

The Hen and the Swallow

A hen, finding the eggs of a viper and carefully keeping them warm, nourished them into life. A swallow, observing what she had done, said, "You silly creature! Why have you hatched these vipers which, when they shall have grown, will inflict injury on all, beginning with yourself?"

Moral: Acts of kindness can sometimes backfire.

The Donkey, the Rooster, and the Lion

A donkey and a rooster lived in a farmyard together. One day, a hungry lion passed by and, seeing the donkey in good condition, resolved to make a meal of him. Now, they say that there is nothing a lion hates so much as the crowing of a rooster, and at that moment, the rooster happened to crow. The lion straightway made off with all haste from the spot. The donkey, mightily amused to think that a lion should be frightened at a bird, plucked up the courage and galloped after him, delighted with the notion of driving the king of beasts before him. He had, however, gone no great distance when the lion turned sharply round upon him and made an end of him.

Moral: Pride can end in ruin.

The Dogs and the Hides

Some hungry dogs saw a number of hides at the bottom of a stream where the tanner had put them to soak. A fine hide makes an excellent meal for a hungry dog, but the water was deep and the dogs could not reach the hides from the bank. So they held a council and decided that the very best thing to do was to drink up the river. All fell to lapping up the water as fast as they could. They drank and drank until, one after another, all of them burst with drinking. Still, for all their effort, the water in the river remained as high as ever.

Moral: It's always wise to know what you can handle.

The Raven and the Snake

A hungry raven, searching for prey, came across a snake lying at full length on a sunny bank. He seized him in his long beak and would have devoured him, but the snake, twisting and turning about, bit the raven with his venomous fangs so that he died in great pain.

Moral: It is wrong to satisfy your appetite at the expense of another's welfare.

The Cat and the Mice

A certain house was overrun with mice. A cat, discovering this, made her way into it and began to catch and eat them one by one. Fearing for their lives, the mice kept themselves close in their holes. The cat was no longer able to get at them and perceived that she must tempt them forth by some device. For this purpose, she jumped upon a peg and, suspending herself from it, pretended to be dead. One of the mice, peeping out, saw her in that position and said, "Ah, my good madam, we will not come near you. It is wisest to keep a safe distance."

Moral: It is foolish to put yourself at the mercy of a known enemy.