



Ups and Downs

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Easy
3 min read

The summer had been very hot. Not a drop of rain had fallen for many weeks, and there was drought in the valley where the animals lived. The streams had dried up and the springs had ceased to flow. Master Fox took up his pipe and went out to take a walk under the lime-trees to think things over. There he met Mistress Goat, all dressed up in her Sunday clothes.

“Good morrow, cousin,” said he. “You are very fine today.”

“Yes,” she answered, “I put on my best dress because it helps me to think. What we are to do for water I do not know. We have finished all that we had in the barrel, and unless we can find some more very quickly I and my children will die of thirst.”

“To tell you the truth,” said the Fox, “I was thinking the same thing. I am so dry that my tongue is sticking to the roof of my mouth, and I cannot even smoke my pipe with pleasure. What do you say to going together in search of water? Four eyes are better than two, any day in the week.”

“Agreed,” said the Goat; and away they started together. For a long time they looked everywhere, but not a trace of water could they find. All of a sudden the Goat gave a cry of joy, and running up to her the Fox saw that she had discovered a well, on the brink of which she was standing gazing at the cool water far below.

“Hurrah!” cried the Fox. “We are saved!”

“Yes,” answered the Goat, “but see how far down the water is! How are we to get at it!”

“You just leave that to me,” said the Fox. “I know all about wells—I’ve seen them before. All one has to do is to get into the bucket which is hanging by the rope and descend as smoothly and as safely as you please. I’ll go first, just to show you the way.”

So the Fox got into the bucket, and the weight of him caused it to descend, while the empty bucket at the other end of the rope rose to the top of the well. A minute afterwards he was at the bottom, leaning over the side of the pail and greedily lapping up the water. Nothing had ever tasted so delicious. He drank and drank until he could hold no more.

“Is it good?” cried Mrs. Goat from above, dancing with impatience.

“It is like the purest nectar!” answered the Fox. “Get into the bucket quickly and come down and join me.”

So the goat stepped into the bucket, which immediately began to descend with her weight, while at the same time the bucket with Master Fox in it began to rise to the surface. The two met half-way.

“How is this?” asked Mrs. Goat in surprise. “I thought you were going to wait for me!”

“Ah, my dear friend,” answered Reynard with a wicked grin, “it is the way of the world. Some go up and some go down. I hope you will enjoy your drink. Good-bye!”

And as soon as he got to the top he jumped out of the bucket and ran off at top speed.

So poor Mrs. Goat had to stay there at the bottom of the well until the farmer came and found her, half dead with cold. When at last she was rescued she found that she had only exchanged one prison for another, for the farmer put her into the fold with his own sheep and goats, and so she lost her liberty for ever.

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