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[Hans Andersen, translation Michael Finnissy, Note Michael Finnissy: Andersen's original Danish and Adelbert von Chamisso's German translations components also appear, adjacently, in my English adaptations.]

I

The Bird Incarnating Song

Det er Vintertid; Jorden har et Sneelag, Luften er høi og klar, Træerne staae som hvide Koraller. Deilige er Naten.

The winter air is bright and cold. A sharp wind scattering the snow. Trees stand out like white coral against the night sky. By the open sea: a giant's grave, and seated on the tomb, the spirit of the buried hero. "No-one sings the deeds of my life. Are they forgotten? Deeds of strength, of youthful courage, of valour and fearless adventure."

Da greb den gamle Barde i Harpens Strænge. Nearby, a tiny bird had heard these words, and as the unquiet spirit rose up and vanished, the tiny bird began to sing.

Døden er der ikke Liver vælder.

Then the bird soared away, over mountaintop and valley, over fields, and vast oceans. It sang, not only in praise of heroes, but of the land of its birth. Runes and old wives' tales. And songs of love, so many and so warm, of Fidelity and Truth. Throughout time, as tales were told, there hovered nearby, this tiny bird. And now, perchance, he looks in on us, waiting to sing. While everything on earth is hidden away.

II

Hjertets Melodier

Melodies of the Heart, No.4

Min Tankes Tanke ene Du er vorden,
Du er mit Hjertes første Kærlighed,
Jeg elsker dig i Tid og Evighed!
My only thoughts have become of thee.
I love thee as nought else on earth.
I love thee throughout time and all eternity.

III

**For the album
of Madame Grove, née Fenger**

Behind the lake at Sorø, with Ingemann and
his wife, we enter the presbytery.
We hear the joyful voices of children.
Later, we walk through the forest of beech-
trees, to the edge of the lake.
It is now the time of the full moon, and a
nightingale is singing.

IV

Spørg Amagermo'ér

1871

An old red-faced carrot, with dirt in his hair.
Bold and shameless he proposed marriage to
a sweet young carrot. She was a carrot from
good family roots and spotless complexion.
At the wedding the guests drank morning
dew and ate fallen leaves and pollen. A large
white cabbage bless'd the union, and turnips
carried the bridal train. Beans and potatoes
heartily sang, while herbs and nettles wilted
in each other's arms. The old carrot made
a speech. Too long and lacking in humour.
Mumbling, groaning, wheezing, on and on.
While the young carrot stared wide-eyed,
out beyond the horizon. She was not smiling.
Then there was dancing. The old carrot
removed his boots, and jumped about in a
frenzy. Leaping. Spinning. Sliding. Then he
fell, and broke in half, and died. The young
carrot said 'Ah...', as her luck had changed.
Now she was free to roam, free to swim in
the soup, free to be gently nibbled. She was
free, young and still fresh.

V

Hjertesuk af en udtjent Damekjole

Heartfelt sighs from thrown-out ladies'
clothing

Der var en Tid,
Det var de gode gamle Dage!
I gyldne Sale svandt min Blomsterveraar,
Nu skal maaskee jeg snart i 'Vartou' bygge;
Hvor Krusemynterne bag Ruden staaer.
Alt dreier Hanen sig paa 'Petri' spiiir,
Dog ei jeg døer jeg bliver jadet er den store
Gaade.
There was a time. But the glory-days have
vanished!
In gilded 'salons' my springtime-blush was
lost.
And soon I will be in a home for 'old folk'
Potted plants, tiny windows.
The brittle threads in me will snap. But if I
do not die...
I will become...
Yes — I will only know that later on...

VI

Martsvioleer

Märzveilchen
March-violets

Der Himmel wölbt sich sich rein und blau,
der Reif stellt Blumen aus zur Schau.
Am Fenster prangt ein flimmernder Flor.
Ein Jüngling steht, ihn betrachtend, davor.
Und hinter den Blumen blühet noch gar ein
blaues,
ein lächelndes Augen paar.
Märzveilchen, wie jener noch keine geseh'n!
Der Reif wird angehaucht, zergeh'n.
Eisblumen fangen zu schmelzen an,
und Gott sei gnädig dem jungen Mann.
The clear blue arching of the sky. Frost
pricking blossoms from drops of dew.
A shimmering flower on the window-pane, A
youth, waiting and watching.
Beyond the bloom he sees two smiling eyes
Dark, almost purple like March-violets. As
lovely as any he had seen.
His breath will melt the thin layer of frost.
The ice-flowers will evaporate.
Then, merciful Lord, protect him.

VII

Tyveknægten

Muttertraum
A mother's dream

Die Mutter betet herzlich, und schaut
entzückt auf den schlummernden Kleinen. Er
ruht in der Wiege so sanft un traut.
Ein Engel muss er ihr scheinen. Sie küsst ihn
und herzt ihn sie hält sich kaum. Vergessen
der irdischen Schmerzen, es schweift in der
Zukunft ihr
Hoffnungstraum. So träumen Mütter im
Herzen.
Der Rab' indess mit der Sippschaft sein
kreischt draussen am Fenster die Weise:
Dein Engel wird unser sein, der Räuber dient
uns zur Speise.
The mother's prayer is heartfelt, enraptured
as she looks at her sleeping child. At peace in
his cradle, calm and assured,
To her he must seem like an angel. She
kisses and cuddles him, unable to stop.
Forgetting all her earthly troubles,
In hopeful dreams for his future. All mothers
dream this in their hearts.
The ravens, outside at the windows, are
scratching and shrieking:
Your tiny angel will soon be ours. We will
peck and pull at his tiny entrails, relishing
them for dinner.

