

# Aesop's Fables

## 39. THE ANT AND THE DOVE

By Kate Stonham

It was another hot, dry day in the forest.

Ant had been wandering over crinkly, dry leaves for days in search of a nice, cool drink.

'All I need is a drop of rain falling from a leaf - or a tiny pool of dew on a flower petal - or even a muddy puddle...' he thought. But it was so hot all the dew and puddles in the forest had dried up.

'I'm so thirsty, that I have no choice,' Ant sighed at last. 'I shall have to go in search of the Roaring River.'

Ant had been warned about the Roaring River. 'It roars and it swirls and if you go too close, it will sweep you away,' a wise owl had told him.

But Ant was desperate. 'The river has more drops of water than all the rain clouds in the world,' he thought. 'It's my only hope of staying alive.'

So Ant headed off. He plodded on and on through the trees, until finally, he heard rushing water ahead...

Before him lay the Roaring River - as vast as a sea, or so it seemed to tiny Ant.

The fast flowing waters looked frightening - but Ant was too thirsty to feel fear. He clambered down the river bank and bent his weary head into the water to drink it up.

The cool, sparkling water was so refreshing that Ant didn't hear a roaring wave coming towards him. Suddenly, he was flat on his back - his little legs in the air, being swept away by the water!

'Help!' he cried. 'Someone save me, please!'

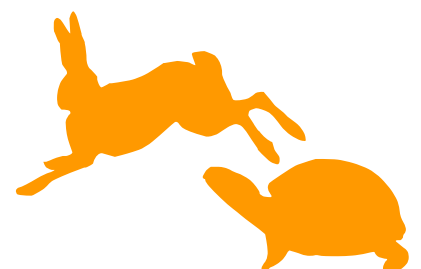
All of a sudden, a green leaf dropped onto the water by his side with a plop.

'Quick, climb on!' cried a gentle cooing voice.

Ant didn't have time to see who the voice belonged to. He just did what it told him... then he opened his eyes and looked up.

Perching on the branch of a tree above was a pure white Dove.

'Stay calm, little Ant - and wait for the gentle breeze to blow the leaf to the river bank,' she cooed.





Sure enough, the leaf carried Ant to safety.

He looked up - but the Dove had disappeared. 'I can't leave without thanking her,' he thought. 'So I shall wait until she returns.'

Ant waited and waited. Then, just as he was about to fall asleep, he heard strange noises. They were coming closer and closer...

Two men emerged from the forest and stopped under the Dove's tree. One was carrying a bucket - the other a large, golden cage.

'This is the tree, the home of the most beautiful dove in the land,' said the man with the cage. 'I hope that glue in your bucket is sticky enough...'

'Indeed it is,' said the second as he covered the branch with a thick, green paste. 'When the Dove lands, its feet will stick to the branch. Then we can put it in the cage and take it to the King. All we have to do is hide and wait...'

Ant was horrified. 'I can't let this happen!' he thought. 'But what can a tiny creature like me do against two such giants of men?'

Ant looked up as he heard the flapping of wings. The Dove had returned and was about to land on the sticky branch!

'If I'm going to act, I must use the only

weapon I have...' thought Ant. 'And I must do it right now!'

So he jumped onto the men's feet - and bit as hard as he could, time and time again.

'Yow!' they cried out in pain and took to their heels through the forest.

'Thank you for saving me from a life in a cage,' cooed the Dove to Ant.

'And thank you for saving me from the giant wave,' replied Ant.