



LEV TOLSTOY

THE TWO
FRIENDS

*Malysh
Publishers*





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Fables

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THE TWO FRIENDS

Two friends were walking through the forest one day when a bear jumped out in front of them. One of the boys ran off and hid in a tree whilst the other stayed where he was on the roadway. There was nothing for him to do but to fall to the ground and pretend to be dead.

The bear went up to him and started sniffing around and the boy was even too frightened to breathe.

The bear sniffed at his face and, deciding he was dead, went away.

When the bear had gone the other boy climbed down from the tree and said, laughing,

"Well, what did the bear whisper in your ear?"

"He said that the very worst kind of people are those who run away and leave their friends in danger," the boy replied.



THE GARDENER AND HIS SONS

A gardener wanted to teach his sons to garden. So when he was dying he summoned them to him and said,

"Now, my children, when I die you are to search in the vineyard for what is hidden there."

The children thought this must be hidden treasure and when their father died they set to work and dug over the whole vineyard. Although they didn't find any treasure they dug the soil so well that from then on the vines bore much more fruit and they grew rich.



THE WAYFARERS

One day an old man and a young man were walking along together when they saw a sack of money lying on the road. The young man picked it up and said, "How lucky I am to find this!"

Said the old man,

"Be sensible now, we found it together."

But the young man replied,

"Oh no, we didn't. I picked it up without your help."

The old man said nothing and they walked on. After a while they suddenly heard the sound of hooves behind them and someone shouted,

"Who's stolen my money?"

The young man was frightened at this and said,

"I hope, old man, we're not going to have any trouble because of what we found."

"You found the money without my help so now you can face the consequences without my help too."

The young man was arrested and taken to the town to be tried whilst the old man continued his way home.



THE FATHER AND HIS SONS

A father ordered his sons to live together in harmony, but they took no notice of his words. So then he told them to bring him a broom and said,

"Break this broom!"

But they couldn't do so, however hard they tried.

Then their father untied the broom and ordered them to break it a twig at a time.

They did this without difficulty.

And then their father said,

"It's just the same with you: if you live together in harmony you'll be invincible, but if you quarrel and always live each thinking of himself alone anyone will easily be able to get the better of you."



THE OLD WOMAN AND THE WOLF

A hungry wolf was out looking for something to eat when he heard a baby crying in a cottage on the edge of the village and an old woman say,

"Now if you don't stop crying I'll give you to the wolf."

The wolf stayed just where he was and sat waiting till they'd give him the little boy. He was still there waiting as night fell, and then he heard the old woman start to speak again,

"Don't cry, little fellow. We'll not give you to the wolf. We'll kill him just the minute he sets foot near here."

At that the wolf realized that the people in the village obviously said one thing and did another; and he left.



THE PEASANT AND THE WATER-SPRITE

One day a peasant dropped his axe in the river. Very upset at his misfortune, he sat down on the bank and started to weep.

Hearing his sobs, a water-sprite felt sorry for him and appeared out of the river holding a golden axe and said,

"Is this your axe?"

Said the peasant,

"No, it's not mine."

Then the water-sprite appeared with another axe, a silver one.

But the peasant again replied,

"No, that's not mine."

So the water-sprite came out of the river with the axe the peasant had dropped.



At that the peasant said,
"Ah, that's my axe."

And the water-sprite gave him all three axes for being so honest.

When he had got back home the peasant showed his friends the axes and related what had happened.

And one of the other peasants thought he would do the same. So he went to the river, threw his axe into the water, sat down on the bank and started to weep.

The water-sprite appeared out of the river holding a golden axe and asked him,

"Is this your axe?"

The peasant was delighted and shouted,

"Yes it's mine!"

But the water-sprite gave him nothing, neither the golden axe nor his own, because he had been so dishonest.



THE LEARNED SON

A young man from the town was visiting his father in the countryside. His father said to him,

"It's harvest time so you can help me. Just take that rake and we'll be off."

But the son didn't want to work and so he said,

"Since I've been studying the sciences I've forgotten all these peasant words. What's a rake?"

No sooner had he stepped out into the yard than he stood on a rake and it swung up and hit him on the forehead.

Then he remembered soon enough what a rake was, he clutched his forehead and said,

"What stupid fool put that rake there!"



THREE SMALL LOAVES AND ONE RING ROLL

One day a peasant wanted something to eat. So he bought a small loaf and ate it, but when he'd finished he was as hungry as ever. He bought a second small loaf and ate that, but he still wanted something else. He bought a third small loaf and ate that too, but even then he hadn't had enough to eat. So he bought a ring roll and when he'd eaten it he at last felt satisfied.

