



The Carpenter's Son

by Jenna McKenzie

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David's broom moved swiftly over the shaving-strewn floor. He didn't even stop as he usually did to watch the flecks of dust swirling golden in the streams of light from the windows. After what seemed like endless years of sweeping shavings and other such monotonous tasks in his father's workshop, he was finally going to be allowed to make something all of his own! The thought filled his little-boy heart with glee. He knew exactly what he wanted to build, a stool for Mother that was as pretty and useful as she was. He had confided this to his grandfather and explained his idea in great detail. Father had promised days ago that the two would start working as soon as there was time. Maybe today, David hoped.

"David, take a look at those scrap pieces and pick out something for your project," his father waved toward a pile of wood pieces without looking up from the intricate design he was carving in the back of a chair. David bounded over eagerly and looked carefully over the wood, "This one," he seized a large piece.

His father glanced up, "Too big, we don't want to waste wood."

"Oh, I can cut it."

"See if there's a different one."

"This one seems too small."

"It is."

"What about this?"

"Too hard, you wouldn't be able to work it."

David's brow puckered in frustration. Was anything right? Just then he heard his mother calling them to dinner.

"How is David's first project coming?" Grandfather asked Father that evening after David had gone to bed. "We didn't get enough time to start it. That chair took longer than I expected," Father replied. "I told him to pick out some scrap pieces but he doesn't seem to know the first thing about what to do."

Grandfather smiled, "Do any of you, when you first start out?" His old hands, workman-

hard and master-craftsman-skilled, whittled a tiny bird from a bit of stick for David's little sister.

Father smiled, too, a little sheepishly, "I suppose not. But I expected a little more from a boy who all but grew up in the shop, even a daydreamer like him. I don't know how this will go."

"Do you know what he wants to make?"

Father looked surprised, "Well, no. Come to think of it, we never talked about it. I wanted him to make a stool."

"That's what he wants to make. He's been telling me about it all week. It's a surprise for Elizabeth."

"I wonder why he didn't tell me?"

"Perhaps you had no time to hear."

Neither spoke for a moment.

"Time," Grandfather repeated. "Young ones take much time. They have dreams and ideas beyond what we could ever imagine. We have the knowledge to mend and order and create. If you have a tree with valuable wood and a carpenter with valuable skill, what do you need to make something?"

"Tools," Father answered slowly.

"Yes," agreed Grandfather. "And time."

The next day morning, David swept the shop more slowly. His eyes squinted calculatingly at the scrap pile and he stopped now and then to draw out crude patterns in the dust with his finger. He sighed. It was no good, he just didn't know what to do.

Father laid down his chisel and called his son, "David, what is it that you had in mind?"

"I wanted to make Mother a stool," David said quietly.

"Exactly what I started with myself. Let's see." Father and son knelt by the scrap pile,

turning over the pieces.

"This one for the top," Father pointed. "It's light and strong and if we cut this rough part off it will be just the right size."

David touched the wood and a smile lit up his face.

"Then we need smaller pieces for the legs? Of the same kind?" he asked.

"We'll find something."

Late afternoon found Father back at his work with David perched on his bench, industriously sanding a newly-made little stool. Grandfather entered the shop. "How are things going?"

David hopped down and held up his masterpiece for inspection. "Look what I made! Father told me how but he let me do most of it. Isn't it fine?"

"Yes, David. It is," Grandfather looked over at the man that had not so long before been a little fellow himself, sawdust in his hair and all. Grandfather and Father smiled at each other. "Very fine indeed."