

The Little Cock and the Little

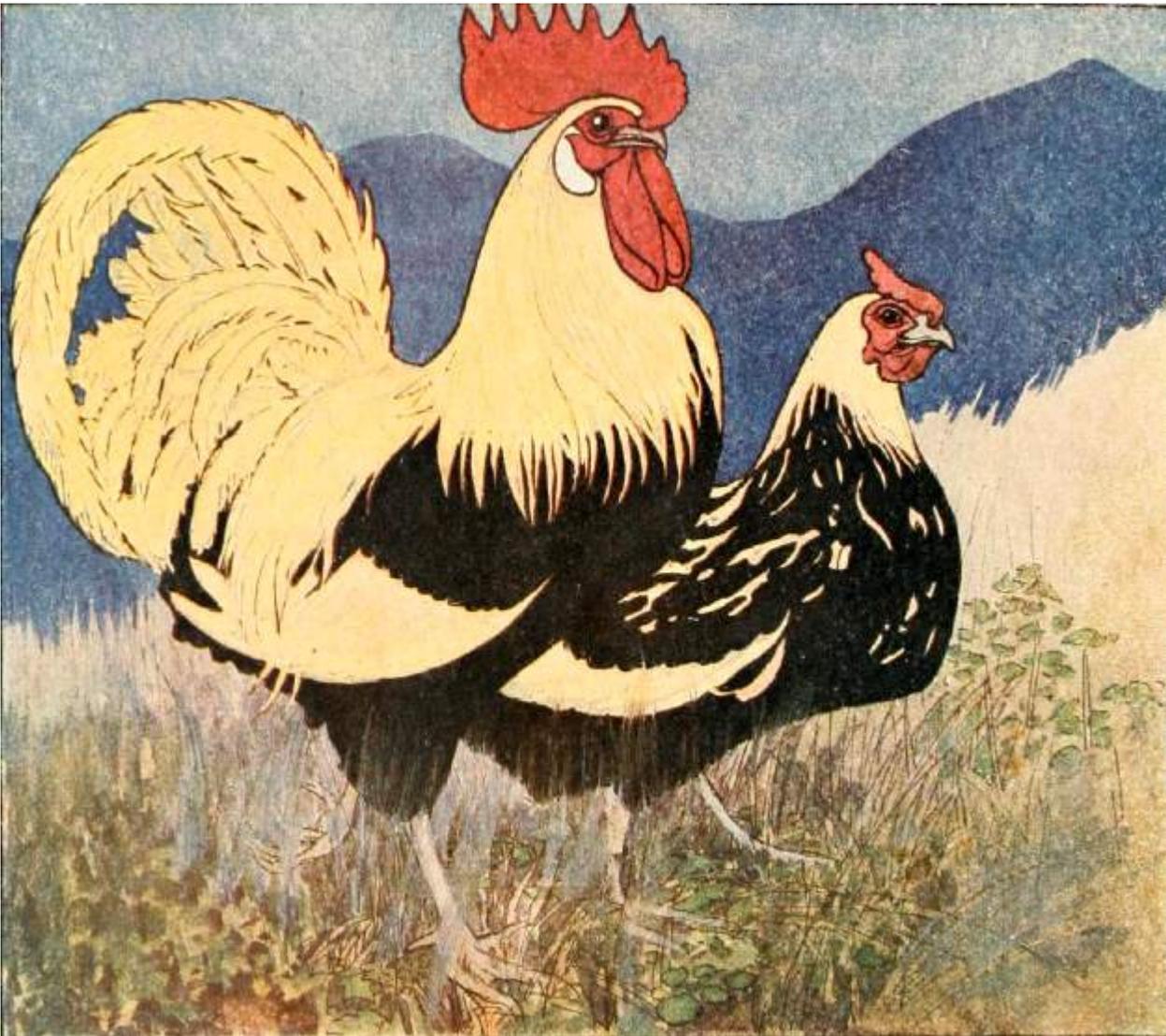
Hen

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Easy
4 min read

Once upon a time, a little cock and a little hen went to the Giant Mountains to hunt for strawberries. On the way, they agreed to divide equally all the fruit they found. The little hen was the first to find a big berry and calling the little cock according to their agreement, each ate his half.



