

# The Prince Who was a Rooster

*Retold by Caroline Feller Bauer*

It was a pity. The prince was such a handsome young man. He had been well educated by tutors. He spoke three languages quite fluently and he rode a horse as well as any man. It was such a pity that he believed that he was a rooster.

It happened one day after a particularly grueling session with his mathematics professor. Prince Aaron was discouraged when the problem he was working refused to come out in a satisfactory manner. He chanced to look out the window and saw a rooster pecking about the yard. "What a fine life the rooster has," mused the prince. "All he has to do is peck and crow, peck and crow. His life is so much easier than mine. I would love to be a rooster. I will be a rooster."

The prince threw off his clothes, flapped his arms and crowed.

His family was astonished and saddened. Prince Aaron's mother and father wrung their hands and shook their heads. The servants averted their eyes and continued to serve the prince, but were shocked that the future ruler thought he was a rooster. How could the prince ever find a princess if he was a rooster?

Now Prince Aaron refused to eat the meals prepared by the castle kitchen and instead ate corn thrown on the floor. He refused to lay in his bed or sit in a chair. He was deaf to the pleas that he continue his studies. He strode around the castle completely naked, crowing and flapping his arms.

The queen was sure that the prince would tire of such strange behavior. But the king thought they better do something. He sent out a royal proclamation.

Anyone who could cure the prince would be given a fine prize. Several men came to the castle to try to plead with the prince, but he was difficult to talk to, crowing and flapping his arms.

After several discouraging weeks, the young girl who fed the royal hens and rooster asked for an audience with the king and queen.

"I think I can cure your son of his rooster behavior," she said, bowing before the royal couple.

"But how can you help?" lamented the king.

"Don't worry," said the henkeeper. "Just let me have some time with your son."

Pauline entered the room where the prince was happily flapping his arms. He crowed at Pauline. Pauline crawled under the desk where the Prince was nibbling on some kernels of corn. She cackled like a hen.

"Greetings, Rooster," she said.

"Who are you?" asked the prince.

"I am a hen come to join you," answered the girl.

"But why are you wearing clothes?"

“Shhh,” cautioned Pauline. “I don’t want anyone to know I’m a hen. Hens get eaten, you know.”

The prince looked thoughtful. “Would you like some corn?” he offered.

“Thank you,” said Pauline, “but first I will fetch a plate and a fork to eat it.”

“If you are a chicken, why would you eat your corn like a human being?” asked Prince Aaron.

“Shhh,” cautioned Pauline. “I don’t want anyone to know I’m a hen. Hens get eaten, you know.”

The prince looked thoughtful. He crowed and flapped his arms. Pauline cackled and flapped hers. They grinned at each other.

Pauline said, “I think I would like to read now. Where do you keep your books?”

“How can you read if you are a hen?” asked the prince.

“Shhh. It’s boring to just cackle and peck all day, and anyway I don’t want anyone to know I’m a hen. Hens get eaten, you know.”

The prince looked thoughtful. He flapped his arms and crowed. Pauline flapped her arms and cackled. They grinned at each other.

He said, “I think I’ll get dressed. I’m a bit cold wearing nothing. Since you are my guest, I think I’ll join you at the dining-room table. And I happen to have a book with a very interesting mathematical problem. Perhaps you would enjoy working it with me.”

As the afternoon drew to a close, the prince asked Pauline the henkeeper if she would like to be his bride. “Of course,” said Pauline. The prince crowed with pleasure.

“Shhh,” cautioned Pauline. “Roosters get eaten too.” The parents of the prince were so delighted that they gave Pauline one-half of the kingdom.

The prince and Pauline were soon married. In time they became the rulers of the kingdom. The people were pleased with their new rulers.

Only King Aaron and Queen Pauline knew that they were really a rooster and a chicken.