

**1812**

**GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES  
THE WONDERFUL MUSICIAN**

**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 Wonderful Musician (1812) - A musician walking through a wood wants company so he fiddles to bring out a good companion. A wolf, a fox, and a hare answer his call, but these are not the companions he desires.

**THE WONDERFUL MUSICIAN**

A WONDERFUL musician was walking through a forest, thinking of nothing in particular. When he had nothing more left to think about, he said to himself, "I shall grow tired of being in this wood, so I will bring out a good companion." He took the fiddle that hung at his back and fiddled so that the wood echoed.

Before long a wolf came through the thicket and trotted up to him.

"Oh, here comes a wolf! I had no particular wish for such company," said the musician. But the wolf drew nearer, and said to him, "Ho, you musician, how finely you play! I must learn how to play too." "That is easily done," answered the musician; "you have only to do exactly as I tell you." "Oh musician," said the wolf, "I will obey you, as a scholar does his master." The musician told him to come with him. As they went a part of the way together they came to an old oak tree, which was hollow within and cleft through the middle. "Look here," said the musician, "if you want to learn how to fiddle, you must put your forefeet in this cleft." The wolf obeyed, but the musician took up a stone and quickly wedged both his paws with one stroke, so fast, that the wolf was a prisoner, and there obliged to stop. "Stay there until I come back again," said the musician, and went his way.

After a while he said again to himself, "I shall grow weary here in this wood; I will bring out another companion"; and he took his fiddle and fiddled away in the wood. Before long a fox came slinking through the trees.

“Oh, here comes a fox!” said the musician; “I had no particular wish for such company.” The fox came up to him and said, “Oh my dear musician, how finely you play! I must learn how to play too.” “That is easily done,” said the musician; “you have only to do exactly as I tell you.” “Oh musician,” answered the fox, “I will obey you, as a scholar his master.” “Follow me,” said the musician; and as they went a part of the way together they came to a footpath with a high hedge on each side. Then the musician stopped, and taking hold of a hazel-branch bent it down to the earth, and put his foot on the end of it; then he bent down a branch from the other side, and said, “Come on, little fox, if you wish to learn something, reach me your left fore-foot.” The fox obeyed, and the musician bound the foot to the left-hand branch.

“Now, little fox,” said he, “reach me the right one”; then he bound it to the righthand branch. And when he had seen that the knots were fast enough he let go, and the branches flew back and caught up the fox, shaking and struggling, in the air.

“Wait there until I come back again,” said the musician, and went his way.

By and by he said to himself, “I shall grow weary in this wood; I will bring out another companion.” So he took his fiddle, and the sound echoed through the wood. Then a hare sprang out before him. “Oh, here comes a hare!” said he; “that’s not what I want.” “Ah, my dear musician,” said the hare, “how finely you play! I should like to learn how to play too.” “That is soon done,” said the musician, “only you must do whatever I tell you.” “Oh musician,” answered the hare, “I will obey you, as a scholar his master.” So they went a part of the way together, until they came to a clear place in the wood where there stood an aspen tree. The musician tied a long string round the neck of the hare, and knotted the other end of it to the tree.

“Now then, courage, little hare! Run twenty times round the tree!” cried the musician, and the hare obeyed. As he ran round the twentieth time the string had wound twenty times round the tree trunk and the hare was imprisoned, and pull and tug as he would he only cut his tender neck with the string. “Wait there until I come back again,” said the musician, and walked on.

The wolf meanwhile had struggled, and pulled, and bitten at the stone, and worked away so long, that at last he made his paws free and got himself out of the cleft. Full of anger and fury he hastened after the musician to tear him to pieces.

When the fox saw him run by he began groaning, and cried out with all his might, "Brother wolf, come and help me! The musician has betrayed me." The wolf then pulled the branches down, bit the knots in two, and set the fox free, and he went with him to take vengeance on the musician. They found the imprisoned hare, and set him likewise free, and then they all went on together to seek their enemy.

The musician had once more played his fiddle, and this time he had been more fortunate. The sound had reached the ears of a poor wood-cutter, who immediately, and in spite of himself, left his work, and, with his axe under his arm, came to listen to the music.

At last here comes the right sort of companion," said the musician; "it was a man I wanted, and not wild animals." And then he began to play so sweetly that the poor man stood as if enchanted, and his heart was filled with joy. And as he was standing there up came the wolf, the fox, and the hare, and he could easily see that they meant mischief. Then he raised his shining axe, and stood in front of the musician, as if to say, "Whoever means harm to him had better take care of himself, for he will have to deal with me!" Then the animals were frightened, and ran back into the wood, and the musician, when he had played once more to the man to show his gratitude, went on his way.

**THE END**