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# Big Goose

## AND THE LITTLE HEN



E. SCHACHERER VERFON

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THE BIG GOOSE AND  
THE LITTLE HEN





*Big Goose lived in a tumble-down house.*



*The* **Big Goose**  
**AND THE LITTLE HEN**



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## THE BIG GOOSE AND THE LITTLE HEN



**B**IG GOOSE lived in a tumble-down house in a hollow near one of the big city's neglected streets. There were weeds in the front and in the back of the house. They grew as tall as young

trees and were covered with clinging vines which crept over the ground and climbed up their stalks to get to the sunlight.

When Big Goose forced his way through this dense underbrush he liked to make believe he was walking through a jungle or among the trees in a cool, green forest.

There was no pond near his house. So for days and often weeks Big Goose could use only his pan of drinking water in order to moisten his feathers as much as possible. But when the clouds gathered in the sky and the thunder rolled so that it shook the house, Big Goose ran quickly to



*Big Goose ran quickly to an open place.*

an open place in his jungle of weeds and waited for the coming of the welcome rain.

How good he felt when the first big drops began to strike pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat on his broad back. When puddles formed in the hollow places, what fun it was to wade through them and pretend to swim in the larger ones. Those were happy days for him—days when he could remember the freedom he used to have before he came to this small place where he now lived.

Big Goose did not have the little house all to himself. Red Rooster with his family had lived there a long

time before Big Goose came. He was a fierce old fellow with a hoarse voice that scared Big Goose when he first heard it.

When Big Goose first came to this house he tried to make friends with Red Rooster.



“Good morning, sir,” he honked to him very politely, “I hope you are feeling well this beautiful morning.”

But Red Rooster would not answer him. He just gave him a wicked look and passed on.

Big Goose was sorry he could not make friends with Red Rooster. But he was too proud to do anything more about it. So he stayed on his own side of the little house.

He became very lonely and wished that the master in the big house would bring at least one other goose to keep him company, instead of adding all the time to Red Rooster’s large family.



The master in the big house had been wondering why there were not as many eggs as usual in the nests when he came around to gather them. He would say,

“I wonder what is the matter? I cannot understand it. My chickens eat just as much as ever and seem to be just as healthy as ever. Why don't they lay more eggs?”

Finally he thought that perhaps a fox or some other wild animal crept in at night and stole the eggs. So, night after night, he set a good strong trap. But the only thing he ever caught was a skirt which the wind had blown off the clothes line.

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Now all this time Red Rooster and his family knew what was the matter. Big Goose also knew and felt sorry for the man because he had been a kind master. One day he ran after his master and tried to tell him what was wrong.



But when the master saw Big Goose running after him with his neck stretched out and quacking, “Honk,

honk, honk,” at the top of his voice, he thought Big Goose was trying to bite him. So he picked up a stone and drove Big Goose away; and told his wife that he would have to take that goose and put him in the cooking pot.

This pleased Red Rooster very much. But when Big Goose heard it he said to himself,

“Here I try to help my master and he does not understand me.”

One nice, sunshiny morning while the master was again wondering what had happened to the eggs, to his great surprise a big fat hen with twelve fluffy little chicks came stepping out of the weeds.

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While the master stared, out came another hen, then still another, with their fluffy little babies behind them. Now the master was not so sorry that there had not been as many eggs in the nests as usual.

The weeds kept growing higher and higher and the little chicks kept growing bigger and bigger until finally they began to wander off alone. Big Goose saw this and thought,

“I’ll make friends with all of them, then I will be able to tell from their manners and the way they talk which one will like me most.”

But they were all afraid of him and although he spent days and days hunting nice fat worms for them, he could not coax one near enough to make friends.

There was a mystery about Big Goose which not even his master nor the man from whom he had bought him knew about. Because of this Big Goose could never be really happy. He always looked lonely. He was forgotten by Red Rooster and his large family.

*B I G   G O O S E   A N D   L I T T L E   H E N*



Then something happened which made Big Goose feel very happy and not lonely any more. One day he was walking through the weeds to reach his favorite spot where there was a little clearing. Suddenly he heard a strange noise that made him stop short. It sounded just like a baby playing with a rattle.

He stepped very softly until he came to the edge of the clearing.



*She was so frightened she could not move.*





When he peeped through the weeds he saw a sight which scared him so that he hardly knew what to do.

Right in the middle of the clearing was a queer looking snake with marks shaped like diamonds all over his body, and some strange objects on the very tip of his tail that rattled every time he shook it.

