

Tiny Tales from Aesop



TINY TALES
FROM AESOP



Laura Gibbs



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About This Book

Aesop was a legendary storyteller of ancient Greece, and the stories called “Aesop’s fables” have been going strong for three thousand years. This book contains a selection of classical, medieval, Renaissance, and modern Aesop’s fables, ranging from the ancient Roman poet Phaedrus to the 18th-century neo-Latin poet Desbillons. You will find famous fables here such as “The Lion’s Share” and “The Boy Who Cried Wolf,” plus many not-so-famous fables about animals, about people, and about the gods and goddesses too. The fables included here represent only a small fraction of the Aesopic fable tradition. For more Aesop’s fables, visit:

Aesop.LauraGibbs.net

The paragraph you just read about this book is 100 words long, as is this paragraph, and that’s also the length of each story in the book. These stories go fast, but you can slow down when you find one you like. Read it again. Let it sink in. Maybe even write your own version of the story, using your imagination to add more details. Meanwhile, if you don’t like a story, don’t get bogged down; just move on to the next one. There are more 100-word stories from Aesop, plus lots of stories from other cultural traditions, at:

100Words.LauraGibbs.net

The Stories



1. The Lion's Share

A lion, a cow, a goat, and a sheep were working together as partners.

They managed to kill a stag, and the lion divided their prize into four equal parts.

“The first part is mine,” he said, “because I am the lion. The second part goes to me because I am the strongest. Next, I will take the third part for myself on account of my exceedingly hard work. Finally, if anyone so much as touches the fourth part, they will know my wrath!”

That is the lion's share: he pretends to share, but he takes it all for himself.

2. The Angry Lion

There was once an enraged lion, filled with anger and hatred, hoping to find another lion he could fight with and kill.

Then, as he was looking down into a well, there it was: a lion had fallen in there.

It was just his own reflection in the water, of course, but he saw what he wanted to see.

The angry lion, convinced he had found the enemy he was hoping to find, sprang and jumped into the well, and he drowned.

So it is that those who are angry often do more harm to themselves than to anyone else.

3. The Lion and the Rabbit

A lion found a sleeping rabbit and was about to gobble him up, but all of a sudden the lion then saw a deer passing by. The lion abandoned the rabbit, and he started to chase the deer.

Awakened by the ruckus, the rabbit ran off.

The lion, meanwhile, chased the deer a long time but didn't catch her, so he returned to the rabbit.

When he discovered the rabbit had also escaped, the lion said, "By Hercules, I got what I deserved: I cast aside food I already had in my paws, preferring to chase an uncertain hope instead."

4. The Lion and the Bulls

A lion wanted to attack two bulls, thinking they would make a very fine feast.

The two bulls joined forces, however, and turned their horns towards the lion, so he could not get between them. Combining forces, those bulls were stronger than the lion.

Since the lion couldn't fight both bulls at once, he resorted to subterfuge instead.

"If you betray your partner to me, I promise not to touch you!" he said to each one, separately. "I'll kill the other one; I won't kill you."

Using this trick, the lion managed to kill both bulls easily, one by one.

5. The Lion and the Mouse

As a mouse ran over a sleeping lion, the lion awoke and grabbed her.

“Let me go, please!” squeaked the mouse. “I’ll repay your kindness, I promise!”

“What could you ever do for me?” scoffed the lion. “I’m letting you go only because it’s not worth my time to kill you.”

A few days later, the lion was caught in a hunter’s snare. He roared in terror, and the little mouse ran to the rescue, gnawing through the ropes and freeing the lion.

“I was wrong about you,” said the grateful lion. “You’re a good friend to have after all.”

6. The Lion's Army

There was a fierce war between the beasts and the birds, and the lion had taken command of the army of beasts, with tigers and bears, leopards and wolves, and all sorts of mighty warriors in his ranks.

The donkeys and rabbits wanted to enlist too.

The tigers and bears and other warriors scoffed, but the lion accepted the volunteers gladly. "The donkeys will be my trumpeters," the lion said, "and the rabbits will be my couriers."

The greatest commanders know how to make the best use of all their soldiers, based on the strengths of each and every one.

7. The Lion Cub and Man

“Don’t fight Man,” said the Lion to his Cub, but the Cub didn’t listen. The Cub went looking for Man.

He saw a Bull. “Are you Man?”

“No, I bear Man’s yoke.”

Next he saw a Horse. “Are you Man?”

“No, Man rides me.”

Then he saw someone splitting logs with wedges: a Man!

“Fight me, Man!” said the Cub.

“I will! But first, help me split this log.”

When the Cub put his paws in the crack, Man knocked out the wedge, trapping the Cub’s paws.

The Cub finally pulled loose and went home with bloody paws, lesson learned.

8. The Lion in Love

A lion had fallen madly in love with the daughter of a woodcutter.

“Please let me marry your daughter,” the lion said to the woodcutter. “I will love and cherish her always.”

“My daughter is a tender and delicate girl,” the man replied, “and she cannot endure a lion’s claws and teeth.”

“Do not fear,” said the lion. “I will have my teeth and claws removed, and then I will marry your daughter.”

The lion did as he promised, but when he returned to the woodcutter to arrange the marriage, the man beat the defenseless lion and drove him away.

9. The Lion and the Man Debating

“I’m stronger than you!” roared the lion.

“No, you’re not!” shouted the man. “I’m stronger than you, and I’ll prove it.”

The man took the lion to see a painting of a man killing a lion. “Just look at that!” he declared triumphantly.

“A man painted that painting,” the lion scoffed. “If a lion could paint, he would paint a lion killing a man. Come on, and I’ll show you some real proof.”

The lion then took the man to the circus where a lion really was killing a man.

“This isn’t pretend,” the lion told him. “This is real.”

10. The Lion and the Boar

A lion and a boar were fighting fiercely.

“I’ll kill you!” roared the lion.

The boar growled back, “Not before I kill you!”

The vultures were delighted to hear these words, and they settled comfortably in a tree, watching the fight and waiting to see who would kill and who would be killed.

“I’d like lion for dinner,” said one of the vultures.

“I’d prefer boar,” said another.

But the boar and lion finally tired of fighting and left the scene, while the vultures cursed them both. “The lion has betrayed our hopes,” they squawked, “and so has the boar.”

11. The Old Lion and the Horse

An old lion was stalking a horse, but he was no longer strong, so he decided to play a trick instead.

“I’m a doctor,” he shouted to the horse, “and I see that you’re limping.”

The horse, however, was also a trickster. “What good luck!” he said. “I’ve got a thorn in my hoof. Please remove it if you can.”

Then, when the lion bent down to inspect the hoof, the horse kicked him in the head and ran off.

“That horse tricked this old trickster, fair and square,” said the stunned lion, “and I’ve got only myself to blame.”

12. The Lion and the Unicorn

The lion and the unicorn were fierce enemies.

The lion, pretending weakness, limped up to the unicorn. “Set aside our quarrels and help me, please. I want to go see my wife before I die, but I need your horn to lean on. I will return it to you as soon as I have said my last goodbyes to my wife; I give you my word.”

The unicorn felt sorry for the lion and offered him his horn, which left the unicorn defenseless.

The lion took the horn and then used it to attack the unicorn, defeating him at last.

13. The Old Lion's Last Breath

The lion was worn out with sickness and old age. Now he was stretched out on the ground, about to draw his last breath.

The boar approached and stabbed the lion with his tusks. "That's for every time you did me wrong!"

Then the bull did the same with his horns. "It's payback time!" he bellowed.

Next came the donkey, who kicked the lion with his hooves. "I never thought I'd see this day!" he brayed.

"When I was strong," groaned the lion, "all the animals respected and feared me, but now even that wretched donkey treats me with contempt."

14. The Lion and the Donkey Go Hunting

A lion and a donkey agreed to go hunting in partnership together.

One day they happened upon a pack of wolves. The donkey brayed loudly and raced at the wolves as if he were going to swallow them whole.

“Hee-haw!” he shouted. “Hee-haw!”

The wolves laughed, but when they glimpsed the lion running up behind the donkey, they turned tail and ran away.

“Behold!” said the donkey. “The tremendous sound of my voice has made the wolves run away!”

“I suspect it was the sight of me that did it,” replied the lion, “rather than the sound of your voice.

15. Wild Donkey, Tame Donkey

There was an onager who watched a tame donkey walking along the road, weighed down by a heavy load, while the whip-wielding donkey-driver walked beside him.

“How happy I am to live wild and free!” thought the wild donkey. “I do what I please, and I go where I want.”

Meanwhile, a lion crept up quietly. Fearing the donkey-driver, he avoided the tame donkey and instead attacked the unprotected onager, who did not stand a chance against the lion’s sharp teeth and claws.

“How happy I am not to be food for a lion!” the tame donkey thought to himself.

16. The Wild Donkey

An onager who had strayed from his herd in search of grass saw a donkey eating a bundle of barley straw.

“That barley straw looks tasty,” thought the wild donkey, “and how fat he looks. He must be a lucky donkey indeed!”

Then the wild donkey watched as a man put heavy bundles on the donkey’s back. The man shouted at the donkey, and then he threatened the donkey with a whip.

At that, the onager turned and ran. “I was wrong; that donkey is not lucky after all. I would never sell my freedom in exchange for barley straw.”

17. The Donkey and the Horse's Barley

A donkey once asked a horse to share a little bit of his barley.

“I would do so gladly,” replied the horse. “I’m a very noble creature after all! But I simply can’t give you any barley at the moment. When we get to the manger this evening, though, I’ll give you a full sack of wheat.”

“Since you won’t give me even a little bit of barley now,” said the donkey, “why should I believe you’ll give me a lot of wheat later?”

Beware of people who make big promises but don’t really want to give you anything at all.

18. The Cruel Horse and the Donkey

“Get out of my way, stupid donkey!” shouted a horse, and when the donkey did not get out of the way fast enough, the horse kicked the donkey and wounded him badly.

As he did so, though, the horse brought about his own punishment: he dislocated his leg and, overcome by pain, he had to lie down on the ground, groaning in agony.

The donkey then stood over the horse and said, “Look at you there on the ground! I’m still in pain, it’s true, but I feel better already, seeing you lying there, the victim of your own wickedness.”

19. The Horse and the Donkey's Load

A tanner was driving his donkey and his horse to market, and the donkey staggered under the weight of his load.

“Help me, horse!” said the donkey. “I need you to take just a little bit of the load. Have mercy!”

“Bearing the load is your job!” replied the horse. “I’m no donkey.”

Soon afterwards, the donkey collapsed and died.

The tanner skinned the donkey, and then he put the donkey’s load on the horse, along with the donkey’s skin.

“Woe is me!” groaned the horse. “I refused to help the donkey, and now I’m bearing the whole load myself.”

20. Death and the Donkey

There was a donkey who led a miserable life, and after years of wretched labor, he finally implored Death to deliver him.

Death did come, but not with the deliverance that the donkey expected.

“My poor donkey,” said Death, “I am here to take your life, and I also have bad news for you: after your death, the humans are going to take the skin from your dead body and make that skin into a drum. So, just as they beat you in life, so too they will beat you in death.”

That was the fate of the poor donkey.

21. The Donkey in Winter

It was Winter, and the donkey longed for Spring, with fresh grass to eat and a bit of warmth.

But when Spring came, bringing fresh grass, there was so much toil and labor that it was worse than Winter.

The donkey longed for Summer, but the labor was even greater then and the weather was even hotter.

He began to long for Fall, but Fall brought harvest loads to carry and provisions to lay in before the snows arrived.

Then it was Winter, and once again the donkey longed for Spring, with some fresh grass and a bit of warmth.

22. The Two Donkeys

Two donkeys were going to town, one carrying bags of oats, and the other, bags of money.

The donkey carrying money was adorned with all sorts of foppish frippery, including bells that went jingle-jangle as he walked.

The other donkey was as plain as the load he was carrying.

Bandits fell upon them, and they attacked the donkey with the money, stripping him of his cargo and his fine adornments, thrashing him cruelly, but they paid no attention to the donkey with the oats.

“What a fine thing it is,” thought the humble donkey, “not to have anything worth robbing.”

23. The Donkey and the Icon

There was a great religious procession, and a donkey was carrying a holy icon on the way to the church.

When the people saw the icon, they all fell to their knees in devotion.

“Behold!” the foolish donkey thought to himself. “The people are all falling to their knees and worshipping me... ME!”

As the donkey hee-hawed happily, the donkey-driver cracked his whip and laughed. “You are nothing more than a donkey. You were a donkey before I put the icon on your back, and you’re still a donkey now,” he said. “They’re worshipping the icon; they’re not worshipping you!”

24. The Fox and the Leopard

The fox and the leopard were arguing about who was the most beautiful.

“Just look at me! And look at my spots!” boasted the leopard. “Anyone can see that I am the most beautiful. I have spots all over everywhere. No other animal has fur with such a lovely pattern as mine.”

