

I Have Had Enough

By Emma Ruthloff

When I was about seven years old, Minnie taught me how to feed and water the chickens all by myself. From the first day I came to the farm three years ago, I had helped her feed the chickens and gather the eggs. At first I was afraid of the chickens but I soon got over it. Minnie told me, "Leave an old settin hen alone. When she's settin on a nest of eggs, she's very protective and will defend her nest to the end." Of course I always had to see just what would happen even though I was told many times to leave certain things alone.

I fed the other chickens as usual by entering the chicken yard and scattering feed on the ground and filling their water buckets. I had to go into the hot chicken house to collect the eggs and give the settin hen feed and water. I never liked being in the chicken house in the hot weather. The air was stale and the smell from the chicken manure made me breathe funny. The sun beat down on the black tar roof and it seemed to be a lot hotter in the chicken house than outside.

Regardless of the heat and smell I had made up my mind to see just what the settin hen would do if I bothered her. The nesting boxes were little squares built all in a row about three feet off the floor on one side of the chicken house. The other side had several long poles nailed along the wall for the chickens to go to roost on. There was one small window on each side but they did not let in much light. I always had to stand still for a little while until my eyes adjusted to the darkness in there. The settin hen's nest was at the far end of the nesting boxes and at first I would just pass near her nest. The hen would rise to a standing position just above her eggs, and fluff out her feathers, which made her look twice as big as she really was. That was not so scary because I knew all her fluffed out feathers was just a threat to make me think she was bigger. She would extend her neck in my direction with her beak open and make a low croaking sound. If I took a few steps back, she would carefully settle herself back down on the eggs. As I came closer, her warning sounds got louder and she would not settle back down on the nest until I walked away. For a few days I tested the hen and she did the same things. I began to get a little bolder and came closer to her. She stood above her eggs, fluffed out her feathers, shook her whole body making her feathers rustle, extended a wing and drew it back to make a loud cracking sound. When her warning sounds became a lot louder, I backed off for the time being.

I did not tell Minnie about testing the hen. I had seen Minnie deal with settin hens and it did not look that bad. Thinking about the ongoing taunting of the hen, I was tired of taking it slow to seeing what would happen. I decided, I'm much bigger, and she couldn't possibly hurt me other than a few pecks and I had certainly had that happen to me before. It was time to have the showdown with the hen. I fed the chickens and gathered the eggs in the big brown basket as usual, and took them to the house. Each egg was valuable because Minnie sold them and I did not want to risk breaking any of them.

I scouted around to see where Minnie and Wanda were so they would not see me going back into the chicken house. They were not in the house and I supposed they were in the garden picking green beans, so I sneaked along the low growing currant bushes beside the garden fence. I peaked through and saw them busily picking the beans. They would be expecting me to join them after I finished with the chickens. Well, I was not finished just yet. I walked away quietly, keeping my head and shoulders slumped so they would not see me above the bushes and call me to come and help.

I went directly back to the chicken yard. The gate was held closed with a chain wrapped around a piece of wood on the gate, and one link was hung on a nail driven partly into the post beside the gate. I slowly slipped the chain link from the nail and held it in one hand as I pushed the gate open a crack and slid through. I closed the gate and oh so carefully put the chain back on the nail. When I had to be sneaky and do things quietly, it seemed to take forever and I had that feeling of never getting through that gate. I also kept looking back toward the garden to see if anyone happened to see what I was doing. The other chickens were finishing the feed and did not run toward me cackling loud like they did when they wanted to be fed. I made a fast run into the chicken house and stood on the other side looking at the settin hen. Her eyes were closed and her head was drooped just a bit. She was having a nap in the late afternoon heat. She had not gotten off her nest to eat the feed I left for her. Looking at the size of her, I wondered what all the fuss was about, and decided that I was going to finally find out. She did not wake until I got close enough to touch her. She opened her eyes and realized immediately that I was too close and wasted no time in putting up a show of defense. Having seen all that before, I paid no attention and moved just inches from her. Squawking very loud, she flew off the nest and aimed herself right at my head. Her claws raked through my hair as she flew by. She landed a few feet from me and came at me flapping her wings and sticking out her neck ready to do battle. I was between her and the nest, which really riled her up. I stood there boldly, not knowing what that hen was capable of doing to me. She came at me full force. She flipped my legs with the tip of a wing, that stung like being flipped with a wet towel. I was stunned by just how much that hurt. Just then I wished I had worn shoes so I could try to kick her real hard. She jumped up and raked her sharp claws down my bare legs, making deep bloody scratches. The hen made terribly loud squawking noises. She pecked me so hard; her sharp beak broke through my skin. She would clamp down on a hunk of skin and then twist her head a few times. I backed away but she kept coming and attacking with her wings, feet and beak. She flew up my back clawing, pecking and squawking. My thin cotton dress gave me very little protection. She got on the top of my head, clamped her claws in my hair, and continued to peck and flip me with her wings.

