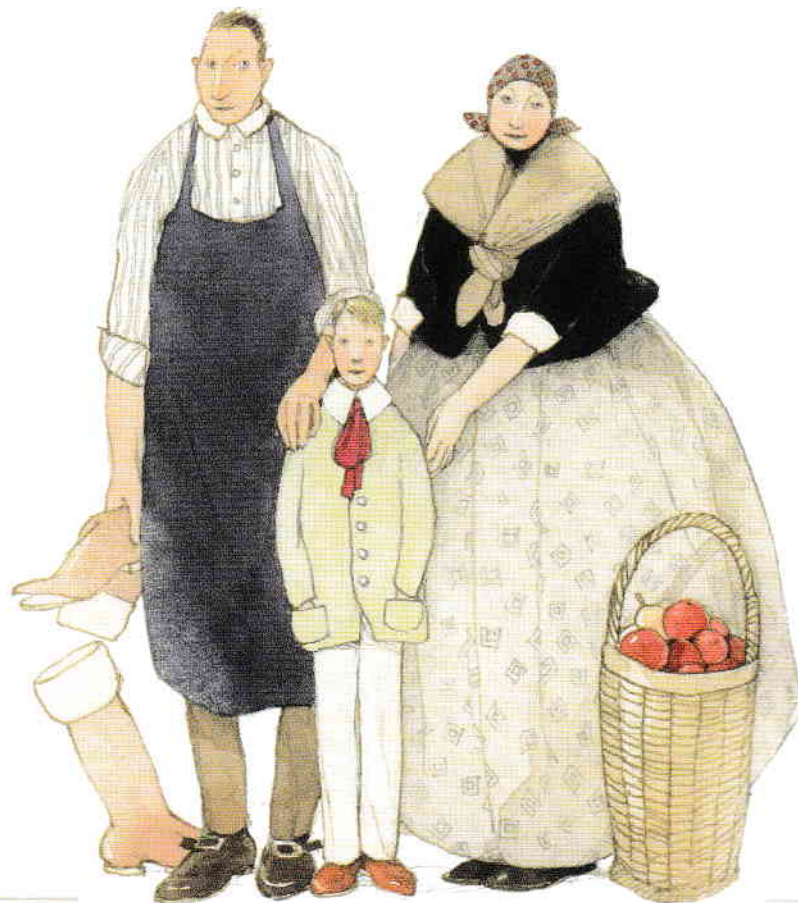


WILHELM HAUFF

DWARF NOSE

ILLUSTRATED BY LISBETH ZWERGER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY ANTHEA BELL



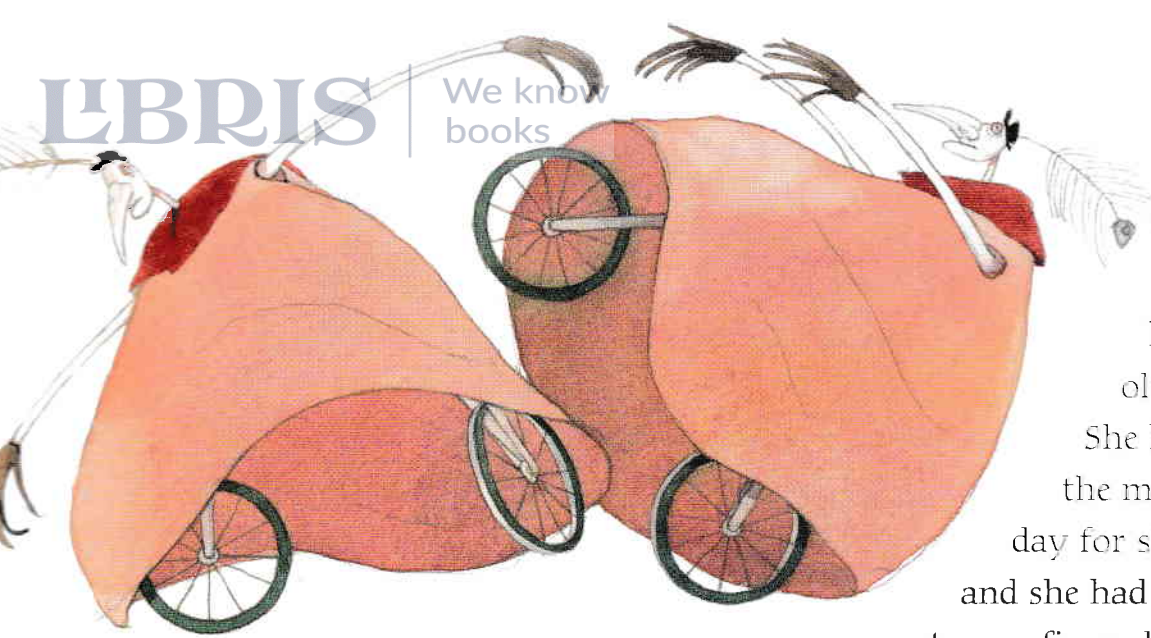
Many years ago, in a large town in Germany, there lived a cobbler and his wife. The cobbler sat in his little workshop at the corner of the street all day long, mending shoes and slippers, and sometimes making new shoes, too. If anyone ordered a pair, he had to buy the leather first, for he was a poor man and kept no supply of shoe leather in his shop. His wife sold fruit and vegetables, which she grew in a little garden outside the town gate, and a great many people liked to buy her wares, for she was neat and cleanly dressed, and she knew how to display her vegetables and lay them out attractively.

