

# Aesop's Fables

## 22. THE FOX AND THE STORK

By Kate Stonham

A rather large bird was wandering round the wood, looking a bit lost. It had long legs, a long thin neck and a very long bill for eating, that clattered away as it searched for nice things to eat.

'Hey there, big bird!' cried the little birds in the trees above. 'You're new round these parts, aren't you?'

'Indeed I am,' replied Stork. 'And I'd like to make some friends.'

'I'll be your friend,' purred a soft voice from behind a bush. Out slunk Fox with his shiny red coat and soft paws.

'Oooo, we wouldn't make friends with old Foxy if we were you,' chorused the birds. 'He's a bit of a joker.'

'Oh, ignore them', Fox purred reassuringly. 'Please, allow me to show you round the woods...'

Fox and Stork were soon laughing and chatting as if they'd known each other forever.

'What do you like to eat, Stork?' asked Fox.

'Frogs, fish, insects and earthworms are my favourites,' replied Stork.

'Mine too - oh, leaving aside frogs,' said Fox. 'I eat nuts and berries too - and I'm very partial to the occasional little bird.'

'Boo, hiss!' cried the birds from above.

'Only joking,' said Fox rather too quickly.

'Would you like to come around my house tomorrow for supper, Stork?'

'It's a trick, it's a trick!' chorused the birds.

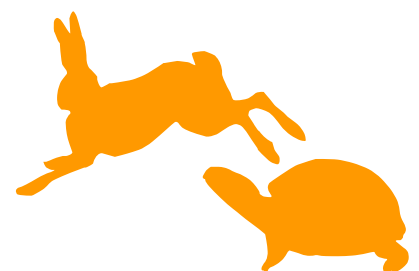
'Thank you, Fox, I'd love to!'

That night, Stork flew over to Fox's house.

'Come in!' cried Fox as he showed Stork into the dining room. 'I hope you like fish soup with mashed earthworms.'

Stork was expecting to see two bowls full of lovely steaming soup - but instead, two flat plates covered in a thin layer of liquid lay on the table.

Stork tried her hardest to eat the soup with her bill, but it was impossible.





Fox meanwhile was already licking his bowl clean. 'Oh, dear, is there a problem?' he asked with a smirk.

'Not at all,' replied Stork. 'It's just - well, I had rather a large tea before I came and my tummy's full.'

'Tea - I like the sound of that,' purred Fox.

'Well, why don't you come to my home tomorrow and join me?' suggested Stork.

'I shall look forward to it,' replied Fox.

Stork flew home that night with a heavy heart.

'We warned you, we warned you!' chorused the birds.

'I know, my so-called friend tricked me,' replied Stork. 'But I may yet have the last laugh.'

The next day, Fox set off for Stork's house.

'Shame on you!' cried the birds as he slunk under their tree.

'Stork can take a joke,' Fox replied. 'And after all, she's invited me over for tea.'

'Hee, hee!' sniggered the birds.

'Come in!' said Stork to Fox. 'I've cooked roast rabbit on a bed of grass with berry and nut sauce.'

'Mmm, my favourite,' said Fox as Stork carried in a tray.

He stared at the tall jar Stork had placed in front of him. It was long and thin and the food lay right at the bottom.

Fox watched in frustration as Stork stuck her long bill into her jar and gobbled up the meal. 'Oh dear,' said Stork. 'Is there a problem?'

'None at all,' growled Fox. He stuck his nose as far down the jar as he could, but he still couldn't reach his dinner.

And now there really was a problem.

'Yowl! The jar's stuck to my face!' came Fox's muffled cries.

'Hee hee! Serves you right, Foxy,' chorused the birds who were watching on the window sill. For once, Fox couldn't answer back.

'I'll pull it off with my wings,' offered Stork kindly.

'Hmmm, I guess I deserved that after the joke I played on you,' said Fox sheepishly.

'Never mind,' said Stork. 'I've got plenty of food in the kitchen. This time we'll have it on proper plates - and our little feathered friends can have some too.'

'Wee, hee!' cried the birds.