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Title: Grimm's Fairy Tales: Mother Holle

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Mother Holle

A widow had two daughters; one of them was very pretty and thrifty, but the other was ugly and idle.

Odd as you may think it, she loved the ugly and idle one much the best, and the other was made to do all the work, and was in short quite the drudge of the whole house. Every day she had to sit on a bench by a well on the side of the high-road before the house, and spin so much that her fingers were quite sore, and at length the blood would come. Now it happened that once when her fingers had bled and the spindle was all bloody, she dipt it into the well, and meant to wash it, but unluckily it fell from her hand and dropt in. Then she ran crying to her mother, and told her what had happened; but she scolded her sharply, and said, "If you have been so silly as to let the spindle fall in, you must get it out again as well as you can." So the poor little girl went back to the well, and knew not how to begin, but in her sorrow threw herself into the water, and sank down to the bottom senseless. In a short time she seemed to awake as from a trance, and came to herself again; and when she opened her eyes and looked around, she saw she was in a beautiful meadow, where the sun shone brightly, the birds sang sweetly on the boughs, and thousands of flowers sprang beneath her feet.

Then she rose up, and walked along this delightful meadow, and came to a pretty cottage by the side of a wood; and when she went in she saw an oven full of new bread baking, and the bread said, "Pull me out! pull me out! or I shall be burnt, for I am quite done enough." So she stepped up quickly and took it all out. Then she went on further, and came to a tree that was full of fine rosy-cheeked apples, and it said to her, "Shake me! shake me! we are all quite ripe!" So she shook the tree, and the apples fell down like a shower, until there were no more upon the tree. Then she went on again, and at length came to a small cottage where an old woman was sitting at the door: the little girl would have run away, but the old woman called out after her, "Don't be frightened, my dear child! stay with me, I should like to have you for my little maid, and if you do all the work in the house neatly you shall fare well; but take care to make my bed nicely, and shake it every morning out at the door, so that the feathers may fly, for then the good people below say it snows.—I am Mother Holle."

As the old woman spoke so kindly to her, the girl was willing to do as she said; so she went into her employ, and took care to do everything to please her, and always shook the bed well, so that she led a very quiet life with her, and every day had good meat both boiled and roast to eat for her dinner.

But when she had been some time with the old lady, she became sorrowful, and although she was much better off here than at home, still she had a longing towards it, and at length said to her mistress, "I used to grieve at my troubles at home, but if they were all to come again, and I were sure of faring ever so well here, I could not stay any longer." "You are right," said her mistress; "you shall do as you like; and as you have worked for me so faithfully, I will myself show you the way back again." Then she took her by the hand and led her behind her cottage, and opened a door, and as the girl stood underneath there fell a heavy shower of gold, so that she held out her apron and caught a great deal of it. And the fairy put a shining golden dress over her, and said, "All this you shall have because you have behaved so well;" and she gave her back the spindle too which had fallen into the well, and led her out by another door. When it shut behind her, she found herself not far from her mother's house; and as she went into the court-yard the cock sat upon the well-head and clapt his wings and cried out,

"Cock a-doodle-doo!

Our golden lady's come home again."

Then she went into the house, and as she was so rich she was welcomed home. When her mother heard how she got these riches, she wanted to have the same luck for her ugly and idle daughter, so she too was told to sit by the well and spin. That her spindle might be bloody, she pricked her fingers with it, and when that would not do she thrust her hand into a thorn-bush. Then she threw it into the well and sprang in herself after it. Like her sister, she came to a beautiful meadow, and followed the same path. When she came to the oven in the cottage, the bread called out as before, "Take me out! take me out! or I shall burn, I am quite done enough." But the lazy girl said, "A pretty story, indeed! just as if I should dirty myself for you!" and went on her way. She soon came to the apple-tree that cried, "Shake me! shake me! for

my apples are quite ripe!" but she answered, "I will take care how I do that, for one of you might fall upon my head;" so she went on. At length she came to Mother Holle's house, and readily agreed to be her maid. The first day she behaved herself very well, and did what her mistress told her; for she thought of the gold she would give her; but the second day she began to be lazy, and the third still more so, for she would not get up in the morning early enough, and when she did she made the bed very badly, and did not shake it so that the feathers would fly out. Mother Holle was soon tired of her, and turned her off; but the lazy girl was quite pleased at that, and thought to herself, "Now the golden rain will come." Then the fairy took her to the same door; but when she stood under it, instead of gold a great kettle full of dirty pitch came showering upon her. "That is your wages," said Mother Holle as she shut the door upon her. So she went home quite black with the pitch, and as she came near her mother's house the cock sat upon the well, and clapt his wings, and cried out—

"Cock a-doodle-doo!

Our dirty slut's come home again!"

[The end of *Grimm's Fairy Tales: Mother Holle* by the Brothers Grimm]