

Translated excerpt

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**Renate Raecke / Jonas Lauströer**  
***Reynard The Fox***

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CHANTICLEER THE ROOSTER MOURNS FOR HIS DAUGHTER  
SCRATCHYCLAW, THE BEST OF ALL EGG-LAYING HENS

Chanticleer the rooster stepped out in the festive meeting-place with a sad flock of followers, attracting the attention of one and all with their miserable crowing and cackling. A stretcher was carried in behind him, and on it lay the hen Scratchyclaw, Chanticleer's daughter, who was famous far and wide as the best of all egg-laying chickens. But she was in a terrible state, poor thing, for her head was missing! Four chickens carried the stretcher, and beside it walked two roosters carrying candles. They were Cockadoodle and Doodledoo, Chanticleer's eldest sons, and they too were known all over the land for their courage and daring.



"It was in spring," Chanticleer the rooster began his tale, "when winter was over and flowers, leaves and green grass were growing and blooming everywhere. Every day of my life, I was glad I had such a large family. My wife had brought up ten sons and twice seven daughters the year before. We were well off; I had nothing to complain of. We lived in safety, well guarded by farm dogs, inside the walls of a monastery, and we wanted for nothing, except perhaps a larger run than the monastery garden where we could scratch about and peck up food.

But you know what young people are like: they wanted to know what life outside the monastery walls had to offer," Chanticleer went on.

"One day, when we ventured out, Reynard met us in the robes of a pious monk. He talked about the royal peace that you, wise king, have decreed at Whitsun. And he said that he, Reynard, had changed his way of life and had vowed never to hurt any other animal again. How I wish I had never believed him!"

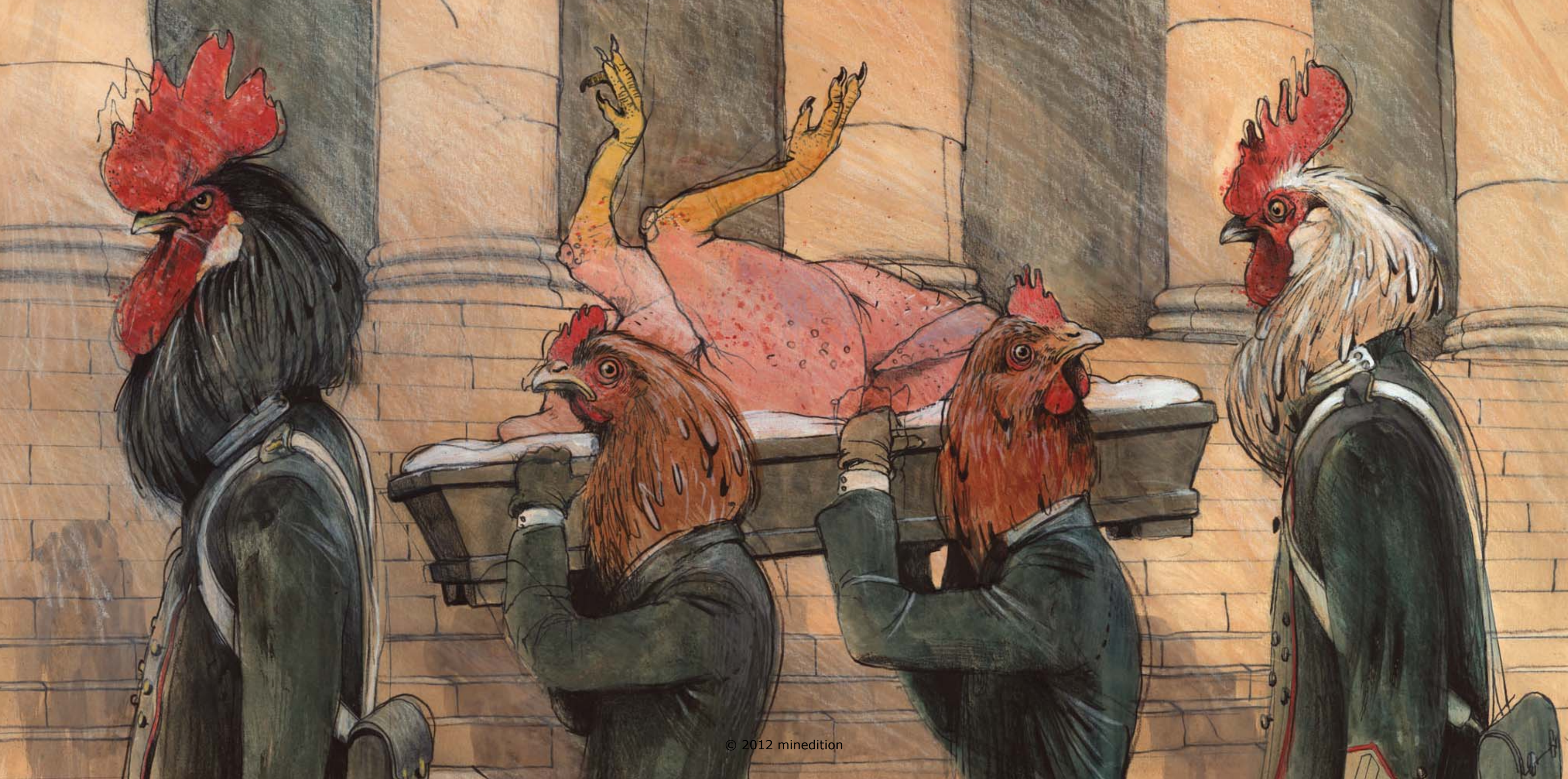
Chanticleer was fighting back tears. "Reynard set traps for us!" he went on. "When I left the monastery walls with my children, and they were happily and curiously exploring the world beyond our farmyard, Reynard, who was hiding in the bushes, sprang his trap. He barred our way back to the monastery garden, and before the watchdogs could do anything about it he had hunted several of my children to death. Attacking with desperate force, the dogs managed to tear the body of my daughter Scratchyclaw away from him, but she had lost her beautiful head."