All I could do was stumble around screaming, crying, and hold my hands over my eyes. Minnie and Wanda heard me screaming and the hen squawking and ran in the chicken house. Minnie knocked the hen off my head and shoved me toward Wanda shouting, "Get her outa here." Minnie was left to do battle with the mad hen as Wanda pulled me along to the gate. I was still screaming, and crying, and holding my hands over my face. Wanda got the gate open and shoved me out. She forced my hands from my face to see if I still had eyes in my head. She said, "Can ya see?" I did not respond and she yelled right in my face, "Can ya see!" I began to pay attention to her question, quieting a bit, and tried to focus through my tears. I nodded my head to show that I could see. She really could not tell if my eyes had been injured because my face was a bloody mess. In the mean time Minnie was kicking the chicken and flailing with her arms and

backed out of the chicken house. She slammed the door, but not quick enough. The hen was tightly wedged between the frame and the door with her neck extended still trying to peck. Minnie used her foot and pushed the hen back in and quickly closed the door. Minnie came running to me and asked Wanda, "Is she blind?" Wanda said, "No she aint, she can see."

Minnie led me to the house, not saying anything. She figured nothing could be done now but tend to my wounds. We always kept water in the heavy cast iron teakettle and even when the fire died down the water would remain hot. Wanda put some warm water in the wash basin and they both washed and examined me. I had deep scratches and piercings from the hen's beak nearly all over my body. Bruises were already showing from where her wings flipped me. For once I did not object to my wounds being tended because that hurt less than the flogging. My dress was shredded from the sharp claws of the hen. Minnie said, "Yer lucky she didn't peck yer eyes out! I've heard tell of people gettin their eyes pecked out by 'n old settin hen. What were ya doin that made that hen flog ya?" I told Minnie, "I'm so much bigger than that hen 'n I didn't think she could do anything this bad to me." Minnie said, "I told ya ta stay away from them hens when they'er settin on their eggs and I told ya they don't want ya near 'em. Ya always have ta learn the hard way. Well, here is somethin fer ya ta think about. That hen's little but mighty, don't ya think?" I said I did not understand what she was saying. Minnie said, "Just cause somethin's little don't mean it kaint do somethin big. Well that little hen did a lot to ya, didn't she? That hen has three little weapons that can hurt ya real bad." I thought about weapons and said, "What's her weapons?" Minnie said, "Now what did she use ta tear ya up?" I said, "Her beak, her feet, and her wings." Minnie said, "And all of them things are her weapons."

Minnie said I should stay out of the sun for the rest of the day. My wounds were not bad but there were a lot of them. Minnie said, "I want ya ta think about what ya did ta make this happen ta ya while yer settin out here." She gave me an easy, but boring job, of stringing green beans and snapping them into pieces. She and Wanda went to the garden and I was left by myself. I sat in the shade of the front porch surrounded by two bushels of beans and had time to think about what troubles I had brought on myself. At first I told myself it was the hen's fault for attacking me and I decided that I hated her. Even though the dress I was wearing during the flogging was worn and getting too small, it was one of my favorites and now it was ripped to shreds by that old settin hen. I would get even with her and not give her any feed and water and keep her locked up until she died. But that was not possible because I looked forward to seeing her little bitties when they hatched. Then the thought struck me that the thing to do was to wait until she raised her bitties and then do her in. Another possibility was to convince Minnie the next time she used one of the chickens for a Sunday dinner, it would have to be the hen that flogged me. But Minnie would not slaughter a hen that was laying eggs or raising bitties. Just why did that hen flog me any way? I began to think up all sorts of reasons, but deep down, I knew they were not true. Minnie's words rang through my thoughts, "A settin hen will do her best ta warn ya before she goes into a full-blown floggin. Ya can back away and nothin will happen." I had to face myself with the truth: I was absolutely wrong in what I had done. The simple fact was that I provoked the flogging. I forgot about trying to get even and I wondered how the hen would behave when she saw me in the future. I did not want to go near her again. Partly out of fear and partly out of shame.

