

The Appleville Musicians

by Gregory W. Yasinitsky

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Based on *The Bremen Town Musicians* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Our story takes place once upon a time, on a delightful spring day.

Marching down the road came a magnificent horse named Hildegard. Her stride was lively and she was playing the trombone!

Hildegard's music caught the fancy of Fillmore, a hound dog who was sunbathing in the meadow. He dashed towards the road and called out: "Ho! Who is making those wonderful sounds?"

"It's just me, Hildegard the horse. I'm on the way to the town of Appleville, to make my living as a musician."

"Do you mind if I join you?" asked Fillmore. "I am a fine percussionist. Just you wait and see."

Fillmore dashed through the meadow lickety-split and returned with a great many instruments. Before Hildegard could say another word, Fillmore began playing with great enthusiasm.

When he finished, Fillmore asked: "Well, what do you think?"

Hildegard was dazzled; she had never heard such drumming before. "By all means, join me!" she exclaimed. "I can always use a good percussionist."

And so, Hildegard and Fillmore, horse and hound dog, marched triumphantly down the road and headed for Appleville, where they hoped to become the Appleville Musicians.

After a while, they stopped to rest.

As they put their instruments down, the most beautiful flute playing they had ever heard came drifting through the trees.

When the music stopped, Hildegard and Fillmore called out excitedly: "Who is that flutist? Where might he be?"

"He?" said a beautiful kitten. "What makes you think it was a *he* playing that flute? I am a decidedly female feline and it was *me* making those sounds. My name is Anastasia."

"Oh please excuse us," said Fillmore. "We did not mean to offend. You see it is just that we—Hildegard the horse and I that is—we are off to the town of Appleville to

make our livelihood as the Appleville Musicians. Hildegard is a fine trombonist and I, well, I'm Fillmore the hound dog and I play drums. Would you care to join us?"

"Well, I don't know," said Anastasia. "I guess it depends on what kind of musicians you are."

At once, Hildegard and Fillmore launched into a spirited rendition of their march.

A smile spread across Anastasia's face. "Of course I'll go with you!" she exclaimed. Anastasia quickly joined in the music making, and the three animals proceeded towards Appleville.

They continued on their happy excursion for quite a while until they came upon a large curve in the roadway. They marched around the bend, but what they saw made them stop in their tracks. There was a chicken standing in the middle of the road, *playing the trumpet!*

When the chicken finished, he glared coldly at our animal friends and began berating them in a most hostile manner.

"What are you second-rate hacks doing in *my* neighborhood? I am the musician in these parts and we don't need any more, thank you. Why don't you go back where you came from!"

"Well you see," said the horse politely: "My name is Hildegard. The kitten is Anastasia and the hound dog is Fillmore. We are just passing through on our way to the city—we hope to become the Appleville Musicians. And, might I ask sir, what is your name?"

"I'm Dwight," said the bird. "Dwight the trumpet playing chicken, and you sorry performers can 'pass through' someplace else."

"You are a *wonderful* trumpeter," said Anastasia, who was trying to butter the chicken up. "And we would simply *love* to have you join us on our trip to Appleville."

"Join a bunch of musical animals?" said Dwight. "Give me a break."

"I'll tell you what," said Anastasia. "Play something special for us and we'll join in. If you don't like what we add, we'll turn around and go back the way we came. But, if you find that our musical contributions enhance your playing, well, you'll come along with us to Appleville. What do you say?"

Dwight said nothing. Instead, he launched into a heartfelt rendition of a stirring trumpet melody.

All at once, the other animals joined in.

When they stopped, Dwight smiled and said: "You know, you're right. Music is much better when you play with other musicians. I would be proud to join your ensemble—if you'll have me."

"Consider yourself in!" exclaimed Fillmore. The musicians were so excited that they immediately launched into their happy march. Dwight, the trumpet playing chicken, enthusiastically joined the other animals as they headed down the road in concert.

As nightfall approached, the musicians stopped again, this time to rest for the evening. Fillmore said: "Gee, it's getting a bit cold and I'm hungry. I sure would like something to eat and a roof over my head. Do you think we should ask the folks in that house if they would help us out?"

"No!!" squawked Dwight. "No! No! Don't go near that house! It's the home of the *goblins!!*"

"Goblins?" asked Anastasia, clearly a bit frightened. "What goblins?"

"Well," whispered Dwight, "many years ago, that house was owned by a wonderful family. But then, these two evil goblins came—Ludmilla and Otto—and they *terrorized* those poor people. The goblins scared them so badly that they ran away, frightened for their lives."

Hildegard thought for a moment and said: "You know, I think that there might be a way we can get into that house tonight. Why don't you come here so I can tell you about it."

In the house, the goblins were sitting down to supper.

"Otto," said Ludmilla. "Do you realize that it's been seven years since we scared away that pathetic family?"

"I remember it well," said Otto. "For weeks we hid in various parts of their yard, and when they came near, we jumped out and shrieked.

"We saved the best for last," cackled Ludmilla. "We approached the house in darkness, making creepy sounds. Then, we climbed up a ladder, got ready to jump through their window and..."

Before Ludmilla could finish her story, there was a loud crash. Suddenly, the goblins' dining room was full of creatures making the most demonic sounds.

Ludmilla and Otto, clearly shaken, burst out of the house and ran off into the distance.

The invading creatures were, of course, the Appleville Musicians. After scaring off the goblins, our animal friends laughed happily and sat down to a magnificent

feast. After they were full, Anastasia found her flute, Hildegard reached for her trombone, Dwight picked up his trumpet, Fillmore grabbed a drum and they all began a joyous celebration which lasted long into the night.

After the party, Anastasia curled up on the front room rug. Fillmore stretched out behind the kitchen door. Hildegard went outside to settle next to the house and Dwight perched himself up on the roof.

All this time, the goblins were hiding in the yard. Ludmilla turned to Otto and whispered: "Go back into the house and see who those demons are."

Otto stealthily slinked to the house. He slipped through the door, and as he tiptoed into the front room, he stepped on Anastasia's tail.

Anastasia woke up with her eyes blazing fire. She hissed and viscously scratched both sides of Otto's face.

Otto ran for the kitchen. As he opened the door, it hit the hound dog in the head. Fillmore angrily bit the goblin's leg.

Otto cried in pain and staggered out the front door. Hildegard, sensing danger, approached Otto and kicked the goblin in the back. As Otto pulled himself out of the dirt, he looked up and saw Dwight perched on the rooftop, playing an eerie melody.

Otto made a dash for Ludmilla. He blurted out: "It's a very Grimm story I have to tell. There is a witch in the house! Her eyes glowed like hot coals and she slashed my face with her long fingernails! Then a man with a knife ran from the kitchen and stabbed me in the leg! Outside, a giant beat me with a club! And then I saw the worst! On the roof, a demon shouted evil curses at me! *We must go! We must flee!!*"

They ran and ran, and for all I know, they may still be running because no one ever saw them again.

As for our friends, the Appleville Musicians—well, they liked their new home so much that they decided to stay. And they lived there happily ever after.

THE END