

**1812**

## **GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES**

### **THE DEATH OF THE HEN**

***Jacob Ludwig Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm***

Grimm, Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) - German philologists whose collection "Kinder- und Hausmarchen," known in English as "Grimm's Fairy Tales," is a timeless literary masterpiece. The brothers transcribed these tales directly from folk and fairy stories told to them by common villagers. The Death of the Hen (1812) - A cock and a hen go to the nut mountain and agree to divide the first nut either of them find. The hen finds a nut, eats it herself and chokes, setting in motion a succession of deaths.

#### **DEATH OF HEN**

ONCE on a time the cock and the hen went to the nut mountain, and they agreed beforehand that whichever of them should find a nut was to divide it with the other. Now the hen found a great big nut, but said nothing about it, and was going to eat it all alone, but the kernel was such a fat one that she could not swallow it down, and it stuck in her throat, so that she was afraid she should choke.

"Cock!" cried she, "run as fast as you can and fetch me some water, or I shall choke!" So the cock ran as fast as he could to the brook, and said, "Brook, give me some water, the hen is up yonder choking with a big nut stuck in her throat." But the brook answered, "First run to the bride and ask her for some red silk." So the cock ran to the bride and said, "Bride, give me some red silk; the brook wants me to give him some red silk; I want him to give me some water, for the hen lies yonder choking with a big nut stuck in her throat." But the bride answered, "First go and fetch me my garland that hangs on a willow." And the cock ran to the willow and pulled the garland from the bough and brought it to the bride, and the bride gave him red silk, and he brought it to the brook, and the brook gave him water. So then the cock brought the water to the hen, but alas, it was too late; the hen had choked in the meanwhile, and lay there dead. And the cock was so grieved that he cried aloud, and all the beasts

came and lamented for the hen; and six mice built a little wagon on which to carry the poor hen to her grave, and when it was ready they harnessed themselves to it, and the cock drove.

On the way they met the fox. "Halloa, cock," cried he, "where are you off to?" "To bury my hen," answered the cock. "Can I come too?" said the fox. "Yes, if you follow behind," said the cock.

So the fox followed behind and he was soon joined by the wolf, the bear, the stag, the lion, and all the beasts in the wood. And the procession went on till they came to a brook.

"How shall we get over?" said the cock. Now in the brook there was a straw, and he said, "I will lay myself across, so that you may pass over on me." But when the six mice had got upon this bridge, the straw slipped and fell into the water and they all tumbled in and were drowned. So they were as badly off as ever, when a coal came up and said he would lay himself across and they might pass over him; but no sooner had he touched the water than he hissed, went out, and was dead. A stone, seeing this, was touched with pity, and, wishing to help the cock, he laid himself across the stream. And the cock drew the wagon with the dead hen in it safely to the other side, and then began to draw the others who followed behind across too, but it was too much for him, the wagon turned over, and all tumbled into the water one on the top of another, and were drowned.

So the cock was left all alone with the dead hen, and he dug a grave and laid her in it, and he raised a mound above her, and sat himself down and lamented so sore that at last he died. And so they were all dead together.

**THE END**