

Aesop's Fables

40. THE BOY WHO CRIED 'WOLF!'

By Rob John

A young boy got a job with a shepherd. 'Just keep your eyes open and look out for wolves' said the shepherd. 'Wolves always try to eat my sheep. If you see one, ring this bell and shout out 'Wolf..! Wolf..!' Then we'll come running with our guns. Can you do that, boy?'

'Don't you worry Mr Shepherd,' said the boy. 'Your sheep are safe with me.'

The boy took the sheep up into the hills and sat down with his bell. 'Don't worry sheep,' he said. 'I'm here now. I'm in charge. You'll be safe with me.'

All morning the boy sat in the grass looking for wolves. 'I expect they're hiding,' he said to the sheep.

That night the boy took the sheep back to the village. The shepherd counted his sheep and was very pleased. 'Well done,' he said. 'All safe. Same again tomorrow?'

'Yes sir!' said the boy.

The next day was exactly the same as the first day. The boy took the sheep to the hills and sat down with his bell looking for wolves. There weren't any.

The boy noticed that the day felt very long. There was no-one to talk to...except sheep...and the sheep never talked back...they just ate grass...all day...

By the fifth day the boy was very bored with his job. He looked up at the mountains. Not a wolf in sight. He looked down at the bell and he thought: 'Maybe I could just pretend there's a wolf.'

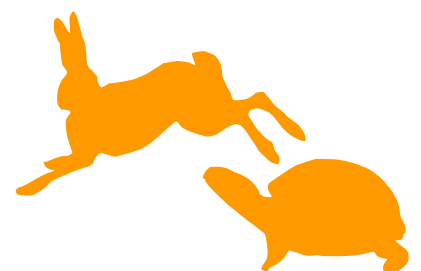
So he picked up his bell...and rang it, shouting: 'Wolf! Wolf! Hurry! Come quickly! There's a big old wolf coming!'

Soon he could hear the sound of men running up the hill. 'Where is it?' said the shepherd.

'Gone,' said the boy. 'He just ran off.'

'Well done boy,' said the shepherd. 'You saved my sheep.'

The other men all patted the boy on the head and said how brave he'd been and what a good job he'd done. The boy felt so proud and pleased with himself that he almost forgot that he'd made the whole thing up.





A few days later he was bored again. 'The only good day I had in this job was when I pretended there was a wolf,' he told the sheep. 'And I rang my bell and all the men came and told me what a good job I'd done. It was brilliant.'

He looked at his bell. And that's when he decided to do it again.

He rang, he shouted and again the men came running. 'Where is it?' said the shepherd.

'Gone,' said the boy. 'Ran away.'

This time the men didn't say 'well done' and pat him on the head. This time they looked at the boy like they didn't believe him.

'There was a wolf, honest,' he said.

The men just walked back to the village without speaking.

Now the boy felt really sorry for himself.

'They know I rang my bell when there was no wolf.'

Then out of the corner of his eye he saw a movement - a big grey thing was coming down the hillside heading straight for the sheep.

The boy rang his bell and he shouted. 'Wolf! Wolf! Come quickly! There's a wolf!'

Down in the village the men heard the bell ring and just carried on working.

'Little fool,' said the shepherd. 'Does he really think we'll fall for that again?'

The boy kept ringing his bell. There were tears in his eyes as he watched the wolf make a meal of one of the shepherd's fattest sheep.

'I rang my bell but nobody came,' the boy told the shepherd that evening.

The shepherd nodded. 'Nobody believes a liar...even when he's speaking the truth.'