The fox just laughed at the leopard. “It’s true that you have lovely fur, but outward beauty really doesn’t matter,” she explained. “The patterns of the mind are far more important, and I have been blessed with an intelligence that is far more beautiful than all your spots.”

25. The Fox and the Dragon

A fox digging in the ground found herself in a dragon's den filled with golden treasure.

"I beg your pardon," she said to the dragon. "I ended up here by accident, and I'll be on my way. Before I go, though, I'd like to know just what you plan to do with all this treasure."

"I have no use for the treasure," said the dragon, "but it is my fate to spend my life here guarding the treasure, night and day."

"Then you're a wretched creature indeed," replied the fox. "You do possess a treasure, but I envy you not."

26. The Farmer and the Dragon

A river dried up, stranding the water-dragon who lived there.

“Take me to water!” the dragon shouted. “I’ll offer a golden reward!”

A greedy farmer tied the dragon to his donkey and brought the dragon to another river.

When he untied the dragon, though, it roared, “Now I’ll eat you!”

“That’s not fair!” yelled the farmer.

A fox heard them. “I’ll be the judge of that!” she said. “Show me how the dragon was tied up on the donkey.”

The farmer tied the dragon up.

“Now take it back where you found it,” advised the fox, “and leave it there.”

27. The Fox in the Hut

A hungry fox crawled through a hole into a peasant's hut; there she found some bread and meat.

The fox devoured the food, but when she went to crawl back out of the hole, her belly was too big, and she got stuck.

As she groaned and sighed, with her head sticking out of the hut, another fox came by and asked what was wrong.

The first fox explained what happened.

“Well,” the second fox told her, “you’ll just have to stay here until you are as skinny again as you were when you went in.”

Time solves many problems.

28. The Fox Meets the Lion

There was once a fox who had never seen a lion before.

The first time she happened to run into a lion she was so scared that she almost died of fright.

When the fox ran into a lion the second time, however, she was still scared, but not as scared as the first time.

Finally, the third time that the fox saw a lion, she walked right up to him and started a conversation.

The moral of the story is that some things are frightening at first, but they are not as scary when you become familiar with them.

29. The Lion and the Bear

The lion and the bear had caught a fawn.

“It’s mine!” roared the lion.

“No, it’s mine!” growled the bear.

Then they started fighting, slashing and tearing at one another until they collapsed on the ground, exhausted.

Meanwhile, a fox strolled by and saw the two of them lying there with the fawn between them. She ran up, grabbed the fawn, and carried it off.

The bear and lion both saw what the fox did but they didn’t have the strength to stand up.

“Woe is us!” they said. “We did all the work, but the fox got the prize.”

30. The Fox Visits the Lion

There was once a lion, king of the animals, who had grown old. He lay in his cave, pretending to be sick. Many different animals came to visit their king, and he devoured the animals one after another after another.

The fox also came, but stood cautiously in front of the cave, greeting the king from there. "I salute you, Your Mightiness!" shouted the fox.

"How good to see you, my dear fox!" replied the lion. "Why don't you come closer?"

"Because I see many tracks of animals going in," replied the fox, "but no tracks of animals coming out."

31. The Fox in the Lion-King's Palace

The lion was a savage king whose palace was filled with the bones and rotting remains of animals he had killed. The stink was terrible.

When the bear entered the palace, he exclaimed, "What a stink!"

This made the lion angry and he killed the bear.

The monkey, however, flattered the king. "Your Highness, the palace smells even more wonderful than usual!"

The lion made the monkey his prime minister.

Then the fox arrived.

"Do you like the smell of the palace?" the lion asked.

"I have a cold, Sire," replied the fox, "and I've lost my sense of smell."

32. The Fox and the Wolf, Courtiers

The lion-king had grown old and sick, never coming out of his cave.

All the animals came to pay their respects, except the fox.

“The fox shows you no respect!” said the wolf.

The fox arrived at that very moment and heard what the wolf said.

She then addressed the king. “While the others bring only condolences, I bring news of a cure for what ails you!”

“What is that?” asked the lion eagerly.

“You need to flay a living wolf and wrap his still warm skin around you.”

So the lion killed the wolf, just as the fox recommended.

33. The Fox and the Ape

“Any animal without a tail is banished from my kingdom!” proclaimed the lion-king. He waved his own tail dramatically. “All animals must have tails. If not, be gone before nightfall!”

The ape had no tail, so he packed his bags and prepared to leave.

He was surprised to see the fox packing her bags too.

“You have a most impressive tail!” said the ape. “The lion-king’s command doesn’t apply to you.”

“True,” said the fox. “But this king is a danger to us all: at any moment he could condemn me for no reason just as he has condemned you.”

34. The Fox with a Short Tail

A fox had gotten trapped in a snare, and lost his tail as a result.

He then ran into some other foxes. "My brothers, where are you going?" he asked.

"We're on our way to the lion's palace," they replied.

"The lion's palace? I was just there, which is where I learned about the latest fashion: short tails!"

When they heard this, the other foxes immediately cut off their tails too.

Then the fox burst out laughing, glad to have these partners in his misery. "They may not have shared my danger," he said, "but now they share my shame."

35. The Fox and the Old Women

A fox was walking along when he saw some old women feasting on a roasted chicken. The food smelled delicious, and the fox was very hungry. “It just isn’t fair,” thought the fox to himself.

He then addressed the old women. “My good ladies,” said the fox, “just imagine what an outcry there would be if I were to do what you are doing right now, eating a chicken like that!”

“There’s no comparison!” one of the women shouted back, laughing at the fox. “We’re eating our own chicken, while you steal and eat chickens that don’t belong to you.”

36. The Fox and the Grapes

A hungry fox was walking along the road when she saw some grapes growing up high on a trellis.

“Those grapes look delicious,” thought the fox. “What a lovely purple color too! That means they’re ripe. I just need to jump up there and grab them.”

So the fox jumped up as high as she could, but the trellis was out of reach.

She tried again. No luck.

Then she tried one last time. Still no luck.

“I knew the grapes were sour anyway,” she said loudly, just in case anybody was listening.

The fox then continued on her way.

37. The Fox and the Moon

A fox was wandering about at night. She strolled through the fields, and then she reached the river.

Feeling thirsty, she went to take a drink from the river, and there in the water she saw a reflection of the full moon in the sky.

“Look at that!” the fox exclaimed. “There’s a wheel of cheese in the river. How delicious that would be to eat!”

The fox then began to drink the water, hoping that if she could drink the whole river, she’d be able to eat the cheese.

The fox kept drinking and drinking until she finally... exploded.

38. The Fox and the Boar

A fox was strolling through the woods and saw a boar rubbing his tusks against a tree, back and forth, back and forth.

As always, the fox was curious. “What are you doing that for?” she asked the boar.

“I’m readying my weapons!” the boar replied. “The sharper my tusks, the more ready I’ll be to fight.”

The fox looked around. “But I don’t see any enemies,” she remarked.

“That’s the idea exactly! I’m sharpening my tusks now,” replied the boar, “because there will be no time to ready my weapons when the enemy arrives and the actual fighting begins.”

39. The Fox and the Rooster

“Dear rooster,” said the fox, “the beauty of your feathers dazzles me, as does the sound of your cock-a-doodle-doo. You are a magnificent creature indeed!”

The rooster beamed with pleasure, and the fox continued, “And you are a prophet of events to come, announcing the sun’s arrival each dawn.”

As the fox was speaking, he crept closer and closer to the rooster. Finally, he snatched the foolish bird in his teeth.

“You knew when the sun would rise this morning,” the fox said, laughing, “but you failed to predict that I was going to have rooster for my supper tonight!”

40. The Fox Seeks an Eye Doctor

The fox wanted to eat the rooster, so he lay down in the barnyard, groaning loudly to get the rooster's attention.

"Please, dear rooster," he cried, "remove this thorn that lodged in my eye when I crawled through a hedge."

"Dear fox," replied the rooster, suspecting trouble, "if I remove the thorn from the one eye, I might accidentally poke out your other eye. I'm not much of a doctor after all, but let me go fetch the watchdog. He'll know what to do!"

At the mention of the dog, the fox immediately recovered his strength and took off running.

41. The Fox and the Stork

The fox invited the stork to dinner. The main course was soup in a shallow bowl. The fox licked the soup with her tongue, but the stork couldn't eat with her beak. She went away frustrated and hungry.

A few days later, the stork invited the fox to dinner, and she served the food in a glass vase with a narrow neck. The fox could see the food but she couldn't get to it with her tongue, while the stork was able to easily eat the food with her beak.

Thus the stork got her revenge: turn-about is fair play.

42. The Fox and the Mule

A fox saw a mule in a meadow.

“What’s your name?” the fox asked.

“I forget,” replied the mule. “But it’s written on my hoof. Read my hoof if you want!”

The fox just laughed and ran into the woods where he met a wolf.

“I found you a delicious-looking mule,” said the fox. “Go ask his name!”

The wolf talked to the mule and when the mule said “Read my hoof!” the wolf bent down... and the mule kicked him! Hard!

The fox then laughed at the wolf. “You can’t even read, and now you’ve got a headache too.”

43. The Wolf and the Fox in the Well

A fox had fallen into a well and shouted for help.

A wolf came by and asked, "What's going on, fox?"

The fox replied, "Go get a rope and pull me out!"

"You poor thing!" said the wolf. "I feel so badly for you down there. It must be very cold. You're probably all wet! How did you manage to fall in?"

"This is no time for chit-chat," shouted the fox. "Go get the rope, pull me out, and then I'll tell you how I fell down here."

The moral: Don't waste words when someone in trouble needs your help.

44. The Fox and the Wolf in the Pit

A fox saw a wolf who'd fallen into a pit.

The fox laughed and ran around the edge of the pit, leaping and jumping with joy. "You idiot!" she shouted. "You fell right into the man's trap!"

While the fox was capering around the pit, the ground beneath her feet crumbled and she fell down into the pit also.

When the wolf saw the fox falling down, he exclaimed, "What a comfort to me it is to see that I won't die alone; this wicked fox, who was mocking me just a moment ago, will die here together with me."

45. The Fox Teaches the Wolf to Fish

The wolf saw the fox running through the snow.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“I’m taking these fish home to eat!” replied the fox.

“Where did you catch them?” asked the wolf.

“I just put my tail in the river, and then I pulled my tail out, full of fish.”

The wolf ran and put his tail in the river, and he waited.

The water was so cold!

The sun went down, the water froze, and the wolf was stuck.

“Help!” he yelled.

The farmer came and beat the wolf, and the wolf died cursing farmer, fox, and fish.

46. The Fox and the Wolf and the Well-Buckets

A fox had jumped into a well-bucket which then plunged down into the water. A wolf heard the splash and came running.

“What are you doing down there?” he asked.

“I’m fishing!” replied the fox.

“I want to go fishing too!” shouted the wolf.

“Well, just get in the other well-bucket up there and come on down.”

As the wolf went down, the fox went up.

“I’ve caught plenty, so I’m going home now,” the fox said.
“Good fishing!”

But there weren’t any fish in the well, and when the wolf shouted for help, a farmer came and killed him.

47. The Fox and the Wolf in the Shed

“I’m starving!” groaned the wolf. “I’ve got to eat something!”

“Follow me!” said the fox, and she led him to the farmer’s shed.

The fox crawled into the shed through a hole, and the wolf also managed to squeeze through.

The shed was full of meat and fish!

Remembering the narrow hole, the fox ate only a little, but the wolf stuffed himself.

Then the farmer burst into the shed, club in hand.

“Run!” squealed the fox.

She escaped through the narrow hole but the wolf got stuck because of his big belly, and the farmer clubbed him to death.

48. The Wolf Becomes a Monk

A wolf had grown old and couldn't hunt, so he decided to put on a monk's habit and go begging from door to door.

Sure enough, the disguise worked, and the wolf was eating pretty well.

He later ran into one of his fellow wolves.

"What are you doing in the robes of a monk?" asked the other wolf indignantly. "That's not how a wolf should live!"

The old wolf replied, "What do you expect me to do? My teeth are gone, and my tired old legs can't run anymore. I have to either get religion or prepare to starve."

49. The Wolf and the Porcupine

A wolf came across a porcupine. He was a fierce-looking creature armed with darts, so the wolf kept his distance.

At the same time, the wolf was quite hungry, and the porcupine would make a very fine snack if only he would lay aside his darts.

“Dear porcupine,” said the wolf, “don’t you know that we animals are living at peace? It is bad manners for you to be going around armed, as if there were war between us.”

The porcupine bristled. “I’m no fool,” he replied. “When I see a wolf nearby, I am at war, not at peace.”

50. The Wolf and the Crane

A wolf was choking on a bone that had stuck in his throat.

“Help me!” he groaned. “Somebody! Anybody! Help me!”

But nobody wanted to help the wolf.

Then the wolf saw a crane.

“Use your beak to get this bone out of my throat!” he begged. “I’ll give you a reward.”

So the crane extracted the bone from the wolf’s throat.

