

Stephanie Schneider Grimm's Zonkey Tales – Carotto Moves In

Original title: Grimm und Märchen – Ein Zeser zieht ein
February 2022
With 4c-Illustrations by Stefanie Scharnberg
128 pages

How Grimm found his Carotto

Bookseller Grimm has recently become the owner of the Book Box shop in his village. This is a good thing, because he adores books, and sometimes even writes one himself. However, he occasionally feels a bit lonely in his store, but fortunately for him, that changes when, a little zonkey suddenly appears in his shop. (Yes, these animals really do exist.) 'I'm Carotto, and I've been looking for you', it declares, pulling a book out of his suitcase. Grimm's Zonkey Tales is printed on it. "We will have adventures together, and you can write them down in here," explains the little zonkey. And so Carotto moves in with Grimm and livens up his house! Because with such a little zonkey, even everyday things like riding a bike suddenly become adventures.



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Stephanie Schneider, born in 1972, studied education and art at the Fine Arts Academy in Braunschweig. Since 2004 she has been pursuing her childhood dream to work primarily as an author. She lives with her husband and two daughters in Hannover.

Stefanie Scharnberg was born in Hamburg in 1967, where she also completed her bookseller's apprenticeship, although she only worked in this profession for a few weeks. She then traveled to Florence to study painting, returning to Germany in 1992, where she resumed her work as a bookseller and illustrator. She now lives with her family in Freiburg.

Sample Translation

by Rebecca Heier (heierrebecca@gmail.com)

Grimm’s Zonkey Tales - Carotto Moves In

A Little Carotto for Grimm

One perfectly normal afternoon, Grimm was sitting in his bookshop writing poetry. Rain drummed on the roof and lashed against the display window. In weather like this, hardly anyone strayed into his shop. So there he sat, in his armchair next to the neglected palm tree, chewing on the end of his pencil.

“I’m alone,” he scribbled in his journal. “But it doesn’t matter. There’s weather for selling books and weather for writing them.” It was definitely writing weather out there.

He put down his pencil and walked over to the display window. On the shelves surrounding him were books – books standing up, books lying on their sides. They were stacked next to the cash register, too, and on the little gold table in the corner. There were even books piled up on the floor. There were so many that even the longest rainy day wouldn’t have been enough to read them all.

Grimm looked out onto the village square. The world was very empty and dripping wet on this afternoon. He sighed. “I guess it really would be nicer if someone were here with me,” he said to himself and went back to his armchair.

At that very moment the little bells over the shop’s door sounded, and in burst Volunteer Vi from the volunteer fire department.

“Oh, it’s you,” said Grimm, immediately turning red as a fire engine. Because, you see, Volunteer Vi was the bravest, strongest, most beautiful person in the village. No wonder Grimm

had a bit of a crush on her. He cleared his throat.

“Which book would you like to buy, Vi?”

“None of them,” Vi said. She held out a big pot right under his nose. “Today I have something for *you!*”

She lifted the lid.

“Alphabet soup!” exclaimed Grimm. He started to get a warm feeling in his stomach. And he hadn't even tried the soup yet. “Thanks, Vi. Will you sit down and have a bowl, too?”

But Vi shook her head. “Sorry, can't. Still have to fix the turntable ladder on the fire truck and rescue a couple of kittens.” She handed him the pot and disappeared as where's-the-fire fast as she'd come.

Grimm looked after her and sighed. Volunteer Vi was really something special. If only she weren't in such a hurry all the time ...

He carried the pot to the kitchenette behind the cookbook shelf and ladled himself a bowl of soup. He stared into the bowl, thinking. Alphabet noodles, leeks and parsley swam in the hot broth. It smelled heavenly. But Grimm hesitated.

“Something's missing. But what?”

Again, the little bells on the shop door started ringing. This time it wasn't the forceful clanging that Vi's entrance had set off, but more of a tiny, careful tinkle-tinkle. Grimm put his spoon down and went to look. There on the reading rug in front of the cash register was a very small donkey. Or was it a zebra? Looking up at him with big eyes, the peculiar visitor sat, a stained suitcase by his side.

“Um ... what can I do for you, Mr. ... um, for you?” asked Grimm.

“Carrot,” whispered the little animal, and sneezed.

“Sorry, but I don't have any carrots,” said Grimm. “You're in a bookshop, not a

greengrocer's.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” whispered the animal. He shook his long ears, sending off a shower of raindrops. “I don't want to buy anything. My *name* is Carrotto!” He offered Grimm his hoof and smiled.

