



# The Flying Trunk

Self-Improvement, Creativity, Learning from Mistakes

A story from a collection of fairy tales compiled by the famous storyteller Hans Christian Andersen.

An unusual story about the light-hearted son of a merchant, who wastes all of his inherited money. The only thing left of the fortune in the end is a trunk. However, he...



🕒 24 min

😊 5+

**There once was a successful merchant** who was so rich he could pave the entire street where he lived with silver. And even after doing that, he'd still have so much left that he probably wouldn't notice.

But of course, he would never do such a thing! He knew how to invest his money and wealth much better, plus he worked 20-hour days. For every coin he gave away, two **would return**. That is how good a merchant he was. Up until one day when he passed away in his sleep. He was finally laid to rest for some very well-deserved peace.

All of his money went to his son, Ayaz, who began gleefully squandering it away. He went out every night. He ate at the finest restaurants, eating exotic meals with the most expensive **wines they had**. He then enjoyed himself by going to masquerades - he always wore the Fool's costume, because it made him laugh to look silly. He threw money away on his friends, buying them pricey - but useless - trinkets.

He even used some of his silver coins instead of stones to skip them across a **nearby lake**, just for fun! Soon, however, his father's life-long treasure dried up. Ayaz was left with nothing but four small pennies, a pair of old green socks with holes and an antique silk **dressing gown**.

Now that he was broke and (nearly) penniless, his friends didn't want to have anything to do with him. They even refused to say hello to him in the streets, because he looked like a beggar. He was an embarrassment. Yet one of the friends had a soft spot for Ayaz and felt sorry for him. He sent him an old, battered trunk with a note, telling him to put everything he had left in it so he wouldn't lose it. It was sound advice, except the merchant's son had next to nothing left.

Instead, he climbed inside the trunk alone and wondered what had become of his life. “Why did I waste my father’s wealth on such **foolish things**?” he asked himself, feeling sorry for himself. “Why didn’t my father’s gift as a wise merchant come down to me?” He was so sad, he actually had tears streaming down his face onto the floor of the trunk.

But. This was no ordinary trunk. As soon as the young man sat up inside, lifting the lid, it flew up in the air. Whoosh! It swished up the chimney and swooshed high **above the clouds**. Eventually, it flew all the way to Turkey! It landed thunk, thinkety thunk! and Ayaz crawled out. His legs were unsteady, but he couldn’t stop grinning.

He hid the trunk in the nearby woods, under a golden-red carpet of fallen leaves and headed towards a city he spied on a distant hill. When he had almost reached the city, he saw a glorious palace at the very center and top of the hill, **glinting with gold**. He noticed all of the windows seemed to be only on the top floors.

Making his way into the city, he met a Turkish amah, or nanny, who was pushing a baby in a stroller. “Greetings, nurse,” he said, approaching her. “Who lives in that grand palace in the middle of the city? The one with the windows so high in the sky?”

“The daughter of the sultan lives there,” said the nanny. “She’s as pretty as a delicate and rare flower. Unfortunately, it was once foretold things wouldn’t end well at all if she **fell in love**. Which is why nobody’s allowed to see her and she’s allowed to see no one except her maids, poor girl.”

The merchant’s son thanked her and returned to the woods. He sat inside his creaking trunk and flew up to the highest **tippy-top windows**, where he entered the princess’s chambers.

The princess was sleeping on a sunflower yellow sofa. She was so beautiful, so amazingly beautiful. The Ayaz couldn’t help himself and gave her a gentle kiss. The princess **woke up in a fright**. The young man introduced himself as a Turkish god who ascended from the clouds. The princess liked the sound of that and calmed down.

“What’s your name?” she asked him.

“Ayaz, my princess. It means ‘cool breeze’ and was named because of my flying powers.”

She blinked at him in amazement, and motioned to a nearby sofa, filled with soft pillows.

He sat down and immediately started twisting her around his finger. He told her in wonderful words about her eyes – how they were two mesmerising deep lakes with her thoughts swimming inside, like mermaids. “The blue of azure for the lakes, with sprinkles of lavender for the nymphs’ tails.” She blushed.

He spoke of her forehead. “My princess, it’s a beautiful snowy-white mountain full of magical, musical halls. On the walls are works of art no eye can imagine.” She **blushed deeper**.

He talked of her lips, too. “They are the shade of ripe berries in my favourite season, summer, and they smile like a sunrise.” She blushed a crimson red at that. “Would you like to hear some stories?” he asked her and she nodded.

So he told her of a skinny stork named Lork, the one who brings children to families; of ornery ogres living underground, and mad masons with big top hats. He continued telling her magnificent tale after tale indeed, each story more fantastic than the last. His compliments and his stories had put her completely under his spell. When the Ayaz asked her for her hand, she agreed eagerly.

