

MAURICE MAETERLINCK
The Blue Bird

1.

A Wood-Cutter's Cottage

A wood-cutter's cottage, simple and rustic. A fireplace, kitchen utensils, a cupboard, a **bread-pan**¹, a grandfather's clock, a spinning-wheel, a water-tap. On a table, a lamp. A Dog and a Cat are sleeping at the foot of the cupboard. Between them stands a large blue-and-white **sugar-loaf**². On the wall hangs a round cage with a **turtle-dove**³. At the back, two windows, with closed shutters. Under one of the windows, a stool. On the left is the front door, with a big latch. On the right, another door. A ladder to a loft. On the right also are two little children's cots, at the head of which are two chains, with clothes on them. Tytyl and Mytyl are sleeping in their cots, Mummy Tyl leans over them, and watches them for a moment. Then she goes out. The lamp on the table lights. The two children wake and sit up in bed.

¹ **bread-pan** — квашня

² **sugar-loaf** — сахарная голова

³ **turtle-dove** — горлица

Tyltyl. Mytyl?

Mytyl. Tyltyl?

Tyltyl. Are you sleeping?

Mytyl. And you?

Tyltyl. No; how can I sleep when I'm talking to you?

Mytyl. Is this Christmas Day?

Tyltyl. Not yet; not till tomorrow. But Father Christmas won't bring us anything this year.

Mytyl. Why not?

Tyltyl. Mummy says that she can't go to town to tell him. But he will come next year. He will come to the rich children tonight.

Mytyl. Really?

Tyltyl. Of course. I have an idea!

Mytyl. What?

Tyltyl. Let's get up!

Mytyl. But we mustn't.

Tyltyl. Why, there's no one about. Do you see the shutters?

Mytyl. Oh, how bright they are!

Tyltyl. It's the Christmas-tree of the rich children. Let's open the shutters.

Mytyl. Can we?

Tyltyl. Of course; no one will stop us. Do you hear the music? Let us get up!

The two children get up, run to one of the windows, and throw back the shutters. A bright light fills the room.

Tyltyl. We can see everything!

Mytyl. I can't.

Tyltyl. It's snowing! There are two carriages, with six horses each!

Mytyl. And twelve little boys!

Tyltyl. How silly you are! They're little girls.

Mytyl. They've got trousers.
Tyltyl. What do you know? Don't push so!
Mytyl. I never touched you.
Tyltyl. I see the tree!
Mytyl. What tree?
Tyltyl. The Christmas-tree! Lots and lots of lights!
Mytyl. What are those people doing? They are making such a noise.
Tyltyl. They're the musicians.
Mytyl. Are they angry?
Tyltyl. No; but they work hard.
Mytyl. Another carriage with white horses!
Tyltyl. Be quiet! And look!
Mytyl. What are those gold things there?
Tyltyl. Toys! Swords, guns, soldiers, cannons.
Mytyl. And dolls; are there any dolls?
Tyltyl. Dolls? That's too silly; dolls are not funny.
Mytyl. And what's that all round the table?
Tyltyl. Cakes and fruit and tarts.
Mytyl. I had some once when I was little.
Tyltyl. So did I; it's nicer than bread, but it's very little.
Mytyl. They've got many tarts there. The whole table's full. Are they going to eat them?
Tyltyl. Of course; what else will they do with them?
Mytyl. Why don't they eat them at once?
Tyltyl. Because they're not hungry.
Mytyl. (surprised). Not hungry? Why not?
Tyltyl. Because they eat whenever they want.
Mytyl. (incredulously). Every day?
Tyltyl. They say so.
Mytyl. Will they eat it all? Will they give some cakes to us?
Tyltyl. They don't know us.
Mytyl. Let's ask them.
Tyltyl. We mustn't.

Mytyl. Why not?

Tyltyl. Because it's not right.

Mytyl (**clapping her hands**¹). Oh, how pretty they are!

Tyltyl. And how they're laughing and laughing!