Minnie and Wanda came from the garden with more green beans. I did not have to help get the cows from the pasture and the milking. My face was swollen and my punctured skin was oozing stuff. Minnie said I would be ok if infection didn't set in. I must keep myself clean and stay out of the barns and away from the animals for a few days. I was tired of sitting on a hard chair and my behind felt like it was pressed as flat as a board. I was sure when I stood up there would be no bump where my behind used to be. Minnie said I could get up for a bit and carry the water we would need for the evening. I was glad to be up and about. During those hot summer months I played in the water some as I dipped it from the spring. Minnie usually frowned on me slopping the water on myself but today she said, "Go down there 'n pour that cold water all up 'n down yer arms 'n legs 'n it'll take some of the swellin out." It was nice to have her permission so I would not have to be sneaky.

The next day was Sunday and we always went to Sunday school. Minnie washed my wounds and put on fresh smelly ointment that stung. She said, "It'll help ya heal up real quick." Minnie had not escaped the ordeal either. She had a few punctures from being pecked by the settin hen too. We went to church and everyone asked what happened to me. Minnie told them, "Emjean picked a fight with an old settin hen, and the hen won." They laughed and in the same breath they said, "Yer lucky ta still have yer eyes, she got ya in the face purdy bad." They told me again what Minnie had said about settin hens.

After church the adults would linger and talk. The young children would run around the church yard and play. The older children would flirt with each other or taunt the younger children if the notion struck them. Of course, since I was the center of discussion this week, I was singled out to be told how dumb I was to let a settin hen flog me. They were boastful in what they would do if one ever came after them. I was embarrassed and wanted to get away from them. I hung around the adults for a bit, thinking that would make them stop, but they continued to make squawking noises. Tugging on her sleeve, I asked Minnie, "Can we go home now?" She was not really finished catching up on all the community news, but she supposed I was not feeling well and she said her good-byes and we got in her car and went home.

After five or six days I started doing all my regular duties, and feeding the hen was one that I was not looking forward to. Minnie knew I was dreading it and she went with me the first time. I was ok with feeding the other chickens but hesitated when I had to face the settin hen. Minnie said, "Go ahead, 'n put the feed 'n water in there, I'll be right behind ya. Nothing is gonna happen, if ya keep yer distance." When the hen saw me coming through the door, she remembered that I was the enemy and began making threatening noises. We put the feed and water just inside the door and left quickly. My heart was pounding but I knew I deserved her mistrust. Minnie said, "From now on you'll have ta keep a big distance between yerself and that hen. She don't trust ya 'n she'll be meaner when her bitties hatch." Even after that hen had raised her bitties she would make threatening noises just at the sight of me.

Minnie raised a few turkeys mostly for our own use. She saw that I was doing a good job caring for the chickens and she decided that it was time for me to take on the responsibility for the turkeys. Now I was sure she wanted to end my life in making me do that. The turkey hens were docile but the gobbler was meaner than any other critter on the farm. The old Gobbler would pick a fight with anything that was not fast enough to outrun him. He attacked just like a

settin hen but being much bigger, he could hurt a lot more. We kept the turkeys in a small barn in a meadow during the night. They were the domesticated kind and could not fly and they had free range of the farm making it cheaper to feed them. They foraged for food mostly insects, worms, and berries. Their favorite place to gather was at the fence along the back of the house. During canning season, we would throw pieces of vegetables or fruits over the fence for them. Before any of us would venture through the back gate, we took a sharp look around. Sometimes the turkeys would crawl under a bush to escape the heat. The big old Gobbler loved to hide under there and just wait to ambush anyone that came by. Wanda and I could usually outrun him if we got a bit of a head start. Minnie was not as fast of foot and sometimes had to skitter up a nearby tree to get away from him. He would strut around, fanning out his tail feathers and make his victorious gobbling sounds. We would have to go rescue her by distracting him. All of us at one time or another had received a severe peck from him. Minnie was usually the one to get beat up the most because she tended to them. Now, She had the nerve to assign this job to me! What! was she thinking?

Usually I was ready to take on new jobs. Minnie had a way of making me feel that doing new things was going to be so much fun and make me a more important person. Minnie said, "Takin care of the turkeys is gonna be yer job now." I was so shocked; my whole body reacted to that news. I jumped up squaring my shoulders, standing stiff, just like a soldier snapping to attention. An automatic, "NO!" came from inside of me somewhere. Minnie flashed a look at me that said, "You will do it 'n don't sass me!" I think I was more afraid of that old Gobbler than the bogeyman. I cried, begged and pleaded to not be given this job. I tried to argue the case of the flogging from the settin hen but that only backfired. Minnie said, "Since ya know from firsthand experience, you'll be sure ta keep that from happenin again." Minnie was tired of dealing with the turkeys. Since I could get away faster than she could, it would become my job. Wanda was not going to help me out because she had no desire to get near that old Gobbler either.