“Give me my reward!” said the crane.

“Your reward,” snarled the wolf, “is that you were able to escape my jaws alive. Now go away before I decide to eat you after all!”

Don’t expect rewards from wolves.

51. The Wolf and the Goat on a Rock

A goat was standing up on a high rock, and a wolf noticed her there.

“There’s no grass up there on that rock,” the wolf shouted. “Look down here: there’s so much nice grass! You should come down here and enjoy a nice meal.”

The goat just laughed at him.

“If I come down there,” she shouted back, “you are the one who would be enjoying a nice meal, not me. We’ll both just have to stay hungry!”

And so the wise goat stayed up there on that rock until the wolf went somewhere else to look for his supper.

52. The Wolf and the Goats in a Tub

A wolf saw two goats standing on a big tub.

“Thank God for sending me such good food!” he shouted as he ran towards them.

But before he could grab them, the goats jumped down inside the tub. “There is holy water here so that we can conduct the Mass,” they said. “Please let us sing a hymn and say our prayers, and you can eat us afterwards.”

“Okay,” said the pious wolf. “I will sing and pray with you!”

The goats bleated and the wolf howled. This sound alerted a farmer who came and beat the wolf to death.

53. The Wolf and the Cow

A wolf ambushed a cow in a pasture.

“I know I can’t escape,” said the cow. “Please just let me go up that hill to pray before you eat me. I’ll pray for God’s blessings on us both!”

“Go,” said the wolf, “but keep it short!”

The cow went up the hill and mooed loudly.

A farmer heard and came running, and the farmer’s dogs tore the wolf to pieces.

The wolf howled, “You didn’t pray for me, did you?”

The cow laughed. “You were going to eat me!” she said. “So my prayers were strictly for me, not you.”

54. The Wolf and the Lamb at the Stream

A wolf and a lamb both came to the same stream to drink; the wolf upstream, the lamb downstream.

The wolf eyed the lamb hungrily, thinking of some excuse to kill and eat him. "Stop muddying my water!" he howled.

"I don't understand," bleated the lamb. "The water flows down from you to me, not up."

The wolf invented another excuse. "I remember you insulted me six months ago!"

"I wasn't even born then," said the lamb. "I'm only three months old."

"Well, that must have been your father!" snarled the wolf, who then attacked the lamb and devoured him.

55. The Wolf and the Lamb in the Temple

A wolf was chasing a lamb, but the lamb managed to run inside a temple.

The wolf dared not enter the god's own house, so he stood at the temple's outer door and shouted to the lamb inside, "What do you think is going to happen now, lamb? The priest of the temple is going to catch you and sacrifice you to the god of this temple. You might as well come outside now and get it over with."

"I'd rather die as a sacrificial victim in here," the lamb shouted back, "rather than become food for you out there."

56. The Friendly Wolf

A man once owned twelve sheep. He wanted to take a trip, so he entrusted his sheep to a friendly wolf.

“I’ll be glad to watch them,” said the wolf.

On the first day, the wolf ate one sheep, another the next day, and by the time the man returned, there were only three sheep left.

“What happened to the rest of my sheep?” the man asked.

“They died unexpectedly,” said the wolf.

“Show me their skins,” said the man, and there he saw the wolf’s teeth-marks.

“You are a murderer!” shouted the man, and he had the wolf hanged.

57. The Wolves and their Allies

The wolves were ready to raid the sheep, if only they could get rid of the watchdogs.

They sought out the most wolf-like individuals among the dogs and said, “Surely we’re cousins, close cousins perhaps. You look more like wolves than dogs! Why not come over to our side?”

By promising the dogs a share in the spoils, they lured them into the wolf pack.

The wolves were then able to easily defeat the rest of the watchdogs.

Next, the wolves killed their dog allies.

And then they feasted on the sheep, who were left without any protection at all.

58. The Treacherous Sheepdog

A shepherd had a special favorite among the dogs who guarded his sheep. This dog, however, would snatch lambs to eat, and even the occasional sheep.

The shepherd eventually discovered this dog was the culprit, so he seized the dog and planned to execute him.

“But wolves do far more damage than I,” the dog whined. “The wolves are your worst enemies. Why punish me? ”

“It’s the business of wolves to kill the sheep, but you are supposed to be their guardian,” he replied. “A wolf is a predator, but you, wretched dog, are worse, for you are a traitor!”

59. The Lamb and the Nanny-Goat

The sheepdog was surprised to find a lamb among the goats.

“Your mother isn’t here,” said the sheepdog. “She must be over there, with the sheep.”

“Not so,” said the lamb. “My mother is the one who gave me her udder to suck. Even though she also had children of her own to feed, it is this nanny-goat who gave me milk. She is the one I call mother.”

“A goat can’t be your mother!” said the sheepdog.

“Yes, she can,” said the lamb. “That sheep may be my mother in body, but this nanny-goat is my mother in love.”

60. The Dogs and the River

Some hungry dogs were roaming the countryside looking everywhere for something to eat.

One of the dogs saw an animal hide floating in the river, and he barked to his fellows, summoning them to come help.

“We’re going to have to drink it!” said one of the dogs.

“Drink what?” asked another.

“We’ve got to drink the whole river!”

And so the dogs began drinking, lapping the water, gulping and guzzling in hopes of draining the river so that they could retrieve the hide.

Finally the dogs drank so much that they burst, and they never did get the hide.

61. The Dog without a House

A dog was about to deliver a litter, but she had no roof over her head.

She went to another dog and begged for help. “If you would just let me occupy your house while I deliver my pups, I’d be forever in your debt.”

Feeling sorry for the expectant mother, the owner of the doghouse moved out, expecting to reclaim her home in a few months.

When she returned, however, the other dog snarled, and so did the puppies. “If you want your house back,” she said, “you’re going to have to contend with me and with my pups!”

62. The Hunting Dog and the Rabbit

There was a hunter whose dog had stirred up a rabbit in the bushes.

The rabbit took off running.

“Go get him!” yelled the hunter. “You can catch him! Go! Go!”

The hunting dog ran after the rabbit as fast as he could, determined to catch him, but the rabbit finally got away. The dog was just not fast enough.

When the dog returned, the hunter shouted at him, “How could that little rabbit outrun you?”

“It’s one thing to run for a living, like me,” said the dog. “It’s another thing to run for your life, like that rabbit.”

63. The Rabbit and the Wolf

A rabbit and a wolf met in the woods.

“You’re such a coward,” said the wolf.

“Ha!” replied the rabbit. “What if I said I could beat you?”

“Beat me? Impossible!” replied the wolf.

“I’ll bet you ten ducats I can beat you!” said the rabbit.

“Agreed!” said the wolf. “Now show me how a rabbit beats a wolf!”

So the rabbit started running, and the wolf chased him.

The rabbit dodged here and there, always ahead of the wolf.

Finally, the wolf couldn’t run any more.

“I don’t win by fighting,” said the rabbit. “I win by running away.”

64. The War of the Rabbits and the Eagles

The rabbits and the eagles were at war, and the rabbits were losing.

The eagles were able to seize the rabbits with their talons and beaks, but the rabbits had no weapons of their own.

“If we don’t have weapons,” said the leader of the rabbits, “then we must have allies!”

The rabbits then decided to ask the foxes to be their allies, but the foxes refused.

“We might be willing to help you,” they said, “if we did not know just who you are and who you are fighting against.”

It is hard to find allies when you’re losing.

65. The Rabbit and the Sparrow

A sparrow was flitting from bush to bush one day when she saw an eagle swoop down from the sky, chasing a rabbit.

The rabbit zigged left, zagged right, running as fast as she could to escape the eagle, but finally the eagle seized the rabbit in his talons, and the rabbit squealed.

The sparrow laughed. “Where’s your fancy footwork now, silly rabbit?” she said.

Then a hawk flew by and grabbed the sparrow.

The dying rabbit saw what happened. “There is some justice in the world,” she thought. “The sparrow paid a price for her cruel words after all.”

66. The Rabbit and the Weasel

While the rabbit was away nibbling grass in the meadow, the weasel occupied her rabbit hole.

When the rabbit came back, the weasel said, "Go away! This is my house now."

"That's not fair!" protested the rabbit. "I demand justice!"

So the weasel proposed that they take their case to the local court, where the judge was an old cat.

"Come closer, my dears!" the cat told them. "I'm rather deaf, and I can't hear what you are saying. Closer! Closer!"

And as soon as the rabbit and weasel got close enough, the cat grabbed them and devoured them both.

67. The Rabbit's Resolution

The animals were holding an assembly.

All the animals had complaints they wanted to make, and the assembly dragged on and on until the rabbit proposed a resolution.

“It’s time to declare equality among the animals. Instead of this animal complaining about that animal, one against another, every animal should be treated with the same respect and dignity as every other animal,” shouted the rabbit, “regardless of how powerful they are. Equal rights for all!”

The lion, however, opposed the rabbit’s resolution.

“Let the rabbit shout all he wants,” growled the lion. “His words have no claws and no teeth.”

68. The Funeral of the Lion-Queen

The lion's wife had died, and all the animals came to her funeral.

They were all weeping for their queen, except for the deer. The lion-queen had eaten many fawns, and the deer was glad she was dead.

"Why do you not weep?" asked the lion angrily.

The deer quickly thought up a story. "Our queen came to me in a dream," she said, "and told me she had reached the Elysian Fields with all the other blessed animals. She doesn't want us to grieve for her."

The lion rejoiced and even rewarded the deer.

Sometimes a lie is safest.

69. The Deer in the Cave

A deer was fleeing some hunters and ran inside a cave.

“I’ll be safe in here!” thought the deer. “I’ll just wait here inside the cave until the hunters are gone, and then it will be safe for me to go back out.”

What the deer didn’t know was that there was a lion in that cave.

The lion pounced on the deer and tore her to pieces.

“Alas!” shrieked the deer. “I was on the run from human hunters, but it is actually another wild animal who has killed me.”

Be careful not to exchange one danger for another.

70. The Deer in the Stable

Fleeing a hunter and his dogs, a deer ran inside a stable.

“Let me hide here!” she said.

The oxen agreed, and the deer hid in one of the stalls.

A stableboy came in, carelessly did his work, and left. He didn't even notice the deer in the stall.

The deer rejoiced. “I'm safe now!”

“Just wait,” the oxen said.

Then the farmer came. As he looked around, he noticed the deer. “What are you doing here?” he shouted. “You don't belong here!”

Then the farmer chased the deer out of the stable right into the path of the hunter.

71. The Deer and his Reflection

A deer was drinking water from a pond when he noticed his reflection.

“My legs are so scrawny and thin,” he complained. “But look at my horns: they are so tall and beautiful!”

Then he heard hunters and their dogs coming his way.

He ran!

The deer’s legs carried him swiftly across the meadow but when he reached the woods, his horns got tangled in the branches. The hunters caught him there and killed him.

“What I thought was my crowning glory has killed me,” he thought as he was dying, “while what I scoffed at could have saved me.”

72. The Deer and the Vine

A deer was on the run from a hunter.

As she looked around desperately for a place to hide, she saw an enormous vine, so she got behind the vine and stood there, waiting.

The hunter showed up, and he also stood there, looking around and catching his breath.

The deer, who was hungry, began to munch on the vine.

As the deer ate, the branches of the vine moved.

Silently, the hunter took aim and shot the deer.

Pierced by the arrow, the deer exclaimed, "It's my own fault! I should not have harmed the vine that saved me!"

73. The Deer and her Friends

There was a deer who was sick, so she lay down in a grassy field to rest. When they heard she was sick, her friends came to visit her.

The rabbit came. "I hope you feel better soon!" he said. He also nibbled on the grass near the deer.

The sheep came, and the cow, and the goat, even the little grasshopper. They all brought good wishes, and they also ate the grass.

So, when the deer did begin to feel better, all the grass was gone; there was nothing for her to eat nearby, and she died of hunger.

74. The Monkey's Twin Children

When a monkey has twins, she loves one, neglecting the other. She thus fondles the one she loves and keeps him close, while the other child has to take care of himself.

There was once a monkey mother who had given birth to twins. A sound in the jungle scared her. She ran from the danger, holding her beloved twin in her arms, but as she ran, she fell against a rock, and the twin she held in her arms was crushed.

The twin that she neglected, however, who was clinging to her back as she ran, survived without injury.

75. The Monkey and the Fishermen

A monkey sat in a tree, watching some fishermen as they cast their nets into the river and then pulled them back out, full of fish.

The monkey watched every little thing the men did.

After a while, the men set aside their nets and went to eat.

The monkey hurried down from the tree. "I'll go fishing too!" she thought. She grabbed the nets, but got tangled up and fell into the river.

"It's my own fault," thought the monkey as she sank under the water. "I didn't really know how to fish, and now I'm going to drown."

76. The King's Dancing Monkeys

There was a king who built a school for dancing monkeys.

“Let them be educated in all the dances!” he proclaimed.

