

Aesop's Fables

Selected and edited by M. Divjak

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The wild Boar whetting his tusks

A wild Boar was engaged in whetting his tusks upon a trunk of a tree in the forest when a Fox came by and, seeing what he was at, said to him, "Why are you doing that, pray? The huntsmen are not out to-day, and there are no other dangers at hand that I can see." "True, my friend," replied the Boar, "but the instant my life is in danger I shall need to use my tusks. There'll be no time to sharpen them then."

A Dog and the shadow

A Dog was crossing a plank bridge over a stream with a piece of meat in his mouth, when he happened to see his own reflection in the water. He thought it was another dog with a piece of meat twice as big; so he let go his own, and flew at the other dog to get the larger piece. But, of course, all that happened was that he got neither: for one was only a shadow, and the other was carried away by the current.

The Fox and the Grapes

A hungry Fox saw some fine bunches of Grapes hanging from a vine that was trained along a high trellis, and did his best to reach them by jumping as high as he could into the air. But it was all in vain, for they were just out of reach: so he gave up trying, and walked away with an air of dignity and unconcern, remarking, "I thought those Grapes were ripe, but I see now they are quite sour."

The Fox without tail

A Fox once fell into a trap, and after a struggle managed to get free, but with the loss of his brush. He was then so much ashamed of his appearance that he thought life was not worth living unless he could persuade the other Foxes to part with their tails also, and thus divert attention from his own loss. So he called a meeting of all the Foxes, and advised them to cut off their tails: "They are ugly things anyhow," he said, "and besides they're heavy, and it's tiresome to be always carrying them about with you." But one of the other Foxes said, "My friend, if you hadn't lost your own tail, you wouldn't be so keen on getting us to cut off ours."

The Fox and the Crow

A Crow was sitting on a branch of a tree with a piece of cheese in her beak when a Fox observed her and set his wits to work to discover some way of getting the cheese. Coming and standing under the tree he looked up and said, "What a noble bird I see above me! Her beauty is without equal, the hue of her plumage exquisite. If only her voice is as sweet as her looks are fair, she ought without doubt to be Queen of the Birds." The Crow was hugely flattered by this, and just to show the Fox that she could sing she gave a loud caw. Down came the cheese, of course, and the Fox, snatching it up, said, "You have a voice, madam, I see: what you want is wits."

The Lion and the wild Ass

A Lion and a Wild Ass went out hunting together: the latter was to run down the prey by his superior speed, and the former would then come up and despatch it. They met with great success; and when it came to sharing the spoil the Lion divided

it all into three equal portions. "I will take the first," said he, "because I am King of the beasts: I will also take the second, because, as your partner, I am entitled to half of what remains; and as for the third - well, unless you give it up to me and take yourself off pretty quick, the third, believe me, will make you feel very sorry for yourself!"

The Lioness and the Vixen

A Lioness and a Vixen were talking together about their young, as mothers will, and saying how healthy and well-grown they were, and what beautiful coats they had, and how they were the image of their parents. "My litter of cubs is a joy to see," said the Fox; and then she added, rather maliciously, "But I notice you never have more than one." "No," said the Lioness grimly, "but that one's a lion."

The Man and the Lion

A Man and a Lion were companions on a journey, and in the course of conversation they began to boast about their prowess, and each claimed to be superior to the other in strength and courage. They were still arguing with some heat when they came to a cross-road where there was a statue of a man strangling a Lion. "There!" said the Man triumphantly, "look at that! Doesn't that prove to you that we are stronger than you?" "Not so fast, my friend," said the Lion: "that is only your view of the case. If we Lions could make statues, you may be sure that in most of them you would see the Man underneath."

The Lion in love

A Lion fell deeply in love with the daughter of a cottager and wanted to marry her; but her father was unwilling to give her to so fearsome a husband, and yet didn't want to offend the Lion; so he hit upon the following expedient. He went to the Lion and said, "I think you will make a very good husband for my daughter: but I cannot consent to your union unless you let me draw your teeth and pare your nails, for my daughter is terribly afraid of them." The Lion was so much in love that he readily agreed that this should be done. When once, however, he was thus disarmed, the Cottager was affraid of him no longer, but drove him away with his club.