Grimm didn't really know what to say. He'd never met anyone with such a funny name. “Welcome,” he murmured, shaking the hoof. “My name is Grimm.” The little visitor sneezed, and the bookshop owner quickly said:

“You're soaking wet. Would you like a bowl of hot soup? It's good for colds, you know,” he explained. “And this one smells extra delicious. The only thing missing is ...”

“Maybe ... a little carrot?” suggested the pint-sized visitor, tilting his head. A grin as warm as a bowl of soup spread over Grimm's face. “Exactly.”

So, the bookseller led him into the kitchenette behind the cookbooks and set a bowl down before him. Hungrily, Carotto slurped up the broth. Grimm watched him eat, and minute by minute, his happiness grew.

“Tell me, what are you actually?” he wanted to know.

“I'm full,” said the little fellow, pushing the bowl away. The bookseller laughed.

“And what else are you? I've never seen anything like you before.”

“I'm a zonkey. Part donkey and part zebra. Something of each and the best of both.”

“But you're really very small for a donkey zebra,” Grimm pointed out as he cleared away the dishes. The zonkey blushed and looked at the floor. “So? That doesn't mean anything. Everybody starts out small.” He slid off the chair, ran to the front of the shop and hopped back and forth between the tiny reading tables and the closely placed shelves stuffed with books. “That's exactly why this is such a good place for me. Everything here is really small, too. We can have lots of adventures together. And you can write them down.”

“How...how do you know...?” stuttered the bookseller. Now it was Grimm's turn to blush. After all, no one in the village knew he was secretly a writer. Not even his friend Rudi or Volunteer Vi. But Carotto just kept on talking. He dragged the suitcase over and declared, “All you have to do is write down everything we do. And when the book is finished, you'll read some of it to me in the evenings. It'll be soooooo cozy!”

The zonkey paused. “You know, I've spent a long time searching for you,” he said, suddenly looking very tired. “When I saw your name on the sign out next to the door, I knew that I'd finally reached my destination.”

Carotto opened the suitcase and pulled a book out. It was quite a hefty volume. Two bookmark ribbons were hanging out on the bottom. They almost looked like two miniature zonkey tails. Carotto solemnly handed the book to the man, who then read:

“Grimm's Carrotto Tales.” Grimm's mop of curly red hair jerked up. “There's a book about you and me?”

“Not yet,” said Carotto. He opened to the first page. It was blank. The zonkey tapped the white paper. “That's why I'm here. It would be best if you started right now.”

Grimm didn't move a muscle. He stared at the book in his hands and looked thoughtful.

“Well, come on. Let's go!” urged Carotto. “Don't just stand there – write something!”

He nudged Grimm, book in hand, over to the armchair. Grimm obediently sat down, picked up the yellow pencil, and got to work. The zonkey climbed up on the armrest.

“One perfectly normal afternoon,” Grimm dictated to himself while looking down at the pencil, “Grimm was sitting in his bookshop writing poetry. Rain drummed on the roof and lashed against the display window. In weather like this, hardly anyone strayed into his shop.”

“That sounds good. Keep it up,” Carotto encouraged him. “I can't wait to see what happens next.”

Sample Translation “Grimm’s Zonkey Tales” (S. Schneider)

“Boy, you and me both!” muttered Grimm. He wrote and wrote and wrote, and the letters seemed to be flying onto the paper all by themselves. Until four pages were filled and the first chapter of *Grimm’s Carrotto Tales* was finished. He still had no idea what would happen in the next story. Grimm knew only this: As of today, he was no longer alone.



Grimm and Carotto Go Home

From now on, time in the bookshop- zipped by. There were just so many things that Carotto wasn't familiar with. While outside the rain was drumming on the roof, Grimm showed the zonkey how to stack the books and make the coffee and run the cash register.

Not until the hands on the clock showed six o'clock did the rain finally let up. Then Grimm hung the golden SORRY WE'RE CLOSED sign on the shop door and announced, "Let's call it a day!"

"So what happens now?" asked Carotto.

"Now we go home," said Grimm.

The zonkey was amazed. "What do you mean. Don't you live here?" He pointed to the shelves and the reading corner beside the neglected palm.

Grimm wrinkled his freckle-covered nose and laughed. "Of course not! This is a bookshop. You can't live here."

"Oh, I don't know, I think it's pretty nice...," said Carotto. He couldn't think of anywhere nicer to live.

"Come on," said Grimm. He picked up the stained suitcase, stepped out onto the sidewalk and locked the shop door. Hand in hoof, they walked through the village, past the fire house and over the Babblebrook Bridge until they came to a fence with a white house behind it.

"Here's where I live," said Grimm.

Carotto craned his neck. An overgrown garden surrounded the house. On the fence gate was a big number "7," hanging aslant. Carotto tapped it with his hoof and the red "7" rocked back and forth.