“Once upon a time, a little cock and a little hen went to the Giant Mountains to hunt for strawberries.”

Illustration by Artur Scheiner, published in *The Disobedient Kids and other Czecho-Slovak Fairy Tales* by Božena Němcová (1921), A.Hasse

Then the little cock found a strawberry, not quite so luscious as the first, but most tempting, in fact so much so, that he said nothing about it to his little partner. Instead, he tried to gobble it down as fast as he could. But it stuck in his throat. He tried every means to get that berry down. He stretched out his neck, moved his head backwards and forwards, jumped up and down, shook himself, in fact tried every thing to make that berry go down. But there it stuck! He then began to show signs of great distress.

The little hen happening to look up, wondered what he was up to and then ran to see. When she saw that he was choking, she became greatly frightened and looked in all directions for help. Suddenly she happened to think of the spring and away she flew to get a drop of his water.

Trembling with excitement, she panted, “Dear spring, dear spring, give me a drop of your water for my little partner, the cock. He is choking to death. Hurry, hurry, dear spring.”

But the spring coldly replied, “No, I will not give you a drop, unless you bring me a leaf from the linden tree”.

So the little hen hurries off to the linden tree, of whom she begs a leaf, which she can give to the spring, who will give her a drop of water for the little cock.

But lo, the linden tree has his bargain. “Yes, I will give you a leaf, but you must bring me a kerchief that the peasant woman is making.” So off to the peasant woman, the little hen flies.

“Dear woman. I pray you, give me a kerchief which I can give to the linden tree, who will give me a leaf which I will give to the spring, who will give me a drop of water.”

Again the woman made a demand. She said, “Unless you bring me some silk from the Queen of Saba, I will not give you the kerchief”.

The little hen was pretty well tired by this time, but she did not despair. She felt quite sure that the good Queen would help her. “Dear Queen, pray let me have a bit of silk which the peasant woman says she must have. Then I will get the kerchief from the peasant woman to give it to the linden tree, who will give me a leaf for the spring, who will give me a drop of water, so that I can save the little cock.”

The Queen was no more generous than the rest. “Yes I will give you some silk, for which you must bring a pair of beautiful shoes from the shoe maker.”

The shoe maker was pegging away on a pair of shoes, when all at once he saw a little hen on his knees. “My, my”, he said in great surprise, “what do you want of me?”

“Please Mr. Shoemaker, I want a pair of your beautiful shoes for the Queen of Saba. If I can take them to her, she will give me a bit of silk for the peasant woman; she will let me have a kerchief for the linden tree; the linden tree will give me a leaf for the spring; the spring will give me a drop of water for the little cock.”

He hesitated, but seeing such a wistful little hen, decided that he would help her. Then he said, “Yes. I will give you a beautiful pair of shoes, but you must get me a bristle from the pig”.

Away she flew to the pig to ask him for a bristle. The pig was stubborn. Why should he give a bristle for

nothing? “Yes, there is one condition on which I will give you a bristle, and that is, in exchange for some corn from the harvesters.” Then to the harvesters who listened to the little hen. “Yes, they will let her have some corn, but she must get them some real cream from the farmer’s wife.”

Many people would have been discouraged after all these delays and conditions, but the little hen was unselfish and a persevering little body, so off she flew to the farmer’s wife. “Dear, dear Mrs. farmer. won’t you please give me some cream for the harvesters?”

“Certainly, but you must first bring me a bag full of grass from the ~~x~~eld.” This seemed almost impossible but the little hen was not then discouraged. She began to pluck the grass as fast as she could and, children, before you knew it, she had a bag full. Then she dragged it to the farmer’s wife and, oh joy, the farmer’s wife gave her the cream.

The little hen carried the cream to the harvesters, who gave corn for the pig. In return, the pig gave her a bristle, which she took to the shoemaker, who kept his promise and let her have a pair of his most beautiful shoes for the Queen of Saba. The Queen gave the little hen a piece of silk for the peasant woman, who let her have the kerchief she had asked for. The linden tree took the kerchief in return for a leaf, which the little hen took to the spring and got the drop of water.

When at last the drop of water was hers, she hurried to the place where she had left the little cock trying to swallow. He was at his last gasp, when she poured the little drop of water down his throat and saved him.

Children, do you think that the little cock will ever again forget to keep his word?

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