

Animal Abuse Gone A Fowl

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We are told terrible stories when we are but children. Morals are confused. Death is justice. Imaginative creatures rule beneath the waves. Above, in clouds, a Giant frolics. In thrones, kindly, plump, white-haired royalty sit. And standing over steaming, foul-smelling cauldrons, witches cackle and methodically stir. We read or listen as the world of make-believe is basted on to our childish fresh minds.

A duck that lays golden eggs! What a miracle. Or, was it a goose in that one? Oh, let's stop and consider the players in that tale. Courage and poverty motivate a boy to pursue high danger. For his family he steals, which leads from bad to worse, ending in murder, shame, trickery, pride and hope. For the boy's crimes he is hailed a hero. In his winnings is a goose, a female goose who has only known misuse.

For some reason the story of Jack (no last name given) and the Bean Stalk, has for me been a source of sore meditation for weeks. Having grown up in the suburbs of Los Angeles, my main interaction with farm or wilderness creatures regularly took place on Saturday mornings watching cartoons. Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig and Daffy Duck. They qualified. None of *their* biology was so out of whack as to birth anything of value. (At least oysters mother pearls.) But I didn't know that truth, until my educational cartooning years were over, and my own children's began. That's when Sponge Bob Square Pants submerged...or did he surface?

Anyway, as I said, I began asking people about that particular fairy tale because I had a serious gap in my understanding of water fowl mating habits. And that's what hit home. Supposedly, this goose lived in the clouds with Mr. Goose, her husband. Though he doesn't come into the story as our ears heard it from our parents and them from their parents—I think the two feathery creatures must've had a lousy marriage, and the Giant laughed all the way to the bank. Or, was it a castle vault? He did have a wife who not only was a terrible bookkeeper, she strategized passive-aggressive doings, and showed early signs of Alzheimer's disease. All of this together would one day bring their castle crashing down. Mrs. Giant was a good cook though.

No one can verify if the geese ever properly consummated their marriage. But, with what scraps of avian biology I recently gained, I understand that if she and her husband ever made the feathers fly (euphemism) that would've meant eggs for breakfast. But, within the scant framework of the fairy tale, she probably remained a vir—.

We don't read about the Giant attempting to breed gold-bearing gooselings. Though a big oaf, he deduced that if she got pregnant it was game over. Whatever his lab experiments might've yielded are scattered and lost in the land of make-believe. The trespasser, Jack, only had his mind set on getting his nagging mother off his rear end. His solution was the quick-footed, heart-pounding theft of a bird. The goose, perhaps in menopause, no doubt had no feathered girlfriends to chat about her feelings of emptiness due to the big oaf's detouring her motherhood.

So, I gingerly asked friends about how come eggs from the store don't have baby birds in them. Though they confidently believe that chickens, turkeys and indeed geese, had a form of sexual activity – I couldn't picture it.

Google? You silently question.

I was afraid, that's why I didn't.

I know those Internet cyber sponges track our every move, and I didn't want a knock on my door by suited men suited to serious behavior asking what could interest a city raised person wanting to know so much about nature's diverse methods of procreation. *Gulp.*

Back to my troubled meditations on the childless, imprisoned bird.

"Not hollow eggs," I was told, "each one solid gold." Nodding, I'd heard that before. *Got it.* I was learning. Talk about hemorrhoids and that goose!

Then I felt sorry for her—never even allowed to try and have cute little flapping children. Then I felt sorry for the Giant, content in his lonely greed; never having parties, never melting the gold down for sculptures as a hobby, and hosting his own art shows. And never letting postmen or delivery persons see the eggs and with grinning admiration hold one. Not even once. Then I felt sorry once again for Mr. Goose. He must've had some ill thoughts toward that lordly, self-centered Giant. *A husband has a right! A man has a right!* (Yes, I know he wasn't exactly a man.)

Then in comes this sneaky disobedient boy. He messed up with the simple instructions about the cow. Now he does worse: two wrongs will make a right! (My gripe—little ears rooting for such a bad role model.) The bird wasn't his. He wasn't stealing it back. Thank heavens he knew what end of an axe to use. By that blade, he escaped his due punishment. In the end, money – enough money – covers the tracks to where crimes were committed.

Don't you believe for a minute that fatherless Jack (doing the labors of two) and his poor, widowed mother, ever let that pair of innocent geese do more than supervised cuddling and never with the lights out. No doubt the goose's abuse continued long after the humans paid off the mortgage and outstanding bills.

Moral of the story: It doesn't matter what size people are they can still be giant oafs.

Another story from REAL LIFE (that I made up!) This parody news story is for amusement. Any similarity to real people, places or things is fictitious and not to be taken as fact.