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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## The Wise Old Gander

Once there lived a farmer who was not a good caretaker. He did not have a house for the hens and chickens and geese and ducks, and Old Fox, who lived in a hole over the hill, never had any trouble in getting a nice goose or a fat hen for his supper or breakfast.

"Something must be done at once," said Madam Goose.

"There will be no one left in the whole yard if this keeps on. Why, only last night Madam Gray Hen was carried off and she has left all those little chicks; it is really too awful to think of."

"But what can we do?" asked Gray Goose. "The rooster does not know, for I heard one of his family ask him, and he only said the master should take better care of us."

"So he should," replied Madam Goose, "but he doesn't, so we must care for ourselves unless we wish to be carried off, too. Let us go to the gander; he may be able to help us."

"Come with us," they called to the rooster and black hen who were talking together; "we are going to see the gander and ask him to help us to be rid of Old Fox over the hill."

The gander stretched out his neck and blinked his eyes as he listened to their tale of woe.

"You are right, something must be done," he said; "and you are quite right in coming to me also. I will think over the matter and give you my advice later."

"Later!" screamed Madam Goose. "Later there will be no need for advice; there will be no one to give it or to advise. What we need is advice at once, and something that will rid us of Old Fox under the hill. He is eating the whole yard, one by one."

"Well, well," answered the gander, standing on one foot and then on the other. "I will think over the matter for a short time and then tell you my decision. You know, my dear madam, that great minds must have quiet to think out important matters. Leave me, I beg of you all, for a little while."

As soon as the gander was alone he waddled over to the pig-pen. "Mr. Pig," he said, "I am going to ask your advice. Old Fox over the hill is carrying off all the fowls and something must be done."

"Ugh, ugh," grunted the pig. "I can tell you what will frighten him away. I will stay awake to-night and grunt at him; he will know better than to linger where I am."

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Pig," said the gander, backing away from the pig-pen. "I will tell my friends, and I am sure they will feel safe to-night."

"Conceited fellow," said the gander. "I guess it will take more than his grunts to scare that foxy fellow."

Then he went to the donkey. "He isn't very wise," thought the gander, "but sometimes those who have the least wisdom speak wisdom without knowing it."

"Mr. Donkey, I have come to ask your advice. Old Fox is carrying off our hens and geese. Something must be done to stop him, or soon there will be none left."

"Quite so; quite so. I see; I see, Mr. Gander," said the donkey. "You have come to the right place for advice. Now go back to your friends and tell them to have no fear; I will take the matter in hand."

"But what are you going to do?" asked the gander.

"Why, my dear sir, I am going to bray at Old Fox when he comes. I am going to bray at him, and you will see he will not stay long when he hears my commanding voice."

"Oh, how can I ever thank you?" said the gander, walking away. "I will tell my friends at once that you will take care of them to-night."

"Foolish old donkey," said the gander to himself. "I guess Old Fox has heard a donkey bray before this. I'll try the cow next."

"Madam Cow, Old Fox is carrying off all the fowls, one by one, and if something is not done at once to stop him, there will be none of us left. What would you advise?"

"Oh, don't ask me, Mr. Gander," said the cow. "All I can do is to moo, and Old Fox would no more mind that than the wind blowing. I wish I were wise enough to advise you, but I am not. But if I can help you in any way let me know."

"Thank you, Madam Cow," said the gander, waddling away. "You may hear from me. We never can tell when we shall need the help of our friends."

The next one the gander visited was the cat.

"Can you help me, Madam Puss?" began the gander. "We fowls are all in trouble; Old Fox carries off one or more of our number every night, and something must be done to stop it at once."

The cat opened her mouth very wide and yawned, and the gander wondered if he had been



wise, after all, in asking her for advice in this matter. But Puss closed her mouth with a snap and sat up.

"Of course I can help you," she said. "Did you ever see my claws?"

The gander backed away as Puss held them up to his view.

The gander confessed that he had not and Puss went on: "Well, leave it to me to protect the barnyard; that dog Rover never seems to think about anything but eating and sleeping. I will yowl and spit at Old Fox when he comes to-night, and I can tell you and your friends he will not come again."

"Thank you, thank you, Madam Puss," said the gander, running away.

"My, but that was a narrow escape for me!" said the gander. "She positively looks awful when she opens her mouth. I seem to be getting advice, but not the kind that will save my friends; they all feel sure they can

scare Old Fox, but not one of them will be able to; I don't know that all of them together would--"

The gander stopped still and held up his head. "I have it," he said, "I have the very plan; I will get them all together and each shall do his part. I believe we can scare Old Fox away for good and all time."

The gander went to the dog and he promised to bark.

"Of course, there is no need of having the others around if I do that," said the dog. "But bring them along if you like; every little helps."

That night the donkey, the dog, the cat, the cow, and the pig were gathered in the barnyard; each one protested that the others were not needed, all but the cow; she was modest, and said she would help. Then the rooster came and offered to crow and the geese were to quack.

"Now you all must hide," said the gander, "and don't move until Old Fox gets right in the middle of the yard; then jump up and do your worst."

Old Fox waited until it was very late, and then crept over the hill and up to the farm. He listened, and, hearing no sound, he crept into the barnyard. He was just about to reach a fat goose when all the animals began. The dog barked, the pig squealed, the donkey brayed, the cow mooed, the geese quacked, the rooster crowed, and Puss, true to her word, yowled and sprang at Old Fox, who was so frightened at the terrible noise he forgot to run until Puss struck at him with her sharp claws; then he took to his swiftest speed, and

away he went over the hill and far away, and was never again seen near that farm.

He told some of his friends that a most horrible animal lived there and must have eaten all the hens and geese and was big enough to eat them, for he saw at least twenty feet and claws and heads of all sizes.