These two good folk had a fine, handsome son, well built and quite tall for his age, which was twelve years. He used to sit in the vegetable market with his mother, and when housewives or cooks had bought a good deal of fruit from the cobbler's wife, he would carry their purchases home for them. He seldom came back from such an errand without a pretty flower, or a small coin, or a piece of cake, for the cooks' employers liked it when they brought the handsome boy home and always rewarded him well.

One day the cobbler's wife was sitting in the market place as usual. She had several baskets in front of her, containing cabbages, other vegetables, and all kinds of herbs and seeds, as well as a smaller basket of early pears, apples, and apricots. Young Jacob, for that was the boy's name, sat beside her crying her wares in his clear voice. "Come along, gentlemen, look at this fine cabbage, smell these delicious herbs! Early pears, ladies, early apples and apricots! Who'll buy? My mother's selling cheap." That was the boy's cry.

Then an old woman came walking across the market place. Her clothes looked rather tattered and torn, her small, pointed face was wrinkled with age, and she had red eyes and a sharp hook nose that almost touched her chin.

She leaned on a long stick as she went along, and you couldn't really say just how she did go along, for she hobbled and slipped and tottered; it was as if she had wheels on her legs, and might tumble over any moment and fall flat on her face on the paving stones.



The cobbler's wife
looked hard at the
old woman.

She had been sitting in
the market place every
day for sixteen years now,
and she had never seen this
strange figure before. And she

couldn't help feeling alarmed when the old woman hobbled over to her and
stopped beside her baskets.

"Are you Hannah who sells fruits and vegetables?" asked the old woman in a
harsh, croaking voice, and her head shook back and forth the whole time.

"I am," replied the cobbler's wife. "Is there anything you'd like?"

"We'll see, we'll see! Let me look at your herbs, let me look at your herbs and see
if you have what I need," replied the old woman. Bending down to the baskets,
she thrust a pair of ugly, dirty hands into the basket of herbs, snatched up in her
long, spidery fingers the plants that had been so prettily arranged, and then lifted
them to her long nose one by one and sniffed them well. It went to the heart of
the cobbler's wife to see the old woman treat her choice herbs so roughly, but she
dared not protest, for it was a customer's right to examine the goods on sale, and
she felt a strange fear of the woman too. When the old woman had gone through
the whole basketful, she muttered, "Poor stuff, poor herbs, none of the things I
want. Ah, it was much better fifty years ago. Poor stuff, poor stuff!"

Her remarks annoyed little Jacob.

"You rude old thing!" he said crossly.

"First you run your nasty dirty fingers through our pretty herbs and crush them,
then you hold them up to your long nose so that nobody who saw you will
want to buy them, and now you go calling our wares poor stuff, when even the
Duke's cook buys everything from us!"



The old woman squinted at the bold boy, gave an unpleasant laugh, and said in her hoarse voice, "Oho, my boy, do you like my nose, my lovely long nose? You will have one just like it in the middle of your face, hanging down over your chin." So saying, she hobbled over to the other basket, which was full of cabbages. She picked up the finest heads of white cabbage in her hands, squeezed them until the leaves squeaked, then threw them back into the jumbled basket and repeated, "Poor stuff, poor cabbage!"

"Don't waggle your head about in that nasty way!" cried the boy in alarm. "Your neck is as thin as a cabbage stalk; it might easily snap off, and your head would fall into the basket, and then who'd want to buy our cabbage?"

"So you don't care for thin necks, eh?" murmured the old woman, smiling. "Well, you won't have one of those; you'll have a head well down between your shoulders to keep it from falling off your little body."

"Don't talk such nonsense to the child!" cried the cobbler's wife at last, vexed by the old woman's long examination and inspection and sniffing of her wares.

"If you want to buy anything, hurry up. You're scaring my other customers away."

"Very well, just as you say," said the old woman, looking grim.

"I'll buy these six cabbages, but as you see, I have to lean on my stick, so I can't carry them. Let your son take the goods home for me and I'll give him a reward."

The boy didn't want to go with her, and he cried, because he was afraid of the ugly old woman. But his mother urged him to go, thinking it was a shame to make the feeble old woman carry such a load alone. Half weeping, he did as she said, wrapped the cabbages in a cloth and followed the old woman away.

She did not walk very fast, and it took her almost three quarters of an hour to reach a very distant part of town, where she finally stopped outside a small,