So the monkeys studied all the dances.

Finally the time came for the royal performance.

The king was delighted to see his monkeys dancing so beautifully, and the audience applauded every dance.

A joker in the crowd, however, decided to throw some nuts onto the stage. The monkeys went wild, forgetting all their dances as they scrambled to grab the nuts. Then the monkeys even started throwing nutshells at the audience.

That was the end of the dancing monkeys.

77. The Monkey and the Camel

The monkey did a dance for the assembly of animals, and they applauded his performance.

“Bravo, monkey!” shouted the animals. “Well done!”

The camel was jealous. “I’m a good dancer!” he thought to himself.

So the camel shoved his way to the front of the assembly and started to dance.

But the camel didn’t know how to dance.

He couldn’t leap.

He couldn’t twirl.

In fact, he looked ridiculous.

So the animals attacked the camel and drove him out of the assembly.

The moral: Be happy for others when they succeed, and don’t let your envy lead you into disaster.

78. The Kingdom of the Monkeys

Two friends, one truthful and one a liar, wandered into the Kingdom of the Monkeys.

Monkeys captured them and brought them to the Monkey-King.

“Behold my court!” said the Monkey-King. “Aren’t we a magnificent sight?”

“The splendor of your court is dazzling,” said the liar. “I’ve never seen anything so magnificent.”

The Monkey-King beamed with pleasure.

“And what do you say?” he inquired, turning to the other man.

“Why, you’re nothing but a monkey, and so are all your courtiers,” he replied.

The Monkey-King shrieked with rage. “Kill him!” shouted the king.

Telling the truth isn’t always the safest strategy.

79. The Cat and the Rooster

A cat had caught a rooster.

“I sentence you to death, you wicked creature!” hissed the cat.

“On what charge?” asked the rooster.

“You’re always waking us up early in the morning,” said the cat.

“That’s just my job,” said the rooster. “I’m supposed to wake the farmer in the morning.”

“And you are lascivious, sleeping with your sister-hens!”

“But that’s also my job!” said the rooster. “That’s how we make eggs for the farmer.”

“I can see you’ve got an excuse for everything,” said the cat, “but I still sentence you to death.”

And then she ate the rooster.

80. The Cat and the Chickens

The cat heard that the chickens were feeling poorly.

“They need a doctor!” the cat said to herself.

So, the cat got dressed up, equipped herself with a doctor’s bag filled with medical instruments of various kinds, and went to visit the chickens.

“Greetings, my good chickens!” she said.

“What do you want, cat?” squawked one of the chickens.

“I heard that you were not feeling well,” replied the cat.

“So I’ve come here to help.”

“Oh, the best help you can offer is to go far away!” said the chicken. “The farther away you go, the better we feel.”

81. The Cat and her Neighbors

An eagle, cat, and sow lived together in a tree: eagle on top, sow at the bottom, and cat in-between.

The cat said to the eagle, "Beware: the sow is digging up the tree's roots in order to topple it and eat your chicks."

To the sow she said, "The eagle craves your little piglets."

The eagle dared not leave her chicks unguarded, nor did the worried sow venture forth to find food, so they both finally starved to death.

The cat and her kittens then had the whole tree to themselves, and they fed on the chicks and piglets.

82. The Cat and the Stork

A stork was carrying an eel home to feed to her chicks.

The cat saw her, and while he enjoyed eating eels, he didn't like to get his feet wet. "O stork," said the cat, "you have such lovely white feathers. Is your beak all white on the inside too?"

The stork kept her beak shut and said nothing.

The angry cat then said, "Ugh! Why would you eat anything so nasty as an eel? You must be a nasty creature yourself!"

The stork kept her beak shut and said nothing.

If you're wise, you'll ignore both flattery and insults.

83. The Cat and the Sparrows

There was a sparrow who lived with a cat as his companion. The two of them played together, the sparrow poking the cat with his beak, and the cat gently swatting the bird with his paw.

Then another sparrow came to live with them, but she was not a nice bird at all. She attacked the cat and she attacked the cat's sparrow-friend too.

"This is unacceptable!" exclaimed the cat. He killed the wicked sparrow and ate her.

"Delicious!" said the cat. "I had no idea that sparrows were so good to eat!"

He then devoured his sparrow-friend as well.

84. Cat and Fox, Philosophers

The cat and the fox were traveling together, sharing philosophical thoughts about beauty, truth, the nature of existence, good and evil, and so on.

Along the way they saw a wolf eating a sheep.

“How immoral!” said the cat.

“I concur!” said the fox. “It’s most unethical!”

Then they passed a barnyard where they saw a hen and her chicks. The fox seized the hen and devoured her, while the cat devoured the chicks.

Having satisfied their hunger, they continued on their journey, philosophizing as before.

Many who condemn criminal behavior will behave like criminals themselves, given the right opportunity.

85. Brother Cat and Brother Rat

The abbey cat had caught and killed all the mice except for one last rat.

To catch that last rat, the cat had to be sneaky, so he shaved his head like a monk and put on a monk's robe.

The rat rejoiced, supposing he was now safe. "Peace upon you, brother," said the rat to the cat, and the cat lowered his eyes piously.

Then, when the rat came closer, the cat grabbed him.

"Stop it!" squealed the rat. "Aren't you a monk now?"

"Only when I feel like it," replied the cat, and then he ate the rat.

86. The Miller's Cat and the Mice

There was a mill infested with mice, so the miller got a cat to kill the mice. The cat was ferocious and soon there were only a few mice still left alive.

The surviving mice, seeing slaughter all around them, retreated to the highest hiding places they could find, never coming down where the cat was lurking.

The cat decided to play dead, lying motionless on the floor.

“Look! The cat's dead!” squeaked the mice.

But the oldest and wisest of the mice warned them, “Don't let that cat fool you! You can't ever trust a cat, living or dead.”

87. The Mouse and the Cat on the Shelf

A mouse gazed at a cat who was curled up, fast asleep, on a high shelf.

“She looks so calm and good-natured,” the mouse thought to himself. “And so pretty too! I’m sure such a beautiful creature must have a kind heart. In fact, I think I would like to make her acquaintance.”

The mouse then scampered up on the shelf, squeaking sweetly.

The cat opened her eyes but did not move until the mouse was within reach.

She then seized the mouse and devoured him.

The moral: If you’re a mouse, be careful when making friends with the cat.

88. The Cat and the Mouse in the Beer

A mouse had fallen into a pot of beer.

“Help!” he squeaked. “I’m drowning!”

“What will you give me if I pull you out?” asked the cat.

“Anything you want!” shrieked the mouse.

“Promise that you’ll come when I call,” said the cat.

“I promise!” said the mouse.

So the cat rescued the mouse.

A few days later, the cat was hungry, so he went to the mouse-hole and said, “Come out now, mouse! You promised!”

“That promise doesn’t count!” replied the mouse.

“What do you mean?” said the cat.

“I was drunk at the time,” replied the mouse, laughing.

89. The War of the Cats and the Mice

The cats and the mice were at war.

The mice realized they were losing, so they decided to organize themselves into a proper army with generals, and they equipped the mouse-generals with elaborate horned helmets.

The mouse-generals then led the mouse-army into battle against the cats, but once again, the cats were victorious.

“Retreat! Retreat!” yelled the mouse-generals.

But when the mice ran into their holes, the generals got stuck. Their helmets were too big to fit inside the holes, making them easy prey for the cats.

Those who live by the sword will die by the sword. Even mice.

90. Belling the Cat

The mice held a council. "Something must be done about the cat!" said the chief of the mice.

"But what shall we do?"

The mice debated many proposals, and finally they decided that a bell might work.

"All in favor of belling the cat, say aye!"

The mice all shouted aye with great enthusiasm.

"All opposed?"

None of the mice was opposed.

"Next order of business," said the mouse-chief. "Who is going to put the bell on the cat?"

Silence.

And so the fine plan failed, all because there was no mouse who would put the bell on the cat.

91. The Mouse and the Cat in the Flour

There was an old cat who was too feeble to hunt mice as she once did. "I'll need to use a trick!" she thought, so she rolled herself back and forth in the flour until she was completely white all over.

Then she lay there, motionless, waiting for the mice.

The cat thus caught all the mice who were young and foolish.

Then an old mouse approached the flour. He had escaped many mousetraps, and he saw the cat lurking in the flour.

"Some mice don't know any better," he said. "But you can't fool me! I'd know you anywhere!"

92. Country Mouse and City Mouse

A country mouse entertained his city cousin with a meal of barley and carrots, but the city mouse scorned this rustic fare.

“Come with me to the city,” he said, “and enjoy some fine dining.”

The city mouse led his country cousin into a dining room where the table was laden with bread, cheese, meat, and delicious sweets too.

They had just begun to enjoy the feast when a cat pounced up on the table; the two mice ran for their lives.

“I prefer my peaceful poverty to your deadly luxury!” said the country mouse, and then he scurried home.

93. The Mouse in the Soup

There was a big pot of soup on the stove, and the cook had left the lid off.

A mouse smelled the soup: irresistible!

So the mouse climbed up onto the pot, and then she jumped in.

As she splashed about in the broth, she gobbled the soup greedily. It was delicious!

Realizing she had no means of escape, the mouse sighed. "So be it!" she squeaked. "I've eaten well, my stomach is full, and I'm ready to die."

Having spoken her last words, the mouse disappeared into the depths of the soup.

Such is the end of all gluttons.

94. The Mouse in the Chest

There was a mouse who had been born inside a chest, and she lived all her life there, eating the grain inside the chest.

Then one day she climbed up onto the edge of the chest and from there she fell down onto a shelf which was full of bread and cheese and all kinds of wonderful food.

“What a fool I’ve been!” said the mouse, “All this time I thought there was nothing better in the world than the little chest in which I lived. Now I see the world is full of things I never dreamed of before!”

95. The Mouse and the Bull

A mighty bull was stretched out comfortably on a bed of straw inside his stable.

Meanwhile, there was a tiny mouse in the straw, and as the mouse nibbled on the straw, she also nibbled on the bull's leg.

"Who did that?" roared the bull. He shook his head angrily, gesturing with his horns, and he finally sprang to his feet, stamping and snorting, looking everywhere for the enemy that had wounded him.

The mouse scurried into her mouse-hole, laughing to herself. "Who would have thought a little creature like me could win a fight with someone so much bigger!"

96. The Mouse Observes the World

“Don’t go outside the mouse-hole,” said the mouse-mother to her daughter.

But the little mouse disobeyed: she ventured outside where she saw a rooster scratching the ground with its talons. The rooster terrified her.

Next she saw a cat sitting by the fire, licking its fur. The cat looked so sweet!

Then she ran back into the mouse-hole.

“Mother,” she said, “I saw a diabolical creature with feathers and a saintly creature with fur.”

“You have it mixed up,” her mother explained. “There is nothing to fear from the feathered rooster, but you must never go near that furry cat!”

97. The Hawk and the Mouse

There was a hawk who got caught in a net.

“Oh! Help me please!” he shrieked, but the hawk had no friends among the creatures, and no one would help him.

Finally a little mouse came scurrying by, and the hawk shouted, “Mouse! Please, I beg you: rescue me from this net if you can!”

The good-hearted little mouse gnawed through the net, setting the hawk free.

“With my compliments!” squeaked the little mouse.

But as soon as the hawk was free, he gobbled up the mouse.

Save a thief from the gallows, says Aesop, and he'll cut your throat.

98. The Hawk and the Nightingale

A nightingale was singing in a bush when a hawk grabbed her.

“Please spare me!” she cried. “My little body is hardly a meal for a great and powerful bird such as yourself. I’m sure you can find much bigger birds that will satisfy your hunger.”

The hawk scoffed. “What a foolish creature you are! Do you really think I would let go a bird I have caught in my talons for a bird I have yet to catch?”

“But I will sing you a lovely song,” pleaded the nightingale.

“My belly is hungry,” replied the hawk, “not my ears.”

99. The Hawk and the Nightingale's Chicks

A hawk had found some nightingale chicks in a nest.

Just at that moment, the mother bird returned. "Please spare my chicks!" shrieked the nightingale. "I'll do anything you ask! Please just spare my babies!"

"I'll spare them if you sing me a beautiful song," said the hawk.

The nightingale started singing, but she was so frightened that her voice quavered as she sang.

"That was terrible," said the hawk.

He grabbed one of the chicks and was about to devour it when a hunter arrived and shot the hawk.

Those who plan destruction for others will likewise be destroyed.

100. The War of the Hawks

A bloody civil war broke out among the hawks.

The doves, who loved peace, decided that they would send ambassadors to the warring groups of hawks, seeking to put an end to the war.

The diplomatic doves finally reconciled the hawks, and there was peace once again in the world of birds.

But now that the hawks were no longer at war with one another, they launched a war against the doves, attacking and devouring the peacemakers.

“What a terrible mistake we’ve made!” moaned the doves. “We should never have united an enemy whose common goal is to destroy us.”

