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The Beggar and the Chick-Pea

R.H. Busk

There was a poor beggar man who went from door to door seeking his bread. He came to a peasant cottage and asked for something in charity.

"I have nothing," said the peasant's wife.

"Then leave something out for me against next time I pass," said the beggar.

"The most I can offer you," she said, "is a single chick-pea."

"That will do," said the beggar. "Mind the hen doesn't eat it."

The peasant's wife put the pea on the shelf. While her back was turned, the hen pecked it up. When the beggar returned, he declared with great authority that since she couldn't give him the pea, she must give him the hen.

She hadn't been expecting this, but his manner was so commanding she handed it over.

At the next cottage, he left the hen for safekeeping and warned the wife not to let the pig near it. The pig got at it and swallowed it. He claimed the pig.

At the next cottage, he left the pig and warned against the calf. The calf killed the pig. He claimed the calf.

At the fourth cottage, he left the calf and noticed a sick girl in bed. "Mind she doesn't take a fancy to the calf," he said. The girl had a fever-craving, crept out, killed the calf, and ate its heart.

The beggar arrived the next day with great authority: "Calf or maiden — you choose."

The peasant's wife kept her head. She said: "The calf is dead, so I suppose I must give you my daughter. But if I wake her now she'll make such a fuss you'll never get her down the road. Leave me your sack, and I'll put her in it while she's sleeping."

The beggar left his sack and went away.

The mother put some heavy stones at the bottom of the sack, stuffed in the fiercest, most bad-tempered dog she could find, tied it shut, and propped it against the wall.

The beggar came back and hoisted the sack onto his shoulder. He carried it all the way home, opened it to take out his prize — and the dog came out instead, and killed him.



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