# Gentle Dora: The Story of a Devil Who Married a Scold.

There was once a young devil who, as he wandered over the earth, found a book. He slipped it carelessly into his pocket and carried it down to hell. Now this book contained a list of the good deeds of a rich man, and the account of a good deed is of course never allowed to enter hell.The devils in hell when they opened the book were greatly incensed over their comrade's stupidity and at once they dragged him off to Prince Lucifer for punishment.Lucifer when he heard the case shook his head gravely."This is a serious offense," he said to the culprit. "To atone you must do one of two things: every day for seven years you must bring a soul to hell, or you must remain on earth for seven years and take service among men. Which will you do?"The young devil was a stupid fellow and he knew he would never be able to seduce a soul every day for seven years. So he said:"If I must choose, Your Majesty, let it be exile on earth for seven years."So Lucifer pronounced sentence and the young devil was driven out of hell and warned not to return until the seven years were up.Sad and forlorn he wandered up and down the world looking for work. People everywhere were suspicious of his black face and turned him away.One day he met a man to whom he told his story."And just because I'm a devil," he said in conclusion, "no one will hire me.""I know where you can get work," the man told him. "Just beyond the next village there is a big farm which is owned by a woman. She's always in need of laborers for she has such a sharp tongue and such a mean disposition that no one can stay with her longer than a month. Her name is Dora and in mockery the people hereabouts call her Gentle Dora. Why don't you take service with her? As you're a devil, you may be able to get the best of her."The devil thanked the man for this suggestion and at once presented himself to Gentle Dora. Gentle Dora, as usual, was in need of laborers and so she employed the devil instantly in spite of his black face.From the start she worked him like a slave from morning till night, scolded him incessantly, and didn't give him half enough to eat. The poor fellow grew thin and almost pale. The months went by and each new month was harder to live through than the one before."I can do a day's work with the best of them," the devil thought to himself, "but there is no one, either man or devil, who can stand this woman's everlasting nagging. Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do?"Now Gentle Dora was looking for a husband. She had already had five husbands all of whom she had nagged to death. On account of this record every bachelor and widower in the village was a little shy of proposing himself as a sixth husband.The devil, who as I have told you was a simple fellow, finally decided that it would be a mighty clever thing for him to marry Gentle Dora. He felt sure that once he was her husband she would give him less work and more food. So he proposed to her.The rich widow didn't much fancy his black face, but on the other hand she wanted a husband and so, as there was no other prospect in sight, she accepted him."At least," she thought to herself, "by making him my husband, I'll save his wages."It wasn't long before the devil found out that life as a husband was even harder than life as a laborer. Now without wages he had ten times more to do while Gentle Dora did nothing but spend her time hunting work for him."Why do you think I've married," she would cry, "if it isn't to have some one take care of me!"So she would stand over him and scold and scold and scold while he, poor devil, toiled and sweated, doing the work of six men.Time went by and the devil grew thinner and thinner and paler and paler. Gentle Dora begrudged him every mouthful he ate and was forever harping on his enormous appetite.At last one day she said to him:"You're simply eating me out of house and home. From now on you will have to board yourself. As I'm an honest woman I'll treat you justly. This year we'll divide the harvest half and half. Which will you have: that which grows above the ground, or that which grows below the ground?"This sounded fair enough and the devil said:"Give me the part that grows above the ground."Thereupon Gentle Dora had the whole farm planted in potatoes and beets and carrots. When the harvest came she gave the devil the tops and herself took all the tubers.That winter the poor devil would have starved if the neighbors hadn't taken pity on him and fed him.In the spring Gentle Dora asked him what part of the new crop he wanted."This time," he said, "give me the part that grows under the ground."Gentle Dora agreed and then planted the entire farm in millet and rye and poppy seed. At the harvest she took all the grain as her share and told the devil that the worthless roots belonged to him."What chance has a poor devil with such a woman?" he thought to himself bitterly.Discouraged and unhappy he went out to the roadside where he sat