One August morning, Minnie announced that I was to go with her to learn how to take care of the turkeys. I whined and cried but Minnie did not show me any mercy. Her lips were pinched together and her permanent frown was deeper than usual. I had learned when she wore that expression, that heaven and earth could pass away and she still would not change her mind. Well, my revenge was to do everything in slow motion. She got tired of my nonsense and said, "If ya don't get a move on, you'll do the turkeys all by yerself." Not taking her threat seriously, I continued to piddle around. She tried something else that made me move lively. She said, "Them turkeys are used ta bein fed 'n let out a lot earlier. I expect they'll be riled up good by the time ya get out there. I'm gonna let 'ja go first." I said, "Ya kaint do that. I don't know what ta do." She said, "If ya don't get a move on, I'll let ya figer it out fer yerself." Her tone was serious and I knew I had pushed her to the limits. I made quick work of getting the feed from the granary and a bucket of water from the spring. I walked fast leaving Minnie behind, and I turned around and said, "Hurry up, them turkeys are gittin meaner by the minute," scaring myself with my own statement.

The small barn was in the middle of a meadow, which left us out in the open to deal with the Gobbler. A ladder was nailed to the side of the barn leading up to the hayloft. As we were walking towards the barn Minnie said, "Now pay attention ta everthing I'm tellin ya. Scatter the feed about twenty feet from the barn. Put the bucket of water up against the barn away from the

door. Get yerself up on that ladder leadin ta the hayloft 'n pull the pin out that's holdin the latch. Shove the door open 'n get yerself up that ladder far enough so 'ez that old Gobbler kaint git 'ja." As we approached the barn we heard the Gobbler loud and clear and he sounded mean. Minnie showed me just how far away from the barn to scatter the feed. I put the bucket of water where she wanted it. I could see the turkeys through cracks in the door and they had their heads crammed tight where the door would open. When the old Gobbler got mad, his neck and snout turned as red as an over ripe tomato. Minnie said, "Climb up in the loft 'n stick yer head out 'n watch how I get this door open." She got on the second rung of the ladder and got the door opened. She hurried on up the ladder and joined me in the loft. The old Gobbler was the first one out. He was not interested in eating the feed because his main concern was trying to flog us. But, he could not climb the ladder and he was too big to fly. All he could do was turn his head side ways to look up at us and strut around with his glaring red neck. He kept his tail feathers spread out like a big fan and made his back and breast feathers stand up which made him look so pretty. I used to enjoy his feather display until I learned that he was not intending on being nice when he did that. Minnie and I were held hostage for about five minutes until he calmed down and joined the other turkeys eating the feed. We quietly climbed down the ladder and slipped around the side of the barn out of his sight and ran to the safety of the yard. The whole ordeal was scary and exciting at the same time.

Minnie and I tended the turkeys together for one week, and we actually would laugh about running from the old Gobbler. September rolled around and once again it was time to put on my shoes and walk down the mountain to my little one room school. The school went from grades one through eighth. Wanda was going to another school because she was in the tenth grade. She left earlier than I did because she had to catch the school bus to get to her school. I found myself making sure my shoes were on good because one morning one flew off my foot as I was running. The old Gobbler stopped for a few moments to peck and scratch it a few times. He decided there was no victory in attacking my shoe and looked down fallen because he did not get a good run at me. I waited until he moved way down in the meadow before I went back to get my shoe.

I was scared each time I had to feed the turkeys but when I made a clean get-away, it was a good feeling. While it was still warm I did not mind waiting in the hayloft until it was safe to come down. When October rolled around I was really resentful of having to stay up there in the cold mornings. I tried to come down when the Gobbler had got a few feet from the barn. He would see me and come charging full force. I received some bad pecks on my legs before I could get back up the ladder. I began to get angry and hurl insults at him. He did not like me yelling and he would stay around the ladder even longer. One morning I filled a coffee can with marble size rocks and put it in the hayloft before I let the turkeys out. I joyful pulled the door open and scrambled up the ladder and stood smugly up in the hayloft and threw the stones at the old Gobbler, calling him every wicked thing I could think of. I yelled at him, "I despise you, 'n you're ugly. Nobody in this world likes you. We all hate you." I took great satisfaction in telling him that, "Thanksgiving is comin 'n guess who we're havin fer dinner, YOU." I described just how his head would be chopped off and his feathers plucked, and I was delighted to tell him that I was sure I was going to help do it. He would try to gobble louder than my shouts. Since we were on top of a mountain range, we had a good echo. He would answer my echo, which was so funny. Without meaning to, I was making the Gobbler meaner. I had to stay longer in the hayloft