101. The Two Doves

Two doves, husband and wife, gathered grain and stored it in a jar.

Through their hard work, they filled the jar.

“If I’m going to eat, I’ll call you, and you can eat too,” said the wife, and the husband promised the same.

The weather was dry, and the grain shrank. The jar was no longer full.

The husband saw this and shouted, “You ate grain without telling me!” Enraged, he pecked his wife to death.

Then it rained; the grain grew plump, filling the jar.

“What have I done?” groaned the husband.

Realizing his mistake, he died of grief.

102. The Stork and the Crow

A stork quarreled with his wife and poked her eye out with his beak.

He was ashamed of what he had done, so he decided to run away.

“Where are you going?” asked the crow.

“I don’t know!” replied the stork. “I just have to get away. I poked out my wife’s eye! I can’t bear the shame.”

“Is that the beak you used to poke out her eye?” asked the crow.

The stork nodded. “Yes, this is the beak.”

“Well,” said the crow, “you can’t run away from who you are. Wherever you go, your beak goes with you.”

103. The Chicken and the Crow

There was a chicken who lived on a farm, and she laid eggs week after week.

Some of the eggs the farmer took away, and some of the eggs the farmer allowed to hatch into chicks.

“Look at me!” said the chicken proudly one day after laying an egg. “I’ve laid yet another egg! I’m a very productive chicken!”

A crow happened to be flying by and he laughed at the proud chicken.

“Stop boasting about being so productive!” said the crow. “Your fertility doesn’t do you any good: you’re not laying those eggs for yourself, but for the farmer.”

104. The Noisy Crow

There was once a very hungry crow. He had been searching everywhere for food and then he found it: a huge chunk of cheese just lying on the ground. "It's cheese!" the crow cawed loudly. "Cheese! Cheese!"

He then began to dance around the cheese, rejoicing at his good luck.

Meanwhile, other hungry crows heard that crow cawing.

"Did you hear that?" they said to one another. "It's cheese!"

So those other crows came swooping down and attacked the first crow. They drove him away from the cheese and ate the whole thing themselves.

Moral of the story: Rejoice quietly.

105. The Crow and the Fox

A crow stole a piece of cheese and settled high up in a tree to enjoy his feast.

A fox saw the crow and she wanted that cheese. So she gazed up at the crow and said, "What a lovely bird you are! Your feathers look especially bright and shiny today. You could be king of the birds if your song were as beautiful as your feathers."

"Oh, I can sing!" said the crow, and the cheese fell out of his mouth as he started cawing.

The fox then grabbed the cheese and ran away.

The moral: Beware of flatterers.

106. The Fox who Played Dead

There was a hungry fox who decided to fool the birds by playing dead. She threw herself down on the ground, and lay there motionless, pretending to be a corpse so that the birds wouldn't be afraid to fly right up to her.

The crow, however, took a close look and saw the fox was still breathing. So he fluttered around the fox and mocked her. "You might be able to fool other birds," cawed the crow, "but you can't fool me. My eyes are as sly as your thoughts."

As the saying goes: It takes one to know one.

107. The Eagle and the Crow

The eagle and the crow were arguing.

“I’ve seen you eating corpses, crow!” said the eagle. “I scorn you and your contemptible habits.”

The crow replied, “You eagles boast of your nobility, but tell me which is truly the greater crime: to feed on creatures that are already dead, as we crows do, or to seek out living victims and feed on them, as do the eagles?”

The moral of the story is that an honorable reputation does not mean you aren’t a criminal, and sometimes the most shameful crimes are those for which people feel no shame at all.

108. The Eagle and the Peacock

The birds had decided to hold a beauty contest.

When the contestants were assembled, the eagle immediately declared that she should be the winner. “Behold!” she proclaimed. “I am surely the most beautiful bird that anyone has ever seen. What say you all?”

The other birds demurred, but then the peacock spoke up.

“You are indeed beautiful,” he said to the eagle. “Although it’s not so much your feathers” – and at this point the peacock unfurled his remarkable tail – “but rather your sharp beak and your fierce talons that make you the winner, threatening death to anyone who might disagree.”

109. The Crow's Warning

The birds were debating whether or not to elect another king in addition to the eagle.

The little birds thought that they'd be better protected if they had more kings.

The big birds, meanwhile, were hoping they might be elected to be the new king.

So, the majority of the birds were ready to vote in favor of electing another king when the crow spoke up and warned them of the danger.

"It's already hard enough to fill the stomach of one king," squawked the crow. "Think how much harder it will be to fill more than one royal stomach!"

110. The Ambitious Crow

An eagle swooped down from a lofty cliff and snatched a sheep from the flock.

When the crow saw this, he wanted to do the same thing. “I’m strong! I’ve got wings! And a sheep would be something very nice to eat!”

So, squawking loudly, the crow swooped down and landed on a sheep, but instead of carrying the sheep away, all he did was get his feet tangled in the wool. He couldn’t even fly away!

The shepherd saw the crow and laughed.

“You thought you were an eagle,” he said, “but now you know: you’re only a crow.”

111. The Crane and the Eagle

A crane and an eagle were soaring through the sky when the eagle saw with his eagle-eye something white down on the ground.

“I see a lamb down there!” said the eagle. “Do you see it too?”

“My eyesight isn’t as good as yours,” replied the crane. “But I know that farmers often lay traps here for birds. I’d advise you to be careful.”

“It’s a lamb, you fool!” retorted the eagle. “Maybe you can’t see it, but I can!”

The eagle then swooped down like a bolt of lightning, only to be caught and killed in the farmer’s snare.

112. The Crane Goes Fishing

It was a clear night, so the crane decided to go fishing.

The starlight shimmered in the water, and the crane thought the flashes of light were fish.

“Look at all the fish!” she exclaimed.

But when she poked her beak into the water, there weren’t any fish, and she went away hungry.

The next day, the crane again saw shimmering flashes in the water. They really were fish this time, but she thought it was just another trick of the light.

“You won’t fool me again this time!” said the foolish crane, and she went away hungry once again.

113. The Halcyon and her Nest

The halcyon built her nest on a cliff near the ocean where she and her chicks would be safe from hunters.

One day when the halcyon left the nest to go find food for her chicks, a great ocean wave came crashing over the rocks. It swept the nest away, and the halcyon chicks all drowned.

When the mother came back to the nest, she saw what had happened.

“Woe is me!” she cried. “I was afraid of hunters on dry land so I sought refuge by the ocean, but now the cruel ocean has killed all my little chicks.”

114. The Swallow and the Nightingale

The swallow, flying through the woods, heard the nightingale singing.

“Dear nightingale,” said the swallow, “your song is so beautiful! Why do you conceal yourself here in the woods? Your song is worthy of a royal audience! Leave this wilderness behind and come with me to where the people live. I will escort you directly to the palace of the king.”

“No, dear swallow,” replied the nightingale, “I don’t want to go to the homes of men, nor even to the palaces of kings. I prefer this solitude where I can sing my songs for God and for the angels.”

115. The Nightingale's Advice

A bird-catcher captured a nightingale.

"If I teach you three secrets," she begged, "will you set me free?"

The man agreed.

"First: when you lose something, let it go. Second: don't grieve. Third: don't believe in the impossible."

"Thank you!" said the man, and he set the nightingale free.

"By the way," she added, "there's a ruby in my stomach as big as an apple."

The man started weeping.

"Apply the secrets!" the nightingale said. "Let it go, don't grieve, use your brain: how could I have a ruby that big in my stomach?"

Laughing, the nightingale then flew away.

116. The Nightingale and the Glow-Worm

There was a nightingale singing in the woods one night, and a glow-worm came to listen to her song.

“You sing nicely,” said the glow-worm. “But look at me! I glow in the darkness. I am radiant! I am a burst of light! You might say that I am a heavenly star who dwells here upon the earth! Take a look!”

The nightingale laughed at the glow-worm and said, “The darkness allows you to shine, it’s true, but as soon as the sunshine dispels the shadows, everyone will see you for what you are: a nasty little insect, nothing more.”

117. The Beetle and the Eagle

“Help me, dung-beetle!” shrieked a rabbit, fleeing from an eagle.

“I grant you asylum,” proclaimed the beetle, but the eagle snatched the rabbit and devoured him.

The beetle vowed revenge.

She climbed into the eagle’s nest and rolled the eggs out.

The eagle went to Zeus, laying eggs in his lap, but the beetle rolled dung-balls into Zeus’s lap. He sprang up in disgust, and once again the eagle’s eggs all smashed upon the ground.

“I seek justice for the rabbit!” shouted the beetle, and when Zeus heard the facts, he ruled against his own bird.

Thus justice was done.

118. The Bees Go to Court

The hard-working bees filled their honeycomb with honey, but then the hornets came and claimed the honey and the comb belonged to them.

The bees resolved to take the case to court. "This is our honey," buzzed the bees.

"The honey is ours!" droned the hornets.

"I'm not sure who to believe," said the judge, "so I order you both, bees and hornets, to fill another comb with honey. Then I will decide the case."

The hornets were indignant. "We will do no such thing!" they said, and then they flew away in shame.

Thus the bees reclaimed their honey.

119. The Bear and the Bees

Once there was a bear in the woods, looking for honey, and he was stung by a bee. This enraged the bear! Roaring loudly, the bear grabbed the beehive, slashing it with his claws.

The bear's attack roused all the bees in the hive who then chased the bear in a mighty swarm, stinging him all over. He barely managed to escape.

Licking his wounds later, the bear said to himself, "One bee sting wasn't that bad, but now I've been stung by hundreds of bees, all because I let myself get angry. My anger was my own worst enemy!"

120. The Fly and the Mule

A self-important fly was sitting on a wagon-pole, shouting at the mule who pulled the wagon.

“What a slowpoke you are!” said the fly. “Why don’t you hurry up? If you don’t hurry up, I will bite you!”

The mule scoffed at the fly. “The only thing I care about is the whip in the hand of my driver,” said the mule. “If he is satisfied with my progress, that is good enough for me. I don’t like the sting of his whip, but as for your bite, I don’t care about that. You are nothing but a little insect!”

121. The Gnat and the Bull

There was a tiny gnat buzzing and whizzing through the air, looking for a place to land.

Then, the gnat noticed a bull.

“Begging your pardon, Mister Bull,” squeaked the gnat as he descended to land on one of the bull’s horns. “Let me rest here just a moment, and I’ll fly away soon so that I do not prove to be too much of a burden.”

The bull chuckled. “Oh, Mister Gnat,” said the bull, “I didn’t even notice when you landed, and I doubt I’ll notice when you go.”

The gnat, indignant, went flying away without another word.

122. The Frogs and the Bulls

There were once two bulls who were waging war against one another.

As the bulls tore the ground, snorting and bellowing, the frogs who lived in a nearby marsh watched the two bulls fighting.

“Alas!” said the chief of the frogs. “This is bad news for us indeed.”

“I don’t understand,” said another frog. “What difference does it make which bull wins and which loses?”

“Stop and think!” said the elder frog. “The winning bull will drive the loser away, and when that bull comes here to our marsh seeking sanctuary, just imagine all the frogs he will trample underfoot.”

123. The Frogs and the Sun

The Sun had decided to take a wife, and he invited all the animals to come to his wedding.

The frogs were leaping and jumping with excitement when they heard the news.

“There will be music at the wedding!” croaked one of the frogs.

“And dancing!” croaked another frog.

“And lots of food too!” croaked yet another.

A wise old frog rebuked them. “Stop rejoicing, you fools!” he said. “The Sun’s marriage is bad news for us all. His heat is bad enough already. Just imagine how much worse it will be after he gets married and starts a family!”

124. The Mouse and the Frog

The mouse hated the frog, and the frog hated the mouse.

Over time, their hatred turned into outright warfare.

“I shall rule the swamp,” declared the mouse.

“Never!” replied the frog. “This swamp is mine!”

The mouse attacked, ambushing the frog, but the frog fought back bravely. They both wore armor made of dried mud and wielded tiny swords made from the marsh-grass

As the battle dragged on, a hawk saw what was happening and swooped down, catching both frog and mouse unawares, gobbling first one and then the other.

Thus ended the war between the frog and the mouse.

125. The Cunning Stork

A stork enjoyed eating both mice and frogs.

To the frogs she said, "Frogs, I was talking to the mice, and they say you are cowards."

"We must go to war with the mice!" replied the frogs.

Then the stork went to the mice and said, "Mice, I was talking to the frogs, and they say you are cowards."

"We must go to war with the frogs!" replied the mice.

The frogs and the mice then marched into the meadow to engage in battle there, and while they fought, the stork feasted happily on the fallen soldiers of both armies.

126. The Boys and the Frogs

There were some boys out playing one day, skipping rocks across the water of a pond.

“Look!” shouted one of the boys. “There’s a frog! Let’s hit him.”

The boys then started throwing rocks at the frog, who plunged back down under the water. The boys waited, and each time a frog dared to stick his head out of the water, the boys threw their rocks.