“You must return on Saturday!” she said. “That’s when my parents come to me for tea. They’re going to be so proud when they find out I’m marrying a god! Prepare a fairy tale for them? My mother loves the noble, enlightening ones, while my father prefers the cheerful ones that make him laugh.”

“Very well then, a fairy tale will be my wedding gift,” he replied. “Alas, it’s time I must go. Farewell, my princess.”

“Wait!” she cried, running out of the room to return with a detailed black scabbard. She handed it to him. He unsheathed it, revealing a sabre inlaid with **golden coins**. Of course, Ayaz was very happy with it.

He climbed in his trunk and **flew away**. Along the way, he bought a new satin dressing gown and a new pair of silk socks and returned to the woods to come up with a fairy tale. Soon, however, it started raining heavily and the wind **blew fiercely**. He didn't care, he was so focused on writing the perfect tale.

“It must have personality!” he thought. “And some action!” He thought some more. “Romance? Ewww, no!” he exclaimed, making a face. “Something funny...” He thought long and hard for several days until he had the fairy tale ready.

It was just in time for the tea with the princess and her parents on Saturday. When he arrived, the sultan and his wife were already expecting him in their daughter's chamber.

“Well, we can't wait to hear the clever and insightful tale you've prepared for us,” said her mother, after they greeted him politely.

“Yes, the cheerful tale that will make us laugh as well!” added the sultan.

“Well, then listen carefully and you just may get your wishes,” said Ayaz. He cleared his throat dramatically. “Ahem, mrrrhg, ahem!” Finally, he began his tale.

“Once upon a time, there was a special house where all things talked to one another whenever no one was around **to hear them**.

There were the royal matches, who were very proud of their noble origin. They came from a tall pine tree, you see, which used to grow in the heart of the forest. The matches were once tiny splinters inside the trunk, but now they were lying on a shelf next to some flint and steel, as well as an old iron pot. They cast their minds back to their youth.

‘We lived such a noble life up inside that majestic branch when we were still little,’ they said. ‘Every morning and every evening, we would drink tasty tea from crystal dew. The sun used to shine brilliantly all day long and **little birds** - usually larks - sang us their tales to keep us company.

We knew we were very rich, because the broad-leaved trees only wore clothes in summer. Yet our family could afford our green garb all year round! One day the woodcutters came and our family was scattered all **over the world**. It was a sad day for us all, saying goodbye.

The trunk became the mast of a marvellous ship, sailing the length and breadth of the oceans. The branches travelled to all sorts of places, too like Iceland and Australia. And the splinters? Well, we are fated to bring the brightest light to common people. Which is why such a noble stock as us has come to this very kitchen.’

‘Harrumph!’ said the iron pot sitting next to them. ‘Well, my story’s a bit different.’ It gave a long sigh. ‘Ever since I’ve come to the world of men, they keep **cooking in me** and then scrubbing me in cold water. The worst is the stinky cabbage with raw fish heads! Yuck!’ It rattled in annoyance.

‘But - I am responsible for the well-being of the whole family and the main delight in my life is sitting cleanly on a shelf and talking to my friends. The only one bringing us some news from the world outside is the pail, who sometimes ventures to the yard. Oh, and the basket. That one has really travelled throughout the land!

The last news he brought us about the nation and the government was rather disturbing. The old porcelain bowl took such a fright after his last report from outside, she fell and smashed into a million pieces. Let me tell you, he’s a freethinker!’

‘You all talk too-too much!’ snapped the flint and hit the steel **so hard it sparked**. ‘Why don’t we try having a bit of fun tonight?’

‘Yes, let’s have a contest and see who is of the noblest birth!’ rejoiced the matches.

‘No, no. I don’t like to talk about my childhood,’ said the clay bowl. ‘Let’s have a little evening entertainment instead? I’ll begin - I’ll tell you what happened to me once. Pay attention please: On the shores of the Baltic sea under the branches of Danish oak trees...’

‘What a wonderful beginning!’ **chattered the plates.** ‘We bet we’re going to love this tale!’

‘Oh, I spent my youth with a nice quiet family living in those parts. They often polished furniture, scrubbed the floor and put on clean curtains!’ the knife cut in on them.

‘Your storytelling is so gripping,’ boomed the broom. ‘It’s evident you’re a woman, since the stories are always so wonderfully tidy, you see.’

‘Yes, indeed, indeed,’ agreed the pail, jumping up in joy and splashing a bit of water **on the floor.**

The bowl continued her story, which finished just as nicely as she began.