because he would not leave the ladder. Sometimes the other turkeys would eat all the feed, but he didn't care. His main purpose was to flog me.

I was beginning to be late for school because of that Gobbler. The teacher understood the first few times it happened but soon tired of hearing the same excuse. She wrote a note about my tardiness. Minnie's solution was to get me up earlier to feed the turkeys. I was furious that one mean old Gobbler was ruining my life. I decided to get a long stick and hit him with it to get away from the barn. The first stick I chose was not strong enough because it broke when I hit him. Still, I was onto something because he immediately flattened his feathers and backed off just briefly. That was long enough for me to get away. That evening I walked into the woods and got a good stout stick about the size of a baseball bat. I sneaked up to the hayloft and left it there to use when I got up my nerve.

I had to think about what I was doing because I could hit the Gobbler and hurt him. Minnie would punish me because she planned on slaughtering and selling him for someone's Thanksgiving dinner. As big as he was getting he would bring a good price. I was beginning to think that bashing him was not such a good idea. I wished he would just die and all my troubles would be over. If he died Minnie would not be able to sell him. I started wishing Thanksgiving would hurry up and get here.

Minnie woke me up a half-hour earlier just so I could sit in the hayloft. I decided that I would not use the stick on the Gobbler but carry it with me just in case I could not get away from him. He was even more aggressive today because of being hit yesterday. I had to stay in the loft even longer and ended up being late for school again. As a punishment the teacher took me to the blackboard and drew a ring and I had to stand on my tiptoes and keep my nose in that ring for ten minutes. At recess the kids made gobbling sounds at me and said, "What's the matter? EmJean are ya afraid of a lil' ole turkey?"

The next morning I got up and went out to feed the turkeys and climbed up into the hayloft and got the stick and came back down the ladder. The gobbler was right there ready to give me a flogging that I am sure he thought was long over due. I held onto the ladder with one hand and swung the stick hard with the other hand. I felt the stick make contact with his red neck and heard the smack. I had not hit him hard enough to discourage him, so I jumped to the ground and stood just like a batter ready to swing. The Gobbler was on me in a flash and I swung with my entire might and made solid contact with his neck again. He tumbled over backwards and lay on his back with his feet clawing the air. At that moment I was more scared that I had killed him than of his flogging. I held my breath while I watched him roll over on his side and attempt getting up. He tried to stand up but he was still stunned and just sat there panting and blinking his eyes. I stood there whimpering and praying to God for him to please be ok. After what seemed to be an eternity he stood up and wobbled around and seemed not to know where he was. I could not watch him any longer because I had to run down the mountain to school.

I could hear the school bell ringing as I ran. I took chances cutting too close to trees; the low branches snagged my hair. I did not stop to get it loose. I just jerked my head and did not care if a big patch of my hair was pulled out. I ran down the steep mountain over loose rocks and lost my footing and went tumbling. It seemed that I was never going to stop falling. When I

finally got to my feet again, I didn't even check for skinned knees but I could feel warm blood trickling down my legs. The bell was still ringing and I had to keep running. I was not going to be punished again in front of the whole class. I told myself, "Go-Faster! Faster!"

I made it just as the teacher rang the hand held brass bell for the last time and turned to walk through the door. I was so out of breath and disarrayed, she thought a bear had chased me. My legs were trembling and I could hardly stand. I was taking in air in big gulps. From running so hard my side hurt and I doubled over. She kept asking me what was wrong, but I was so out of breath I could not talk. She looked scared and got right in my face and said, "Are you all right?" I shook my head up and down to indicate yes. She said, "Did something happen to you?" I shook my head to tell her no. She seemed to be satisfied with that and started to inspect my badly skinned knees. She took me into the cloakroom and I collapsed on the bench. She washed my knees and cut small pieces of a white flour sack to use for dressings on the skinned places. She cut strips of white tape and put them across the dressings to hold them in place.