Finally one of the frogs rose up from the water and spoke to the boys. “Boys!” shouted the frog. “This is just some game for you, but for us it is life or death.”

127. The Porcupine and the Snake

The winter was cold, and the porcupine needed to find shelter. He went from one house to another, and all refused him, until finally he arrived at the snake's house.

"Let me in, snake!" said the porcupine.

The good-hearted snake let the porcupine in.

The porcupine then got nice and warm, but the snake's house was small, and the snake did not like being pressed against the porcupine's prickles.

"There's not room for both of us," said the snake.

"Well, you can leave if you want," replied the porcupine, "but I'm going to stay."

Possession is nine-tenths of the law.

128. The Dragon and the Eagle

A dragon and eagle were fighting, and the dragon had wrapped itself around the eagle, trying to squeeze him to death.

A farmer saw what was happening, and he freed the eagle from the dragon's coils. The eagle then soared up into the sky.

What the farmer did made the dragon angry, so the dragon spit poison into the farmer's drinking water.

The farmer was about to drink, knowing nothing of the poison, but the eagle flew up and knocked the cup from the farmer's hands.

Although the farmer did not realize it, the grateful eagle had saved his life.

129. Zeus and the Wedding Gifts

Zeus, King of the Gods, was celebrating his marriage to Hera, the Queen of Heaven.

He invited all the animals to attend the festivities, and he expected that all the animals would bring wedding gifts according to their abilities.

The bee brought a gift of honey, for example, and the cow brought milk. The monkey performed a dance, the nightingale sang a song, and so on.

Then the snake arrived, carrying a rose in its mouth.

Zeus, however, refused the snake's gift.

"There's nothing but poison that comes from your mouth," Zeus said, "even if it looks like a rose."

130. Zeus and the Dogs

The dogs were frustrated with their lot in life, so they sent ambassadors to Zeus with a petition.

But when the dogs beheld the god, they were terrified and pooped all over the halls of Olympus.

“That smells really bad!” shouted Zeus.

The dogs sent more ambassadors, and this time they stuffed perfume into their ambassadors’ behinds.

When Zeus appeared, these dogs also pooped, and the mix of poop and perfume smelled even worse.

Zeus expelled the ambassadors from Olympus.

Even now the dogs are still looking for their lost ambassadors; that’s why you see them sniffing each other’s behinds.

131. The Prayer of the Fox and the Wolf

The wolf said to the fox, “I admire your cunning, fox!”

“And I admire your ferocity, wolf!” replied the fox. “Let’s direct our prayers to Zeus on Mount Olympus so that he can give each of us the qualities that we lack.”

So the wolf and the fox both prayed to Zeus. “Hear our prayer, O King of the Gods!” they said.

Zeus, however, rejected their petition. “From the beginning of the world’s creation,” he proclaimed, “each animal has possessed its own attributes in abundance, but not the other attributes. To each of the animals their own attributes must suffice.”

132. Zeus and the Camel

The camel was jealous of the bull. “Just look at those horns of his, while I have only these long, floppy ears. I’m defenseless against all the other animals. I must have horns!”

So the camel prayed to Zeus. “I implore you, O King of the Gods! Please give me horns!”

But Zeus just laughed at the camel’s request. “You would look ridiculous with horns,” he said. “Not only do I refuse your request, I’m also going to shorten your long ears. Be content with what you have!”

The moral: Many who seek to have more end up with less.

133. Zeus and the Rabbit

The rabbit admired the horns on the head of the stag, so he prayed to Zeus to grant him the honor of horns.

“You have given other animals many gifts, but I have nothing except swiftness of foot. I would like to have horns just like the stag!”

Zeus agreed to the rabbit’s request and placed horns upon his head.

The horns were very heavy, though, and the rabbit could barely move beneath their weight. He was no longer swift of foot as before, and he looked ridiculous.

The moral: Beware of honors that do you dishonor in the end.

134. Aphrodite and the Cat

A young man fell in love with his cat, so he prayed to Aphrodite. "O Goddess of Love, please change my cat into a woman!"

Aphrodite agreed.

Before the young man's eyes, the cat transformed into a beautiful woman, and they got married.

But Aphrodite was curious. "I wonder if this woman will behave like a woman or like a cat." To find out, she tossed a mouse into the midst of the wedding festivities.

The bride let out a meow, got down on all fours, and started chasing the mouse.

Appalled, Aphrodite turned the woman back into a cat.

135. Zeus and the Donkey

There was a donkey who pulled a farmer's plow.

"This work is too hard," he thought, so he prayed to Zeus for a new master.

Zeus gave him to a potter who made him carry heavy baskets of clay.

The unhappy donkey then prayed to Zeus again, who gave him to a tanner, the cruelest master of all.

"Woe is me!" groaned the donkey. "This newest master shows no mercy now while I'm alive, and he'll show no mercy when I'm dead. This tanner will turn me into leather and make me into whips to be used on other donkeys."

136. Zeus and the Lost Calf

A calf was missing from the farmer's herd. The farmer searched the meadows and woods to find his missing calf.

"O Zeus," he prayed, "if you just show me who took the calf, I'll sacrifice a goat to you!"

The farmer then heard a loud roar: it was a lion, and the lion was tearing his calf to pieces.

When he saw the savage lion, the farmer prayed to Zeus again.

"O Zeus," he whispered, "now that I see who took the calf, I'll also sacrifice a cow to you if you will just keep me safe from that lion."

137. Zeus and the Two Sacks

When Zeus created human beings, he realized they were not perfect. Far from perfect, in fact.

“They’ll need sacks to carry their faults in,” he decided, and so he created some great big sacks, enough so that every human being would have two sacks: one sack to carry their own faults, and a second sack for faults belonging to others.

Zeus threw the sacks over each person’s shoulders: the sack with other people’s faults hangs down in front, and the sack with their own faults behind.

So that’s why you are more aware of other people’s faults than your own.

138. Zeus and the Jar of Good Things

When Zeus created the earth, he took all the good things and put them in a jar.

He then chose a man to keep the jar. "Don't open it!" Zeus said.

"I promise not to open it," said the man.

But of course the man opened the jar, and all the good things flew back up to Zeus.

The man closed the jar as fast as he could, but the only thing still left inside the jar was Hope.

That is why people never lose Hope, who keeps promising she will get the other good things to come back someday.

139. Athena and the Shipwreck

A rich man of Athens was making a voyage across the sea.

In a fierce storm, the winds and waves broke the ship to pieces. All the passengers were thrown into the water and had to swim for their lives.

The rich man, however, did not swim. Instead, he called upon Athena, goddess of his city. "O Athena, I'll give you a thousand gold pieces if you rescue me from the sea."

One of the ship's sailors swam by and shouted at him, "While you bargain with Athena, you should also try swimming!"

The goddess helps them that help themselves.

140. Hercules and the Farmer

A farmer's wagon got stuck in the mud, and the oxen could not pull it out.

The farmer fell to his knees and implored Hercules to come to his aid. "O Hercules," he cried, "help me!"

Then a voice boomed from the sky as loud as thunder. It was the voice of Hercules.

"You fool!" said Hercules. "Put the whip to your oxen and put your shoulder to the wheel. Use all your strength to do what you can. You should only call on me when you have exhausted your own powers."

Help yourself, and the god will help you.

141. Fortuna and the Boy

There was a young boy who fell asleep on the edge of a well.

The goddess Fortuna, or “Lady Luck” as some call her, came and stood next to the boy. “Wake up!” she said to him. “Wake up, boy, and go sleep somewhere else!”

The boy opened his eyes and looked at the goddess sleepily. “What difference does it make to you?” he asked.

“If you fall in the well, everybody will blame it on me,” said the goddess, “instead of blaming you and your reckless behavior.”

The moral: Don’t blame bad luck when the fault is your own.

142. Fortuna and the Farmer

A farmer dug up a buried treasure.

“O Earth,” he exclaimed, “what a great treasure you have bestowed upon me! I will give you my thanks forever.”

The goddess Fortuna then appeared before the farmer. “What are you thanking her for? Just who do you think gave you this treasure? I did, Fortuna, Goddess of Luck! You should thank me for this gift, not the earth,” she shouted.

Then she added, “Thank me now and forever, or else your luck might change from good to bad. Remember: just as I gave you this treasure, I can also take it away.”

143. The Farmer and the Wheat

A farmer disliked the wheat's bristly beard because the sharp bristles cut his hands.

He decided to pray to Demeter, the goddess of crops and fields, for help. "O Demeter," prayed the farmer, "I beg you: let the wheat grow with all the grain but without the bristles."

The goddess granted the farmer's request, and the wheat no longer had any protecting bristles.

As a result, the birds came and ate all the grain.

The farmer regretted his request.

"In exchange for a small comfort," he said, "I have given up a great gain."

Be careful what you pray for.

144. The Farmer and his Weather Wishes

Zeus had a farm that needed a tenant.

There was a farmer who agreed to work the land, provided that Zeus would arrange the weather, hot or cold, wet or dry, based on the man's own wishes.

The farmer thus had his own weather, different from the weather at neighboring farms. But because he didn't understand how weather works, the neighboring farms prospered, while his own crops all failed.

Finally he implored Zeus to take charge of the weather again.

"Divine Providence knows better what the earth needs," the farmer admitted. "I will follow heaven's way, not my own whims."

145. Prometheus and the Satyr

The Titan Prometheus stole fire from the heavens and brought it down to earth.

A satyr was fascinated by the fire and tried to embrace it, wrapping his arms around the flames. "Ouch!" he shouted. "That hurts!"

"You have to be careful," cautioned Prometheus. "The fire will burn your beard if you get too close."

"I don't understand," said the satyr. "Why would you bring us something so dangerous?"

"Fire gives heat, and fire gives light," said Prometheus. "It's up to you to learn how to use it wisely. The danger lies not in its use, but in its misuse."

146. The Satyr and the Traveler

One winter's night a satyr found a traveler stranded in the snow, so he took the man to his cave.

When the man blew on his hands, the satyr asked, "What are you doing?"

"Blowing on my hands to warm them," the man replied.

The satyr then gave the man some hot soup.

"What are you doing?" he asked when the man blew on the soup.

"Blowing on the soup to cool it."

The satyr then threw the man out of his cave. "I don't want anything to do with someone who blows hot and cold from the same mouth."

147. Hermes and the Traveler

There was a traveler making a long journey, and he had grown hungry along the way.

“O Hermes,” he prayed, “please help me! With your divine power, bring me good luck so that I can find something to eat. I promise to give you half of whatever I find!”

The traveler then found a bag of almonds lying on the road. He ate the nuts, and afterwards offered the shells to Hermes.

“Behold, Hermes,” the traveler said solemnly, “here is half, just as I promised.”

A greedy person will even cheat the gods in order to get what he wants.

148. Hermes and the Woodcutter

A woodcutter accidentally dropped his ax in a river.

As he sat there weeping, Hermes appeared, offering him a golden ax.

“That’s not mine,” said the woodcutter.

Hermes offered him a silver ax.

“Not mine either.”

Then Hermes held out the man’s own ax.

“Yes, that’s mine!” he said happily, and Hermes rewarded his honesty by giving him all three axes.

The woodcutter’s friend was jealous, so he threw his own ax into the water. Hermes appeared, offering him a golden ax. When he reached for the ax, Hermes disappeared, and the man ended up with no ax at all.

149. The Justice of the Gods

There was once a ship that sank into the ocean.

A man watching from the shore shouted, “The gods know no justice! Perhaps there was a criminal sailing on that ship, but they have killed everyone who was on board!”

As the man was speaking, an ant happened to bite him. Enraged, the man began stamping all the ants he could see.

The god Hermes then appeared and struck the man with his wand. “You are but as an ant in the eyes of the gods,” he said, “and just as you have judged the ants, so we judge humankind.”

150. Death's Warnings

Death came to take an old man's soul, but the man protested. "That's not fair! You should have given me a warning first. I need time to set my affairs in order."

"I gave you plenty of warnings," Death replied.

"But I've never laid eyes on you before."

"You saw me when I came for others," said Death. "And more than that: I gave you signs. Gray hair, bad eyes, stooped back, poor hearing. Those were all my messengers. If you ignored them, that is no fault of mine."

Memento mori: the time to prepare yourself is now, not later.

151. Death and the Old Man

There was an old man trudging along the road, carrying a heavy bundle of wood on his back.

Finally, he put down his bundle and collapsed by the side of the road.

“I can’t go on,” he thought to himself, so he decided to call on Death.

“I summon you now, O Death!” he cried.

To the man’s surprise, Death appeared before him.

“Why have you summoned me?” Death asked.

The old man replied in a shaky voice, “Perhaps you could help put this bundle of wood back on my shoulders...?”

Death laughed, and he did as the man asked.

152. Death and Cupid

Death and Cupid got their quivers mixed up, which meant Death was shooting love's arrows into old people, while Cupid was shooting death's arrows into young people, causing them to die before their time.

