

The Yard Rooster and the Weathervane One

Two roosters stood—one on a dung heap, the other on a roof—but both were equally arrogant. Which of them is better, in your opinion? Speak up, while we... shall remain of our own mind.

The poultry yard was separated from the neighboring one by a wooden fence, and in that yard there was a dung heap, upon which grew a large cucumber, conscious that it was a hothouse plant.

"A hothouse plant must be born as such!" it reasoned with itself. "But not everyone can be born a cucumber; other breeds must exist too. Hens, ducks, and all the inhabitants of the poultry yard are living creatures as well. There stands the yard rooster upon the fence. He is finer than the weathercock! That one may sit high, but he cannot even flap his wings, let alone crow! He has neither hens nor chicks; he is occupied only with himself and simply sweats copper-green verdigris! No, the yard rooster—that is a rooster! How he strides! As if dancing! And how he crows—music! Listen to him, and you will learn what a true trumpeter means! Yes, should he come here and swallow me whole, stem and leaves—that would be a blessed death!"

During the night, a storm broke out. The hens, the chicks, and the rooster himself—all hid away. The wind knocked down the fence—noise, cracking. Tiles fell from the roof, but the weathercock rooster held his ground. He did not even move from his spot and no longer turned—he could not, though he was young, recently cast. The weathercock rooster was very sensible and sedate; he was born an old man and had nothing in common with the birds of the sky, sparrows and swallows, whom he despised as "insignificant vulgar squeakers." Pigeons are larger, and their feathers shimmer with mother-of-pearl, so they even resemble weathercock roosters, only they are fat and stupid, thinking only of how to fill their crops, and therefore it is boring to associate with them.

Migratory birds visited the weathercock rooster. They told him about distant foreign lands, about aerial caravans, and terrifying robber stories about attacks by birds of prey. This was new and interesting for the first time, but then came repetitions of the same thing, and this was sheer mortal boredom! They became tiresome to him, everything became tiresome. It was not worth associating with anyone; all were so tedious, so vulgar!

"The world is good for nothing!" he said. "It's all sheer nonsense!"

The weathercock rooster was, so to speak, a disappointed rooster and would certainly have greatly interested the cucumber, had the latter known about it. But the cucumber was occupied solely with the yard rooster, and this one happened to come visit him.

The fence had been knocked down by the wind, but thunder and lightning had long since ceased.

"And what do you say about this crow of mine?" the yard rooster asked the hens and chicks. He was somewhat coarse, lacking elegance.

And the hens and chicks followed the rooster onto the dung heap. The rooster strode with a swagger, like a cavalryman.

"Garden plant!" he said to the cucumber, and the latter immediately understood how comprehensively educated the rooster was, and did not even notice that he had been pecked.

"Blessed death!"

The hens and chicks ran up; with hens it is always so: where one goes, another follows. They clucked and chirped, admired the rooster, and were proud that he was of their kind.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" he cried. "The chicks will immediately become adults once I crow about it to the entire world's henhouse."

The hens and chicks clucked and chirped, and the rooster announced the great news:

"A rooster can lay an egg! And do you know what is inside it? A basilisk! No one can withstand its gaze! People know this, and now all of you know what is within me; you know that I am the rooster of all roosters."

And the yard rooster flapped his wings, ruffled his comb, and crowed again. The hens and chicks were even struck with shivers, so flattered they were that one of their family—a rooster among roosters. They clucked and chirped so loudly that even the weathercock rooster could hear them, but he did not stir.

"It's all nonsense!" he said to himself. "A yard rooster will never lay an egg, and as for me, I simply do not wish to! But if I wished, I would lay a wind egg! Yet the world is not worth a wind egg! It's all nonsense! I do not even wish to sit here any longer!"

And the weathercock rooster snapped and fell down, though he did not kill the yard rooster after all, even though he aimed to, as the hens asserted.

The moral?

"Better to crow as a rooster than to become disillusioned with life and snap!"