The teacher told me to just lie on the bench for a while and she would come in to check on me. I was glad she let me lie there because I was in no condition to sit up just yet. She went into the classroom and got schoolwork started with all the other students. She sent in one of the older girls to check on me every few minutes. I finally caught my breath and the pain in my sides eased and I got up and got a drink of water. My legs felt light and I was not sure they would hold me up. I sat back down on the bench for a few more minutes and the teacher came in to check on me. She said, "Are you ready to tell me what happened to you this morning?" I did not want to tell her I had run down the mountain at a breakneck speed to avoid being late. I was never good at lying and could not think of anything so I told her the whole naked truth. I told her about how I had beat up the turkey and he might die because of it. I would have been late again if I had not run. I was actually a little proud that I had gotten to school on time. She was not thrilled about that and said, "EmJean, because you caused such a commotion, you will sit at your desk during recess."

I was angry because of the punishment, after all, I was not late. I was also angry with the Gobbler and still exhausted from running. I could not be nice any longer and screamed at her, "I was not late!" She was startled at such behavior and laid on another punishment. I was to remain in my seat for the next two days for recess and dinner hour. When it was time for recess I did not even care that I had to stay in my seat. It was chilly outside and everyone was staying inside anyway. No one was allowed to talk to me, which I was grateful for. If they could not talk to me, they could not taunt me about my punishment and that blessed Gobbler. I could not stop thinking about that Gobbler. I was worried that I had hurt him really bad and perhaps he had died. I wanted to go home but I also dreaded it. Not knowing what happened was making me have an awful day. The teacher noticed my gloomy attitude that worsened as the day wore on. She came to my desk in the afternoon and put her hand on my head and asked me if I was all right. I did not smile or look at her. I kept my eyes cast down and in a low voice said, "I'm all right." She stood there stroking my head a few times and then she moved away.

This day seemed to drag on forever and ever. I kept looking at the big white faced clock on the wall. I was sure it had stopped, but it was electric and had a red second hand that was still moving, so it surely must be working. It was taking too long to get to the end of the day. I could

not concentrate on doing my work and squirmed and fidgeted so badly I disturbed the others around me. I was too aware of how hard the seat was and sat with first one leg under my behind and then the other one, shifting every few minutes. As the hands on the clock finally dragged their selves around to three-o'clock, I was sitting on the edge of my seat just waiting to be dismissed so I could run into the cloakroom and get my sweater. I did not bother to stay inside to put it on. I was the first one out the door. I ran down the steps, taking them two at a time, not caring if I fell. I hit the ground and ran as hard as I could up the steep mountain. I kept saying, "Oh please God don't let him be dead. Please! Please!" My sides started to hurt and I had to slow down. I prayed to God, "Please don't let me slow down! I have ta keep goin! I have ta find out if I killed that Gobbler!"

When I finally got to the mountaintop I staggered through the meadows looking for the turkeys. They were nowhere in sight. I sat down heavily and thought, I will never find them. I sat there for a while and then I heard his loud gobbling. The sound was coming from the house. I was relieved that he was alive but I still did not know how badly I might have hurt him. I walked at a normal pace because the relief from carrying around that guilt all day set me free. That was short lived because I heard Minnie calling, Help! Help! I tried to run fast but I couldn't because I was still winded from climbing the mountain too fast. I did manage to get to the house pretty quick and found the Gobbler had Minnie up the tree again. I drew his attention and got him to chase me. Minnie got out of the tree and ran for the gate and the Gobbler was on my heels and I kept running until I got to the springhouse. I ran down the steps and grabbed a bucket and filled it with water. I ran back and threw the water on the Gobbler. He flattened down his feathers and shook himself. I stood looking at the lump on his neck knowing I was the cause of it. Now that I knew he was all right I could start to hate him again. He seemed to forget about me for a few seconds and I ran past him to the side gate that Minnie was holding open for me. He stopped preening his wet feathers and came after me. I managed to get inside and Minnie closed the gate. He was so intent on flogging me, he ran right into the gate making a loud thudding sound. Minnie was cold and went directly into the house because he had chased her up the tree and she had been there for pretty close to an hour. She had run out of the house without a sweater thinking she would be right back. I could tell she was feeling the same way about that Gobbler that I was. She said, "Does that old Gobbler seem like he's gettin worse?" I did not have to think about that and answered, immediately, "Yes!"