Now Chanticleer the rooster turned directly to his king. "I had twenty-four children – now I have only these six left. You see, lord king, how badly Reynard has treated me, you see what trouble I am in. Reynard must be punished for breaking the peace."

King Noble angrily shook his mane. Was Reynard the fox brazen enough to disobey his orders? He could not and would not put up with such a thing.

More and more animals came forward to complain. Pardel the panther, visibly upset, drew Lampe the hare forward.







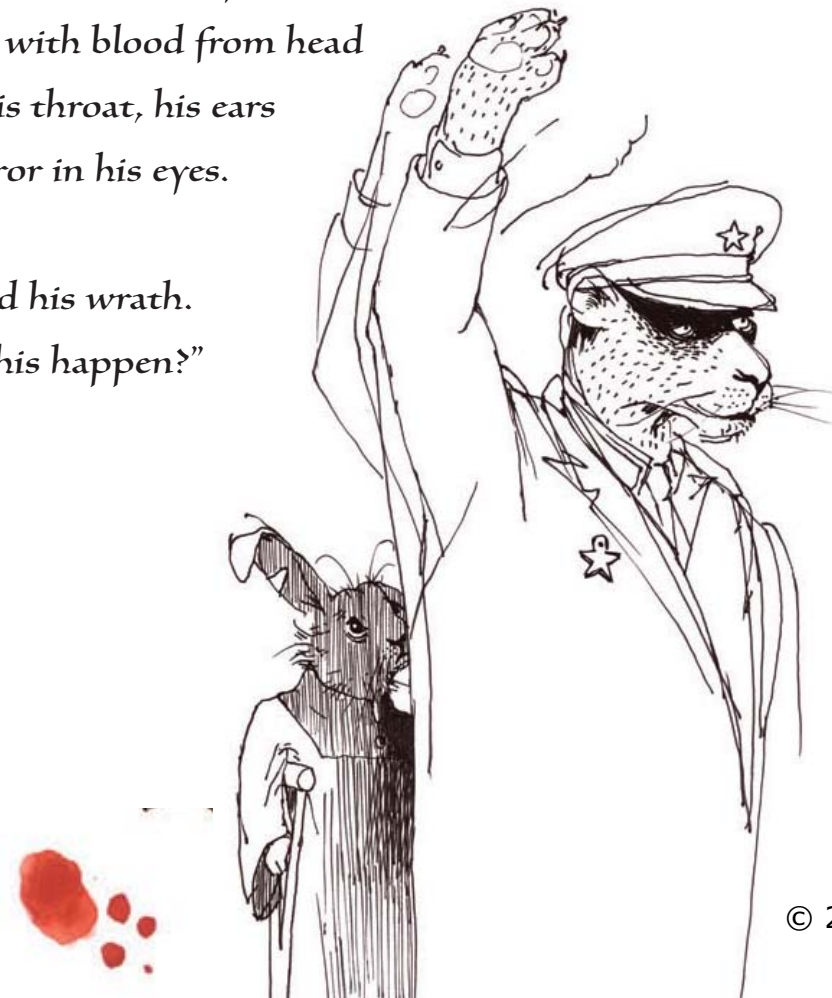
## PARDEL THE PANTHER AND LAMPE THE HARE

“My king,” said Pardel the panther, “we all have bad memories of Reynard the fox, each of us has fallen for his nasty tricks several times, but what he was bold enough to do today cannot go unpunished. He broke the peace.”

