

The Flies and the Honey

A jar of honey was upset and the sticky sweetness flowed out on the table. The sweet smell of the honey soon brought a large number of flies buzzing around. They did not wait for an invitation. No, indeed; they settled right down, feet and all, to gorge themselves. The flies were quickly smeared from head to foot with honey. Their wings stuck together. They could not pull their feet out of the sticky mass. And so they died for a taste of sweetness.

Moral: Greed can be destructive.

The Wolf, the Goat, and the Kid

Mother Goat was going to market one morning to get provisions for her household, which consisted of but one little kid and herself. "Take good care of the house, my son," she said to the kid as she carefully latched the door. "Do not let anyone in, unless he gives you this password: 'Down with the wolf!'"

Strangely enough, a wolf was lurking near and heard what the goat had said. So as soon as Mother Goat was out of sight, up he trotted to the door and knocked. "Down with the wolf," said the wolf softly. It was the right password, but when the kid peeped through a crack in the door and saw the shadowy figure outside, he did not feel at all easy.

"Show me a white paw," he said, "or I won't let you in." A white paw, of course, is a feature few wolves can show, and so Master Wolf had to go away as hungry as he had come. "You can never be too sure," said the kid when he saw the wolf making off to the woods.

Moral: Two pieces of evidence are better than one.

The Tortoise and the Eagle

A tortoise, basking in the sun, wondered aloud what it would be like to fly. An eagle, overhearing her, offered to take her aloft. The tortoise agreed and the eagle carried her almost to the clouds but suddenly let her go. She fell to the ground, dashing her shell to pieces. The eagle then landed and made a meal of the poor tortoise.

Moral: You should never put yourself in your enemy's clutches.

The Lion, the Fox, and the Beasts

The lion once gave out that he was sick unto death and summoned the animals to come and hear his last will and testament. So the fox came to the lion's cave and stopped there, listening for a long time. He watched a sheep go in and, before she came out, a calf came up to receive the last wishes of the lord of the beasts. But soon, the lion seemed to recover and came to the mouth of his cave; he saw the fox, who had been waiting outside for some time.

"Why did you not come to pay your respects to me?" said the lion to the fox.

"I beg your Majesty's pardon," said the fox, "but I noticed the track of the animals that have already come to you; and while I see many hoof-marks going in, I see none coming out. Till the animals that have entered your cave come out again, I prefer to remain in the open air."

Moral: Observing your surroundings can keep you safe.

The Fox and the Ape

Upon the death of the lion, the beasts of the forest assembled to choose another king. The ape played so many grimaces, gambols, and antics that he was elected by a large majority and the crown was placed upon his head. The fox was envious of this distinction. Soon after, the fox saw a trap baited with a piece of meat. He approached the new king and said with mock humility, "May it please your majesty, I have found a treasure to which, if you will deign to accompany me, I will guide you." The ape set off with the fox and, on arriving at the spot, laid his paw upon the meat. Snap! went the trap and caught him by the fingers. Mad with shame and pain, he reproached the fox for being a traitor. The fox laughed heartily and, going off, said over his shoulder with a sneer, "You call yourself a king and don't understand a trap!"

Moral: Popularity doesn't make a person competent for every job.