



STORY: THE TALKING EGGS, A LOUISIANA FOLKTALE

Retold by Dianne de Las Casas

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At the edge of the forest in Louisiana, lived a woman with two daughters. They were named Blanche and Rose. Blanche was as sweet and kind as Rose was mischievous and mean. And although Blanche worked hard and did everything her mother told her, her mother favored Rose. Her mother liked Rose better. Blanche was made to do all the work. She would sweep the porch, cook supper, gather firewood and fetch water. Rose and her mother did nothing but sit on the porch and rock back and forth all day while Blanche did their bidding and served them lemonade.

One day, mother sent Blanche to the well to fetch some water in a bucket. When Blanche arrived at the well, she saw an old woman sitting near the well. The old woman looked up and said, "Dear child. Will you please share some of your water with me. I am quite thirsty and do not have the strength to pull up the bucket."

Blanche answered, "Yes, Auntie." (This is how one showed respect to their elders.) "Here is some cool water for you." Blanche handed the old woman a cup of water and the woman gulped the water down.

"Thank, dear child," the old woman said. "You will be greatly blessed."

Blanche politely excused herself, fetched water in her bucket, and hurried home. When she arrived home, mother and Rose complained that she had taken too long. "Why on earth did it take you so long?" mother screamed. She dipped her finger in the bucket and cried, "Why, you took so long that this water is hot. It's not fit for drinking!" Mother grabbed the bucket and threw the water out as Rose laughed. "Get some more water!" Mother ordered.

Sobbing, Blanche picked up the bucket and went back into the forest to the well. Again, the old woman was sitting near the well. When the old woman saw Blanche's tear, she comforted her. "What has got you so upset, dear child."

Blanche told the old woman about her mother and sister. The old woman listened and patted Blanche on the back. "Come with me, honey. What you need is a good meal and some rest. You'll feel better." The old woman offered her hand and Blanche held her hand as they walked through the forest.

"Now, you must promise not to laugh at anything you see."

Blanche said, “Oh, Auntie. I promise I won’t laugh.”

As they walked, Blanche saw two axes chopping wood. “Chop. Chop. Chop.” No one was holding the handles. They chopped all by themselves. It was a curious sight but Blanche remembered her promise and did not laugh.

Further along, Blanche saw a two-headed cow. The two-headed cow mooed. “Moo, moo, moo.” It was even funnier than the axes but Blanche remembered her promise and did not laugh.

When they arrived at the woman’s cabin, there were chickens running around on four legs. They clucked madly. “Cluck. Cluck. Cluck.” It was a funny sight for sure but Blanche remembered her promise and did not laugh.

When they arrived in the house, the old woman told Blanche to put some wood in the fireplace. When Blanche did, the fire started itself. Then the old woman removed her head and placed it in her lap. She began to comb and braid her hair. Blanche was a little afraid but the woman had been nothing but kind to her and Blanche said nothing.

When the old woman was finished she told Blanche to put the bone in the pot. Blanche did as she was asked. Lo and behold. In a moment, the pot was full of meat. The old woman handed Blanche a single grain of rice and told her to put it in the mortar and pestle. Blanche did as she was asked. Lo and behold. In a moment, the mortar was full of rice. Blanche ate a delicious meal and had a good night’s rest.

In the morning, the old woman said, “You must go home now but before you do, go to the chicken house. All the eggs that say, ‘Take me, Take me,’ you may take them. But the eggs that say, ‘Do not take me, do not take me,’ you must not take them. When you are near your house, you may crack open the eggs.”

“Thank you, Auntie,” said Blanche politely. She took a basket and went into the chicken house. It was full of eggs.

The smaller, plain eggs began to cry out. “Take me. Take me.”

The bigger, beautiful jeweled eggs cried, “Do not take me. Do not take me.”

Although Blanche wanted very badly to take one jeweled egg, she remembered what the old woman said and took only the plain eggs. She walked back through the woods and when she was near home, she cracked open an egg. Jewels and gold spilled out of the egg. Quickly, she picked up her new treasures and carried them inside the house.

Mother and Rose were about to fuss at Blanche for being gone so long when they saw her treasures. Their hearts filled with greed and they demanded to know where Blanche found her treasures. Of course, being kind and soft-hearted, Blanche shared her story with them. When Blanche went to sleep, mother and Rose plotted. Rose would go into the forest find the woman

and her treasures and come back home. They would then take all of Blanche's treasures and move to the city to live in "high society."

In the morning, Rose left. She went to the well and saw the old woman sitting near the well. When the old woman saw Rose, she asked for some water. "Get it yourself, you lazy old woman," Rose answered.

Then she told the old woman she wanted treasures just like her sister. The old woman answered, "You will get what you deserve."

Rose followed the old woman through the forest. The old woman said, "Now, you must promise not to laugh at anything you see."

Rose answered, "I'll laugh at anything I want to!"

As they walked, Rose saw two axes chopping wood. "Chop. Chop. Chop." No one was holding the handles. They chopped all by themselves. Rose laughed and laughed.

Further along, Rose saw the two-headed cow. The two-headed cow mooed. "Moo, moo, moo." It was even funnier than the axes and Rose laughed and laughed.

When they arrived at the woman's cabin, the chickens were running around on four legs. They clucked madly. "Cluck. Cluck. Cluck." It was a funny sight for sure and Rose laughed and laughed.

When they arrived in the house, the old woman told Rose to put some wood in the fireplace. Rose retorted, "Do it yourself, you lazy old woman."

The old woman removed her head and placed it in her lap. She began to comb and braid her hair. Rose looked at the woman and began laughing.

When the old woman was finished she told Rose to put the bone in the pot. What do you think Rose said? "Do it yourself, you lazy old woman."

The water in the pot boiled and they had only broth. The old woman handed Rose a single grain of rice and told her to put it in the mortar and pestle.

Rose said, "Do it yourself, you lazy old woman." Then Rose through the grain of rice out the window complaining that the woman did not know how to cook. Rose went to bed very hungry.

In the morning, the old woman said, "You must go home now but before you do, go to the chicken house. All the eggs which say, 'Take me, Take me,' you may take them. But the eggs which say, 'Do not take me, do not take me' you must not take them. When you are near your house, you may crack open the eggs."

"You better not be tricking me, you old woman" said haughty Rose.

She took a basket and went into the chicken house. It was full of eggs. The smaller, plain eggs began to cry out. “Take me. Take me.”

The bigger, beautiful jeweled eggs cried, “Do not take me. Do not take me.”

Rose thought, “The old woman is trying to trick me. I know she doesn’t want me to take the jeweled eggs because there must be great treasure inside.” Quickly, she gathered as many jeweled eggs as she could, never heeding the old woman’s words. She walked back through the woods and when she was near home, she cracked open an egg. Something spilled out of the egg but it was not jewels and gold. Flies, bees, mosquitos, and beetles flew out. Snakes, worms, lizards, spiders, and roaches crawled out. The creepy creatures began to chase Rose. She ran screaming to the house.

Mother came out and saw the creepy creatures and tried to shoo them away with a broom. The more she swatted, the more they multiplied. Soon, all the creepy creatures were chasing Rose and her mother. They ran off, never to be seen again.

Rose, on the other hand, moved in with Auntie and lived a life of contentment and joy. She found the greatest treasure of all... Love.