down. The troubles of domestic life pressed upon him so heavily that soon he began to cry.Presently a journeyman shoemaker came by and said to him:"Comrade, what ails you?"The devil looked at the shoemaker and, when he saw that the shoemaker was a friendly sort of person, he told him his story."Why do you stand such treatment?" the shoemaker asked.The devil snuffled."How can I help it? I'm married to her.""How can you help it?" the shoemaker repeated. "Comrade, look at me. At home I have just such a wife as your Gentle Dora. There was no living with her in peace, so one morning bright and early I ups and puts my tool kit on my shoulder and leaves her. Now I wander about from place to place, mending a shoe here and a slipper there, and life is much pleasanter than it used to be. Why don't you leave your Gentle Dora and come along with me? We'll make out somehow."The devil was overjoyed at the suggestion and without a moment's hesitation he tramped off with the shoemaker."You won't regret the kindness you've done me," the devil said. "I'm so thin and pale that probably you don't realize I'm a devil. But I am and I can reward you."They wandered about together for a long time living on the shoemaker's earnings. At last one day the devil said:"Comrade, you have befriended me long enough. It is now my turn to do something for you. I've got a fine idea. You see that big town we're coming to? Well, I'll hurry on ahead and take possession of the prince's young daughter. You come along more slowly and when you hear the proclamation that the prince will richly reward any one who will cure his daughter, present yourself at the palace. When they lead you to the princess, make mysterious passes over her and mumble some gibberish. Then I will quit her body and the prince will reward you."The devil's scheme worked perfectly. When the shoemaker reached the town the herald was already proclaiming the sad news that the princess had been taken possession of by a devil and that the prince was in search of a capable exorcist.The shoemaker presented himself at the palace, made mysterious passes over the princess's body, pretended to mumble magic incantations, and in a short time had apparently succeeded in exorcising the devil.In his gratitude for the princess's recovery, the prince paid the shoemaker a hundred golden ducats.The devil waited for the shoemaker outside the town gate."You see," he said when the shoemaker had shown him the money, "I'm not an ungrateful devil."They turned the same trick in several other cities until the shoemaker had a heavy bag of gold."Now you're a rich man," the devil said, "and we can part company. My seven years are up and I am going soon to return to hell. But before I go I'm going to take possession of one more princess. I served Gentle Dora so long that it's a pleasant change to rule some one. This time don't you try to exorcise me. You're famous now and the princess's father will probably hunt you out and beg you to cure his daughter, but you must excuse yourself. This is all I ask of you. If you allow yourself to be persuaded, I'll punish you by taking possession of your body. Don't forget!"They bade each other good-bye and parted, the shoemaker going west and the devil east.Soon word began to pass up and down the land that there was a great king toward the east who needed the services of the famous exorcist to restore his daughter. Emissaries of the king found the shoemaker and against his will dragged him to court. He declared he was powerless to help the princess but the king wouldn't listen to him and threatened him with torture and death if he refused to make the effort."Well then," the shoemaker said, after much thought, "chain the princess to her bed, order out all the attendants, and let me see her alone."The king had these conditions fulfilled and the shoemaker went boldly into the princess's chamber."Hist! Devil!" he called softly.Instantly the devil jumped out of the princess's mouth and when he saw the shoemaker he stamped his foot in anger."What!" he cried. "You've come after my warning! Don't you remember what I told you?"The shoemaker put his finger to his lips and winked."Softly, comrade," he whispered, "softly! I'm not come to exorcise you but to warn you. You know that precious wife of yours, Gentle Dora? Well, she's traced you here and she's down in the courtyard now waiting for you."The devil turned white with fright."Gentle Dora!" he gasped. "Lucifer, help me!"Without another word he jumped out the window and flew straight down to hell as fast as the wind could carry him. And so great is his fear of Gentle Dora that he has never dared to show his face on earth again.The king rewarded the shoemaker royally and to this day the shoemaker is wandering merrily about from place to place. Whenever he hears of a woman who is a scold, he says:"Why, she's a regular Gentle Dora, isn't she?"And when people ask him: "Who's Gentle Dora?" he tells them this story.

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