



Aesop's Fables

12. THE DONKEY IN THE LION'S SKIN

By Jan Payne

There was once a foolish Donkey who wished he was something else.

'If only I was a giraffe,' he would say, 'then I could look over the tops of trees. If only I was an elephant then I could remember where I left things. If only I was a cheetah then I could run like the wind...or fierce as a rhinoceros...or cunning as a crocodile... or strong as a hippo.'

Anything was better than being a donkey. Everyone laughed at donkeys and he didn't like it one little bit.

One day, when he was walking through the forest the Donkey saw something draped over the branch of a tree. When he got closer he could see it was a lion costume.

'I'd look good in that,' he thought. So he put it on.

It covered him from head to foot. The Donkey found a pool and looked at his reflection.

'I look magnificent,' he said. He paraded up and down looking at his reflection from every angle.

The massive head of the lion covered his donkey's head and the lion's golden mane flowed round his neck.

'I look like a lion and I feel like a lion,' he said. 'No-one will laugh at me now. I am King of the beasts!'

The Donkey couldn't wait to show himself to other animals. He walked up to a giraffe who was eating leaves from the top of a tall tree. She stopped when she saw the Donkey and bent her long legs in a curtsy.

'Your Majesty,' she said, in a fearful voice.

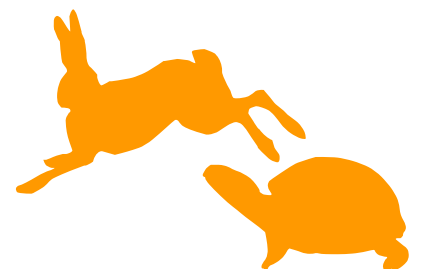
'Greetings, giraffe,' said the Donkey in a deep, lion-like voice. 'Won't you join me in a stroll?'

'I can't today,' said the giraffe, 'I have to get tea for my children.' And she ran away as quickly as she could.

The donkey smiled to himself.

He saw a hippo in the river. The hippo bowed his head when he saw the donkey. 'Your Majesty,' he said, in hushed tones.

'Greetings hippo,' said the Donkey. 'Won't you join me in a stroll?'





'I can't today,' said the hippo. 'I have to call on a friend who is sick.' And he sank out of sight.

Inside the lion costume the Donkey was grinning all over his face. He tripped over a crocodile sun-bathing on a rock.

'Your Majesty!' said the crocodile, smiling with his teeth on the outside of his lips.

'Greetings crocodile,' said the Donkey. 'Won't you...'

But the crocodile had slipped into the water and disappeared.

The Donkey was jubilant. He wanted to leap up and down with delight. What a marvellous thing it was to be a lion. A lion was admired and feared by all the other animals. He felt like a king.

Just then a wily fox came into view. When he saw the Donkey he turned to run. The Donkey could contain his delight no longer. 'I'm a lion,' he thought. 'I look like a lion, I act like a lion. I feel like a lion. I bet I even sound like a lion.'

And the foolish Donkey lifted his head and roared: 'Hee-Haw, Hee-Haw, Hee-Haw!'

The fox stopped in his tracks. He knew that sound. He grabbed the lion's mane and pulled. The lion costume came off in his hands. The Donkey stood there, trembling. The fox began to laugh.

So did the crocodile. So did the giraffe. And so did the hippo.

'If only I had kept my mouth shut,' thought the Donkey.

The other animals put their arms round him.

'Don't worry,' they said, 'we like you just as you are.'

And they all hurried away before the real lion came along.