Right in front of the snake stood the nicest Little Hen that Big Goose had ever seen. She was so frightened that she could not move even an inch away from the black snake.

Big Goose knew immediately what kind of a snake this one was and what would happen to Little Hen unless

something was done. In his old home he had often seen snakes like it. He knew they were called rattlesnakes and were very dangerous.

Big Goose did not wait long to make up his mind. He flew right on top of the snake and caught him between the jaws of his big hard bill, shaking him until the snake was almost broken to pieces.

Little Hen had watched with frightened eyes until the battle was over. Then she saw that her enemy could do her no more harm. When Big Goose had finished his fight he walked over toward her.

Much to his surprise she did not run

away from him as all the other chickens had done, but she stood perfectly still until he came up close to her.

Making his politest bow, Big Goose quacked,

“Madam, you need not be afraid any more. The snake is dead and I am very glad that I was able to be of service to you.”

He did not expect Little Hen to understand what he had said. But imagine his surprise when she bowed nicely in return and clucked in a very sweet voice,

“Sir, I don’t know how to thank you. You have saved my life and I shall never forget it.”



Here indeed was a great wonder—a chicken that understood his friendliness and was not afraid of him. Big Goose made friends at once with Little Hen. He was very happy when he realized that he could now have a friend to talk with.

Big Goose was naturally curious to

know where Little Hen had come from, as he was certain she did not belong to Red Rooster's family. When he finally asked her she became very sad and answered,

“Sir, I am very sorry, but that is one thing I cannot tell you. If I told you I could not stay here any longer and you would never see me again.”

Big Goose felt very sorry for Little Hen and said,

“Please stay here and let me be your friend.”

Then Little Hen was happy again and they walked away together as if they had known each other a long time.

That night Big Goose wondered if the mystery of the Little Hen could possibly be anything like the mystery in his own life. As sleep overcame him he felt very thankful for having found such a nice friend.

Bright and early the next morning Red Rooster called his family together in front of the house to count them. When he came to the end of the line there stood shy Little Hen. Red Rooster was very much surprised when he saw her.

“Who are you?” he scolded. “You don’t belong here.”

“Sir,” said Little Hen, “I am a friend of Big Goose.”



“Go away quickly then,” scolded Red Rooster, “you cannot stay here another minute,” whereupon he flew at Little Hen.

Before she could say another word Big Goose came flying between them, his neck stretched far out and the feathers on his head standing straight up.

“Don’t you dare to talk like that to this lady,” he hissed at Red Rooster. “She will stay here just as long as she pleases and I will protect her.”

Red Rooster saw that Big Goose was very angry and decided it would not be wise to go any further. So grumbling to himself he walked off with his tail drooping down to the ground. Big Goose had conquered him without a battle.

From that day on Big Goose never feared Red Rooster again and he and Little Hen were very happy.

Summer passed and winter came. The friendship between Big Goose and Little Hen grew stronger and strong-



er. When the mistress of the house threw out feed for the chickens, Big Goose was always on hand to see that Little Hen got her share.

On very cold nights they would nest together in the straw in order to keep warm. Those were happy days for both of them.

Big Goose's master lived in a house very much below the level of the street. The only way people could reach it was by a flight of shaky wooden steps which were so far apart that as often as he tried, Big Goose could not climb them. Neither could he fly up because his master had clipped his wings.

Many changes had occurred in the big world since Big Goose first came to this house. At first most of the noises he had heard in the street above were caused by horses walking, trotting, and galloping along. These he could understand because he had often seen horses at his old home.

Gradually as he listened from day to day the sound of horses' hoofs grew less and less. Instead he heard queer, rumbling noises and barking horns such as he had never heard before. Even the headlights shining on the houses puzzled him very much.

Early one spring morning he and Little Hen were talking about many

things, after having eaten a good breakfast of nice fat worms and greens. To their surprise they saw wagon after wagon drive to the edge of the street above them and unload dirt into the alley alongside the house.

Pretty soon the master of the house came out. The two friends heard the drivers of the wagons tell the master that they were going to build a driveway from the street to the alley, so that people could reach the next street.

Big Goose was very much pleased when he heard this news.

“At last,” he said to Little Hen, “we

shall be able to leave this yard and see what is going on in the world above us.”

But Little Hen was not nearly so excited about it as Big Goose, for she feared to think of what might happen to Big Goose when he found his way to freedom.

All day long, day after day, the wagons kept coming and emptying their loads. Little by little the dirt pile grew higher and higher until at last the top was level with the street. Soon after there was a nice, smooth road up which anybody could walk from the house to the street without any trouble.

