



The Old Women and Her Servants

La Fontaine
French

Easy
1 min read

A beldam kept two spinning maids,
Who plied so handily their trades,
Those spinning sisters down below
Were bunglers when compared with these.
No care did this old woman know
But giving tasks as she might please.
No sooner did the god of day
His glorious locks enkindle,
Than both the wheels began to play,
And from each whirling spindle
Forth danced the thread right merrily,
And back was coil'd unceasingly.
Soon as the dawn, I say, its tresses show'd,
A graceless cock most punctual crow'd.

The beldam roused, more graceless yet,
In greasy petticoat bedight,
Struck up her farthing light,
And then forthwith the bed beset,
Where deeply, blessedly did snore
Those two maid-servants tired and poor.
One oped an eye, an arm one stretch'd,
And both their breath most sadly fetch'd,
This threat concealing in the sigh—
“That cursed cock shall surely die!”
And so he did:—they cut his throat,
And put to sleep his rousing note.
And yet this murder mended not
The cruel hardship of their lot;
For now the twain were scarce in bed
Before they heard the summons dread.
The beldam, full of apprehension
Lest oversleep should cause detention,
Ran like a goblin through her mansion.
Thus often, when one thinks
To clear himself from ill,
His effort only sinks
Him in the deeper still.
The beldam acting for the cock,
Was Scylla for Charybdis' rock.[Pg 25]

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com