



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

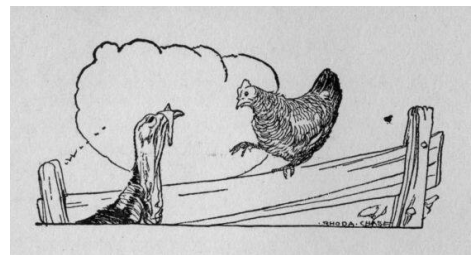
The Old Grey Hen

Abbie Phillips Walker

"Oh dear, I've had enough!" said the Old Grey Hen. "What a life this is! It's unbearable. Every morning at dawn, in response to that crowing Rooster, I scratch in the ground for worms all morning with my feet. Then I sit on the nest and lay a nice egg. But within half an hour, someone takes my egg and I never see it again. Then every spring, I lay a whole lot of eggs and I have to sit on the nest for a long time until the eggs hatch into chicks. After that, I have to scratch for food for both myself and them for weeks. I see no purpose in this kind of life anymore, and I suggest we change it to something that suits me better!"

Just as the Old Grey Hen finished talking to herself, the old father Goose walked by. "What's the problem this morning?" he asked. "Why all the fluttering, splashing, and sputtering? You'd think there was a lot going on, that the whole farm was turned upside down and the corn was falling from the sky."

"There's enough going on to raise a cloud of dust," said the Grey Hen. "What do we Chickens have to live for? I scratch and you waddle, and I scratch and you waddle, and so it goes on. And what's it all for? Something needs to happen, and if no one else does it, then I will. My life is going to be different."



"I think I'll just stay as I am," said the old father Goose as he waddled away. "It might only make things worse, and they're not so bad to be a Goose anyway."

"Good morning, Grey Hen," said Mrs. Duck cheerfully. "We're going to have another beautiful day! The water will be nice and warm for my Ducklings, so I can give them a good swim in the pond."

"It's not a good morning, and it won't be a beautiful day," said the Grey Hen. "And as for swimming in the pond, if I were the mother of as many children as yours, I'd want to keep them in the pond all the time. Just hidden in the water so no one would see them."

"What a mean character that Grey Hen is!" Mrs. Duck said to the greedy Turkey as she walked to the pond. "I tried to be nice to her and cheer her up, but she

insulted me. She spoke so unfriendly about my children that I almost cried."

"I almost wish she had been even more unfriendly," said the greedy Turkey, "because I've never seen a Duck cry and I can imagine it would be a very strange sight. Maybe the Grey Hen needs my good advice, so I'll go see her."

But the old Greedy Turkey was spared the trouble, for within a few minutes he saw the Grey Hen coming towards him along the path. When she was with him, he said, "What a miserable morning this is, Mrs. Hen; none of my feathers are straight and every worm I've tried for breakfast tasted bitter."

"You're absolutely right," said the Grey Hen. "It's just like every morning lately, terribly uncomfortable and unpleasant, and there seems to be no prospect of anything better."

"You're absolutely right," said the Greedy Turkey. "I don't understand what the Goose and the Duck are so satisfied with in the present. As for the future, I don't know why we should expect any more of it than the past."

"I have always felt," said the Old Grey Hen, "that you, Mr. Turkey, have never received even half of your due on this farm. Everyone seems to think that because the Rooster crows every morning at dawn, he is the wisest bird on the farm and the boss. But, as far as I'm concerned, I have always had more appreciation for you and have often spoken of your noble appearance and the regal way in which you strut about. You should be recognized as superior to the Rooster. You are worth much more. But as you know, the Hens have no say here, although I'm sure that one day it will be different."



"You are really very kind, Hen," said the Greedy Turkey, "and I feel the same way as you do, although I don't want to rule the roost, I do think that the Hens should have more say. You should at least be independent and enjoy what you do."

"Oh, I have already decided that," said the Old Grey Hen, and she told him how she had decided to stop laying eggs and to scratch as little as possible.

"Well," said the Greedy Turkey, "I must be off to make sure no Turkey Hens go so far into the woods that they can't find their way back." - "I certainly gave her the kind of advice she wanted," he said to himself as he disappeared from her

hearing, "and that was easier than arguing. Besides, dissatisfied people and animals always feel so much better when they think others are just as unhappy as they are."

The Old Grey Hen, however, kept her word. She stopped laying eggs, and the amount of ground she scratched was hardly worth mentioning. She stole worms from the younger Hens, who were too polite to punish a Hen as old as she was, and all in all, she became a great burden to all the animals on the farm.

The animals could not protect themselves, but Farmer Johnson, who was walking through the yard one day, noticed that the Old Grey Hen's toes had grown to a highly unusual length. "I don't think she scratches much," he said as he passed by, "and I also suspect she doesn't lay many eggs. I'll ask mother when I get home."

"No, that's right," said Mother Johnson when he asked her, "I haven't found an egg in the Old Grey Hen's nest for a month or more."

"She's not paying for the winter this way," said Farmer Johnson. "We might as well eat her." And the following Sunday, when Farmer Johnson went to dinner, they brought a large steaming dish of Hen to the table, and that was the end of the Old Grey Hen.

A day or two later, when the Greedy Turkey and Mrs. Duck met, Mrs. Duck said, "I hear that the Grey Hen has left us."

"Yes," said the Greedy Turkey, "and I hope she is happier now than she was here, but actually her greatest satisfaction was when others were unhappy..."

Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why [ririro.com](https://www.ririro.com) offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share [ririro.com](https://www.ririro.com) and spread the joy of reading.

Instagram: [@ririro_reading](https://www.instagram.com/ririro_reading) · Pinterest: [pinterest.com/ririrocom](https://www.pinterest.com/ririrocom)