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Of course the very first to try the new road after the last workman had gone was Big Goose, with Little Hen stepping timidly along beside him.

But they did not stay up there very long. Hardly had they reached the street when a great, giant animal with shining eyes as big as dinner plates came rushing toward them

with a big noise, scaring Big Goose and Little Hen so much that they fled back to the lower road. For neither had ever seen an automobile before.

Big Goose was a very proud goose. He did not sleep much that night for thinking that Little Hen would now believe him to be a coward. So he made up his mind that the very next day he would travel up the road again and boldly defy that great animal.

But the first thing that Big Goose saw the next morning scared him more than ever. There, standing in the yard was what looked like the very same animal he had seen yesterday. He almost returned to his little house,

but remembering that he was not going to be afraid he jumped in front of Little Hen, and, with head up proudly he stood watching his enemy.

But nothing happened. The strange animal stood perfectly still and acted just as though it had never seen Big Goose before. Then to his surprise the animal's side flew open and the little boy who lived in the master's house came right out of its stomach.

When he had caught a glimpse of the seat inside the animal, then Big Goose knew what the beast really was.

“Why,” he honked to Little Hen, “that's nothing but a new kind of carriage which runs without horses!”

From then on Big Goose had no more fear of automobiles. After breakfast every morning he and Little Hen marched up the road to the street to see what was going on. Whenever a wagon passed by he would not even look at it. But when an automobile came along he would chase it furiously, honking at the top of his voice.

Little Hen was scared every time he did this because she was afraid he would get hurt. So she talked with him and begged him to stop it, but Big Goose said,

“I know it is foolish, but I just cannot help myself.”



This made Little Hen very unhappy. So she decided that the only thing she could do was to try to keep Big Goose from going up the road every day.

When Big Goose was ready to start off the next morning Little Hen said to him,

“Please let us stay at home today. I do not feel well today.”

But Big Goose answered,

“I am sorry, Little Hen. But I think a nice walk is just what you need to make you feel better.”

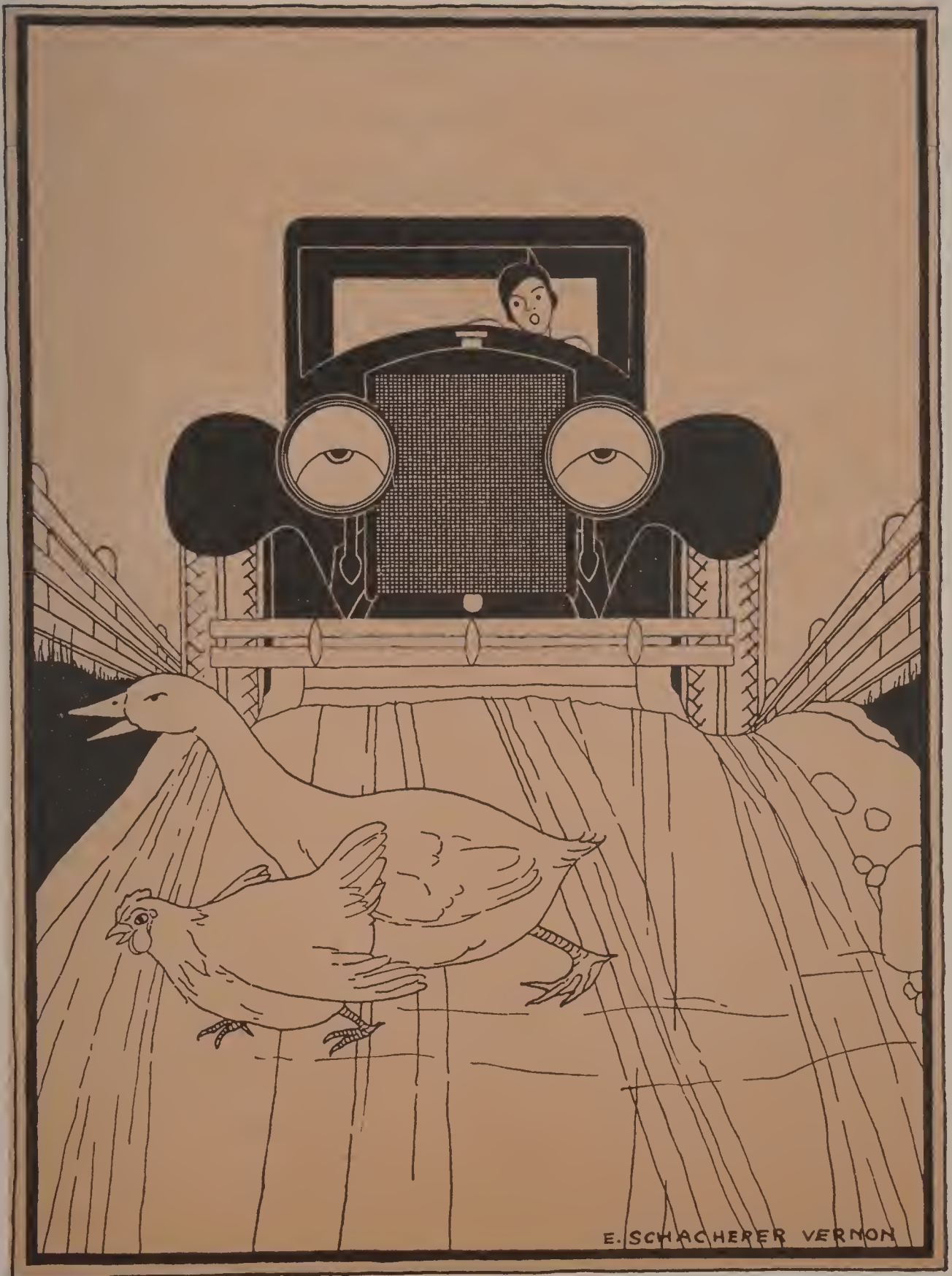
Though Little Hen was very sorry that he would not give up the trip, she followed Big Goose as usual up the road. In spite of the clear blue

