

Who Works Harder?

A peasant and his wife once quarreled over which of them worked harder. The man said that he had to work harder in the field and the woman declared that it was more difficult to work at home.

One summer day they decided to change jobs. The wife drove off to plow and the man remained in the house. Before going off to the field, the woman gave her husband these orders: "Pay attention to what I'm saying and don't neglect the cattle. Drive out to pasture the herd of cows and the flock of sheep. Don't lose any of the chicks or the mother hen and remember to feed them. Prepare some dinner on time, before I return home. Bake a few loaves of bread. Churn the butter and don't forget the buttermilk. Over there is some dry millet so pound it for the porridge."

After setting these tasks for him she drove off with the family to the field. The peasant in the meantime started to drive the animals to pasture but the herd of cattle and the flock of sheep had gone on ahead and so he had to run to catch up to them.

He returned home and because he didn't want a hawk to steal the chicks he tied them with some string and secured them to the hen and then let them go outside. Then he started to get busy at the stove.

He had noticed that his wife used to mix the dough and pound the millet for porridge when there was a fire going in the stove, so he set to work to knead the dough in the kneading trough and also to pound the millet in the mortar. Then he decided to churn the butter as well, so he fastened a pot of cream to his belt. You see, the idea was that while he was grinding millet the butter would be churned.

He had only started to pound the millet in the mortar than the hen began to cluck and the chicks to cheep. From the mortar he looked outside to see what was happening but as he moved he stumbled

over a big cudgel and fell headlong, breaking the pot with the cream in it. He looked outside: a huge hawk had seized one chick and after it trailed the remaining chicks and the hen because they were all tied tightly together. So the hawk flew away with the whole family of chickens.

While the man was looking to see where the hawk had carried off the hen and chicks, a pig had entered the house, upsetting the trough of dough, which flowed all over the place. While the pig was gobbling it down with its big mouth, another pig was puttering about near the millet in the mortar. Suddenly the stove went out. The peasant began to contemplate what he had to do, so he stood rapt in thought. Meanwhile, dinnertime had arrived!

Suddenly, his wife returned from the field. She drove into the yard and looked: there was no hen! Quickly she unharnessed the nag, entered the house and asked her husband, “Where are the hen and chicks?”

“Where? The hawk went off with them. I tied up the chicks and attached them to the hen so a hawk shouldn’t get any of them and so that they shouldn’t scatter in all directions. But this hawk flew by—such a huge one!—and he carried off the hen and chicks.”

“And did you make dinner?”

“Yes, but the stove went out.”

“Did you churn the butter?”

“I certainly did. But when I ran after the hen I slipped and the pot broke and the dogs ate all the cream.”

“Now, what’s this dough doing all over the house?”

“It’s those dratted pigs! When I ran after the hen, they got into the house. One overturned the trough and the other ate up all the millet in the mortar.”

“So, I see you did everything?”

“Of course I did! You just try working with all these nasty hawks and pigs!”

“And in the meantime I finished doing all the plowing you set for me. And did you notice the time I returned home?”

“Oh, you had only one job to do—and how many did you tell me to do? You said to do this, to do that. How can one person do everything?”

“But I have to do these jobs every day—so don’t argue with me. And don’t you ever say that there is nothing for a woman to do at home!”