

# THE HALF-CHICK

## A Spanish Tale

Once upon a time a beautiful black hen had a large brood of chicks. They were all perfectly normal little birds, except the youngest; who looked as if he had been cut in two. He had only one leg, one wing, and one eye, and he had half a head and half a beak.

The first time the hen saw her half-chick, she knew he would never grow up to be like his brothers, and she was afraid for him. She named him Medio Pollito, which is Spanish for half-chick.

Though the half chick was odd and helpless-looking, he was not at all willing to remain under his mother's protection. In fact, he had a roving spirit, in spite of having only one leg. When his mother called for him to return to the coop, he pretended to not hear her, and blamed it on having only one ear.

Whenever the family took walks around the farm, Medio Pollito would hop away and hide in the corn field. Then his

mother would run about in a frenzied state while his brothers and sisters looked for him.

As he grew older the half chick became more self-willed, disobedient, rude, and disagreeable.

One day he told his mother he was tired of his dull farmyard life and that he was going to Madrid to see the King.

His worried mother asked him to stay home with her. After all, Madrid was far away. She told him that one day, when he got bigger, she would take him on a short journey.

But Medio Pollito had made up his mind. He was going – now. Then, scarcely waiting to say good-bye to his family, he stumped down the road that led to Madrid.

Soon the chick passed a stream that was all choked up and overgrown with weeds. Its waters could not flow freely. When the stream saw the half-chick hopping along its banks, it asked for help with clearing away the weeds.

The half chick was very rude to the stream. He told the stream he did not have time to help because he was on his way to Madrid to see the King. Then, hop, hop, hop, away stumped Medio Pollito.

A little later he came to a fire that was burning very low. As the half-chick approached, the fire asked for help. He wanted the chick to put more wood on him so he wouldn't die out.

The half chick was very rude to the fire. He told the fire he did not have time to help because he was on his way to Madrid to see the King. Then, hop, hop, hop, away stumped Medio Pollito.

The next morning, as he was getting near Madrid, the half chick passed a large almond tree, in whose branches the wind was caught. The wind asked the half chick to help it get untangled from the tree.

Medio Pollito was very rude to the wind. He told the wind he did not have time to help because he was on his way to Madrid to see the King. Then, hop, hop, hop, away stumped Medio Pollito in great glee, for the towers and roofs of Madrid were now in sight.

When he entered Madrid the half chick saw a great splendid house, with soldiers standing before the gates. He knew this must be the King's palace. As he hopped past a back window the King's cook saw him and snatched him up. The king

wanted chicken soup for dinner so the cook quickly put the half chick into the broth-pot that was hanging over the fire.

Almost immediately, the half chick asked the water to help him escape. Water refused to help because it remembered how rude the half chick was when it was part of a stream and wanted help removing weeds where it was clogged.

Then fire began to burn the half chick. He danced and hopped from one side of the pot to the other, trying to get away from the heat, and crying out in pain. He asked the fire to help him escape. The fire refused to help and reminded the half chick how rude he was when fire asked for help in the forest.

Soon the cook checked to see if the soup was done. He thought the half chick was not fit for the royal table so he threw Medio Pollito out into the street. Then wind caught the half chick, and whirled him through the air. The half chick asked the wind to help him.

Wind reminded the half chick how rude he was when it was caught in the branches of the almond tree. To punish him, wind blew the half chick onto the steeple of the highest

church in the town. Then the wind, rain and heat from the sun turned the half chick into a weathervane.

To this day if you go to Madrid and walk through the streets until you come to the highest church, you will see Medio Polito perched on his one leg on the steeple where he is teased by the wind, rain and heat of the sun – all because he didn't help them when he was asked.

\*Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the following tales:

“The Half Chick” found in Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Spain retold by Virginia Haviland. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, c1963, pp. 36-49.

“The Half Chick” found in Around the World in 80 Tales by Saviour Pirotta. Illustrated by Richard Johnson. Boston: Kingfisher, c2007, pp. 27-29.