Minnie noticed the patches on my knees and asked, "What 'ed ya do ta yer knees?" I told her, "I could hear the bell ringin 'n ran too fast down the Mountain 'n fell down." She seemed to be thinking about something other than what we were talking about. I said, "I was not late, I made it there just in the nick of time." She was so deep into her own thoughts, I was not sure she heard me. I did not repeat my words because I was worn out and decided to go change into my work clothes. The sooner I got my work finished the sooner I could have time for myself. Wanda would be getting home from school in a little while and I wanted to tell her what I had done.

I got through the gate and away from the wrath of the Gobbler. I hurried over to the pastures to find the cows. I found Old Dock (the plow horse) and made sure he was standing on all fours with no injuries and drove the cows to the barn. They seemed to know that I was in a bad mood and they all moved along automatically. Minnie and Wanda did the milking and I helped by scooping up feed for the cows and carrying the buckets of milk to the springhouse. I

did not even want to play with the barn cats this evening. Wanda was the only one that was in a good mood. She noticed that I was too quiet. She asked, "Did ya git inta trouble with Minnie?" I said, "No, but I hit that old Gobbler with a big stick this mornin 'n thought I killed him. I had ta leave fer school 'n I run down the mountain lickity-split, before Mrs. Baylor stopped ringin her bell. When I got there, I was outa breath 'n couldn't talk fer a while. Mrs. Baylor got mad because I had caused such a commotion and I got punished anyway. I hurried home to see if I killed that Old Gobbler 'n he had Minnie up that tree again, without her sweater on."

Wanda got great pleasure in knowing I hit that big pompous bird and she wanted to know all the details. She was sorry she had not been there to see it. I couldn't take any enjoyment in telling her because the upset from it through the whole day had been too much for me. Minnie was in the springhouse separating the milk. I was in and out of the house carrying wood. We were ahead of schedule in our work today and the sun was just starting to set. The turkeys would be making their way back to the barn to go to roost. Minnie finished in the springhouse and started to the house carrying a pitcher of milk. She had forgotten about the turkeys. The old Gobbler was between the gate and the springhouse and he went after her. She dropped the milk and the pitcher broke. Well now, that made her mad and she went for that old Gobbler. She got him by the neck and hollered for us to come out side. When we got out there we saw her holding on to that big old Gobblers neck real tight. She had to squeeze his neck to cut off his breath to keep him from tearing her up. He was trying to put up a fuss but she was squeezing so hard, his baldhead and neck were turning kind of blue. She yelled, "Quick! Go get the axe! I'm gonna chop his head off right now!" Wanda and I stood there dumbfounded because Minnie never lost patience with any of the animal. She had to yell at us again to get us to move. It was a struggle, but she led that Old Gobbler right up to the chopping block and stretched his neck out with one hand and chopped his head off with one swift movement. She looked like she was mad enough to chew nails and spit out tacks. She said, "I have had enough!"

The three of us stood there with our jaws dropped and watched as the last signs of life slipped from his headless body. I didn't trust him even in death. I sneaked up to his lifeless body and nudged him gently with my toe and ran back a few steps. I was half way expecting him to rise up and attack me. Minnie and Wanda seemed to need to be reassured that he was dead too. I still was not satisfied and went up to give him a good kick and this time I did not run but stood there looking down at him. I started to kick him some more but Minnie said, "Stop, you'll bruise the meat." I really wanted to kick him more and tell him that all of us were happy that he was dead. I knew Minnie would not approve of such behaviour, so I kept my thoughts to myself.

The next morning Minnie let me sleep longer because I would not be spending a half-hour in the hayloft. For the first time I did not dread feeding the turkeys. I went out to the barn and with great pleasure opened the door and stood back to watch the turkeys crowd each other getting out the door. They stopped abruptly because they were not used to seeing me standing there. They automatically looked up to the hayloft as if to say, "Aren't you supposed to be up there?" I smiled and said, "Good mornin, 'n don't none of ya get the idea of takin up where that old Gobbler left off, cause Minnie chopped his head right off last night. He's all dressed and ready ta go ta town 'n be sold fer somebody's dinner real soon."

I walked to school with a sway in my step and a smile on my face. I was the first student to get to school. The teacher was surprised to see me so early and looking so happy. She could not help herself and asked, "Yesterday you looked like you had the troubles of the world on your shoulders. What's making you so happy today?" My smile broadened and I announced, "Minnie chopped that old Gobbler's head right off last night 'n and he aint around ta flog us no more." She looked perplexed and said, "Why did she kill him now when it isn't Thanksgiving time yet?" I replied, "She jist got tired of him floggin all of us 'n led him by the neck to the choppin block."

