

RUSSIAN FOLK TALES

From
Alexander Afanasiev's Collection
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The Cat, the Rooster and the Fox

There was once an old man who had a cat and a rooster.

One day the old man went to the forest to chop wood, the cat soon followed him with his dinner, and the rooster was left all alone.

By and by a fox came running up. She seated herself under the window and sang out:

"Come, Friend Rooster, comb of gold,
You who are so brave and bold,
Look out of the window, please,
And you'll get some nice, fresh peas!"

The rooster pushed open the window, stuck out his head and looked round to see who was calling him, and the fox seized him and carried him off with her.

"Save me, Puss, I beg and pray,
Fox is dragging me away,
Beyond the dark forests,
Beyond the white sands,
Beyond the blue seas,
To the thrice-ten lands!"

the rooster cried.

The cat heard him. He ran after the fox, got the rooster out of her clutches and brought him back home.

"Take care, friend Rooster," said the cat, "do not believe what the fox says or look out of the window, for she will eat you up, bones and all!"

On the next day the old man told the rooster to watch over the house and not to look out of the window and went to the forest again to chop wood, and the cat soon followed with his dinner. The fox, who dearly wanted to eat up the rooster, waited for them to go away and then came up to the house and sang out:

"Come, Friend Rooster, comb of gold,

You who are so brave and bold,
Look out of the window, please,
And you'll get some nice, fresh peas,
And some grains of wheat, too!"

The rooster walked up and down the house and stayed mum, and the fox sang her little song again and threw a handful of peas in through the window. The rooster ate the peas and said: "You can't fool me, Fox! I know you want to eat me up, bones and all." "Don't be silly, Rooster!" said the fox. "Why should I eat you! All I want is for you to pay me a visit and see what a nice house I have." And she sang out again:

"Come, Friend Rooster, comb of gold,
You who are so brave and bold,
Look out of the window, please,
And you'll get some nice, fresh peas,
And some grains of wheat, too!"

The rooster glanced out of the window and lo! — he found himself in the fox's claws!

"Save me, Puss, I beg and pray,
Fox is dragging me away,
Beyond the thick forests,
Beyond the dark groves,
Beyond the steep hills
Where the wild wind roves...
She wants to eat me up, bones and all!"

he called.

The cat heard him. He ran after the fox, got the rooster out of her clutches and brought him back home. "Didn't I tell you not to look out of the window if you did not want the fox to seize you and eat you up!" said he. "Take care now, for tomorrow we will be going deeper into the forest."

On the next day the old man was in the forest chopping wood and the cat had just left the house with his dinner when the fox crept up to the window. She sang her song three times over, but, seeing that the rooster made no reply, said: "What's the matter

with you, Rooster, have you turned deaf and dumb?" "You won't fool me, Fox, I won't look out of the window!" the rooster told her. The fox threw a handful of peas and some wheat grains in through the window and sang out again:

"Come, Friend Rooster, comb of gold,
You who are so brave and bold,
Look out of the window, do,
And my house I'll show to you
Where I keep some nice, ripe wheat
Which is very good to eat!"

And she added:

"You can't imagine what treasures I have in my house, Rooster! Come, now, show yourself and forget what the cat told you. Had I wanted to eat you up, I would have done so long ago. I like you, Rooster, I like you very much and I want to teach you the ways of the world. Look out of the window, and I'll go round the corner if you don't want me near." And she squeezed herself against the wall.

The rooster jumped up on a bench, but, not being able to see the fox and wanting to know where she was, he stuck his head out of the window, and the fox seized him and was off with him in a trice! The rooster called to the cat to save him, but the cat did not hear him, and the fox took him behind a clump of fir trees and ate him up. She left nothing but some feathers, which were carried away by the wind. The old man and the cat came home, but the rooster was gone. They grieved and sorrowed for a time, and then they said: "That is what happens when you don't listen to those who wish you well!"

Translated by Irina Zheleznova