

Deep in the Welsh hills perched a neat greystone cottage surrounded by a patchwork garden of vegetables and flowers: green cabbages and orange marigolds, scarlet runner-bean flowers and purple clumps of herbs. The wooden shutters at each window, fastened in winter to keep out the icy winds, were flung open. The front door was open too, and summer sunshine poured onto the scrubbed stone floor of the porch. Everything looked calm and bright.

Everything, that is, except the little girl who suddenly catapulted out of the open doorway. You could see at once that she was in a bad mood. She stamped her foot and shouted something back into the cottage. Then, with a scowling face, she marched off behind the house, reappearing moments later holding up the corners of her white apron. Reaching into the apron, she drew out a handful of something and flung it on the ground.

‘Here you are, you stupid pecky things!’ she shouted.

At once a dozen chickens appeared, scratching their way out of the bushes. Flinging out the corners of her apron, the girl emptied the rest of the grain over the hens in a flurry.

‘I hate you, I hate you, I hate you,’ she muttered as the grain fell to the ground. Then she flounced off to the furthest corner of the garden and threw herself down under an apple tree.

