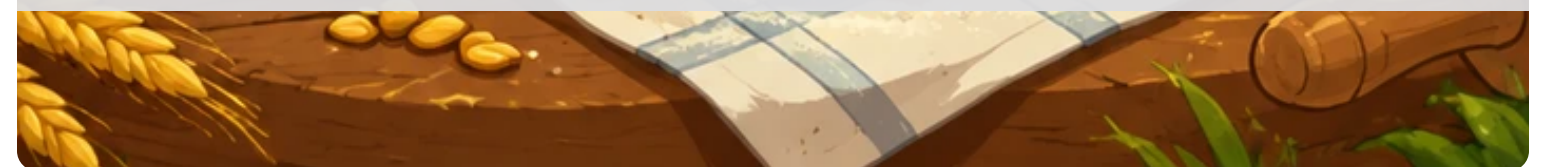




The Little Red Hen's Golden Loaf

Tersoo Ase





Ruby the Little Red Hen was scratching about the sun-drenched farmyard when she discovered a few tiny, golden grains of wheat hidden in the dirt. She looked at the seeds with excitement, knowing they could become something wonderful with a bit of effort.



Ruby approached her friends—the sleepy dog, the lazy cat, and the noisy duck—and asked if they would help her plant the wheat. One by one, they all declined with a lazy yawn and a shake of their heads, leaving Ruby to stand alone with her seeds.



Since no one would help, Ruby set to work in the garden, using her sharp beak and sturdy claws to dig neat little rows in the soft, dark earth. She carefully tucked each grain into its new home and covered them with a blanket of soil.



As the bright summer sun shone down, the wheat grew tall and strong, eventually turning a magnificent shade of shimmering gold. Ruby stood before the towering stalks and realized it was finally time for the harvest.



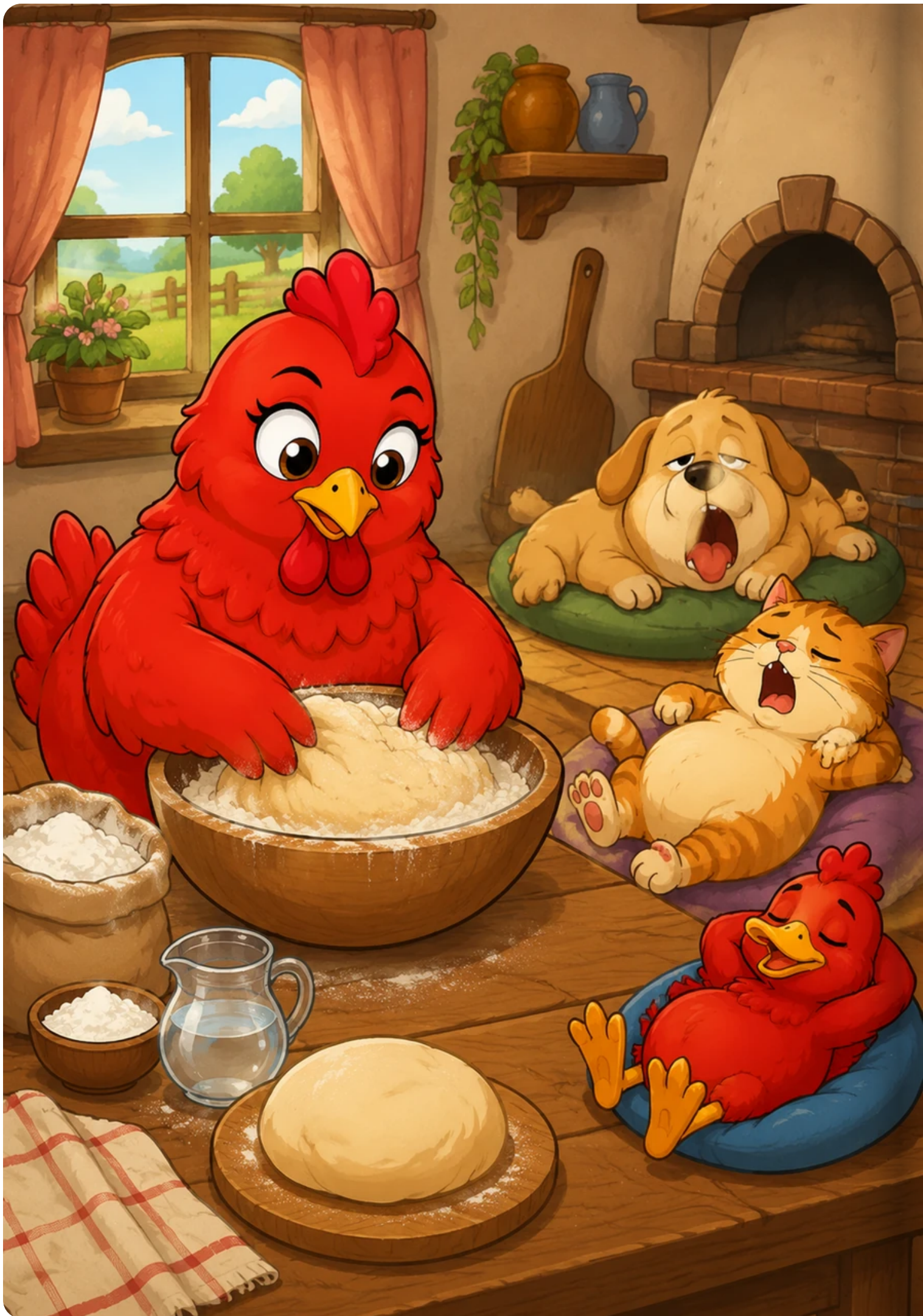
Ruby asked her friends once more for help cutting the wheat, but the dog, the cat, and the duck were much too busy napping in the shade. With a determined nod, Ruby picked up her tools and began to harvest the heavy stalks all by herself.



With the harvest complete, Ruby needed to take the heavy sack of wheat to the old windmill on the hill to be ground into flour. Despite the weight of the bag, her friends refused to move a single paw or feather to assist her on the journey.



At the windmill, the giant stones whirred and ground the wheat into a fine, soft white powder that smelled like the earth and the sun. Ruby carried the precious sack of flour back to the farm, her heart light even though her wings were tired.



Back in her cozy kitchen, Ruby asked who would help her knead the dough and bake it into a delicious loaf of bread. Once again, the dog, the cat, and the duck replied with a chorus of 'Not I,' so Ruby began to mix the flour and water alone.



A heavenly aroma of freshly baked bread soon drifted across the farmyard, drawing the hungry animals toward Ruby's window. Ruby pulled the steaming, golden-brown loaf from the oven and asked, 'Now, who will help me eat this bread?'



The dog, the cat, and the duck all cried out 'I will!' as they gathered around the table with hopeful eyes. However, Ruby shook her head and shared the delicious feast with her little chicks instead, reminding everyone that those who do the work deserve the reward.