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How The Fox Played Herdsman

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Once upon a time there was a little old woman who had a farm of her very own with sheep, and cows, and swine. But the little old woman was so busy making butter and minding the dairy that she had no time to look after the herds.

One fine morning she started out to hire a herdsman. Now she had not gone very far when she met a bear.

"Whither away, Goody?" asked Bruin of the little old woman.

"Oh, I am off to engage a herdsman for my farm," said Goody in reply.

"Why not hire me, Goody?" asked Bruin.

"Can you call the flocks at evening?" asked the little old woman.

"You should just hear me," said Bruin, and he called in a very loud and gruff voice, "OW, OW."

"No, no, I won't have you," said the little old woman as soon as she heard his gruff voice, and off she went on her way.

She had not gone a day's journey farther when she met a wolf.

"Whither away, Goody?" asked the wolf of the little old woman.

"Oh, I am off to engage a herdsman for my farm," said Goody.

"Why not hire me, Goody?" asked the wolf.

"Can you call the flocks at evening?" asked the little old woman.

"You should just hear me," said the wolf, and he called in a shrill voice, "UH, UH."

"No, no," said the little old woman as soon as she heard that, and off she went on her way.

But before the end of another day's journey, whom should the little old woman meet but Brother Fox, sitting beside a blackberry bush, and sunning himself.

"Whither away, Goody?" asked Brother Fox.

"Oh, I am off to engage a herdsman for my farm," said Goody in reply.

“Why not hire me, Goody?” said Brother Fox.

“Can you call the flocks at evening?” asked the little old woman.

“Ah, you should hear me,” said Brother Fox. He opened his mouth very wide, and sang in a sweet voice:

“Tum-ti-ti, tum-ti-ti-tra-la-la.”

“You will do very well,” said the little old woman, quite carried away with the fox’s sweet singing. “You shall come home with me, and be my herdsman.”

Things went very well for a little while at the farm. Early each morning Brother Fox led the sheep and the cows and the swine to pasture, and at night he led them home again, and locked the barn, and bolted the pigpen.



But, somehow, after a week, the flocks and the herds seemed smaller each night when the little old woman went out to make the rounds of the farm.

“Where is the small black pig?” she asked of Brother Fox.

“Loitering in the meadow,” said Brother Fox, wiping his mouth with his paw.

“Where is the old ram?” asked the little old woman.

“He stops behind at the brook,” said Brother Fox, turning his head away that Goody might not see him laughing.

So Goody went back to the dairy, and she wondered and wondered what made the flocks grow smaller.

At last she had churned enough butter to make a fine cake and she went out to the poultry roost for eggs with which to enrich it.

Alas, such a hubbub, and cackling, and fussing did she find.

The cock stood on the pump, crying loudly, “Cock-a-doodle-do.”

The hens ran about cackling, and out of their midst walked Brother Fox with a chicken over his back, and his hat full of eggs.

And as he went along he sang to all the poultry yard:

“Tum-ti-ti, Tum-ti-ti,
Tum, tum, ti,
Old Goody’s herdsman,
Sly Reynard, am I.”

“Well, it’s certainly a very poor herdsman you are,” cried the little old woman.
“Where is the small black pig? Where is the old ram?”

She ran after Brother Fox, who dropped his eggs and broke every one, and tipped over the churn as he passed the dairy. The little old woman picked up the dasher, and would have beaten Brother Fox, but he was too quick for her, and reached the woods, with a drop of cream on the tip end of his tail.

So the little old woman learned what had become of her herds, and Brother Fox was never able to get that cream from off his tail, The tip end has been white ever since he played at being a herdsman.

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