Mytyl. And the little babies are dancing!

Tyltyl. Yes, yes; let's dance too!

Mytyl. Oh, what fun!

Tyltyl. They're taking the cakes! They can touch them!

They're eating, they're eating, they're eating!

Mytyl. Two, three, four cakes!

Tyltyl. Oh, how lovely! Oh, how lovely, how lovely!

A knock at the door of the cottage.

Tyltyl (frightened). What's that?

Mytyl (scared). It's Daddy!

The big latch is rising, with a noise. The children see a little old woman dressed in green with a red hood on her head. She is humpbacked and lame and near-sighted; her nose and chin meet; and she walks with a stick. She is obviously a fairy.

The Fairy. Do you have the grass here that sings or the bird that is blue?

Tyltyl. We have some grass, but it can't sing.

Mytyl. Tyltyl has a bird.

Tyltyl. But I can't give it to you.

The Fairy. Why not?

Tyltyl. Because it's mine.

The Fairy. That's a reason, no doubt. Where is the bird?

Tyltyl. In the cage.

¹ **clapping her hands** — хлопя в ладоши

The Fairy. I don't want it; it's not blue enough. You must go and find me the bird I want.

Tyltyl. But I don't know where it is.

The Fairy. Me too. That's why you must **look for it**¹. And I must have the blue bird. It's for my little girl, who is very ill.

Tyltyl. What's the matter with her?

The Fairy. We don't quite know; she wants to be happy.

Tyltyl. Really?

The Fairy. Do you know who I am?

Tyltyl. You're rather like our neighbour, Madame Berlingot.

The Fairy (angrily). **Not a bit!**² This is intolerable! I am the Fairy Berylune.

Tyltyl. Oh! Very well.

The Fairy. You must start at once.

Tyltyl. Are you coming with us?

The Fairy. I can't, my soup always boils over if I leave it for more than an hour. (Pointing to the ceiling, the chimney and the window). Will you go out this way, or that way, or that way?

Tyltyl (pointing timidly to the door). I want to go out that way.

The Fairy (angrily again). That's quite impossible. It's shocking! (Pointing to the window) We'll go out this way. Well? What are you waiting for? **Get dressed at once!**³

The children dress quickly.

Tyltyl. We have no shoes.

¹ **look for it** – поискать её

² **Not a bit!** – Ничуть!

³ **Get dressed at once!** – Сейчас же одевайтесь!

The Fairy. **That doesn't matter**¹. I will give you a little magic hat. Where are your father and mother?

Tyltyl (pointing to the door on the right). They're sleeping there.

The Fairy. And your grandfather and grandmother?

Tyltyl. They're dead.

The Fairy. And your little brothers and sisters. Have you any?

Tyltyl. Oh, yes; three little brothers.

Mytyl. And four little sisters.

The Fairy. Where are they?

Tyltyl. They are dead, too.

The Fairy. Would you like to see them again?

Tyltyl. Oh, yes! At once! Show them to us!

The Fairy. I don't have them in my pocket. But you will see them when you go through the Land of Memory. It's on the way to the Blue Bird, just on the left. What were you doing when I knocked?

Tyltyl. We were eating cakes.

The Fairy. Have you any cakes? Where are they?

Tyltyl. In the house of the rich children. We were just playing. Come and look, it's so lovely. (He drags the Fairy to the window).

The Fairy (at the window). Do you envy them?

Tyltyl. Why?

The Fairy. Because they are eating the cakes.

Tyltyl. Not at all; they're rich. But isn't it beautiful over there?

The Fairy. It's no more beautiful there than here.

Tyltyl. It's darker here and smaller and there are no cakes.

The Fairy. It's exactly the same, only you can't see.

Tyltyl. Yes, I can; and I have very good eyes. I can see the time on the church clock and daddy can't.

¹ **That doesn't matter.** – Это не беда.

