



Schmitt – Be Brave!

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(First section done in rhyme as is the original text, rest was translated in prose form.)

When on lovely summer days
Dragonflies flit through the haze;
In the meadows, flowers blossom
And their scent is something awesome;
Bees are busy making honey,
Cats are lazing where it's sunny,
Squirrels skitter in the trees,
Birds a-flutter on the breeze,
That's when Schmitt goes for a stroll -
A friend to every animal.
For Schmitt has an amazing gift:
From a lion to a swift
He can mimic every feature,
Of absolutely any creature;
Or rather, he believes he can:
Puffing his cheeks like a pelican,
He thinks he's got it to a tee,
No one will ever guess it's me!
But Schmitt, the hero of our yarn,
Is really a chameleon.
Colours and patterns he can ape,
But not take on another shape.
His self-belief is just so strong
He can't imagine he is wrong
He isn't titchy any more;
He's a tiger, hear him roar!
The animals all clap and grin -
And now, our story can begin:

For on this summer's day, Schmitt
Doesn't want to laze around at home,
and so, as soon as the sun is up

he sets off out into the world
To explore the surrounding area
In the early morning hours.
He passes a farmyard,
and suddenly hears a loud clucking
and sees: at the henhouse gate
a vixen is making mischief.
She's jumping up and down at the gate,
Keeping the chickens on the run,
trying to dig her way underneath it,
though without much success –
Schmitt walks up to the red animal:
“Who are you and what are you doing here?”
The vixen at once stops causing a fuss.
“Do you see that hook up there?”
She asks him in a gentle voice.
“If I could climb up this fence,
I could open the door.
I've been asked to guard the chickens.
But sadly, I just can't reach it,
though I've tried everything I can.”

“**N**o problem, I can help you out.
I really can!” says Schmitt.
He prepares himself at once.
And with no clue about what's really going on,
he climbs up the fence.
The vixen's waiting down below,
to get into the henhouse at long last,
and snatch a couple of chickens.
Oh no, now it's too late!
No matter how loud the cockerel crows:
The vixen takes a run-up;
The chameleon is baffled.
Schmitt takes the hook off the latch
And at once, with a mighty racket,
the vixen leaps into the henhouse,
feathers flying everywhere.
The chickens are very nimble;
They duck and dodge for all they're worth.
But the vixen won't give up.
An old chicken crosses her path,
It's panting, it can't go on,
and the vixen is delighted!
She snatches up the poor bird.

The cockerel is still crowing: "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

The chickens, beside themselves with rage,
Now rush forwards.
They make a ring around Schmitt and scold him:
"How could anyone be so stupid?!
Everyone knows that we chickens
Are tasty morsels to a vixen!"
"I thought you'd been locked up in there,
otherwise I wouldn't have done it,"
Says Schmitt, but he doesn't really understand
What the hens are talking about.
"Really? I'm starting to lose patience with you!
It's your fault this awful thing has happened!
What a terrible day this is –
Now the vixen has her dinner.
It's the end for that poor chicken,
You should be ashamed of yourself!
The henhouse is supposed to protect us
From these terrible dangers."
"Now, stop wailing, all of you,
Don't lose hope straight away.
I'll think of something, you'll see,
It shouldn't be too difficult.
I see what's happened now! I am truly sorry!
I'm not always very smart,"
Says Schmitt, and starts to rack his brains.
How is he going to make up for this blunder?
"The vixen stole the chicken -
Well, I'll just get her back!"
The chickens start to laugh.
How is this little animal going to do that?
"To get her back in one piece,
You'll have to fight the fox and win.
And you're much too small for that;
You'll never manage it alone."

Schmitt sets off, following the tracks
Of this mean animal.
And soon our hero arrives
At a big field of wheat.
In among the millions of stalks,
four black crows are sitting.
They're perching on a scarecrow
And holding their full bellies.

