

# Heartache

Hans Christian Andersen

The story we have for you here is really divided into two parts. The first part could be omitted, but it gives us some preliminary information which is useful.

We were staying at a manor house in the country, and it happened that the owner was absent for a day or so. Meanwhile a lady with a pug dog arrived from the next town; come, she explained, to dispose of the shares in her tannery. She had her certificates with her, and we advised her to seal them in an envelope and to write on it the address of the proprietor of the estate, "General War Commissary, Knight," etc.

She listened to us, took up the pen, then hesitated, and begged us to repeat the address slowly. We complied and she wrote, but in the middle of the "General War--" she stopped, sighed, and said, "I'm only a woman!" While she wrote, she had placed her Puggie on the floor, and he was growling, for the dog had come with her for pleasure and health's sake, and a visitor shouldn't be placed on the floor. He was characterized outwardly by a snub nose and a fleshy back.

"He doesn't bite," said the woman. "He hasn't any teeth. He's like one of the family, faithful and grouchy; but the latter is the fault of my grandchildren for teasing him. They play wedding, and want to make him the bridesmaid, and that's too strenuous for the poor old fellow."

Then she delivered her certificates and took Puggie up in her arms. And that's the first part of the story, which could have been omitted.

Puggie died! That's the second part.

About a week later we arrived in the town and put up at the inn. Our windows looked out into the tannery yard, which was divided into two parts by a wooden fence; in one section were hides and skin caps, raw and tanned. Here was all the equipment for carrying on a tanning business, and it belonged to the widow. Puggie had died that morning and was to be buried in this section of the yard. The widow's grandchildren (that is, the tanner's widow's, for Puggie had never married) covered the grave—a grave so beautiful it must have been quite pleasant to lie there.

The grave was bordered with broken flowerpots and strewn over with sand; at its head they had stuck up a small beer bottle with the neck upward, and that wasn't at all symbolic.

The children danced around the grave, and then the oldest of the boys, a practical youngster of seven, proposed that there should be an exhibition of Puggie's grave for everybody living in the street. The price of admission would be one trouser button; that was something every boy would be sure to have and which he also could give to the little girls. This suggestion was adopted by acclamation.

And all the children from the street, and even from the little lane behind, came, and each gave a button. Many were seen that afternoon going about with one suspender, but then they had seen Puggie's grave, and that sight was worth it.

But outside the tannery yard, close to the entrance, stood a ragged little girl, very beautiful, with the prettiest curly hair, and eyes so clear and blue that it was a pleasure to look into them. She didn't say a word, nor did she cry, but every time the gate was opened she looked into the yard as long as she could. She had no button, as she knew very well, so she had to stand sorrowfully outside, until all the others had seen the grave and everyone had left. Then she sat down, put her little brown hands before her eyes, and burst into

tears, for she alone hadn't seen Puggie's grave. It was a heartache as great as any grown-up can experience.

We saw this from above-and seen from above, this, like many of our own and others' griefs could, made us smile! That's the story, and anyone who doesn't understand it can go and buy a share in the widow's tannery.