

A Fairy Tale



Arthur Hoppe

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a terribly awful villainous ogre named The Mad Butcher of Transylvania. He lived in a castle on Transylvania avenue.

Everybody was very afraid of the Mad Butcher. They said he chopped off people's heads and boiled them in oil and drove trucks over his own grandmother.

This made the Mad Butcher very mad. He said nothing like that was going on in his castle at all and if anybody said so he'd chop off their head.

But the pile of bones in the castle courtyard got higher and higher. Finally, it was visible over the castle wall. The people rose up against the Mad Butcher. To appease them, he dragged out his two favorite courtiers and ruthlessly chopped off their heads.

It was too late, however. The angry people drove the Mad Butcher into exile and he holed up in a cave, lucky to escape with his life.

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THREE YEARS passed. At last, the former Mad Butcher emerged from his cave, blinking in the sunlight and smiling tentatively.

"Hi," he said. "I want to confess."

"You want to confess you chopped off people's heads and boiled them in oil and all that terrible stuff?" the people asked.

"Goodness me, no," said the former Mad Butcher. "I want to confess that I am too nice a guy. I just can't help it. I've got a heart as big as all outdoors."

"That's a handicap?" asked the people.

"It certainly is if you're running a mad butcher shop," said the former Mad Butcher, shaking his head sadly. "I mean when I first saw those bones piling up in the courtyard I should have asked my two favorite courtiers what was going on. Any normal, suspicious person would. Darn! Why do I have to be so naive and trusting?"

"That's a shame," said the people.

"Then when my two favorite courtiers finally came to me and told me everything, I didn't know what to do."

"Why didn't you call the cops?" asked the people.

"I'm just too big a sweetheart, I guess," said the former Mad Butcher, his voice choking up.

"You poor man," said the people, a few taking out their handkerchiefs.

"And when I did try to chop off their heads, first I chopped off one of my own arms and then the other," said the former Mad Butcher, tears running down his cheeks. "Oh, I have to admit I'm not a very good butcher."

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BY NOW everyone was sobbing uncontrollably. "Please, please forgive me for letting you down," cried the former Mad Butcher, "by being such a good, decent, kindly, loving, trusting, wonderful human being."

The people said they sure would. They even gave him a couple of million dollars as evidence of their eternal admiration. And everybody lived happily ever after.