, and driving across country to the river again. I shall save almost a couple of miles and get to my sea cattle all the sooner."

"Oh, you are a lucky man!" said Big Claus. "Do you think I should get some sea cattle too if I got down to the bottom of the river?"

"Why, I should think so," said Little Claus. "But I can't carry you to the river in the sack, you're too heavy for me. If you'll walk there yourself and get into the bag, I'll throw you in with the greatest of pleasure."

"I'll be much obliged to you," said Big Claus, "but if I don't get any sea cattle when I get down there, I shall give you a thrashing, you may depend upon that."

"Oh no, don't be so unkind!" So they went across to the river. When the cattle, which were thirsty, saw the water, they ran as fast as they could to get down there and drink.

"Look what a hurry they're in," said Little Claus, "they're longing to get to the bottom again."

"Yes, but you've got to help me first," said Big Claus, "else you'll get a thrashing!" So he crept into a big sack that had lain on the back of one of the steers. "Just put a stone in it, or I'm afraid I shan't sink," said Big Claus.

"It'll sink all right," said Little Claus; but all the same he put a big stone in the sack, tied the string tight and gave it a push. Splash! There lay Big Claus in the river and sank to the bottom straight.

"I'm afraid he won't find those cattle," said Little Claus; and drove off home with what he had.

[End of *Little Claus and Big Claus* by Hans Christian Andersen, from *Hans Andersen Forty-Two Stories*, translated by M. R. James]