

The Naughty Boy

Hans Christian Anderson

Once upon a time there was an old poet-one of those good, honest old poets. One evening, as he was sitting quietly in his home, a terrible storm broke out-the rain poured down in torrents-but the old poet sat warm and cozy in his study, for a fire blazed brightly in his stove and roasting apples sizzled and hissed beside it.

"There won't be a dry stitch on anybody out in this rain," he told himself. You see, he was a very kindhearted old poet.

"Oh, please open the door for me! I'm so cold and wet!" cried a little child outside his house. Then it knocked at the door, while the rain poured down and the wind shook all the windows.

"Why, the poor little child!" cried the old poet as he hurried to open the door. Before him stood a naked little boy, with the water streaming down from his yellow hair! He was shivering, and would certainly have perished in the storm had he not been let in.

"You poor little fellow!" said the poet again, and took him by the hand. "Come in, and we'll soon have you warmed up! I shall give you some wine and a roasted apple, for you're such a pretty little boy."

And he really was pretty! His eyes sparkled like two bright stars, and his hair hung in lovely curls, even though the water was still streaming from it. He looked like a little angel, but he was pale with the cold and shivering in every limb. In his hand he held a beautiful little bow-and-arrow set, but the bow had been ruined by the rain, and all the colors on the arrows had run together.

The old poet quickly sat down by the stove and took the little boy on his knee. He dried the child's hair, rubbed the blue little hands vigorously, and heated some sweet wine for him. And pretty soon the little boy felt better; the roses came back to his cheeks, and he jumped down from the old man's lap and danced around the old poet.

"You're a cheerful boy," laughed the old man. "What's your name?"

"My name is Cupid," was the reply. "Don't you know me? There lies my bow, and I can certainly shoot with it, too. Look, the storm is over and the moon is shining!"

"Yes," the old poet said, "but I'm afraid the rain has spoiled your bow."

"That would be a shame," replied the little boy as he looked the bow over carefully. "No, it's already dry again, and the string is good and tight. No damage done. I guess I'll try it." Then he fitted an arrow to his bow, aimed it, and shot the good old poet right through the heart!

"Do you see now that my bow is not spoiled?" he said laughingly, and ran out of the house. Wasn't he a naughty boy to shoot the good old poet who had been so kind to him, taken him into his warm room, and given him his delicious wine and his best apple?

The good poet lay on the floor and wept, because he really had been shot right through the heart. "What a naughty boy that Cupid is!" he cried. "I must warn all the good children, so that they will be careful and never play with him. Because he will certainly do them some harm!" So he warned all the good children, and they were very careful to keep away from that naughty Cupid.

But he is very clever and he tricks them all the time. When the students are going home from the lectures, he runs beside them, with a black coat on and a book under his arm. They don't recognize him, but they take his arm, thinking he is a student, too, and then he

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sends his arrows into their hearts. And when the girls are in church to be confirmed, he is likely to catch them and shoot his darts into them. Yes, he is always after people!

In the theater he sits up in the big chandelier, burning so brightly that people think he's a lamp, but they soon find out better. He runs about the king's garden and on the rampart, and once he even shot your father and mother right through the heart! Just ask them, and you'll hear what they say.

Yes, he's a bad boy, this Cupid-you had better never have anything to do with him, for he is after all of you. And what do you think? A long time ago he even shot an arrow into your poor old grandmother! The wound has healed up, but she will never forget it.

Saucy Cupid! But now you know all about him, and what a naughty boy he is!

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