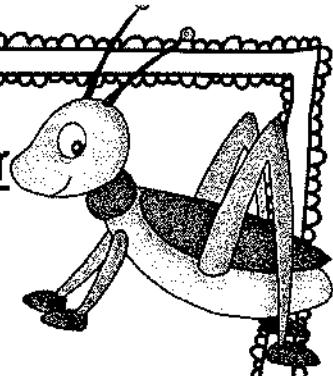


The Ant and the Grasshopper

(adapted from the fable by Aesop)



"Ahhh.... This is the life," sighed the grasshopper contentedly as he lounged in the thick, summer grass. The warm sun shone on him, and he gazed through the tall stalks of grass at the blue sky. After a relaxing rest, the grasshopper leapt off across a flowery meadow, chirping and singing with delight. Before long, the grasshopper happened upon an ant that was headed toward his nest. The ant was bent over with a large kernel of hard corn upon his back. The ant trudged along, determined but weary from the heavy weight of the corn.

"Why are you working so hard?" questioned the grasshopper. "Come and leap with me! It is summer, and the weather is perfect!"

The ant replied, "I am storing up food for the winter, and I recommend that you do the same."

"Why bother about winter?" said the Grasshopper as he rolled his eyes. "You worry too much, little ant! There's plenty of food right now!" But the ant went on its way and continued its toil.

Winter arrived with its icy winds, heavy snow, and hard frozen ground. There were no tiny insects to eat, no seeds, no corn, no food at all. The foolish grasshopper found himself dying of hunger. He saw the ants sharing the corn and grain they had spent all summer collecting.

Then the Grasshopper knew:

It is best to prepare while you have the chance.



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MERCURY & THE WOODMAN

A Woodman was felling a tree on the bank of a river, when his axe, glancing off the trunk, flew out of his hands and fell into the water. As he stood by the water's edge lamenting his loss, Mercury appeared and asked him the reason for his grief. On learning what had happened, out of pity for his distress, Mercury dived into the river and, bringing up a golden axe, asked him if that was the one he had lost. The Woodman replied that it was not, and Mercury then dived a second time, and, bringing up a silver axe, asked if that was his. "No, that is not mine either," said the Woodman. Once more Mercury dived into the river, and brought up the missing axe. The Woodman was overjoyed at recovering his property, and thanked his benefactor warmly; and the latter was so pleased with his honesty that he made him a present of the other two axes. When the Woodman told the story to his companions, one of these was filled with envy of his good fortune and determined to try his luck for himself. So he went and began to fell a tree at the edge of the river, and presently contrived to let his axe drop into the water. Mercury appeared as before, and, on learning that his axe had fallen in, he dived and brought up a golden axe, as he had done on the previous occasion. Without waiting to be asked whether it was his or not, the fellow cried, "That's mine, that's mine," and stretched out his hand eagerly for the prize: but Mercury was so disgusted at his dishonesty that he not only declined to give him the golden axe, but also refused to recover the one he had let fall into the stream.

Penny the Princess

Penny was a beautiful princess. She lived in a tall towering castle that almost reached the clouds. What people didn't know was that she had special wishing powers. But Penny often failed to use them because she had everything she had ever wanted. She had no need to wish for food, or pretty things, or happy times. Every day was pleasant for Penny.

One day, a poor man visited her and asked for help. He explained that he had lost his crops and his home in a terrible storm. He spent every day out searching for enough food to feed his family, and his poor wife often had to search for food too. He said he would do anything to be able to provide for his family again. Penny agreed to help him right away. She used her powers to wish that the man's land and home would be returned to new. Penny was shocked by how pleased the man was. He jumped up and down, clapped his hands, and a tear even rolled down his cheek. She had never realized how lucky she was. From that day forward, she decided to use her powers to help as many people as she could.

Stewart the Dragon

Stewart was a very big green dragon. He lived in a cave on the top of a hill. The people in the town below were very scared of him. If they ever saw Stewart, they ran inside to hide. This made Stewart very sad. He did not want to hurt anybody. He just wanted to be part of the town. It always looked like everyone was having lots of fun. Unfortunately, whenever Stewart opened his mouth to say hello, flames poured out. He was just trying to be friendly, but everyone screamed as soon as they saw the flames and raced away.

One night it was very cold, and the people of the town could not start a fire. Stewart went down to the town. He breathed gently on the fire and it roared to life. The people of the town realized that Stewart was a kind dragon. They invited Stewart to come down to the town every night. Stewart started the fire each night. Then he dined with the villagers, before returning happily to his home.



