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Author: Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859)

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# Mrs. Fox

There was once a sly old fox with nine tails, who was very curious to know whether his wife was true to him: so he stretched himself out under a bench, and pretended to be as dead as a mouse.

Then Mrs. Fox went up into her own room and locked the door: but her maid, the cat, sat at the kitchen fire cooking; and soon after it became known that the old fox was dead, some one knocked at the door, saying,

"Miss Pussy! Miss Pussy! how fare you to-day?  
Are you sleeping or watching the time away?"

Then the cat went and opened the door, and there stood a young fox; so she said to him,

"No, no, Master Fox, I don't sleep in the day,  
I'm making some capital white wine whey.  
Will your honour be pleased to dinner to stay?"

"No, I thank you," said the fox; "but how is poor Mrs. Fox?" Then the cat answered,

"She sits all alone in her chamber upstairs,  
And bewails her misfortune with floods of tears:  
She weeps till her beautiful eyes are red;  
For, alas! alas! Mr. Fox is dead."

"Go to her," said the other, "and say that there is a young fox come, who wishes to marry her."

Then up went the cat,—trippety trap,  
And knocked at the door,—tippety tap;  
"Is good Mrs. Fox within?" said she.  
"Alas! my dear, what want you with me?"  
"There waits a suitor below at the gate."

Then said Mrs. Fox,

"How looks he, my dear? is he tall and straight?  
Has he nine good tails? There must be nine,  
Or he never shall be a suitor of mine."

"Ah!" said the cat, "he has but one." "Then I will never have him," answered Mrs. Fox.

So the cat went down, and sent this suitor about his business. Soon after, some one else knocked at the door; it was another fox that had two tails, but he was not better welcomed than the first. After this came several others, till at last one came that had really nine tails just like the old fox.

When the widow heard this, she jumped up and said,

"Now, Pussy, my dear, open windows and doors,  
And bid all our friends at our wedding to meet;  
And as for that nasty old master of ours,  
Throw him out of the window, Puss, into the street."

But when the wedding feast was all ready, up sprang the old gentleman on a sudden, and taking a club drove the whole company, together with Mrs. Fox, out of doors.

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After some time, however, the old fox really died; and soon afterwards a wolf came to pay his respects, and knocked at the door.

*Wolf.* Good day, Mrs. Cat, with your whiskers so trim;  
How comes it you're sitting alone so prim?  
What's that you are cooking so nicely, I pray?  
*Cat.* Oh, that's bread and milk for my dinner to-day.  
Will your worship be pleased to stay and dine,  
Or shall I fetch you a glass of wine?

"No, I thank you. Mrs. Fox is not at home, I suppose?"

*Cat.* She sits all alone,  
Her griefs to bemoan;  
For, alas! alas! Mr. Fox is gone.  
*Wolf.* Ah! dear Mrs. Puss! that's a loss indeed:  
D'ye think she'd take *me* for a husband instead?  
*Cat.* Indeed, Mr. Wolf, I don't know but she may,  
If you'll sit down a moment, I'll step up and see.

So she gave him a chair, and shaking her ears,  
She very obligingly tripped it upstairs.  
She knocked at the door with the rings on her toes,  
And said, "Mrs. Fox, you're within, I suppose?"  
"Oh yes," said the widow, "pray come in, my dear,  
And tell me whose voice in the kitchen I hear."  
"It's a wolf," said the cat, "with a nice smooth skin,  
Who was passing this way, and just stepped in  
To see (as old Mr. Fox is dead)  
If you like to take him for a husband instead."

"But," said Mrs. Fox, "has he red feet and a sharp snout?" "No," said the cat. "Then he won't do for me." Soon after the wolf was sent about his business, there came a dog, then a goat, and after that a bear, a lion, and all the beasts, one after another. But they all wanted something that old Mr. Fox had, and the cat was ordered to send them all away. At last came a young fox, and Mrs. Fox said, "Has he four red feet and a sharp snout?" "Yes," said the cat.

"Then, Puss, make the parlour look clean and neat,  
And throw the old gentleman into the street;  
A stupid old rascal! I'm glad that he's dead,  
Now I've got such a charming young fox instead."  
So the wedding was held, and the merry bells rung,  
And the friends and relations they danced and they sung,  
And feasted and drank, I can't tell how long.

[The end of *Grimm's Fairy Tales: Mrs. Fox* by the Brothers Grimm]