And then he slapped his brow and said,

"What a fool I am! Whyever did I waste my time eating all those small loaves. I should have started off with the ring roll."



THE CAT WITH A BELL

The cat began to make life very difficult for the mice since he ate two or three of them every day. At last the mice had a meeting to discuss ways of saving themselves. But although they talked and talked they couldn't come up with an answer.

Then one mouse said,

"I'll tell you how we can save ourselves from the cat. After all, the only reason why we're eaten is because we don't know when he's coming. We ought to hang a bell round his neck so it rings as he moves. Then we'd be able to hear when he's nearby and run away."

"That would be fine," and old mouse said, "but someone will have to put the bell on him first. Your idea's good enough, but you tie the bell round the cat's neck and then we'll say thank you."



THE SQUIRREL AND THE WOLF

As a squirrel was springing from bough to bough she fell down right onto a wolf who was asleep under the tree. The wolf jumped up and was about to eat the squirrel when she started to beg him,

"Let me go."

Said the wolf,

"Very well. I'll let you go, only you tell me why you squirrels are so jolly. I'm bored all day long, but every time I look up at you you're always playing and springing about merrily."

Said the squirrel,

"Let me go up into that tree first and I'll tell you from there, or else I'm too frightened."

The wolf let her go and the squirrel jumped into the tree and said,

"You're bored because you're so malicious. Your malice is eating away at your heart. Whereas we're always so jolly because we're kind and never do anyone any harm."



THE PEASANT AND HIS LUCK

While Luck was travelling round the world one day a peasant went to mow his meadow and fell asleep. Then Luck went up to him and said,

“Here he is asleep instead of working. He’ll never get all the hay in before the good weather breaks and then he’ll blame me, his Luck. He’ll say he never has any Luck.”



THE HARES AND THE FROGS

One day some hares met and started grumbling about their life, "We're killed by people, dogs, eagles and other animals too. It's better to get it over with at once than to live in fear and torment all the time. Let's go and drown ourselves!"

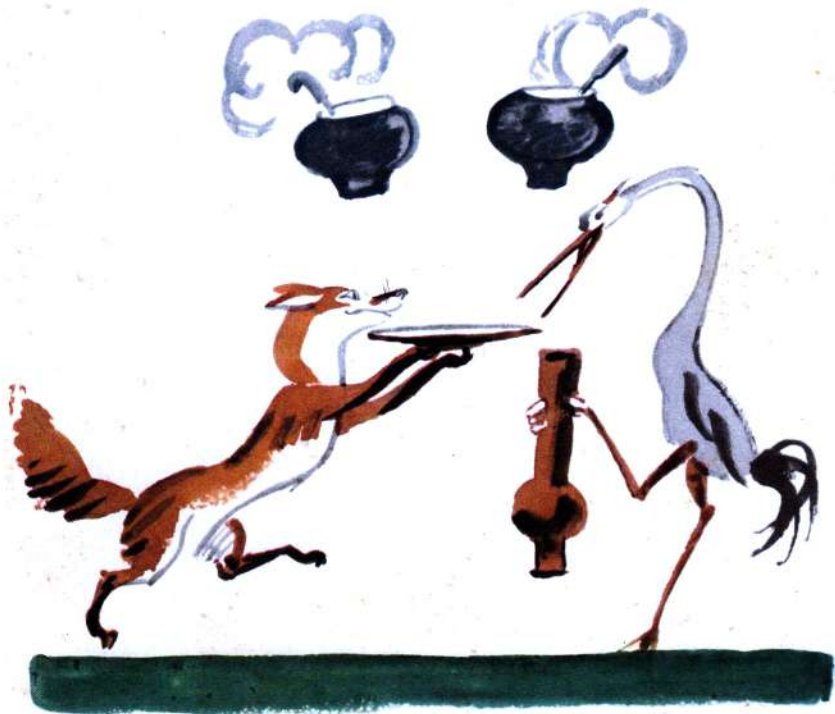
And the hares ran off to throw themselves in the lake. But some frogs heard them coming and plopped hastily into the water. At that one of the hares said,

"Stop, lads! Let's not be in too much of a hurry to drown ourselves: it must be even worse being a frog than a hare since they're even afraid of us."



THE VIXEN AND THE STORK

A vixen invited a stork to lunch and served up some soup on a plate. The stork with his long beak couldn't eat any of it and the vixen ate it all up herself. Next day, the stork invited the vixen home and served lunch in a jug with a narrow neck. The vixen's muzzle was, of course, too large for the jug but the stork just thrust in his long beak and ate everything up himself.



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Printed in the USSR

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