

The Monkey and the Dolphin

It happened once upon a time that a certain Greek ship bound for Athens was wrecked off the coast close to Piraeus, the port of Athens. Had it not been for the dolphins, who at that time were very friendly toward mankind and especially toward Athenians, all would have perished. But the dolphins took the shipwrecked people on their backs and swam with them to shore. Now, it was the custom among the Greeks to take their pet monkeys and dogs with them whenever they went on a voyage. So when one of the dolphins saw a monkey struggling in the water, he thought it was a man and made the monkey climb up on his back. Then off he swam with him toward the shore. The monkey sat up, grave and dignified on the dolphin's back. "You are a citizen of illustrious Athens, are you not?" asked the dolphin politely.

"Yes," answered the monkey, proudly. "My family is one of the noblest in the city."

"Indeed," said the dolphin. "Then of course you often visit Piraeus."

"Yes, yes," replied the monkey. "Indeed, I do. I am with him constantly. Piraeus is my very best friend." This answer took the dolphin by surprise and, turning his head, he now saw what it was he was carrying. Without more ado, he dived and left the foolish monkey to take care of himself, while he swam off in search of some human being to save.

Moral: One falsehood leads to another.

The Eagle, the Cat, and the Wild Sow

An eagle made her nest at the top of a lofty oak; a cat, having found a convenient hole, moved into the middle of the trunk; and a wild sow with her young took shelter in a hollow at its foot. The cat cunningly resolved to destroy this chance-made colony. To carry out her design, she climbed to the nest of the eagle, and said, "Destruction is preparing for you and for me, too, unfortunately. The wild sow, whom you see daily digging up the earth, wishes to uproot the oak, so that she may, on its fall, seize our families as food for her young." Having thus frightened the eagle out of her senses, she crept down to the cave of the sow and said, "Your children are in great danger; for as soon as you go out with your litter to find food, the eagle is prepared to pounce upon one of your little pigs." Having instilled these fears into the sow, she went and pretended to hide herself in the hollow of the tree. When night came, she went forth with silent foot and obtained food for herself and her kittens but, feigning to be afraid, she kept a lookout all through the day. Meanwhile, the eagle, full of fear of the sow, sat still on the branches and the sow, terrified by the eagle, did not dare to go out from her cave. And thus they both (along with their families) perished from hunger and afforded ample provision for the cat and her kittens.

Moral: It's dangerous to be paralyzed by fear.

The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

A certain wolf could not get enough to eat because of the watchfulness of the shepherds. But one night, he found a sheepskin that had been cast aside and forgotten. The next day, dressed in the skin, the wolf strolled into the pasture with the sheep. Soon, a little lamb was following him about and was quickly led away to slaughter. That evening, the wolf entered the fold with the flock. But it happened that the shepherd took a fancy for mutton broth that very evening and, picking up a knife, went to the fold where the first animal in his path happened to be the wolf.

Moral: The evildoer often comes to harm through his own deceit.

The Rooster and the Fox

One bright evening, as the sun was sinking on a glorious world, a wise old rooster flew into a tree to roost. Before he composed himself to rest, he flapped his wings three times and crowed loudly. But just as he was about to put his head under his wing, his beady eyes caught a flash of red and a glimpse of a long, pointed nose, and there just below him stood Master Fox. "Have you heard the wonderful news?" cried the fox in a very joyful and excited manner.

"What news?" asked the rooster very calmly. But he had a fluttery feeling inside him, for he was very much afraid of the fox.

"Your family and mine and all other animals have agreed to forget their differences and live in peace and friendship from now on forever. Just think of it! I simply cannot wait to embrace you! Do come down, dear friend, and let us celebrate the joyful event."

"How grand!" said the rooster. "I certainly am delighted at the news." But he spoke in an absent way and, stretching up on tiptoes, seemed to be looking at something afar off.

"What is it you see?" asked the fox a little anxiously.

"Why, it looks to me like a couple of dogs coming this way. They must have heard the good news and—" But the fox did not wait to hear more. Off he started on a run. "Wait," cried the rooster. "Why do you run? The dogs are friends of yours now!"

"Yes," answered the fox. "But they might not have heard the news. Besides, I have a very important errand that I had almost forgotten about." The rooster smiled as he buried his head in his feathers and went to sleep, for he had succeeded in outwitting a very crafty enemy.

Moral: The trickster is easily tricked.

The Wolf and the Shepherd

A wolf had been prowling around a flock of sheep for a long time, and the shepherd watched very anxiously to prevent him from carrying off a lamb. But the wolf did not try to do any harm. Instead, he seemed to be helping the shepherd take care of the sheep. At last, the shepherd got so used to seeing the wolf around that he forgot how wicked he could be. One day he even went so far as to leave his flock in the wolf's care while he went on an errand. But when he came back and saw how many of the flock had been killed and carried off, he knew how foolish to trust a wolf.

Moral: Once a wolf, always a wolf.