

Transcript of the video "The Farmer and the Devil"

Constance, the storyteller, is strolling through the Louvre.

[Constance]

Ah, summer! What does it make you think of? It makes me think of haystacks in the fields, the smell of hay. But country people work in the summer!

Look!

Constance goes up to a painting of a woman and two men in a field, building the mown hay into stacks.

[Constance]

They're hay-trussers. The wheat is cut and the trussers make haystacks.

Oh! I know that house. A farmer lived there. He was so poor he had three mangy cows and a half-blind old rooster.

Constance goes up to the next painting: a woman and her two children at the door of their house. The first is already outside; the mother holds the second while he relieves himself.

Those are his children... and his wife, expecting the third.

Do you know why country people said the Devil was never far away?

But that year everything was fine. The harvest was good. But, in mid-August, there was a dreadful storm. Lightning struck the barn. It burned. No barn, no wheat, no wheat, no bread!

The farmer was very worried. He couldn't sleep at night. One night, on the road, he found a stone, sat down and held his head in his hands.

[The farmer]

"How will I feed my family this winter?"

[Constance]

There suddenly appeared a stranger, very well dressed.

[The stranger]

"Excuse me good sir, could you tell me the way to the castle?"

[The farmer]

"Of course! Go straight ahead! It's on your right. You can't miss it."

[The stranger]

"But tell me, good sir, you don't look happy."

[Constance]

The farmer, glad of someone to talk to, started telling him all his woes.

[The stranger]

"Listen, maybe I could help you. I could build you a bigger barn than your old one full of grain."

[The farmer]

"What do you mean? Only God or the Devil could do such a thing!"

[The stranger]

"I don't know about God. But I can."

[Constance]

The farmer turned pale. He looked at the stranger and saw flames in his eyes.

[The farmer]

"Be off, Satan! Be off, Devil!"

[The Devil]

"As you wish, but remember, before winter's end, you and your family might all die! Listen to me, farmer. If, before cock-crow, my imps have rebuilt a barn full of wheat, then I'll take the child your wife's expecting."

[Constance]

The farmer, white as a sheet, had to accept. When he got home, he slipped into bed next to his wife. He tossed and turned. His wife woke up.

[The farmer's wife]

"What's the matter?"

[The farmer]

"Nothing at all."

[Constance]

He tossed and turned.

[The farmer's wife]

"I can see something's wrong. Tell me!"

[Constance]

So the farmer told her.

[The farmer's wife]

"What? You've sold our child to the Devil?"

[Constance]

Angrily, she got up, cursed him, looked through the window... and saw pointed tails, clawed hands, red eyes. The imps were rebuilding the barn!

She thought for a while, and had an idea. She went to the henhouse, and put a bundle of hay next to the old rooster. She set it alight and the rooster, feeling the heat and, through his closed eyes, sensing the light, had not a moment's doubt... The sun was rising! Cock-a-doodle-doo!

Yes... But the imps hadn't finished their work. They had one stone left to lay. The Devil's pact was worthless. The Devil screamed and disappeared. The woman's good sense had saved her child from the Devil's claws. And that winter, the whole family could eat. There was plenty of grain for everyone.