

# Aesop's Fables

## 8. THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

By Tony Payne

One hot day at the end of summer a Fox trotted along the dusty path to a farm, listening out for other creatures and sniffing the air, as foxes do.

It was getting late and after a long day the sun looked a little red in the face and had dropped out of sight behind a bush.

It was the time of day that the Fox liked best. The farmer's work was finished. He had taken off his muddy boots and gone inside for tea. The Fox only showed himself when the farmer had left his boots outside. Then, if he came running after the Fox with his gun - as farmers do - he would first have to sit on the step, put his boots back on again, and the Fox would have plenty of time to run away.

The Fox is certainly very clever, and handsome too, but no one knows this better than the Fox himself.

He would look at his reflection for hours admiring his beautiful red coat with its snow white bib. He would look at his smart black legs, which matched his sleek black ears. And his sleek black ears matched his shiny black nose, which looked exactly like a small polished pebble.

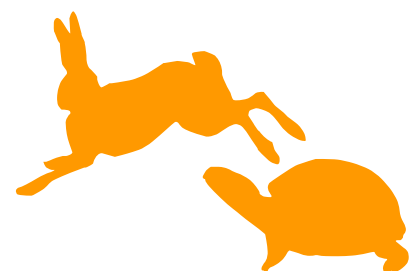
But best of all, he thought, was his glorious bushy tail, like a big, soft paintbrush dipped in whitewash.

The farmer locked in the hens at night, and the rabbits and geese, and he shoed the ducks onto their little island in the middle of the duck pond so that the clever Fox could not get them. He knew the Fox hated swimming.

But the Fox did not only eat chickens and rabbits and ducks and geese - though he would put them all on the menu given half a chance. If he couldn't get into the hen house, and he couldn't swim to the duck island, and if the geese made a fuss and rattled their beaks at him - as geese do - then there was always something else to eat.

There were slugs and grasshoppers and mice and worms and frogs and eggs and big meaty bones the farmer put out with the rubbish. And tonight there was fruit!

The Fox looked up at a huge bunch of juicy grapes hanging above his head. He was very thirsty. He could imagine the sweet, delicious juice running down his chin.





But he couldn't reach them. He was clever, though, wasn't he? Everyone said so, and the Fox was used to getting what he wanted - so he would take a run at it, and...jump!

Missed!

He jumped again...and again. He leaped and hopped and bounced and somersaulted. But the juicy grapes were always just out of reach.

The Fox stopped at last, hot and panting. 'Ha, well!' he said to himself. 'The grapes don't look that juicy and I just know they will be as bitter as lemons. Phooey! Who wants to eat sour grapes!'

And the Fox walked slowly along the dusty path back to his den with his nose in the air and his tail between his legs - as hungry, disappointed foxes do.

Sometimes, when we can't get what we want, we pretend we never wanted it anyway.