

Aesop's Fables

11. THE WOLF AND THE HERON

By Lavinia Murray

Wolf loved food. He ate breakfast then he ate two more breakfasts, which took him up to his midday snack. This was followed by three helpings of lunch, tea, dinner, supper and a midnight feast - with barely a burp between them.

When Wolf went to bed he stared up at the moon and stars and wondered what they would taste like. 'Absolutely scrumptious,' he decided. Then Wolf would fall asleep and dream of all the food he'd eat next day.

One morning Wolf found an enormous, glittering fish in the shallow waters at the edge of the river. So, Wolf gobbled up the fish as quickly as a great woolly cloud gobbles up the moon. Wolf was about to pat his stomach when he realized something was wrong.

'Ack eurk ach! There's a bone stuck in my throat!' Wolf spluttered and slapped the back of his neck with his enormous paws. He coughed, shook his head and wagged his ears but nothing he did made any difference - the bone was stuck fast.

'I wont be able to eat ever again!' Wolf moaned. 'No more food for me - and the

bone hurts, it's like having tummy ache and stubbed toes all at once inside my neck! Please, will someone help me!' and he whined and stumbled frantically along the riverbank. Then he noticed...

'Oh - look at that bird! Look at that beak!' he croaked.

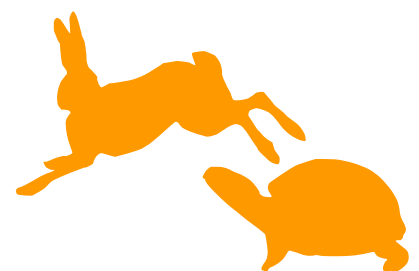
'Are you looking at me?' asked a Heron as the Wolf's whiskers tickled his wing.

'Yes,' said Wolf and smiled the best smile he'd ever smiled so that sunlight went 'ting' on his teeth. 'I was just thinking what a beautiful bird you are and how pointy and useful that beak of yours is. I wonder if you could help me?'

'Go on,' said the Heron, 'I am rather handsome.'

'Well, Heron, there's a bone stuck in my throat and it hurts. Worse than that, I can't eat because of it.' And Wolf's stomach rumbled so loudly a nearby family of ducks thought it was thunder and hurried into the rushes. Wolf lifted up his paw and whined.

'Please, wonderful Heron, kind Heron, use your beak to get it out.'





'Um, well, to tell you the truth, Wolf, I am having a little rest right now,' said the Heron.

And Wolf snapped slinked away to get his next meal.

'Listen, Heron, my friend, I'll give you a present if you remove the bone - as a reward.'

'Sounds good to me,' said the Heron. 'I can always have a rest later. Open your mouth as wide as you can and I'll have a look.'

'Ahhhh,' went the Wolf and in went the Heron's head, sliding carefully between the rows of sharp teeth. It was dark in the Wolf's throat but Heron found the bone and tapped and tweaked and tugged.

'Got it!' Heron said, gently drawing out the bone and setting it down beside the Wolf. 'Now, what about my reward?'

Wolf grinned an unpleasant grin that showed all his teeth. 'See these?' Wolf said, tapping a tune on them with the tip of a long pointed claw.

'Yes, I had a good look at them a moment ago when my head was in your mouth,' said the trusting Heron.

'Well, snarled Wolf, 'I didn't bite your head off, did I?'

Heron checked his neck. 'No you didn't,' he replied.

'Well, that's your reward.'