

A Nasty Boy

Once upon a time there lived an old poet, a truly good poet and very kind. One evening he was sitting at home while a storm raged outside. Rain poured down in sheets, but the old poet felt so cozy and warm beside the tiled stove, where a fire burned brightly and apples baked with a cheerful hiss.

"It's terrible to be caught in such weather—not a dry thread would remain!" he said. He was very kind.

"Let me in, let me in! I'm frozen and soaked through!" suddenly cried a child behind the door.

He was crying and knocking at the door, while the rain kept pouring and the wind battered the windows.

"Poor little thing!" said the old poet and went to open the door.

Behind the door stood a small boy, completely naked. Water dripped from his long golden hair; he shivered from the cold; had they not let him in, he would surely have perished.

"Poor little thing!" said the old poet and took him by the hand. "Come with me; I'll warm you up, give you some wine and an apple; you're such a pretty little boy!"

Indeed, he was extremely pretty. His eyes sparkled like two bright stars, and his wet golden hair curled in ringlets—just like a little angel!—though he was quite blue from the cold and trembled like an aspen leaf. In his hands he held a wonderful bow; the only trouble was that it had been entirely spoiled by the rain, the paint on the long arrows had faded.

The old poet sat closer to the stove, took the little one onto his knees, squeezed out his wet curls, warmed his small hands in his own, and boiled some sweet wine for him. The boy cheered up, his cheeks flushed red; he jumped down to the floor and began dancing around the old poet.

"My, what a merry little boy you are!" said the old poet. "And what is your name?"

"Cupid!" answered the boy. "Don't you know me? Here is my bow. I know how to shoot! Look, the weather has cleared, the moon is shining."

"But your bow is spoiled!" said the old poet.

"That would be a pity!" said the little boy, took the bow and began examining it. "It has dried completely and nothing has happened to it! The string is properly stretched! I shall test it right now."

And he drew the bow, placed an arrow, took aim, and shot the old poet straight in the heart!

"There, you see, my bow is not spoiled at all!" he cried, laughed loudly, and ran away.

Nasty little brat! He shot the old poet who had let him in to warm up, caressed him, given him wine to drink, and offered him the finest apple!

The kind old man lay on the floor weeping: he was wounded straight in the heart. Then he said:

"Phew, what a nasty little brat this Cupid is! I shall tell all good children about him so that they beware, do not get involved with him—he will hurt them too."

And all the good children—both boys and girls—began to beware of this Cupid, yet he still manages sometimes to deceive them; such a rogue!

Students walk from lectures, and he is beside them: a book under his arm, in a black frock coat, and you cannot recognize him! They think he is also a student, take him by the arm, and he shoots an arrow straight into their chest.

Or here come girls from the priest or to church—he is there too, as usual; forever chasing after people!

Sometimes he climbs into a large chandelier in the theater and burns there with a bright flame; people at first think it is a lamp, and only later realize what is happening. He runs about both in the royal garden and along the fortress wall. And once he even wounded your parents in the heart! Ask them, they will tell you. Yes, that Cupid is a nasty little brat, you'd better not get involved with him! All he does is chase after people. Just think, he once shot an arrow even at your old grandmother! That happened long, long ago, covered over by time, yet it has not been forgotten, and never will be! Phew! Wicked Cupid! But now you know about him, you know what a nasty little brat he is!