Cupid realized what was happening, so he went to Death in order to correct the error.

"We need to fix this!" Cupid said to Death.

They did their best to sort the arrows properly, although some of Death's arrows remained in Cupid's quiver and vice versa.

As a result, you sometimes see old people fall victim to Cupid, while some young people fall victim to Death.

153. The Father and his Lazy Sons

An old farmer knew his lazy sons were not ready to take over the farm.

So, when he summoned them to his deathbed, he said, "I am leaving you a great treasure! I buried it in the vineyard."

"Where exactly in the vineyard?" the sons asked.

But the old man died without another word.

The sons dug in the vineyard, hoping to find the treasure.

They dug and they dug and thus they made the vineyard so fertile that they harvested more than ever before.

Then they realized that the fertile soil was the treasure their father had left them.

154. The Father and his Quarrelsome Sons

A farmer's sons were always quarreling, so the father decided to teach them a lesson.

"Bring me a bundle of sticks," he said.

He then told each son to break the bundle.

Try as they might, none of the sons, not even the strongest, could break the bundle of sticks.

Then the father untied the bundle and gave each son a stick.

"Break that," he said.

Each son broke the stick easily.

"So too with you," explained the father. "United, you are strong. But divided and each on his own, you are weak, and your enemies will easily destroy you."

155. The Man's Loyal Dog

A man had a very loyal dog.

One day when he returned home, he found the dog's mouth all covered with blood and the cradle overturned, while his baby boy was nowhere to be seen.

"What have you done?!" he shouted as he drew his sword and slew the dog.

But then as he picked up the fallen cradle, he found the baby safe beneath, along with the corpse of a deadly snake whom the dog had killed.

"What have I done?!" he groaned, lamenting how cruelly he had rewarded the dog who had saved the life of his son.

156. The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs

A woman possessed a miraculous goose that laid golden eggs.

But this was not enough for the greedy woman.

“If the goose can lay eggs of gold,” she thought, “then surely I will find a goldmine in its guts. I don’t want the eggs; I want the goldmine inside!”

So the woman killed the goose and cut it open, but inside there were only goose guts. There was no gold in there at all.

“Woe is me!” the woman cried. “I should have been grateful, but instead I was greedy and killed my goose, so now I’m left with nothing.”

157. The Woman and her Cat

There was a woman who was troubled by mice in her house.

“A curse upon these mice!” she shouted. “They keep nibbling on my cheese.”

She pondered the problem until she knew what to do.

“A cat is what I need,” she decided.

The woman thought it would be best to get a very hungry cat, one who would be sure to eat up all the mice. So the woman procured a very hungry cat and then waited eagerly to see what would happen.

The cat ate up all the mice, but it ate up all the woman’s cheese too!

158. The Woman and her Hen

There was a poor woman who had a single hen, and that hen laid an egg for her every day without fail.

But the woman wanted the hen to lay even more eggs, so she gave the hen more food to eat.

“If I give her twice as much food, she will lay twice as many eggs!” thought the woman.

But it was just the opposite: as the hen got fatter and fatter, she laid fewer and fewer eggs, until finally she laid no eggs at all.

Those who desire to possess more might instead lose what little they had.

159. The Milkmaid's Bucket of Milk

A woman was carrying a bucket of milk to market, balancing the bucket on her head.

“I’ll sell the milk,” she thought, “and buy some eggs to hatch. I’ll raise the chicks, who will lay more eggs, which I’ll sell to buy a piglet. I’ll raise the pig till he’s big and fat; then I’ll sell him and buy a colt. I’ll raise the colt, and when he grows up, I won’t walk anymore. I’ll go riding instead: giddy-up, giddy-up!”

But when she began to gallop like a horse, she spilled the milk and ended up with nothing at all.

160. The Farmer and the Lion

A lion found his way into a farmer's stable, and the farmer, hoping to capture the lion, closed the stable door.

When the lion was shut in with no way out, he went wild. First he tore the sheep to pieces, and then he turned his attention to the cows.

The farmer, afraid that the lion might eventually attack him too, opened the door and let him go.

"It's your own fault!" said his wife. "You should be afraid of a lion even from a distance, so why on earth did you shut him up inside your very own stable?"

161. The Farmer and the Apple Trees

There was an inexperienced farmer who understood nothing about farming.

One day he saw his neighbor trimming his apple trees, cutting back the bad branches.

“Why are you destroying your trees?” asked the inexperienced farmer.

“I’m not destroying them; I’m pruning them,” replied the farmer. “My trees will bear more fruit as a result!”

The inexperienced farmer rushed home and cut the branches off his apple trees too, both good branches and bad.

When it came time to harvest the apples, he was disappointed to discover that his trees had produced no fruit.

Be careful when you imitate an expert.

162. Bushes and Hedges

A man inherited the estate of a distant relative. He had lived in the city all his life, so country life was new to him. He was delighted by the vineyard, but he saw no purpose for the bushes and hedges.

“These plants grow no grapes,” he complained. “I’ll tear them down!”

But after he tore down all the bushes and hedges, all manner of people came tramping through the vineyard, as did all manner of wild beasts.

As a result, the vineyard was ruined and the man realized his mistake, but it was too late to save the grapes.

163. The Foolish Farmers and the Rabbit

Some foolish farmers owed rent to the landlord. They had the money, but they didn't know how to deliver the money in time.

"What can we do?" the foolish farmers wailed. "How will we get the money to our landlord in time?"

"I know!" one of them said. "Rabbits are fast. Let's tie the money-purse onto a rabbit and tell him to deliver the money."

So they caught a rabbit, tied the purse around his neck and said, "Take this to our landlord!"

The rabbit ran off and was never seen again, and so the fools lost all their money.

164. The Farmer's Revenge

There was a wicked farmer who was jealous of his neighbor's crops.

"He has all the good luck, and I have nothing but bad luck," the farmer thought to himself. "But I'll find a way to get my revenge!"

The farmer then captured a fox and tied a burning torch to the fox's tail. Then he let the fox loose in his neighbor's field.

The fox, however, ran right back into the farmer's own field, setting it on fire and burning his crops to the ground.

As a result, the farmer ended up even worse off than he was before.

165. The Farmer and the Frozen Snake

A kind-hearted farmer found a snake in the snow, half-frozen. “You poor thing!” he said, and he picked up the snake and put it inside his cloak to keep it warm.

Then, when he got home, he placed the snake beside the fire.

As the snake warmed up, it returned to life and began to hiss at everyone in the house, spraying venom.

The farmer grabbed an ax to fend off the snake as he denounced the snake’s behavior with angry words. “What kind of gratitude is this?” he exclaimed. “I saved your life, yet you’re trying to kill me!”

166. The Widow and her Sheep

There was a widow who had but one sheep.

One time when she was shearing the sheep, she cut the wool so close that the sheep began to bleed.

“Stop!” shouted the sheep. “What need is there to take my blood along with the wool? And if you really do want to take my flesh, then find someone who knows how to do that properly. But if, as I hope, you only want my wool, don’t wield your blade like a butcher.”

“My apologies,” said the widow. “I thank you for your wool, and I will be more careful hereafter.”

167. The Shepherd and his Cloak

The shepherd led his flock of sheep to a great oak tree. He then spread his cloak out under the tree and climbed up in the tree to shake down the acorns.

“Come on, sheep!” he said. “I’m going to get you something good to eat!”

The sheep eagerly crowded around and ate the acorns, but they also ate the shepherd’s cloak.

When the shepherd climbed down and saw what had happened, he yelled at the sheep. “You ungrateful creatures! You supply the wool for other people’s clothes, but you have eaten the clothes of the man who feeds you.”

168. The Shepherd and the Ram

There was a shepherd, and his sheepdog died.

One of the rams said to the shepherd, “Shave my wool and cut off my horns, and then put the sheepdog’s skin on me. The wolves will see me and run away!”

The ram’s plan worked: when the wolves came, they saw the sheepdog, or so they thought, and ran.

One day, however, the ram was feeling very bold, so he chased the wolves and, as he ran, a thorn snagged the sheepdog’s skin, leaving the ram naked and defenseless.

No longer afraid, the wolves turned on the ram and devoured him.

169. The Shepherd's Big Sheepdog

A shepherd had a big sheepdog who guarded his flock. Because he was a big dog, he ate a lot of food.

“Why don't you sell him and get a couple of smaller dogs instead?” advised the shepherd's friend. “You could save some money on dog food that way.”

The shepherd agreed, so he sold his big dog and replaced him with two much smaller dogs.

As soon as the wolf saw the new sheepdogs, he attacked the flock, killing many of the sheep.

“Alas!” wailed the shepherd. “Just to save a little money, I have suffered a great loss!”

170. The Shepherd and the Wolf Cubs

A shepherd found some orphaned wolf cubs, and he took the cubs home and raised them.

“When they grow up,” he thought to himself, “I’ll use them to guard my own flock. Even better, I will train them to raid the flocks of other shepherds.”

But when the wolf cubs grew up, the very first thing they did was to raid the shepherd’s own flock, killing all the sheep.

When he saw what had happened, the shepherd groaned. “It’s my own fault,” he said. “I should have destroyed the little wolves instead of raising them up for my own destruction.”

171. The Wolf Who Herded Sheep

There was a wolf who dressed as a shepherd, wearing a shepherd's cloak and carrying a shepherd's crook.

He wore the costume so well that the people were fooled, as were the sheep and even the dogs. By pretending to keep the sheep, he was able to poach them, one after another, and he grew fatter and fatter.

One night, in his excitement, he made the mistake of letting out a cry of joy: the howl of a wolf, not a shepherd.

At that moment, all the shepherds and dogs realized his true identity, and they caught and killed him.

172. The Shepherd and the Friendly Wolf

There was a wolf who followed the shepherd's flock, never causing any harm.

At first, the shepherd regarded the wolf as his enemy, but he grew accustomed to the wolf, even thinking of him as a friend.

So when the shepherd had to go to town one day, he left his flock in the wolf's care.

As soon as the shepherd was gone, the wolf attacked the flock.

When the shepherd returned and saw the dead sheep, he groaned. "It's my own fault," he lamented. "I was a fool to have left my sheep in the care of a wolf!"

173. The Shepherd and the Lion

A lion had a thorn in his paw, so he went to a shepherd.

“Help me!” the lion said, slowly extending his paw.

The shepherd was terrified, but then he saw the thorn. He removed the thorn, and the grateful lion went back into the woods.

Years later, the shepherd was wrongly accused of a crime and thrown to the beasts in the arena. The lion was one of those beasts, and he recognized the shepherd. The lion embraced the shepherd and defended him from the other beasts.

Amazed, the king absolved the good shepherd and freed the lion also.

174. The Boy Who Cried Wolf

There was a shepherd boy who used to tell lies just for fun.

One day when he was tending the sheep, he started shouting. "Help! Help! There's a wolf!"

The farmers came running, and the boy just laughed at them.

He tricked the farmers again a few weeks later.

The next time, there really was a wolf.

"Help! Help! There's a wolf!" he cried. "It's the truth!"

But the farmers said, "We won't let that boy fool us a third time."

So the wolf attacked the flock and killed the sheep.

The boy thus learned his lesson the hard way.

175. The Shepherd and the Rabbit

A shepherd saw a rabbit run by, and he also heard the hunter's dogs howling in the distance.

"I better act fast," he thought, and he struck the rabbit on the head, killing it. He then picked up the rabbit and hid it inside his cloak just as the hunter arrived.

"Did you see a rabbit come this way?" asked the hunter.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," replied the shepherd.

The hunter sighed. "I was hoping to roast that rabbit for supper!"

After the hunter left, the shepherd said to himself, "I think I'd prefer rabbit stew."

176. The Three Travelers

There were three travelers whose food was almost gone, so they decided the one who had the best dream would eat the remaining food for breakfast.

When they awoke, the first man said, “Zeus’s eagle carried me up to Mount Olympus!”

The second said, “I dreamed I plunged through the ground down into Hades.”

The third traveler then said, “I dreamed I saw you being taken up to heaven” – he nodded to the first – “and I saw you plunge into the underworld” – he nodded to the second. “Since you had both vanished forever, I decided to eat the food myself.”

177. The Three Wise Men

Three wise men wandering through the jungle found the bones of a dead tiger.

The first man boasted, "I have the power to reassemble these bones." He chanted a spell, and behold: the tiger-skeleton was made whole.

The second man said, "I have greater powers; I can put flesh on those bones." He chanted his spell, and behold: a dead tiger was lying on the ground.

The third boasted he was the most powerful of all. "I can revive the dead!" He chanted a spell, and the tiger came to life.

The tiger then attacked and killed all three men.

178. The Two Friends and the Bear

Two friends were traveling together.

Along the way, they ran into a bear.

One man climbed a tree to escape the danger.

The other, remembering that bears won't touch a corpse, lay down on the ground and played dead.

The bear sniffed the man on the ground, pressing its snout against the man's face. Satisfied that the man was dead, the bear went back into the woods.