Pardel thrust Lampe the hare forward. “Look at him, lord king,” said Pardel the panther. “You see an animal who set out to come here, trusting in your invitation – and what does he look like now?”

What a pitiful sight the hare was! His fur was untidy, and some of it pulled out, he was encrusted with blood from head to foot, there were marks of strangling on his throat, his ears hung down all limp, and there was pure terror in his eyes. Not a word passed his lips.

With difficulty, King Noble suppressed his wrath. “You speak up for Lampe, Pardel, how did this happen?”



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“When I was on my way here this morning,” Pardel went on, “I heard Reynard’s voice in a bush. He was telling Lampe here that he would teach him to sing pious hymns. Hymns? That brought me up short. I stayed where I was and listened.

‘Are you sure you’re not planning to do me any harm, Reynard?’ I heard Lampe ask cautiously.

That villain Reynard only laughed. ‘Whatever can you be thinking, friend Lampe? You know that our king has decreed peace, so how could anything harm you?’

‘Very well, then,’ said Lampe, and he came out of hiding. ‘In that case I’d like to learn singing from you.’ And he went trustfully towards Reynard.”

Pardel the panther found it hard to go on with his story. “Reynard didn’t hesitate for a moment. When Lampe was close enough for him to attack, he bit his neck, beat him and shook him – and if I hadn’t come leaping out of the bushes to his aid, that would have been the end of Lampe the hare.”

Now it was impossible for King Noble to keep his subjects at the assembly calm any longer. They were too angry with Reynard, and they were all demanding justice and drastic punishment for that good-for-nothing fox at the top of their voices.







## GRIMBERT THE BADGER DEFENDS REYNARD

“Lord king,” Grimbert interrupted, “it has always been the custom at your court for no one to be condemned in his absence. As my honoured cousin Reynard has not come here, I would like to speak in his defence, for we all know that there are two sides to every story. If I hear what Isegrim has to say in accusing Reynard, then you must hear me telling you about the nasty trick that Isegrim himself once played on my honoured cousin Reynard. A king who claims to do justice must also hear the case for the defence.”

King Noble the lion nodded, as a sign that he agreed, and asked the assembly to give the badger a hearing.



## THE STORY OF THE FISHMONGER

Grimbert glanced around, to reassure himself that all the animals were looking at him intently, and he gave the queen in particular a winning smile.

“It was in winter weather,” he began his plea for the defence, “when all the animals were so hungry that they would have been glad of even a bone gnawed clean, it was then that Isegrim the wolf and my honoured cousin Reynard the fox formed an alliance with each other. They agreed to go hunting together,” he went on, “to get food for themselves and their families. Everything they caught was to be divided between them honestly and in friendship. Or so at least they agreed.”

One day they saw a fishmonger going to market with his horse and cart. The cart was loaded up with delicious fresh fish, and the scaly skins of the fish glittered in the winter sunlight. Isegrim and Reynard felt their mouths watering – but neither of them had any money to buy his wares from the fishmonger honestly.

While Isegrim was still lamenting and complaining that his stomach was grumbling, Reynard had already thought up a clever trick. He lay down on the road, right in the fishmonger’s way, and played dead.







The fishmonger, who was suspicious at first, approached the fox with a knife, ready to chase him away at any time, but Reynard played his part perfectly. He lay there, stiff and rigid, and so deceived the fishmonger. I have plenty of time, thought the fishmonger, he's dead as a doornail. I can skin him at home and then take his skin to market with me. So he threw the fox who looked so dead up into his cart, and went on his way to do his other business first.

While the fishmonger drove on to market, looking ahead of him, Reynard the fox came back to life, and busily threw fish after fish out of the back of the cart and down to his companion Isegrim. Isegrim, who was following the cart at a safe distance, picked them all up just as busily.

Finally, when the cart was lighter by about half, Reynard felt tired of the work and jumped down, asking Isegrim for his share of the fish.

"There's your share, and you're welcome to it," said the wolf, with a cunning grin, pointing to the road behind them - where nothing lay but fishbones gnawed bare. Isegrim had greedily satisfied his hunger without a thought for his friend, although Reynard had thrown down the fish right in front of his nose."

Grimbert paused, seeing that the king and queen were whispering excitedly to each other. He bowed low to the royal pair, and waited in silence for the decision.



King Noble tried to restrain his anger, and talked for a moment to Bruin the bear and Tybalt the cat, his confidential advisers.

Then he announced his verdict. "We will send a messenger to Reynard. He must appear in person to answer the charges against him. Hear me!" said the king, turning to Bruin. "I will entrust that message to you. But beware of his deceiving ways. You have heard yourself what cunning tricks he plays on my subjects."

"Never fear, my king," said Bruin. "I've known about Reynard's sly malice long enough. He won't find it easy to hoodwink me!"