Schmitt heads straight towards them,
and wakes them from their lunchtime nap.
“Hello there, I have a question.
Do you happen to have seen
A vixen pass by this way?
She has stolen a chicken.”
“Yes, we saw her,”
Croaks one of the crows.
“Oh, if you would be so kind,
Which way did she go?
I want to save the chicken.”
The crows burst out laughing.
What does this little creature think he’s doing?
Then they point to the edge of the woods:
“Caw, caw, you’re off your head!
Only a wolf could do a thing like that.
Don’t make a fool of yourself.
Just admit it, say to yourself:
I would never get out alive!”
“Never!” says Schmitt. “You may laugh,
But I’m not a scaredy-cat.
Yes, it’s true, I’m very small,
but I’ll think of something.”

As Schmitt is going into the woods
A long thin animal
Gently wraps itself around him
And tickles him until he laughs.
He’s never seen anything like it.
How do you walk without any legs?
Then she opens her mouth very wide,
And Schmitt does too, to be polite.
His long tongue shoots out,
and bops her on the head, and – oh no!
The snake falls to the ground.
“What ssssneaky trickssss are thessse?”
She cries. “You ruffian!
Ow, that really hurt!”
Schmitt is frozen in shock himself,
And says, copying the snake:
“Oh, I’m sssssoo very ssssorry!
That’ssss a lovely dresss you’re wearing!”
“No one’s ever said that before,”
The snake says, quite taken aback.
“Everyone here thinkssss I’m sssscary.

They always ssssay I'm sssso ugly."
"I love the zig-zags on your back,
They're ssssuper nicccce!"
"Oh, you're flattering me now –
But tell me, what are you sssseeking here?"
"The vixen sssstole a chicken,
And I mean to get it back."
"Ha, you want to catch the fox?
She'll gobble you up in two sssseconds flat."
The snake laughs, and then adds:
"I'd leave her in peacccce if I were you."
"I can't do that: I made a promise.
And I always keep my word.
You'll see, I'll think of something,
it can't be all that difficult."
"I admire your bravery.
She ssssnuck off into the woodssss
With what she sssstole,
That way, passsst the anthillssss."

Schmitt goes deeper into the woods.
And very soon he meets
A badger outside his sett,
sweeping the entrance nice and clean.
"Excuse me, can I ask you a question?"
"Certainly not, not today!"
The badger replies quick as a flash,
"Be off with you, get on your way!"
Schmitt has no intention of doing that.
"The vixen and that poor chicken..."
"I don't want to hear another word from you.
Now buzz off and stop bothering me!"
Schmitt watches him for a while.
"Excuse me, but what are you doing?"
The badger nearly blows a gasket:
"Why do you ask so many questions?
Can't you see I'm busy cleaning?
I don't expect you do anything so useful!"
"Ah, that's why it's so spick and span,
it must be very cosy inside."
The badger has never heard such a thing before
And invites Schmitt inside at once.
"Do you fancy something sweet?"
Schmitt says thank you, but he must be getting on.
"I have to go and fetch the chicken

That was stolen by the vixen.”
The badger laughs so hard he coughs:
“But the vixen’s far too big!
Only a wolf would be so bold,
You’ll just end up in her belly.”
“That’s what everyone says!
But don’t worry, I’ll think of something.”
The badger is impressed by his bravery:
“I’m sure you’ll do a good job.
The vixen isn’t far from here,
In fact, her house is just next door.”

