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The Wonderful Musician

There was once a capital musician who played delightfully on the fiddle, and he went rambling in a forest in a merry mood. Then he said to himself, "Time goes rather heavily on, I must find a companion." So he took up his fiddle, and fiddled away till the wood resounded with his music.

Presently up came a wolf. "Dear me! there's a wolf coming to see me," said the musician. But the wolf came up to him, and said, "How very prettily you play! I wish you would teach me." "That is easily done," said the musician, "if you will only do what I bid you." "Yes," replied the wolf, "I shall be a very apt scholar." So they went on a little way together, and came at last to an old oak tree that was hollow within, and had a large crack in the middle of the trunk. "Look there," said the musician, "if you wish to learn to fiddle, put your fore-feet into that crack." The wolf did as he was bid: but the musician picked up a large stone and wedged both his fore-feet fast into the crack, so as to make him a prisoner. "Now be so good as to wait there till I come back," said he, and jogged on.

After a while, he said again to himself, "Time goes very heavily, I must find another companion." So he took his fiddle, and fiddled away again in the wood. Presently up came a fox that was wandering close by. "Ah! there is a fox," said he. The fox came up and said, "You delightful musician, how prettily you play! I must and will learn to play as you do." "That you may soon do," said the musician, "if you do as I tell you." "That I will," said the fox. So they travelled on together till they came to a narrow footpath with high bushes on each side. Then the musician bent a stout hazel stem down to the ground from one side of the path, and set his foot on the top, and held it fast; and bent another from the other side, and said to the fox, "Now, pretty fox, if you want to fiddle, give me hold of your left paw." So the fox gave him his paw; and he tied it fast to the top of one of the hazel stems. "Now give me your right," said he; and the fox did as he was told: then the musician tied that paw to the other hazel; and took off his foot, and away up flew the bushes, and the fox too, and hung sprawling and swinging in the air. "Now be so kind as to stay there till I come back," said the musician, and jogged on.

But he soon said to himself, "Time begins to hang heavy, I must find a companion." So he took up his fiddle, and fiddled away divinely. Then up came a hare running along. "Ah! there is a hare," said the musician. And the hare said to him, "You fine fiddler, how beautifully you play! will you teach me?" "Yes," said the musician, "I will soon do that, if you will follow my orders." "Yes," said the hare, "I shall make a good scholar." Then they went on together very well for a long while, till they came to an open space in the wood. The musician tied a string round the hare's neck, and fastened the other end to the tree. "Now," said he, "pretty hare, quick, jump about, run round the tree twenty times." So the silly hare did as she was bid: and when she had run twenty times round the tree, she had twisted the string twenty times round the trunk, and was fast prisoner; and she might pull and pull away as long as she pleased, and only pulled the string faster about her neck. "Now wait there till I come back," said the musician.

But the wolf had pulled and bitten and scratched at the stone a long while, till at last he had got his feet out and was at liberty. Then he said in a great passion, "I will run after that rascally musician and tear him in pieces." As the fox saw him run by, he said, "Ah, brother wolf, pray let me down, the musician has played tricks with me." So the wolf set to work at the bottom of the hazel stem, and bit it in two; and away went both together to find the musician: and as they came to the hare, she cried out too for help. So they went and set her free, and all followed the enemy together.

Meantime the musician had been fiddling away, and found another companion; for a poor woodcutter had been pleased with the music, and could not help following him with his axe under his arm. The musician was pleased to get a man for his companion, and behaved very civilly to him, and played him no tricks, but stopped and played his prettiest tunes till his heart overflowed for joy. While the woodcutter was standing listening, he saw the wolf, the fox, and the hare coming, and knew by their faces that they were in a great rage, and coming to do some mischief. So he stood before the musician with his great axe, as much as to say, No one shall hurt him as long as I have this axe. And when the beasts saw this, they were so frightened that they ran back into the wood. Then the musician played the woodcutter one of his best tunes for his pains, and went on with his journey.



"So he stood before the musician with his great
axe."

[The end of *Grimm's Fairy Tales: The Wonderful Musician* by the Brothers Grimm]