VIII

Soldaten

Der Soldat

The soldier

Med dæmpede Hvirvler Trommerne gaae,
 Ak, skal vi da aldrig til Stedet naae,
 At han kan faae Ro i sin Kiste?
 Jeg troer mit Hjerte vil briste!
 Jeg havde i Verden en eneste Ven,
 Ham er det, man bringer til Døden hen,
 Med klingende Spil gennem Gaden,
 Og jeg er med i Paraden.
 For sidste Gang skuer han nu Guds sol,
 Der sidder han alt paa Dødens Stol;
 De binde ham fast til Pælen.
 For barm Dig Gud over Sjælen!
 Paa eengang sigte de alle Ni.
 De Otte skyde jo reent forbi;
 De rysted' paa Haanden af Smerte,
 Kun jeg traf midt i hans Hjerte!
 Our steps keep time with the muffled drum.
 How slow it seems, and how long the march.
 O, that he was at peace and everything
 done. My heart is pounding. I loved only
 him, in all the world, this man who they have
 condemned to death. And I am ordered to be
 a part of the firing squad.
 Now, for the last time, he will glimpse the
 sunlight, before they bind his eyes.
 May a kindly god grant this man eternal
 peace.
 Nine soldiers take aim. Nine who shudder in
 horror, as the bullets are discharged. But it is
 I who strike to the centre of his heart.

IX

Keiserens nye Klæder

The Emperor's new clothes

In a great city, many years ago, there lived
 an emperor. He cared for nothing except
 the latest fashion in clothes, and he had a
 different outfit for every hour of the day and
 night. One summer's evening, two cheats
 arrived in the city, claiming to be weavers,
 and saying that the clothes they made were
 not only stylish and elegant, but possessed a
 unique quality: that they could only be seen
 by clever people.
 The emperor ordered six hundred suits
 immediately, thinking that he could then
 be certain which of his subjects could be
 proved clever, and which were irredeemably
 stupid. The devious weavers demanded
 huge sums of money for their labours. They
 put up two looms and other machinery, and
 pretended to spin and weave. Their looms
 remained empty, but all who visited, in order
 not to seem stupid, acclaimed the spinning
 and weaving: "such fine design, such fine
 colours." The cheats were delighted, and
 asked for yet more money. The emperor
 visited the weavers and saw the empty
 workshop with nothing on the loom. But he,
 of all people, could not appear stupid, so
 he said, aloud, "This cloth, and this apparel,
 give us great pleasure! They have our most
 exulted approbation!" And the entire court
 agreed: "magnificent, so tasteful and elegant,
 beyond compare!"

The weavers were presented with the highest
 honours in the land, and the emperor decreed
 a public ceremony, at which his new clothes
 would be displayed.

The people gathered. The sun shone. The
 emperor rose early and summoned the
 weavers. "See, here is the shirt, here the
 trousers, here the long cloak, all as light as a
 spider's web." They appeared to hold up each
 item in turn, but their hands were empty.
 Then they pretended to dress the emperor
 in the new clothes. "How well they fit. How
 fine they look. What wondrous ceremonial
 garments!" The procession appeared. There
 was an unexpected silence, then a child
 cried out, "He has nothing on. Our emperor
 is naked."

X

Rosenknoppen 1836

The rose-bud

Rose-bud red, so fine of form,
 Shaped like human lips so warm.
 You I'll kiss, then, as your groom.
 'Tis but to enhance your bloom.
 Twice to kiss my lips now yearn,
 Feel just how my flesh does burn.
 'Tis a fact I can't ignore,
 No-one have I kissed before. No-one here for
 me will pine,
 So I'll kiss you dear rose-bud mine.
 You, alas, know not my grief You'll shed no
 tears, only a leaf.
 All those people at my grave,
 Reflect on all the songs I gave.
 "It was him we should have kissed."
 But if well meant, their chance was missed.
 While I yet live, they think not to say to me:
 "Kiss me not once, not once, but daily."

XI

Recension 1830

Critique

Land and sea are both "vermilion hued" at
 dusk.
 Once heard that becomes a commonplace.
 The sun is neither "gold" nor "transcendent".
 It always rises in the East and descends in
 the West.
 Stars at night shine "cold and lifeless."
 Too far away for comment.
 The blackbird warbling in the tree.
 No "gifted musician" but merely following its
 instincts
 and guarding its nest.
 The moon is rising: not "deathly pale", but a
 ball of grey rock,
 conforming to some dull cosmic pattern.
 If oceans "rage", and billows "foam", they
 should learn self-control,
 and practice good sense and moderation.
 And "Art"?
 Clearly — Art is very clever but hardly worth
 a Normal Person's bother.

XII

Da jeg saa hende igjen 1844

When I saw you again

We saw each other
 some years had passed.
 I thought the eyes made clear those hidden
 thoughts.
 Perhaps I dared not show you.
 A smile. A glance. Such happiness.
 The moment was brief. The warmth and
 humour in your voice.
 Your voice. Your words. Almost a song.
 I sing it softly now, and my cheeks begin to
 glow.