Mrs. Baylor was not from our area and she had not grown up on a farm. She did not have a good understanding of what a settin hen or a mean old turkey could do to you. She asked, "What do they do to you when they flog you?" I looked to see if she was kidding but her face was serious and I said, "Don't ya know?" She shook her head to indicate no and she kept looking at me to answer her question. I told her everything about flogging; after all, I was an expert on the subject now. I told her all of my troubles, starting with the Rhode Island Red settin hen and ended with the ordeal of the old Gobbler. She sat on the corner of her desk and listened to my story. Another student arrived early and Mrs. Baylor interrupted me long enough to give the brass bell to the student, and told her to stand outside and ring it. She told me to continue. I felt like I was somebody really important. I had to tell Mrs. Baylor all about flogging and how to protect herself. She paid real close attention and asked if we were going to eat the turkey. I told her, "No! we don't want to eat his mean old meat." She said, "What did you do with it?" I told her, "Minnie 'n me plucked his feathers 'n dressed him. Minnie is takin him ta town today 'n try ta sell him." She asked, "How big is he?" I said we did not know but Minnie thought he was over twenty pounds. She said, "I'm interested in buying it. I'm having a lot of company this weekend and I could make a turkey. Could you run home quick and ask her to bring it here after school?" I was real proud that I had found a buyer for the turkey. I hurried up the mountain and was so happy that Minnie would get money for that blessed old Gobbler. I checked in the garage and her car was still there so I knew that she had not left yet. I searched in the house and all the buildings. She was not around, so I started up over the hill calling, "Minnie, Minnie." She was in a meadow repairing a section of fence and she came running because she thought something bad had happened. She was relieved when I told her every thing was all right. She was really happy that Mrs. Baylor wanted to buy the turkey. She said, "Tell Mrs. Baylor I'll be down at the schoolhouse at three-o'clock with the turkey." She was so happy she picked me up and whirled around and sat me down. She patted my head and said, "I'm so glad I don't have ta make that trip ta town today. Go on back now, 'n ya can ride home with me from school." I was feeling like I had just settled a big business deal and smiled to myself, thinking everything is turning out all right. I hurried back down the mountain to the schoolhouse to give my teacher the good news.

When I arrived the first recess period was over and all the students we busy doing their schoolwork. I walked up to Mrs. Baylor's desk and whispered to her that Minnie was bringing the turkey and I told her how much she wanted for it. She seemed pleased and smiled. She gave me instructions in what work to do. I went to my desk and was happy with myself and the entire world until I remembered she had punished me. I would have to stay in my seat during dinner break and the second recess today.

When she dismissed us for dinner it was a warm day and everyone went outside to eat. I thought that just maybe she would let me go too. She did not tell me I could go. Instead she

invited me to sit next to her and eat lunch at her desk. I felt like that was a great privilege and it made up for the punishment. We talked some more about how bad that old Gobbler was. I did not want to tell her much more about him because I thought she might feel like he was too mean to eat too. Trying to change the subject, I asked her if she liked different vegetables that we had for sale. In October we had white potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, two kinds of pumpkins, apples and some greens. We always had milk, cream, butter and eggs for sale. She made a list of things she wanted to buy. Her list was long and she said, "I won't have to buy much from the grocery store. Do you think Minnie could bring these things to me Friday?" I said, "She most likely can but Friday is the day she goes ta town. You can ask her when she comes today."

Mrs. Baylor, called the other students in and class resumed.

At the recess break I still had to stay inside. Mrs. Baylor came to my seat and asked me some more questions about the things we sold. She wanted to know if we made our butter with sweet cream. I told her we make it once a week and it was sweet. She said, "Sometimes when I buy homemade butter the cream has soured a little bit. I like my butter made with fresh sweet cream." We passed the recess time talking about vegetables and dairy stuff.

Minnie was waiting in her car when we were dismissed. Mrs. Baylor went out to greet her and transferred the big old Gobbler to her car. She and Minnie were talking about all the other things she wanted to buy. Minnie told her she could not come Friday but she could bring the things she wanted Thursday after school was over. I was glad to hear that because I would get another ride home. They chatted for a short while and then they said good-by.

Minnie seemed to be very happy because of making the sale of the turkey and getting a long list of other things to sell as well. She said, "Well, yer turnin out ta be a good salesman." We both were pleased with the way things turned out. I think I was most happy that the old Gobbler was not around anymore, we all had had enough of him.