The first man got down from the tree and said, "What did that bear say to you?"

"The bear told me: don't trust a friend who deserts you in a moment of danger."

179. The Two Travelers and the Ax

Two men were traveling together.

Along the way, they saw an ax lying beside the road.

One of them grabbed the ax and shouted, "Look what I found!"

"No," said his companion, "look what WE found."

But the man who grabbed the ax disagreed. "It's mine," he said, "and I'm going to keep it!"

A little while later they realized people were chasing them and shouting angrily. It was the woodcutters, and they wanted their ax back.

"Uh-oh," said the man with the ax. "We're in trouble!"

"No," said his companion, "YOU are in trouble. It's your ax, not mine."

180. The Two Men and the Donkey

Two friends were traveling through the woods when they found a stray donkey. They each laid hands upon the creature.

“It’s mine!” shouted the first man.

“No, it’s mine!” shouted the other.

They shouted for a while, and then they began to pummel one another with their fists.

The donkey stood there, watching them, and finally he galloped away deep into the woods.

When the men paused in their fighting, they noticed that the object of their quarrel was gone, but they kept on arguing nonetheless.

“It was mine!” shouted the first man.

“No,” shouted the other, “it was mine!”

181. The Two Men and the Oyster

Two friends walking on the beach found an oyster.

“It’s mine!” shouted the one.

“It’s mine!” shouted the other.

Along came a third man.

“May I assist you?” he inquired, and they asked him to judge their case.

The man pulled out a knife, opened the oyster, and gulped down the delicacy inside.

He then held up the two half-shells.

“This is for you.” He gave half of the shell to one man.

“And this is for you,” he said to the other man, bestowing the other half.

“And good day to you both!” he added, continuing on his way.

182. The Merchant and the Copper

A merchant deposited some valuable copper with a friend.

When he later asked for its return, the friend said, "Alas, the rats ate all your copper."

"Impossible! Rats can't eat copper."

"These rats can," said his friend.

The merchant went away, but his friend came to him the next day, desperate because his son was missing. The merchant had kidnapped him!

"I saw a raven carry him off," said the merchant.

"Impossible! A raven can't do that!"

"No more than rats eat copper."

The merchant had proved his point; his friend returned the copper, and the merchant returned the boy.

183. The Man and his Mistresses

A middle-aged man had not one, but two mistresses. One of his mistresses was younger than he was, and the other was older.

The younger mistress didn't want her lover to look old, so at every opportunity she would pluck the grey hairs from his head, leaving the dark hairs. "You're so handsome!" she would say.

The older mistress felt insecure about her age, so at every opportunity she would pluck the dark hairs from his head, leaving the grey. "You look so distinguished!" she would say.

Before long, the poor man was completely bald, thanks to his two mistresses.

184. Three Generations

There was a man who had grown old, and his own son had decided to throw him out of the house. "There's no room for you here!" the son said.

The old man wept. "It's cold out there. I'll freeze to death."

The man's son told his own little boy to fetch two blankets, but the boy returned with just one.

"I told you to bring two blankets for your grandfather!" yelled the father.

"I decided to keep one for you when you get old and I throw you out of the house," replied the boy.

Children learn by example.

185. Father and Son and Donkey

A man and his son led their donkey to market.

“Someone should ride!” shouted a bystander. So the man put his son on the donkey.

Along the way, another bystander scoffed. “Lazy boy! Why must your father walk?” The son dismounted and the father rode.

They met another critic, who said, “Cruel father, making your son walk!” So both rode.

Then another critic. “Poor donkey, carrying two riders!”

So they tied the donkey to a pole and carried him instead, but the donkey kicked and struggled, and thus the donkey fell into a river and drowned.

There’s no pleasing everyone.

186. The Philosopher and the Pumpkin

A philosopher strolled through a garden and remarked, "Look at that enormous pumpkin growing on that scrawny vine! God should have honored the pumpkins with a lofty position, growing in trees instead of on the ground. I would arrange things differently if I were in charge!"

Then, to escape the heat of the day, the philosopher went and rested beneath a shady tree. As he sat there dozing, an acorn fell down on his head.

"Dear Lord!" he exclaimed. "If that had been a pumpkin, it might have killed me. God really does know best how everything should be arranged!"

187. The Monks and their Abbots

An abbot gave the monks three meals daily.

“We need more food,” they grumbled. “Let God take him soon!”

That abbot died.

The next abbot gave them only two meals.

“He deprives us of food; let God deprive him of life.”

That abbot died.

The next abbot gave them only one meal.

“Before hunger shortens our lives, let God shorten his life.”

But one monk said, “God grant him long life!”

Surprised, the others asked, “Why?”

“The first was bad,” the monk explained, “the second worse, and the third worst of all. The next might deprive us of food entirely.”

188. The Abbot and the Bones

A man wanted to become a monk.

The abbot pointed down into the ossuary. "Go down," he said, "and bless those bones."

The man did as the abbot said.

"Did you bless the bones?" The man nodded.

"What did the bones say?" asked the abbot.

"Nothing," the man replied.

"Now go curse the bones."

The man did as the abbot said.

"Did you curse the bones?" The man nodded.

"What did they say?"

"Nothing."

The abbot said, "Brother, that is how you must behave if you want to become a monk: regard blessings and curses the same, and say nothing."

189. The Hermit and his Disciple

A hermit, wanting to test his disciple, put a mouse under a bowl.

“I’m going out,” he said. “You stay here, and whatever you do, don’t look under that bowl.”

The disciple was curious, of course. “Why does my master not want me to know what is there?” he wondered.

He approached the bowl, lifted it carefully, and thus let loose the mouse that had been trapped there.

When the hermit returned, he asked his disciple if he had seen what was under the bowl.

“I saw,” he said, “but it would have been better if I had not seen.”

190. The Priest and the Weeping Woman

As a priest sang the Alleluia, an old woman sitting in the front pew burst into tears. The louder the priest sang, the louder she wept.

He thought to himself, "I had no idea that I could move someone to such devotion with the sound of my voice!"

After the Mass, he spoke to the woman. "I saw that you were deeply moved by today's service," he said.

"Yes, thank you, Father," the woman replied. "Only yesterday, a wolf killed my donkey, and you sounded just like my poor donkey. When I heard you singing, it moved me to tears."

191. Hiring a Donkey

A merchant hired a donkey and driver to carry his goods from one town to another across the desert.

The day was hot and the journey was long, so they had to stop and rest. There was no shade of any kind, except for the shadow cast by the donkey.

The merchant settled down comfortably in that shade, but the driver protested. "That's my donkey," he said, "so it's my shade!"

"But I'm the one who hired the donkey!" the merchant exclaimed.

"You paid for the donkey, it's true," said the driver, "but you did not pay for his shadow!"

192. Seeing a Camel

The first time the people saw a camel, they were terrified. “What is this great beast?” they shouted, and they ran away.

The second time they saw the camel, they looked at him and did not run away.

The third time, they were not scared at all. One person even went and got a bridle which he put on the camel in order to lead him around. Then they rode the camel, and finally they learned to use the camel to make long journeys across the desert.

The moral of the story: You can overcome fear with time and familiarity.

193. The Sailor and the Merchant

A merchant and a sailor were drinking together in a tavern.

“How did your father happen to die?” the merchant asked the sailor.

“He died at sea,” replied the sailor. “He was a sailor like me, as was my grandfather. He also died at sea.”

“Aren’t you afraid you’ll drown too?” asked the merchant.

Instead of answering, the sailor replied with a question. “And where did your father die?”

“In bed,” answered the merchant.

“And your grandfather?”

“Also in bed,” said the merchant.

“Well, I’m no more afraid of the sea than you are of bed,” said the sailor, smiling.

194. The Introverted Philosopher

A philosopher had a country estate where he kept to himself, walking in his gardens, reading in his library, writing in his study. He saw no one, and that was how he liked it.

One day a neighbor came to see him on certain practical matters. "I am astounded by this solitary life of yours," he said. "Aren't you lonely? Don't you require conversation? Wouldn't you like some companionship? I am glad to come visit you, and I can bring my friends too!"

"You seem to misunderstand," replied the philosopher. "I did not feel at all alone... until you arrived."

195. The Miser and his Gold

A miser buried a bag of gold coins in a hole in the ground. He never spent any of the money, but he often returned to the hole to check and make sure his treasure was safe.

A neighbor grew suspicious when he saw the miser visiting and revisiting the spot. He investigated, found the treasure, and stole it.

When the miser returned and discovered his money was gone, he began shrieking.

The same neighbor came out and consoled him. "Just put a rock there instead," he advised. "It will do you as much good as that money ever did."

196. The Boy and the Thief

A boy sat weeping beside a well.

A man approached – he was a thief! – and asked the boy why he was weeping.

“I wanted to hide my jar of gold coins in this well,” said the boy, “but the rope broke and the jar fell in and now I can’t get it back out.”

The man immediately stripped off his clothes and jumped into the well, thinking he would steal the gold coins from the boy.

The boy, meanwhile, stole the thief’s clothes and ran off.

The thief ended up with no gold, and with no clothes either.

197. The Boy and his Teacher

A boy had fallen into a deep river and was desperately clinging to a willow branch to keep from being pulled down by the current.

As he was hanging there, his teacher walked by.

“Help!” shouted the boy.

The teacher shook his head. “Look at you! That’s what you get for being reckless! You deserve a good whipping as punishment so that you won’t make that mistake again.”

The boy, terrified at the thought of a whipping, let go of the branch and was swept to his death in the river’s waters.

Some teachers prefer to scold instead of helping.

198. The Trumpeter Captured

During a fiercely fought battle, the army's trumpeter was captured by an enemy soldier.

As the soldier dragged him away to be executed, the trumpeter begged him for mercy.

"Don't kill me, please!" he shouted. "I didn't fight in the battle. I don't know how to fight! I don't even have any weapons! Look: all I have is my trumpet."

The enemy soldier scoffed. "That is all the more reason for me to kill you, coward!" he said. "You rouse the rest of us to risk our lives on the field of battle, while you yourself stand on the sidelines."

199. The Star-Gazing Astrologer

There was an astrologer who was in the habit of going out at night and strolling around, gazing up at the stars.

One night, as the astrologer was staring intently at a particular constellation, he walked right into a ditch.

As he lay there moaning and groaning, his neighbor walked by.

“Help!” shouted the astrologer.

When his neighbor looked down into the ditch, he recognized the astrologer and realized what must have happened. Laughing, the neighbor told him, “Instead of looking up at the heavens, you ought to look down here at the ground that’s right in front of you.”

200. The Man in the Tree

Fleeing a deadly unicorn, a man climbed a tree beside a lake.

Four snakes were slithering around the lake, and a dragon rose up from the watery depths, its mouth gaping open.

Then the man saw two mice, one white and one black, gnawing at the tree's roots.

How could he escape all these evils?

Then he looked up and saw honey dripping down from higher in the tree. As the honey fell into his mouth, he forgot all about the dangers.

The tree toppled and he fell into the dragon's jaws, but his only thought was of the honey.

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156. The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs

157. The Woman and her Cat
158. The Woman and her Hen
159. The Milkmaid's Bucket of Milk
160. The Farmer and the Lion
161. The Farmer and the Apple Trees
162. Bushes and Hedges
163. The Foolish Farmers and the Rabbit
164. The Farmer's Revenge
165. The Farmer and the Frozen Snake
166. The Widow and her Sheep
167. The Shepherd and his Cloak
168. The Shepherd and the Ram
169. The Shepherd's Big Sheepdog
170. The Shepherd and the Wolf Cubs
171. The Wolf Who Herded Sheep
172. The Shepherd and the Friendly Wolf
173. The Shepherd and the Lion
174. The Boy Who Cried Wolf
175. The Shepherd and the Rabbit
176. The Three Travelers
177. The Three Wise Men
178. The Two Friends and the Bear
179. The Two Travelers and the Ax
180. The Two Men and the Donkey
181. The Two Men and the Oyster
182. The Merchant and the Copper
183. The Man and his Mistresses
184. Three Generations
185. Father and Son and Donkey
186. The Philosopher and the Pumpkin
187. The Monks and their Abbots
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189. The Hermit and his Disciple

190. The Priest and the Weeping Woman
191. Hiring a Donkey
192. Seeing a Camel
193. The Sailor and the Merchant
194. The Introverted Philosopher
195. The Miser and his Gold
196. The Boy and the Thief
197. The Boy and his Teacher
198. The Trumpeter Captured
199. The Star-Gazing Astrologer
200. The Man in the Tree

Story Sources

All the stories in this book are adapted from *Mille Fabulae et Una* [1001 Fables] by Laura Gibbs, a compendium of Aesop's fables in Latin. Sources range from the Latin fabulist Phaedrus, to medieval fabulists such as Odo of Cheriton and Renaissance fabulists such as Abstemius, as well as the modern Latin fabulist François-Joseph Desbillons. For story-specific bibliography and notes, visit:

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