



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Wedding Breakfast

Abbie Phillips Walker

Old Granny Quack heard it first, and she put on her bonnet at once, for she never let anyone get ahead of her telling news in the barnyard.

"Yes," she said, looking over her spectacles, "Miss Penny Hen is going to be married down in the grove by the pond tomorrow morning early, before the sun is up, so Parson Owl can see whom he is marrying."

Miss Penny Hen did not have to send out invitations, for everybody knew about the wedding, and everybody expected to be invited, so the next morning early, everybody was there. The bridegroom was handsome Mr. Rooster, from the next farm, and Miss Penny Hen was going to leave the barnyard where she had been brought up for a new home right after the wedding.

All the Ducks took a very early swim that morning and were waddling up the bank just as the other guests came into the grove. The Hens and Chickens found nice seats on the rocks, and the Turkeys perched on the limbs of trees, where they could see everything that happened, and old Granny Quack waddled to a very front seat, so near the bridal party that Parson Owl had to ask her to get off his tail feathers.

Mr. Crow was just flying over to the cornfield when he happened to glance down, and he quite forgot his breakfast, for he did not intend to miss anything that went on, no matter whether he was invited or not.

"Now I wonder what all that crowd is up to?" he said, flying down to a limb where he could see. "Huh, nothing to eat! A fine wedding, I should say, without a breakfast! I won't stay, even to watch old Parson Owl fly home afterward and bump his head against all the trees, as he is sure to do."

But just as he was flying over the field, Mr. Crow saw Mr. Fox creeping along through the tall grass.

"Going to the wedding?" he asked. "Of course, you were invited, Mr. Fox, but you are late. Parson Owl had already married them when I left."



Mr. Fox was not at all pleased that Mr. Crow had spied him, but he pretended he

was on his way to the pond for a drink of water, and that the wedding did not interest him, which wasn't at all true, for he had gone to the barnyard the day before to get a nice plump chicken for his dinner, and he heard Granny Quack telling the news, so he decided to wait, and when the guests were all there to help himself to the very nicest one he could find.

"Ha, ha!" cawed Mr. Crow loudly. "You're a sleek talker, Mr. Fox, but you can't pull the wool over my eyes."

And then Mr. Crow flew away, or at least Mr. Fox thought he did, for he watched until he was out of sight, flying in the opposite direction from where the wedding was going on. But Mr. Crow turned around and flew back another way, and Mr. Fox did not see him. He got to the grove just as everybody was starting for the barnyard for the wedding breakfast.

"Ah, I am a lucky bird!" thought Mr. Crow, and down he flew, right into the midst of the wedding party. "Mr. Fox is coming on the run," he announced. "He heard there was to be a wedding, and he wants to get here in time for the breakfast."

Everybody ran, excepting Mr. Crow, and he flew; and by the time Mr. Fox reached the grove, there was nothing to be seen but a few feathers. And when he crept around the side of the barn to see if there was a chance of getting one stray hen, there was Mr. Crow eating breakfast with the wedding party right in the center of the group.

"That rascal, he told," said Mr. Fox. But Mr. Dog came along and chased him over the fields, and Mr. Fox went home without his breakfast, wondering how he could pay Mr. Crow for cheating him out of it.

Mr. Crow cawed loudly and long at Mr. Fox when the next day he saw him down by the pond. "Why didn't you come to the wedding breakfast?" he asked. "Everybody was so upset because you were not there."

Mr. Fox looked up at Mr. Crow sitting on a limb of the tree over him and said in smooth tones: "I had a bone in my foot and could not get there, but I am sure you were there, Mr. Crow, and how could they miss anyone when they had the pleasure of your company?"

Mr. Crow could not talk as well as Mr. Fox, so he just cawed and flew away, but if he had seen the look in the eyes of Mr. Fox, he would have been on the lookout for a while. He didn't, however, and in fact, he forgot all about the wedding breakfast very soon, for it was his busy season of the year — looking after all the newly planted cornfields.

Mr. Crow was a wise old fellow, and it took more than a raggedy-looking man standing in a cornfield to scare him away, and even a man with a gun did not frighten him if he was near the woods.

Mr. Fox knew this, and he did not intend to catch Mr. Crow or harm him, but what he did plan to do was to scare him nearly out of his wits, which he did, as you will learn.

One morning before it was light, Mr. Fox was coming home from a hunting trip and crossing a cornfield, he happened to see a very good-looking scarecrow; in fact, he had jumped when he saw it, it was so well dressed.

When he saw his mistake, Mr. Fox smiled, and a smile means from Mr. Fox that he has something on his mind. He walked right over to the scarecrow, and for a few minutes, he was very busy, and when he finished being busy, he was dressed in the clothes of the scarecrow and standing there just as natural as could be.

He knew he would have to wait until daybreak and perhaps a little longer, but the fun he would have would be worth the trouble, he was sure of that. So he stood quite still, only when the wind blew, and then he waved his raggedy arms and rested his legs by changing his position a little.

By and by, when the sky was gray and streaks of light showed over the hill where Mr. Sun was making ready to get up, along came Mr. Crow and perched on the rail fence by the cornfield. He gave a careless glance at the scarecrow and after casting his bright eyes about, he flew right over to the field and perched on one arm of the scarecrow and cawed loudly his scorn:

"Old raggedy scarecrow, you can't frighten me, For I'm a brave bird, as all can see. I can see through you with one sharp eye, You can't fool me, so you needn't try."

Just as he finished cawing, Mr. Crow turned to peck at the coat sleeve on which he was sitting when Mr. Fox gave a jump and barked.

Mr. Crow was so frightened that his wings just flopped at his sides. He almost fell to the ground, but he was away in another second, and Mr. Fox rolled over and over on the ground laughing.

Of course, Mr. Crow did not stop to see who it was inside the raggedy clothes. He went as far as he could from that cornfield, but when next day Mr. Fox saw him sitting on a branch near the field, he was looking very carefully at the scarecrow waving its arms in the breeze.

"Old raggedy scarecrow, you can't frighten me, For I'm a brave bird, as all can see. I can see through you with one sharp eye, You can't fool me, so you needn't try."

Mr. Fox sang this loudly as he walked by, hidden by the bushes, but Mr. Crow heard him, and away he flew without giving one caw.

"I guess he will keep out of my affairs after this, meddling old fellow," said Mr. Fox as he trotted off home.

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