The badger is right, it isn’t far.
Schmitt wonders: is the vixen there?
The dark entrance of her burrow
Looks really quite scary.
Schmitt steps carefully inside,
feeling weak and very small.
In the raven-black burrow
He very soon starts getting scared.
And soon he hears a quiet scrabbling
That makes him almost freeze in fear.
From inside the burrow
The vixen now leaps out.
“What are you doing here, little lizard?”
The mean animal asks him.
“Oh yes, what... what wa... was it again?”
Schmitt stutters, scared out of his wits.
Then he pulls himself together:
“The chicken that you stole...”
The vixen interrupts him at once:
“I don’t know what you’re talking about.
And I don’t have time for this, either.
Now go away, or there’ll be trouble!”
Schmitt wants to run away, teeth chattering,
Then he hears a soft clucking.
“That must be the old hen!”
He cries in delight, and in he goes.
The angry vixen now
Springs forwards in one big leap.
“Do you really want to mess with me?
I’ll gobble you up right now!”
All Schmitt can do is hop aside, fast
And shuffle safely out of the burrow.

Schmitt is still quite horrified,
the vixen nearly shredded him!
The other animals were right:
He's too small to fight a fox.
Schmitt sits down and thinks hard.
How is he going to keep his promise?
If he is going to free the hen,
he'll have to be someone else.
But who on earth would dare
to chase the vixen out of her burrow?
A big, strong animal, that's who!
The first one Schmitt comes up with is a bull.
But the foxhole is much too small,
A bull would never fit inside.
How about a shark, then?
Ha, that would make the vixen scream!
The only problem is that
Sharks live underwater.
What was it the badger and the crows said?
A wolf could do it – that's the one.
So Schmitt turns himself completely grey
And climbs into the burrow, howling.
There's no sign of the vixen now,
Schmitt can carry on safely.
When he finally finds the hen,
she clucks her grateful thanks:
"My hero, you've come to rescue me!
You've saved me from certain death!"
"I'm sure we're not safe yet, my dear,
The vixen can't be far from here."
No sooner are the pair outside
Than they hear the vixen screaming.

She comes running from far away,
Quickly recognising Schmitt in his wolf disguise.
"You're a cheeky one, alright,
Now I'll have that chicken back."
"Oh no, oh no, what shall we do?"
The chicken clucks loudly.
She flies into the nearest tree
And hides – who would have thought it?
And that gives Schmitt an idea:
He colours himself white as snow,
with orange feet and a bright red head.
Now he looks just like a frightened chicken.

“Stay where you are,” he tells the hen,
“And watch me run around here,
Back and forth from tree to tree,
Hoping the vixen chases me.
And every time I hide myself,
You squawk from where you are.”
No sooner said than done: Schmitt starts to run,
With the vixen hot on his heels.
Since both animals look the same,
It doesn’t matter which way she turns,
The hen is here, the hen is there,
the hen seems to be everywhere.
And after all that back-and-forth
The vixen simply can’t go on.
She starts to pant and then lies down.
Schmitt and the chicken cry: “Hurrah!”

The vixen is so very tired
That Schmitt gives her a good talking-to.
“Why did you steal that hen?”
The vixen, looking sorry for herself,
Points to a nearby bush.
“This had better not be a trick,”
Schmitt warns the wicked thief.
Then, in the bush, he counts seven,
Yes, seven little fox cubs,
Very cute and very small.
They all come bounding over.
“Are those all your cubs?”
The vixen howls loudly and moans:
“They’re the only reason I went hunting.
A chicken would have fed them all.
I’m all alone, what shall I do?”
The hen is outraged by that.
She can’t believe her ears.
“When someone is left all alone
Then life is very hard indeed.
How we do it in the henhouse
Is to help each other; that makes us happy.”
The vixen says: “Yes, you’re right.
I’m sorry, and I truly mean that.
Please forgive me for what I did.
And thank you for your advice.”
“Oh, not at all, it’s all forgiven,
You must all come and eat with us,

You and your seven sweet little cubs,
They're so very lovable!
We can't offer you any meat,
But you will all get nice and full
On corn and worms and tasty berries –
So will you do us the honour?"

On the great, green meadow
A fresh, gentle breeze blows.
Fox and hen – who would have thought? –
Live in perfect harmony.
And Schmitt, our little hero
Sets off again, out into the world.
For, as I'm sure you will agree:
There's lots of world out there to see!