The Fairy (angrily). I tell you that you can't see! How do you see me? Well, answer me, will you? I want to know if you can see! Am I pretty or ugly? (The silence). Won't you answer? Am I young or old? Are my cheeks pink or yellow? Perhaps you'll say I have a hump?

Tyltyl. No, no; it's not a big one.

The Fairy. Oh. Have I a hook nose? Did I lose one of my eyes?

Tyltyl. Oh, no, I don't say that. Who put it out?

The Fairy (more and more irritated). Nobody! You wretched, impudent boy! That eye is much finer than the other; it's bigger and brighter and blue as the sky. And my hair, do you see that? It's fair as the corn in the fields, it's like gold! Do you see it on my hands?

Tyltyl. Yes, I see a little.

The Fairy (indignantly). A little! Sheaves! Armfuls! Waves of gold! I know there are people who say that they don't see any; but you're not one of those wicked, blind people, I can hope?

Tyltyl. Oh, no; I can see your own hair.

The Fairy. People are very odd! Since the death of the fairies, they see nothing at all. Luckily, I always carry with me something to give new light to dimmed eyes. What am I taking out of my bag?

Tyltyl. Oh, what a dear little green hat! What's that in the cockade?

The Fairy. That's the big diamond that **makes people see**¹.

Tyltyl. Really?

The Fairy. Yes; first the hat on your head. Then turn the diamond a little; from right to left. Do you

¹ **makes people see** – возвращает людям зрение

see? The diamond presses a bump which opens your eyes.

Tyltyl. Doesn't it hurt?

The Fairy. Not at all. You will see even the inside of things: the soul of bread, of wine, of pepper, for instance.

Mytyl. Can you see the soul of sugar, too?

The Fairy (angrily). Of course you can! I hate unnecessary questions. The soul of pepper is more interesting than the soul of sugar. I give you all that to help you in your search for the Blue Bird. Oh, one more thing. (Pointing to the diamond) When you hold it like this, and when you turn it, you can behold the past. Another little turn and you behold the future. It's curious and practical and it's noiseless.

Tyltyl. Daddy will take it from me.

The Fairy. He won't see it; no one can see it when it's on your head. Will you try it? (She puts the little green hat on Tyltyl's head). Now, turn the diamond.

Tyltyl turned the diamond and a sudden and wonderful change came over everything. The old Fairy alters into a princess of marvellous beauty. The flints of the cottage walls turn blue as sapphires, become transparent and gleam and sparkle like the most precious stones. The humble furniture becomes resplendent. The table looks like a table of marble. The face of the clock winks its eye and smiles genially. The door that contains the pendulum opens and releases the Hours. They begin to dance.

Tyltyl (pointing to the Hours). Who are all those pretty ladies?

The Fairy. Don't be afraid; they are the hours of your life and they are glad to be free and visible for a moment.

Tyltyl. And why are the walls so bright? Are they made of sugar or of precious stones?

The Fairy. All stones are alike, all stones are precious; but man sees only a few of them.

While they are speaking, the souls of the **Quartern-loaves**¹, in the form of little men scramble out of the bread-pan and frisk round the table. Fire follows them with laughter.

Tyltyl. Who are those ugly little men?

The Fairy. Oh, they are merely the souls of the Quartern-loaves, who left the pan.

Tyltyl. And the big red fellow, with the nasty smell?

The Fairy. Hush! Don't speak too loud; that's Fire. He's dangerous.

The Dog and the Cat utter a loud and simultaneous cry. The Dog rushes upon Tyltyl, kisses him violently and overwhelms him with noisy and impetuous caresses. The Cat combs its hair, and washes its hands. Then it goes to Mytyl.

The Dog (yelling and jumping). My little god! Good-morning, good-morning, my dear little god! At last, at last we can talk! I have so much to tell you! Good-morning, good-morning! I love you!

Tyltyl. (to the Fairy) Who is this?

The Fairy. Don't you see? It's the soul of Tylo.

¹ quartern-loaves — каравай