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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Old Granny Fox: A Dinner For Two (25/29)

Dark deeds are done in the stilly night,
And who shall say if they're wrong or right?

—Old Granny Fox.

It all depends on how you look at things. Of course, Granny and Reddy Fox had no business to be in Farmer Brown's henhouse in the middle of the night, or at any other time, for that matter. That is, they had no business to be there, as Farmer Brown would look at the matter. He would have called them two red thieves. Perhaps that is just what they were. But looking at the matter as they did, I am not so sure about it. To Granny and Reddy Fox those hens were simply big, rather stupid birds, splendid eating if they could be caught, and bound to be eaten by somebody. The fact that they were in Farmer Brown's henhouse didn't make them his any more than the fact that Mrs. Grouse was in a part of the Green Forest owned by Farmer Brown made her his.

You see, among the little meadow and forest people there is no such thing as property rights, excepting in the matter of storehouses, and because these hens were alive, it didn't occur to Granny and Reddy that the henhouse was a sort of storehouse. It would have made no difference if it had. Among the little people it is

considered quite right to help yourself from another's storehouse if you are smart enough to find it and really need the food.

Besides, Reddy and Granny knew that Farmer Brown and his boy would eat some of those hens themselves, and they didn't begin to need them as Reddy and Granny did. So as they looked at the matter, there was nothing wrong in being in that henhouse in the middle of the night. They were there simply because they needed food very, very much, and food was there. They stared up at the roosts where the biddies were huddled together, fast asleep. They were too high up to be reached from the floor even when Reddy and Granny stood on their hind legs and stretched as far as they could.

"We've got to wake them up and scare them so that some of the silly things will fly down where we can catch them," said Reddy, licking his lips hungrily.

"That won't do at all!" snapped Granny. "They would make a great racket and waken Bowser the Hound, and he would waken his master, and that is just what we mustn't do if we hope to ever get in here again. I thought you had more sense, Reddy."

Reddy looked a little shamefaced. "Well, if we don't do that, how are we going to get them? We can't fly," he grumbled.

"You stay right here where you are," snapped Granny, "and take care that you don't make a sound."

Then Granny jumped lightly to a little shelf that ran along in front of the nesting boxes. From this she could

reach the lower roost on which four fat hens were asleep. Very gently she pushed her head in between two of these and crowded them apart. Sleepily they protested and moved along a little. Granny continued to crowd them. At last one of them stretched out her head to see who was crowding so. Like a flash Granny seized that head, and biddy never knew what had wakened her, nor did she have a chance to waken the others.

Dropping this hen at Reddy's feet, Granny crowded another until she did the same thing, and just the same thing happened once more. Then Granny jumped lightly



down, picked up one of the hens by the neck, slung the body over her shoulder, and told Reddy to do the same with the other and start for home.

"Aren't you going to get any more while we have the chance?" grumbled Reddy.

"Enough is enough," retorted Granny. "We've got a dinner for

two, and so far no one is any the wiser. Perhaps these two won't be missed, and we'll have a chance to get some more another night. Now come on."

This was plain common sense, and Reddy knew it, so without another word he followed old Granny Fox out by the way they had entered, and then home to the best dinner he had had for a long long time.