"It's off-kilter, I know," said Grimm, tugging on his curly hair. "I've been meaning to

straighten it.” But Carotto just waved it off.

“Doesn't matter a bit. I like things that are a little off-kilter.”

Grimm opened the gate. The zonkey trotted along behind him up to the house. He gazed in astonishment at all the bushes and herbs and flowers on either side of the pathway. Way back at the end of the garden in the tall grass, he even discovered a big wicker beach chair with its own roof.

“Wow, this is a fantastic yard!” Carotto exclaimed. “I bet it's a great place to play ball games, isn't it?”

The bookseller shrugged his shoulders.

“I wouldn't know. I've never tried.”

“Really? Why not?”

“Just having a big yard isn't enough,” Grimm explained. “You need somebody to play with.”

“That's true,” said Carotto. He'd never thought about that.

The bookseller opened the door to the house.

“Welcome,” he said, leading the zonkey directly into the kitchen since it was time for supper.

Afterwards, Grimm showed his new friend the rest of the house. Carotto especially liked the bedroom.

“Nice pillows,” he said. “Do you have pillow fights with them before bedtime?”

Grimm's ears turned red. “Um, no,” he mumbled. “A pillow fight is like a ball game. Doesn't work when you're alone.”

Carotto tilted his head.

“Seems to me you're alone quite a bit.” He reached for Grimm's big hand and patted it.

“But don't worry. Not anymore. Starting today, you have me. With me you can play pillowball and

Sample Translation “Grimm’s Zonkey Tales” (S. Schneider)

have game fights and whatever else you can think of.”

“Yes, I guess something like you really is just what I’ve been needing,” said Grimm, and once again started getting that noodle-soup-warm feeling in his belly.

“And now we’ll fix you up with a bed,” he remarked. But the zonkey waved the suggestion off and got his suitcase out of the hallway.

“Not necessary. I’ve got my own right here,” he said, and let the bookseller look inside. “See?”

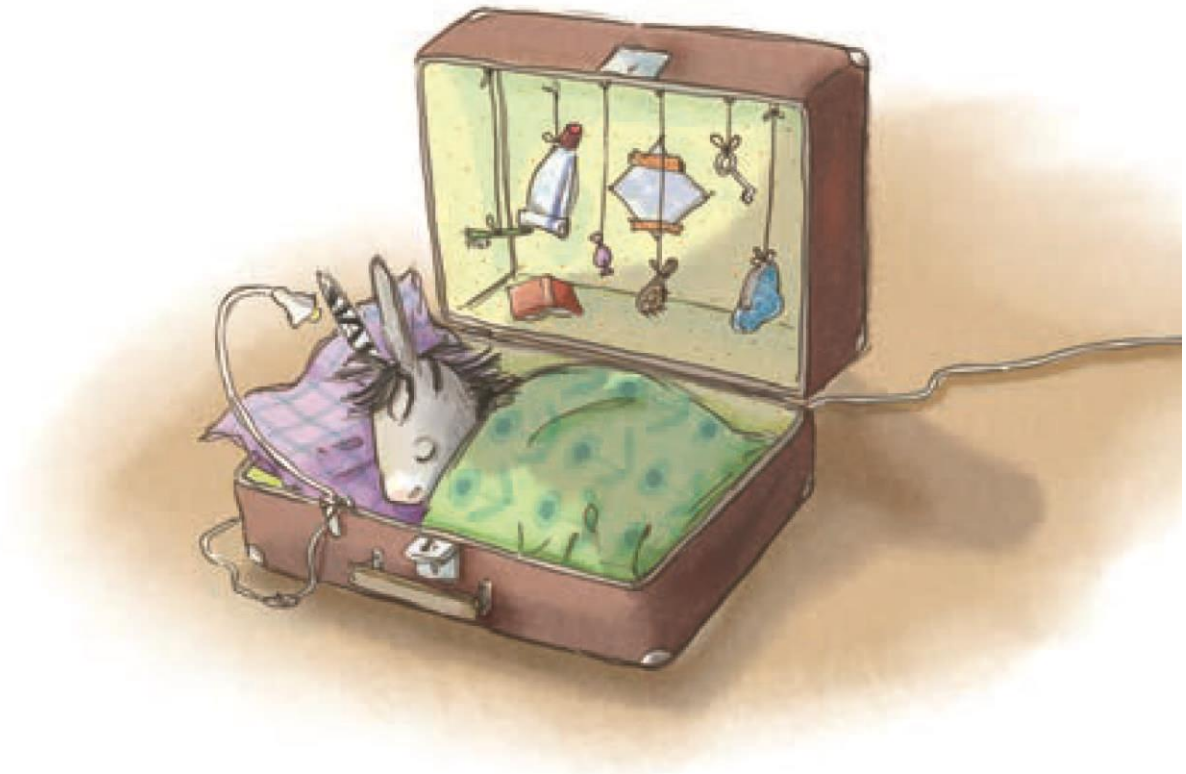
A checkered pillow and a blanket lay there. It looked very cozy. Almost like a doll’s bed, and just the right size for a small-scale zonkey.