The Astronomer

An astronomer used to go out at night to observe the stars. One evening, he was wandering around town with his eyes fixed on the sky. He suddenly tripped and fell into a well. He sat there and groaned about his sores and bruises and cried for help. He pummeled his fists against the well. He looked up and all he could see were the stars. The twinkling stars looked back down on him and laughed.

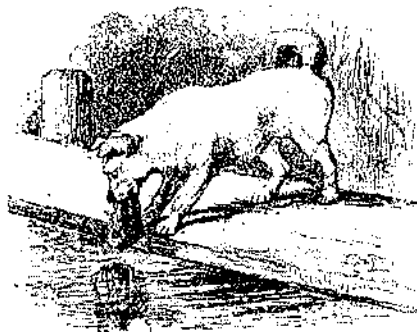
The astronomer's friend finally heard his cries and made his way over to the well. After hearing the astronomer's story of how he fell, he simply shook his head.

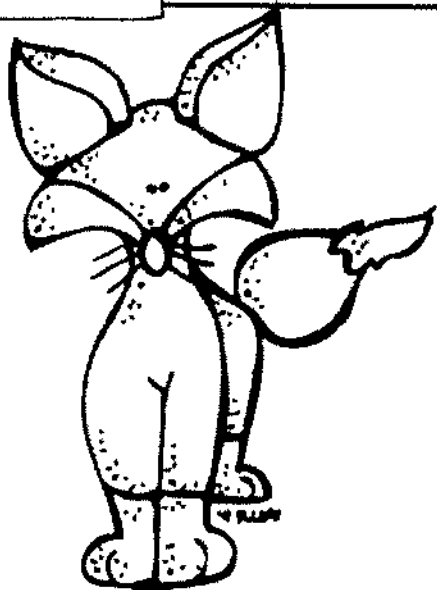
"Old friend, in striving to see into the heavens, you don't manage to see what is on the earth," the friend said.

The Dog and the River

A dog was crossing a river by walking across a log. He had a small but juicy piece of meat in his mouth. He walked slowly across the log, while being careful not to lose his balance. As he looked down, he saw his own reflection in the water. He mistook the reflection for another dog. As he stared at the dog, he realized that the piece of meat it was carrying was larger than his own. He immediately dropped his own piece of meat and attacked the other dog to get the larger piece.

As he barked at the dog, his piece of meat fell from his mouth and into the water below. His paw struck at his reflection, only to hit the water below. At that moment, he realized that the other dog was only his reflection. He stared sadly at his small piece of meat as it floated away.





THE FOX & THE CROW

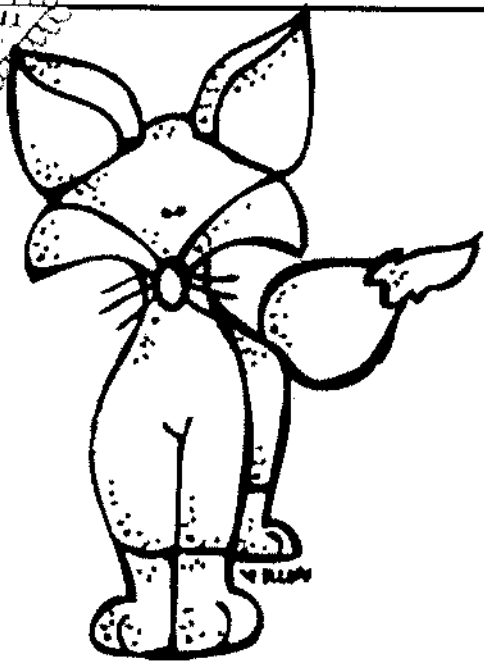
A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree.

"That's for me, as I am a Fox," and he walked up to the foot of the tree.

"Good day, Mistress Crow," he cried. "How well you are looking today: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds."

The Crow lifted up her head and began to caw her best, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Master Fox.

"That will do," said he. "That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future:



THE FOX & THE GOAT

By an unlucky chance a Fox fell into a deep well from which he could not get out. A Goat passed by shortly afterwards, and asked the Fox what he was doing down there.

"Oh, have you not heard?" said the Fox; "there is going to be a great drought, so I jumped down here in order to be sure to have water by me. Why don't you come down too?"

The Goat thought well of this advice, and jumped down into the well. But the Fox immediately jumped on her back, and by putting his foot on her long horns managed to jump up to the edge of the well.

"Good-bye, friend," said the Fox, "remember next time: