



## THE DIVIDING OF THE GOOSE

Once upon a time, there was a very poor peasant family. They lived humbly and rationed their food, but one day they didn't have anything left to eat, so the father and mother agreed to roast the last goose they had in the yard.

"When you roast it," the father said, "I can take it to the earl. I might be able to exchange it for a bit of flour. Then we can bake bread that will last us so much longer than the goose would."

And so his wife roasted the goose, put it in a wicker basket, and gave it to her husband. The peasant took the goose, shut the door behind him and set off toward the earl's castle. When he arrived, he offered the goose as a gift, hoping the earl would take pity on him and give him some flour.

"Thank you for the gift, my good man," the earl said. "But I don't know how to divide the goose! I have a wife, two sons and two daughters. I don't want to divide it unevenly!"

The peasant gave it some thought.

"Well!" he said. "You're the head of the family, so you'll get the head," he said and handed it to the earl.

"You're the lady of the house," he said to the earl's wife. "You stay at home and watch over everything when the earl is away." And he cut off the backside and handed it to the lady.

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Then he cut off the legs and gave them to the sons, so they could better walk the world when they went looking for experience. The wings he gave to the daughters, so they could easily leave their home when the time came.

“And the rest of it goes to me!” he said proudly, putting the rest of the goose back in his basket.

The earl found the peasant’s method very funny and, in return, gave him two large sacks of flour and a pouch of gold.

On the way home, the peasant met his rich and greedy neighbour, who had plenty of everything but never helped the peasant in the slightest even though he knew how poor he was.

“Where are you coming from, neighbour, with your basket so full and your spirits so high?” asked the rich man.

The peasant told him everything: how his wife had roasted the last goose, how he had divided it for the earl so that there was a piece left for him, too, and how the earl had paid him well for his services. The rich neighbour was so envious he ground his teeth and clenched his fist, then muttered something under his breath and walked away.

The next morning, the rich man ordered his wife to roast five geese at once. She packed them in several baskets, and soon enough he was knocking eagerly on the earl’s door.

The earl greeted him, thanked him politely for the gift and said, “Well! Now you have to help me. How are we going to divide these geese? I have a wife and four children, so together there’s six of us.”

Racking his brain, the scrooge scratched his head, but he couldn’t think of a way to divide five geese between six people.

After a while, the earl saw the man couldn’t come up with a solution and instead called for the peasant.

“Yesterday you were able to divide one goose between six people,” he said. “How should we divide these five geese among ourselves?” asked the earl.

The poor man didn’t have to think long. He took one of the geese and handed it to the earl.

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“You and your wife make a pair, so when I give you this goose, there’ll be three of you.”

Then he called for the earl’s sons.

“You are also two, so when I give you a goose, there’ll be three of you, too!”

Then he called for the daughters and gave them a goose with the same explanation. Everyone was eager to see what the farmer would do with the two remaining geese. The earl leaned in, waiting to see how the farmer would amuse him this time.

“And these two,” the farmer said, “well! I’m only one, so these two must go to me so we can also be three! Now all of us have an equal part!”

The earl was greatly amused by the peasant’s wit, and rewarded him generously once again. The rich neighbour, miserable and mortified, was sent home with no geese and no pride, but the clever peasant went home, happily pulling a cart full of flour and a chest overflowing with gold, the two geese sitting in a basket on top.