

1812

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES
THE VAGABONDS**

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 Vagabonds (1812) - After a day of "nutting," a cock and a hen make a carriage out of nutshells, harness a duck to pull them, pick up a pin and a needle on their journey, then play some nasty tricks on an innkeeper.

THE VAGABONDS

THE COCK said to the hen, "It is nutting time; let us go together to the mountains and have a good feast for once, before the squirrels come and carry all away." "Yes," answered the hen, "come along; we will have a jolly time together." Then they set off together to the mountains, and as it was a fine day they stayed there till the evening. Now whether it was that they had eaten so much, or because of their pride and haughtiness, I do not know, but they would not go home on foot; so the cock set to work to make a little carriage out of nutshells.

When it was ready, the hen seated herself in it, and said to the cock, "Now you can harness yourself to it." "That's all very fine," said the cock, "I would sooner go home on foot than do such a thing, and I never agreed to it. I don't mind being coachman, and sitting on the box; but as to drawing it myself, it's quite out of the question." As they were wrangling, a duck came quacking, "You thieving vagabonds, who told you you might go to my mountain? Look out, or it will be the worse for you!" And she flew at the cock with bill wide open. But the cock was not backward, and he gave the duck a good dig in the body, and hacked at her with his spurs so valiantly that she begged for mercy, and willingly allowed herself to be harnessed to the carriage. Then the cock seated himself on the box and was coachman; so off they went at a great pace, the cock crying out "Run, duck, as fast as you can!" When they had gone a part of the way they met two foot-passengers- a pin and a needle. They cried "Stop! stop!" and said that it would

soon be blindman's holiday; that they could not go a step farther; that the ways were very muddy; might they just get in for a little? They had been standing at the door of the tailors' house of call and had been delayed because of beer.

The cock, seeing they were slender folks that would not take up a great deal of room, let them both step in, only they must promise not to tread on his toes nor on the hen's.

Late in the evening they came to an inn, and there they found that they could not go any farther that night, as the duck's paces were not good- she waddled so much from side to side- so they turned in. The landlord at first made some difficulty; his house was full already, and he thought they had no very distinguished appearance. At last, however, when they had made many fine speeches, and had promised him the egg that the hen had laid on the way, and that he should keep the duck, who laid one every day, he agreed to let them stay the night; and so they had a very gay time.

Early in the morning, when it was beginning to grow light, and everybody was still asleep, the cock waked up the hen, fetched the egg, and made a hole in it, and they ate it up between them, and put the eggshell on the hearth. Then they went up to the needle, who was still sleeping, picked him up by his head, and stuck him in the landlord's chair-cushion, and, having also placed the pin in his towel, off they flew over the hills and far away. The duck, who had chosen to sleep in the open air, and had remained in the yard, heard the rustling of their wings, and, waking up, looked about till she found a brook, down which she swam a good deal faster than she had drawn the carriage.

A few hours later the landlord woke, and, leaving his feather-bed, began washing himself; but when he took the towel to dry himself he drew the pin all across his face, and made a red streak from ear to ear. Then he went into the kitchen to light his pipe, but when he stooped towards the hearth to take up a coal the eggshell flew in his eyes.

"Everything goes wrong this morning," said he, and let himself drop, full of vexation, into his grandfather's chair; but up he jumped in a moment, crying, "Oh dear!" for the needle had gone into him.

Now he became angry, and had his suspicions of the guests who had arrived so late the evening before; and when he looked round for them they were nowhere to be seen.

Then he swore that he would never more harbor such vagabonds, that consumed so much, paid nothing, and played such nasty tricks into the bargain.

THE END