sky, the warm sunshine and the green carpet of grass in the yard, she felt very sad.

Then happened the very thing which she had feared. Just as the two friends reached the upper street a big red automobile came rushing toward them sounding its horn.

As usual Big Goose started to chase it, with Little Hen following and calling to him to come back. So eager was she to head him off that she ran right in front of the automobile.

Big Goose immediately saw her danger and without any thought of his own peril he jumped over Little Hen, giving her a hard push that threw her



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*Big Goose gave Little Hen a hard push.*



clear of the wheels. When she had recovered she stood there trembling and hid her face under her wing to avoid seeing the end of her dearest friend.

At this very instant the cruel wheels passed right over Big Goose and his feathers were scattered all about, some of them settling down on Little Hen. Then a strange thing happened.

Little Hen was changed from a chicken into a lovely girl. She was all dressed in silk and satin, with a string of pure white pearls around her neck and a ribbon of shining gold around her beautiful brown hair.

When she looked at the spot where

*BIG GOOSE AND LITTLE HEN*

Big Goose had lain she saw standing there a beautiful young man dressed like a prince, and bearing a sword of the finest gold.

This is the mystery of Big Goose and Little Hen.



Long, long ago, a good king and queen ruled over the land of Happydell. They had only one child, a beautiful boy whom they loved so dearly that no matter what he did they could see nothing wrong in it. So of course he grew up to be a terribly spoiled young prince.

This prince was very bright in his studies, but he could not keep from teasing the girls. One day while driving his pony cart home from school he saw some girls walking ahead of him in the road and decided to have some fun at their expense.

The girls were all dressed in their best clothes because they were going

to a birthday party. But the young prince did not care anything about that.

The girls stepped off to one side to let him pass; but just as he caught up with them he whipped up his ponies and made them trot through a mud puddle, splashing the little girls' clothes from head to foot. The girls cried bitterly, but the prince only laughed with cruel glee and passed on.

The wicked prince soon learned that every evil deed is sure to be punished. For that night while lying asleep in his soft bed the good Queen Mab of the fairies suddenly appeared at his side. She had been peeping from be-



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hind a tree when he was playing his trick on the little girls. Queen Mab waved her fairy wand over his bed, singing this song:

God gave this earth to boys and girls,  
For happiness, and joy, and laughter;  
And he who all their pleasure spoils,  
Shall pay with grief and tears hereafter.



*B I G   G O O S E   A N D   L I T T L E   H E N*

So you, mean prince, with heart of stone,  
    Shall be deprived of all your power;  
And in a lowly form atone  
    For all the sweets you caused to sour.

Arise and as a goose go forth,  
    To wander friendless, sad and weary;  
From east to west, and south to north,  
    Through endless ages, dark and dreary.



B I G   G O O S E   A N D   L I T T L E   H E N

'Till well the lesson you have learned,  
That boys and girls should love each other;  
And blessings rare are only earned  
By treating each like friend or brother.

In a strange and distant land,  
To prove your heart is kind and loving;  
Lay down your life without command,  
To save the one who shares your roving.