The plates **tinkled with joy,** and the broom pulled a bit of parsley from the sand and gave it to the bowl as a gift.

‘I feel like dancing!’ exclaimed the iron fire poker. Right away he began swinging about, doing a jig. Oh, if only you could see how high he was kicking up his one leg!

‘What a poor wretch,’ thought the matches. ‘He has no sense of rhythm!’

It was now time for **the kettle to sing,** but she refused, explaining that she had caught a nasty cold. She claimed she couldn’t possibly sing until someone brought her to a boiling point. But she was surely just making excuses. It was more like she only wanted to sing at her master’s lofty table with his famous guests, you see.

There was also an old quill lying on the window. The housemaid usually **wrote with it.** There was nothing really remarkable about it, except that it always sank too deep in the ink-pot. It was actually rather proud of that. ‘If

the kettle won't sing,' said the quill, 'so be it. There's a lark in a cage outside who would be quite happy to sing for us.'

'I think that would be **most inappropriate!**' stepped in the old teapot with a snobby frown. She was the kitchen's lead soprano - and the kettle's stepsister. 'We shouldn't listen to such a squeaky bird! But I will let the basket be the judge of that...'

'I'm cross with all of you,' complained the basket, 'I'm so very cross you can't **even imagine!** This is no way to spend the evening! We should be turning this house upside down! Each of you would take up a different place than usual, and I'd arrange the whole thing. Wouldn't that be a laugh?'

'Yes, let's have fun and misbehave! We may misbehave! Maybe misbehave!' they all chanted.

But suddenly, the strict housemaid opened the door and entered. They all fell silent as the grave, not one making a peep. The maid picked up the matches **and lit one** - oh how it crackled and blazed.

'Now everyone can see how radiant we are!' the matches sighed happily. 'What a beautiful and noble light we give to everyone,' thought the matches together, as the lit match slowly **burnt down**.

"What a **wonderful fairy-tale!**" clapped the sultana, delighted. "It felt as if I were right in the kitchen next to those matches, feeling mischievous with the basket! We will be happy to bless your wedding. It seems you are quite worthy of her."

"Exactly, my dear! I agree.' The sultan then turned to Ayaz. 'You will marry our daughter **on Monday, son,**" he said.

And just like that, at a finger snap, they'd accepted him in the family.

The rumour about the wedding quickly spread across the country and on the eve of the celebration, the entire city was shining with bright, vivid colours. Royal servants were giving away sticky buns and cheesy pretzels in the

streets. They threw them to children who were reaching up to catch them, chanting glory to the sultan and whistling **on their fingers**.

"I should contribute as well," thought the merchant's son. "I want to impress my beautiful bride-to-be with more than just tales!"

So he flew to buy fireworks in an exotic market, packed them all in his trunk with him inside and took off for the sky **over the city**.

Nobody had ever seen a spectacle as wonderful as when he fired the rockets from the puffy clouds. Oh, how they were **bursting and crackling**! And what amazing colours they turned the sky into! Fuchsias and ambers and exploding white stars!

All of the Turks were jumping with joy. Everyone could finally see that the princess was really marrying a god. Her blessing would be their blessing.

When the merchant's son landed back in the forest, he thought to himself: "I'll go take a stroll in the town to see if the fireworks left a good impression."

He walked among the people and listened to their **praise and excitement**. Everyone agreed it was simply marvellous - almost miraculous.

"I saw an actual god," said one of them. "His eyes were as bright as the sun's center and his beard was frothy like a rising tide!"

"He was flying in a flaming orange caftan," said another. "I could see sweet little angels peeping out of its folds and creases!"

He had heard a great many delighted voices, indeed, and it made him happy. He decided to go back to the woods. After all, the next day was his wedding day. He had to arrive on time, looking handsome, and return to that tall tower window where he'd met his bride for the first time.

He returned **to the forest** to get some rest in his trunk - but it was nowhere to be found! There was nothing. No, but wait a minute. There were ashes. The trunk had burnt to ashes! A tiny spark left inside from the fireworks must have grown into a raging fire and consumed his flying trunk until it



was gone.

The young man realised in terror and with a horrified sadness that he couldn't fly anymore. And there was no way he could get to his bride.

The next day, Monday, the princess stood on the roof waiting for him until dusk. Tuesday morning, she put on a violet mourning gown and vowed never to fall in love again. Though in the early hours of dawn, you might catch glimpses of her, still there, looking out for him.

And the groom, Ayaz? He wanders the world (everywhere but Turkey, that is) telling his fairy-tales. But none are as merry as the one about the matches, the tale which won him true love and which nearly **won him a wife**.