



# *The Bird with the Golden Gizzard: The Story of Two Brothers*

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*Easy*  
*7 min read*

There was once a poor man who had a large family. He was so poor that he had nothing to feed the children. For three days they had had no food. On the third day as the father was out cutting osiers he saw, sitting in a bush, a small bird that shone like gold.

“If I could snare that bird,” he thought to himself, “and take it home, the children would be amused and perhaps forget they were hungry.”

So he caught the bird and carried it home and, sure enough, the children were so delighted that for two days they didn't cry for food.

On the third day the bird laid a golden egg. The oldest boy took the egg to the goldsmith to sell it. The goldsmith examined it and said:

“I don’t believe I have money enough to buy this egg.”

“Just give me some bread,” the boy said. “That will be enough.”

The goldsmith gave him two loaves of bread, one under each arm, and filled his pockets with golden ducats. So for once the whole family had all it could eat and still there was money left over.

Two days later the bird laid another golden egg which the boy carried to the goldsmith and sold for the same price.

Now the goldsmith had a son who said he would like to see this wonderful bird. So he went home with the boy. He looked the bird over very carefully and under its wings he discovered an inscription that no one else had seen. The inscription read:

Whoever eats my heart will become king.

Whoever eats my gizzard will find under his head each morning a heap of golden ducats.

The youth went home and told his father about the strange inscription. They talked the matter over and at last decided that it would be well for the young man to marry the poor man’s oldest daughter provided he could get the golden bird as dowry.

The goldsmith went to see the girl’s father and after some discussion the marriage was arranged.

The wedding day arrived. The bridegroom ordered the bird to be roasted and ready to be put on the table when the bridal party came home from church. It was his intention to eat the heart himself and have his bride eat the gizzard.

The children of the family cried bitterly at the thought of losing their pretty bird, but the bridegroom, of course, had his way.

Now two of the boys stayed home from the wedding and they decided that they would like very much to taste the roast bird if only they could find a piece that nobody would miss. They did not dare take a leg or a wing, but they thought it would be safe to pick out a morsel from the inside. So one boy ate the heart, the other the gizzard. Then they were so frightened at what they had done that they ran away and never came back.

When the bride and groom returned from church, the bird was carried to the table. The groom looked at once for the heart and the gizzard and was greatly shocked at their disappearance.

The two boys who had gone out into the world found work with a merchant. They slept together and every morning the merchant's wife found a heap of golden ducats under the feather bed. She didn't know to which boy they belonged. She took them and saved them for a whole year until they filled a hogshead.

At the end of a year the boys decided to go out again into the world. The merchant showed them all the ducats his wife had found in their bed and he said to them:

"Take with you as many as you want now and when you come back you may have the rest."

The brothers parted company and each set out alone, the one to the left, the other to the right.

The younger brother came to a tavern. The landlady had two daughters who were so sharp at cards that they very soon won all the money he had. When he was picked clean he asked them to stop playing until the next morning when he would again have plenty of money.

Sure enough in the morning when he got up he had all the money he wanted. The girls asked him where it came from and he told them.

When they heard about the gizzard he had swallowed, they put something in his wine that made him sick at his stomach and he threw up the gizzard. The younger girl instantly snatched it, washed it, and swallowed it herself. Then as he had no more money they drove the poor boy away.

As he wandered in the fields he grew very hungry. He came to a meadow where he found a kind of sorrel that he ate. As soon as he ate it he turned into a goat and went jumping about the bushes nibbling at the leaves. He chanced to eat a kind of leaf that changed him back into himself.

"Ah," he thought, "now I know what to do!"

He picked some of the sorrel and some of the other leaves and went straight back to the tavern. He told them there that he was bringing them a present of a new kind of spinach that tasted very good. They asked him would he cook it for them.

The cook tasted it and at once she turned into a goat. The serving maid came into the kitchen and when she

saw a goat there she drove it out. The youth asked the maid would she like to taste the new spinach. She tasted it and immediately she turned into a goat. Then when the landlady and her two daughters tasted it they, too, turned into goats.

He fed the cook and the serving maid some of the other leaves and they turned back into themselves. But the other three he left as goats.

He made halters for them and then he hitched them up and drove off.

He drove on and on until he came to a town where the king was building himself a castle. Now this king was his brother who had eaten the magic bird's heart. The king's workmen were hauling stone for the new castle, so he decided to put his goats to work hauling stone. He loaded his cart heavier than all the other carts.

The king noticed him and recognized him and asked him where he got those goats. So he told the king the whole story. The king thought the goats had been punished long enough and begged his brother to have pity on them and restore them. He took the king's advice and did so.

When they were once more human beings, he married the girl who had swallowed the gizzard. They soon became very rich, for every morning there was a heap of golden ducats under her head.

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