And when the wheels of monster grim,  
Have brought to end your life of trouble;  
Arise and shed your goose's skin,  
And be once more a prince most noble.

This was how the boy prince became  
a Big Goose. Now let us learn about  
Little Hen.



It so happened that one of the girls  
whom the prince spattered with mud  
saw Queen Mab watching them from  
behind the tree. This girl's name was

Floraleen. She was a very good girl and a great friend of the fairies. They loved her very much and often invited her to be their guest when they had their dances in the moonlight.

After drying her tears, Floraleen returned to her home and changed her dress to one that was not quite so pretty but nice enough for the birthday party. They all played the nicest games and danced to the sweetest music. They had wonderful things to eat—dainty sandwiches, cakes covered all over with lovely icing, all kinds of fruit, and more ice cream than anybody could eat.

Floraleen did not enjoy the party a bit. She was a very tender-hearted child and was thinking all the time of seeing Queen Mab behind that tree and wondering what the queen would do to punish the mean prince. She was angry with the prince but really did not want him to come to any harm.

As soon as the party was over she ran all the way to the forest in search of the Fairy Queen. Though she looked here, there, and everywhere, not a trace of the fairy could she find in any of her usual places.

The first thing that Floraleen heard the next morning was that the prince was missing and that all of the police

and the whole army and navy were out searching for him.

Then Floraleen cried as if her heart would break, for she knew that what she had feared had come to pass, and that the prince had met with some terrible punishment for his wickedness.

It was a strict rule of the fairies that after a sentence of punishment had once been given it could never be taken back, no matter how earnestly some one might plead for it. So of course the Fairy Queen would never release the young prince. But far back in the darkest and gloomiest



*Floraleen was standing at the door of the cottage.*





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part of the forest lived an old witch. She had once been a young and beautiful fairy, but had long been banished because she had broken one of their most important laws. As she



could never do any good again, she spent her time planning ways to spoil the fairies' good deeds.

One of her ways was to cast a spell over any child who happened to be near her cottage. Floraleen had often been near it, but her mother and father had warned her and the witch was never able to get her to come inside.

But now, filled with grief for what had happened to the prince, she thought of the old witch and wondered whether she would be able to do anything. Almost before she knew what she was doing, Floraleen was standing at the door of the cottage with her

hand on the knocker. She was very much afraid.

Just then the old witch came out with a very sweet smile on her face and looking so kind and gentle that the poor girl forgot her fears and remained. The witch invited her into the cabin, but Floraleen refused. Then the witch said,

“Well, my dear, you need not come in if you do not want to. But sit with me here and tell me your troubles.”

Her voice sounded so kind that Floraleen could hold back no longer. She burst into tears and then sitting by the witch's side told her the sad story of the prince.

“My dear child,” said the witch at the end of the story, “of course I will help you. You have come to just the right place, for I know all about the poor prince and what Queen Mab did with him.”

Now this was not true, for the witch did not have the faintest idea of what had happened. But Floraleen’s heart was filled with joy when she heard the witch’s promise.

Then the witch went to a large hole in the ground at the side of her cottage, threw in some dried leaves and twigs and started a good hot fire. Then she got a pair of shears and said to Floraleen,



“Now, my dear, if you will let me cut off a tiny lock of your hair I will bring the prince here before you can count one, two, three.”

Floraleen was very scared and would not consent to this. But the witch begged so hard and said that the prince was so unhappy that Floraleen finally let her cut off a small lock.

The witch threw the lock of hair into the fire and told Floraleen to kneel at the edge of the hole. Suddenly she waved her thin hands over the little girl's head and chanted:

Let milk-white skin now turn to brown,  
From crown of head to knee.  
Let plumage now replace your gown,  
And you a chicken be.  
Till big gray feathers falling low,  
In far and distant land,  
Shall settle on you at a blow,  
And a prince before you stand.

Immediately the girl became a Little Hen. The witch with cruel glee got out her broom and drove Little Hen out of the forest to start on her travels into the world.





*They decided they would return to Happydell.*





There is not much more to be told. After the prince and Floraleen had talked everything over many times, they decided that they would return to their own country of Happydell. Everybody was very happy to see them once more and great parties



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were held in their honor. For the prince had become as good as he was beautiful and Floraleen was even sweeter than she had been before. They lived out their lives together just as happily as when they were Big Goose and Little Hen.





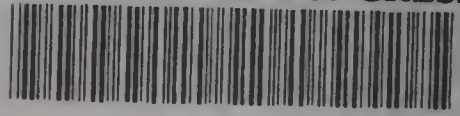








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