

Jonathan und Mother Hulda

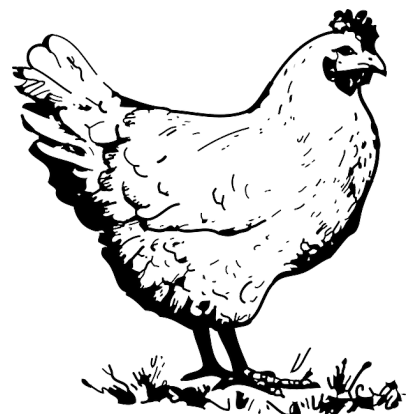
Anticipation

All the joy and energy that the world has accumulated over the summer is at rest in November. November is the month in which life begins anew. For this it must retreat into silence.

Jonathan does not like November. It is grey, gloomy. And boring. In summer he can swim and play soccer. Even in autumn there is still plenty for him to do. First school starts and in October the leaves fall. In November there is simply nothing. Not yet Advent, not yet Christmas season. Not yet winter.

Jonathan is kicking a stone with his shoe. "Hey!" shouts the stone. "What are you doing?" Jonathan runs to the stone and can hardly believe his luck. "Well, well, a talking stone. You do not exist!" "Listen, you rascal. First you toss me through the air and now you insult me. If I could, I would throw myself at you. Outrageous!" The leafy creatures and the tree spirits also shook their heads at Jonathan's behaviour. "Why, why, why? Isn't he happy with his life? So careless, so rude. One who hurts and then laughs about it." "No, I'm not like that." "You're not? He's a liar, too! Mother Holle, come quickly!" And she came, and Jonathan shuddered. Hulda, the goddess of death, what terrible stories he had heard about her! He was so afraid that he couldn't utter a word. She looked at him from her terrible face, her eyes.

Jonathan looked into her eyes. They are not horrible eyes, he thought. But then she sucked him in. Whirled him through the air. He had been mistaken. This goddess was taking her revenge and he would not live to tell the tale. When he regained consciousness, he found himself in another land. He was in a hut built on stilts. But the stilts were made of bone. Jonathan cried because he was all alone. He was afraid. There was not even the old goddess to be seen. The land in front of the hut had to be ploughed. Animals wanted to be fed. But Jonathan only wanted to cry. He cried and cried and cried. At some point he had squeezed out even the last tear and realised that he was hungry. There were chickens, but no one to collect their eggs. Jonathan picked himself up, looked into the nests and found an egg. He fed the chickens so that he would have eggs again the next day. Then he chopped wood to fire the stove. He realised that he did not want to live on eggs alone. The next morning he started to stock up: he thought about what he could grow. Which animals he needed. What fruit he wanted. And he set to work.



Despite his best efforts, the harvest was poor, the eggs few. It was just enough to survive. Jonathan despaired. He had been so industrious. "You stupid chickens, what more do you want?" "Well, finally you ask, smarty pants." And the hen told him exactly what she wanted. Jonathan did as he was told and the next day he found so many eggs that he could not eat them all. "Give the excess to the fine ones." And again, Jonathan did as he was told. From now on, he always, always, shared his harvest with the fine folk. The goddess. No matter if he had plenty or little. And thus every evening he looked forward to the next day. Because together they would master whatever came up.

"If I had known then what I do know now! I'm sorry, talking stone. Wherever you are, you should know that I have learned from my mistakes." That night, the hen said to him, "You must move on." Jonathan said goodbye to the hut, the animals, trees, and plants, the earth and the beings. Then he tied up his bundle and moved on. He decided to follow the sun and came deeper and deeper into the forest.

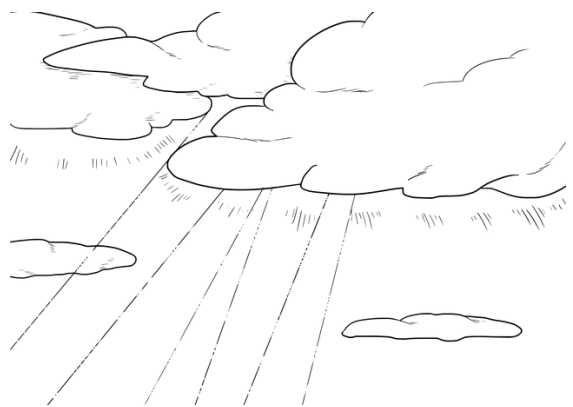
He heard hooves thundering through the forest and just in time he moved aside, deep into the bushes. As he crouched there under the rose hip, the rider came back. Noble and well dressed, of tall stature and upright posture, the rider looked around searching. But Jonathan remained silent. When the rider was gone, Jonathan waited a long time. When he was about to free himself from the bushes, his clothes got caught in the thorns. Instead of raging, Jonathan remained silent.

And the knight came out of the shadows. He looked around once more and then left again. Jonathan let go of the hedge as he knew that he was now safe. He kept away from the well-travelled paths and soon reached a river. A little old man sat there and Jonathan saw that he was freezing. He offered him his coat and cooked a soup for him and the little man. The two of them lay down to sleep near the fire and Jonathan covered himself with dry leaves. The next morning, the little man was gone. In his place lay a lump of clay. Jonathan put the clay in his bag and continued walking.

Without his coat he was freezing. His teeth were chattering. Then he came to the wagon of a woman who was sitting at the spinning wheel. She smiled at him, but there was something about her he didn't like. She promised him a coat, a warm soup. Jonathan got her some firewood and when she turned around and started the fire, he ran away as fast as he could. In the thicket a goat spoke to him: "So you escaped her, good for you. Now run on, for I too am a danger. I must betray you!" Jonathan ran on and could hear from afar how the bleating of the goat lured the woman to the place where he had just been.

Alone and chilled to the bone, he lay down in the roots of a tree to rest. He was happy about the protection the tree gave him. Glad that he had escaped and was alive. And full of anticipation for the next day.

During the night, a warming veil fell over him, and when he awoke the next morning, the sun shone down from the sky and warmed his limbs. After a long march, Jonathan



arrived at a white-washed hut. His hunger drove him to knock on the door. Fire burned in the fireplace and blinded him when the door opened. So he could not make out the figure that stood there in the door. She invited him in and told him to sit down.

When she closed the door and turned around, Jonathan recognised the woman: Hulda, the goddess of death. Also known as Mother Holle. But he was not afraid. Not anymore. They ate soup and she asked him about his journey. "What have you learned?" "That you are not evil." He had also learned diligence and humility, but he didn't say that. She would know.

"Well, so you shall return home now." And when Jonathan regained consciousness, he saw before him the stone he had kicked away. "Dear stone, where do you want to go?" The stone sighed with pleasure. When Jonathan brought it to the desired place, he thought he recognized the little man from the forest in the stone. Back home he did many things differently now. He helped with the work. He took nothing for granted. And he did not take himself so seriously. He knew now how valuable he was. So it was easy to be generous.



The lump of clay had turned into a piece of gold. With the money Jonathan built a house for himself and started a family and soon an elder bush grew in front of it. Every evening of a full moon Jonathan brought a large portion of flour, milk and honey to the shrub. And he made sure to share what he had with others in many a way.

And so he and his family lived happily ever after.