The Wolf and the Lamb

A Wolf came upon a Lamb straying from the flock, and felt some compunction about taking the life of so helpless a creature without some plausible excuse; so he cast about for a grievance and said at last, "Last year, sirrah, you grossly insulted me." "That is impossible, sir," bleated the Lamb, "for I wasn't born then." "Well," retorted the Wolf, "you feed in in my pastures." "That cannot be," replied the Lamb, "for I have never yet tasted grass." "You drink from my spring, then," continued the Wolf. "Indeed, sir," said the pour Lamb, "I have never yet drunk anything but my mother's milk." "Well, anyhow," said the Wolf, "I'm not going without my dinner": and he sprang upon the Lamb and devoured it without more ado.

The Wolf and the Lion

A Wolf stole a lamb from the flock, and was carrying it off do devour it at his leisure when he met a Lion, who took his prey away from him and walked off with it. He dared not resist, but when the Lion had gone some distance he said, "It is most unjust of you to take what's mine away from me like that." The Lion laughed and called out in reply, "It was justly yours, no doubt! The gift of a friend, perhaps, eh?"

The Astronomer

There was once an Astronomer whose habit it was to go out at night and observe the stars. One night, as he was walking about outside the town gates, gazing up absorbed into the sky and not looking where he was going, he fell into a dry well. As he lay there groaning, some one passing by heard him, and, coming to the edge of the well, looked down and, on learning what had happened, said, "If you really mean to say that you were looking so hard at the sky that you didn't even see where your feet were carrying you along the ground, it appears to me that you deserve all you've got."

The Trumpeter taken prisoner

A Trumpeter marched into battle in the van of the army and put courage into his comrades by his warlike tunes. Being captured by the enemy, he begged for his life, and said, "Do not put me

to death; I have killed no one: indeed, I have no weapons, but carry with me only my trumpet here." But his captors replied, "That is only the more reason why we should take your life; for, though you do not fight yourself, you stir up others to do so."

The three tradesmen

The citizens of a certain city were debating about the best material to use in the fortifications which were about to be erected for the greater security of the town. A Carpenter got up and advised the use of wood, which he said was readily procurable and easily worked. A Stone-mason objected to wood on the ground that it was so inflammable, and recommended stones instead. Then a Tanner got on his legs and said, "In my opinion there's nothing like leather."

The boasting Traveler

A man once went abroad on his travels, and when he came home he had wonderful tales to tell of the things he had done in foreign countries. Among other things, he said he has taken part in a jumping-match at Rhodes, and had done a wonderful jump which no one could beat. "Just go to Rhodes and ask them," he said; "every one will tell you it's true." But one of those who were listening said, "If you can jump as well as all that, we needn't do to Rhodes to prove it. Let's just imagine this is Rhodes for a minute: and now - jump!"

The Shepherd's Boy and the Wolf

A Shepherd's Boy was tending his flock near a village, and thought it would be great fun to hoax the villagers by pretending that a Wolf was attacking the sheep: so he shouted out, "Wolf! wolf!" and when the people came running up he laughed at them for their pains. He did this more than once, and every time the villagers found they had been hoaxed, for there was no Wolf at all. At last a Wolf really did come, and the Boy cried, "Wolf! wolf!" as loud as he could: but the people were so used to hearing him call that they took no notice of his cries for help. And so the Wolf had it all his own way, and killed off sheep after sheep at his leisure.

Father and Sons

A certain man had several Sons who were always quarrelling with one another, and, try as he might, he could not get them to live together in harmony. So he determined to convince them of their folly by the following means. Bidding them fetch a bundle of sticks, he invited each in turn to break it across his knee. All tried and all failed: and then he undid the bundle, and handed them the sticks one by one, when they had no difficulty at all in breaking them. "There, my boys," said he, "united you will be more than a match for your enemies: but if you quarrel and separate, your weakness will put you at the mercy of those who attack you."