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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Mother Turkey And Her Chicks

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Mother Turkey believed in the old adage taught to her by her grandmother, "The early bird catches the worm," and every night when the sun set she took her little chicks to the highest branch they could reach in an old apple-tree and sang them to sleep with this lullaby:

"Close your eyes, my little turkey chicks:
Hide your heads, don't peep.
Mother knows the bogy fox's tricks,
And she'll watch while you sleep."

Mother Turkey had told them about the bogy fox that lived in a hole on the other side of the hill, and it did not need more than the mention of that name to make them obey.

"I do wish we could get just a look at him," said one chick, as his mother came to the end of the verse. "I should not know him if I met him."

"Oh yes, you would," replied his mother. "He has a very long tail, and a sharp nose, and his teeth! Oh, dear me!" she exclaimed, as she flapped her wings at the thought of them.

"Will you wake us if he comes to-night?" asked another chick.

"I shall not need to do that," replied Mother Turkey; "you will hear us talking. He is a very sly fellow, and always very polite and says nice things. But you cover your heads; it is getting late," and she began to sing:

"Close your eyes, my little turkey chicks:
Hide your heads, don't peep.
Mother knows the bogy fox's tricks,
And she'll watch while you sleep."

By the time Mother Turkey reached the end of the verse this time all the chicks were fast asleep.

Mother Turkey stretched out her wings once or twice and turned her head in all directions, and then she settled herself for a nap.



The moon was shining brightly when she awoke, and she saw not far off what looked like a large black dog walking cautiously toward the tree. Mother Turkey took another look and saw the bushy tail, and she perched herself more firmly on the limb and looked to see if her children were safe on there, too, for she knew that the bogy fox had come to take one of her chicks back to his hole if he could.

"Good evening, Mr. Fox," she said, as the fox came near enough to hear her. "I was sure that I knew your splendid figure; you certainly make a most remarkable picture in the moonlight."

Mr. Fox was somewhat taken aback at this compliment paid him in such a pleasant manner, for usually he was the one to make remarks and the turkeys listened, not daring to move or speak.

He recovered from his surprise by the time he was under the tree, and said: "You are most flattering, Mistress Turkey, and I can only return the compliment by telling you that you are a picture yourself in the moonlight, sitting so stately on that limb, but if you would enjoy to the full extent this beautiful evening you must come from the tree and take a walk over the hill."

"No doubt you are right," replied Mrs. Turkey, "but I could not think of leaving my children alone."

"I should be very glad to take care of the little dears while you are gone," said Mr. Fox, "and if you will have them come down beside me I will tell them a story which I am sure will keep them interested until you return."

By this time the turkey chicks were awake and listening to what the fox was saying. He seemed so nice and polite that they quite forgot to be afraid, and when he spoke of telling them a story one of them said: "Oh, please do go, mother, and let him tell us a story. We'll be very good if you will."

"You see, my dear madam," said the fox, "the little dears are quite willing to stay with me. Do go and enjoy the moonlight."

Mother Turkey looked at her children in a way that plainly said to them, "Be quiet," and then she said to Mr. Fox: "I appreciate your kind offer, and were my children well should be very glad to leave them with you, but they have been sick, and are so lean that I have to be very careful that they sleep and eat well, or they will not be fat by next Thanksgiving, and that would be a disgrace, you know."

When the fox heard this he was not so anxious to have the chicks come down, so he said, "I know just how anxious you must feel, Mistress Turkey, and if you will come down where I can talk with you without being heard I will tell you the very thing to give them to make them fat."

"If he cannot get the chicks he will take me," thought Mrs. Turkey, "but I am too old a bird to be caught even by this sly fellow."

Mrs. Turkey did not reply to this last remark. She was thinking of a trap she saw her master set the day before. "I wish you would walk around a little so my children can see what a beautiful bushy tail you have," she said. "They have never seen so handsome a fellow as you are."

Mr. Fox was very proud of his tail, so he walked out from the shade of the tree and strutted about.

"Tell him how handsome he is," whispered Mother Turkey to her chicks.

"Oh, isn't he handsome!" said one, and another said, "I wish we had such bushy tails, instead of these straight feathers," while Mrs. Turkey said, "You are quite the handsomest creature I have ever seen, and I have seen many in my time."

By this time the fox was so pleased with their admiration that he was ready to do anything to display his charms, so when Mrs. Turkey said, "I wish you would run and show them how you can run and jump," he asked what he could jump on to show his nimbleness.

"The top of that hogshead would be a good place," said Mrs. Turkey, knowing well that the cask had no head and that it was nearly full of water.

Away ran Mr. Fox, and splash he went into the hogshead. He tried to get out, but it was no use; the cask was too high, and then the farmer, hearing the noise, came out and soon put an end to Mr. Fox.

The little turkeys sat wide-awake and trembling beside their mother, but when the farmer went into the house she began to sing:

"Close your eyes, my little turkey chicks:

Hide your heads, don't peep.

Mother knows the bogy fox's tricks,

And she'll watch while you sleep."

And in a few minutes all was quiet again in the yard.

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