“It’ll be best if we put my bed right next to yours. Then you’ll always be able to listen to my snoring whenever you have trouble getting to sleep.”

So, after getting their teeth brushed, they each snuggled in under the covers on their beds. The bookseller switched the light off. He looked up at the ceiling and wiggled his toes. He hadn’t felt this happy in a long time.

“Shall I tell you a good-night story?” he asked into the darkness, but the little zonkey didn’t answer. He was already fast asleep. After all, traveling is tiring.

“Good night,” Grimm whispered. Without any sort of story, but with a noodle-soup-warm feeling in his belly.



Grimm and Carotto Each Take a Stand

Fortunately, the next day was Sunday. So Grimm and Carotto had a lot of time to get to know each other. They ran a wild zonkey race around the breakfast table. They played hide-n-seek and crazy eights. And all the way out to the tips of his curly red locks, Grimm sensed how much nicer it was

not to be alone anymore.

“So now what?” asked Grimm when they’d run out of ideas for games. “Shall we make some pudding?”

“Ooh, yes, please!” Carotto shouted.

So the bookseller took a pot out of the cupboard and put it on the stove. He found the sugar and vanilla. Then he got the milk out of the refrigerator and looked around.

“What’s wrong?” asked Carotto.

“I can’t find the eggs,” said Grimm.

The zonkey shrugged. “So? Doesn’t matter. After all, we want to make pudding, not eggs.”

“Well, yes, but you still need eggs if you want to make a real pudding.” The bookseller opened one cupboard after the other, peering in. “I could swear I just saw some...,” he muttered.

“I’ll help you,” said Carotto. Together, they shoved dishes and tin cans aside as they searched the shelves, and – just to make sure – checked the oven. You never know. But the eggs didn’t turn up.

The bookseller ran his hands through his hair. “This’ll never do,” he said, looking at the chaos surrounding them. “I think we’ll have to tidy up a little here first.”

But that wasn’t at all what the little zonkey wanted to hear. “We wanna make pudding – not clean up!” he moaned.

“Well, I’m sorry, but we’ll have to. If we don’t tidy things up, we won’t find the eggs. And without eggs I can’t make a real pudding, even if I stood on my head.”

Carotto pricked up his ears.

“You can stand on your head? No kidding?” He leaped off the countertop.

“Now that’s something I’d love to see,” he shouted. “Please, Grimm, stand on your head!”

“Well, all right,” said the bookseller. “We can each do a headstand. But after that we clean

up. Deal?”

“Deal,” said the little zonkey, nodding eagerly.

Grimm took a pillow from the window seat and put it on the floor. Then he stood on his head. Just like that, no sweat. Straight as a poker rose his blue-jeaned legs into the air.

“Wow, you're so good at that!” the zonkey enthused, and tried it himself.

But no matter how hard he tried, he fell over right away. As soon as he lifted his hooves into the air, he'd tilt to the side and plop down on the kitchen tiles.

Then he went and took the empty pudding pot off the stove, turned it over and climbed up on it.

“Looky here, Grimm!” shouted the zonkey, balancing on one leg like a ballerina. “You're standing on your top, but I'm standing on a pot, which is way better. From up here, the world looks totally different.”

“What do you see, then?” Grimm wanted to know. Carotto's gaze swept the kitchen.

“A lamp, a pepper shaker, the plates, jam, a deck of cards, your shoes, the kitchen table, the dining bench,” he said, making a list. But then he suddenly stopped. He jumped off his pudding pot and yelled:

“I know where the eggs are!” He ran to the dining bench and pulled out a carton. “They were hiding under the newspaper.”

Grimm got to his feet again and smiled. “Good thing you did that potstand,” he said. “Now we can make our pudding after all.” Then he said seriously, “But first we have to clean this place up. We said we would.”

“That's true, I guess we did,” said Carotto airily as he set the pot back on the stove. “But now, fortunately, we've found the eggs. Why should we still tidy up?”

“Hmm, yes indeed. Why should we?” said Grimm, the twinkle returning to his eyes.



Sample Translation “Grimm’s Zonkey Tales” (S. Schneider)

Because everyone knows that when things are in a bit of a mess, pudding tastes twice as good.