

CHAPTER 9 — Fox Loses His Tail

Once when Coyote was traveling on the plains, he saw two buffalo bulls. One of the bulls was fat, the other thin.

“At last I see some meat,” thought Coyote. “I will walk over there where those bulls are feeding.”

“Hey, Grass-eaters,” he said, going over to Fat Bull as though he were his friend. “What do you think we ought to do today?”

“We don't know,” said Fat Bull.

“Well, I have heard about you. I was told you are good runners. So, I have come to see if you would race.”

“No, we can't run well at all,” said the bulls.

“Oh, let's race anyway. We will see.”

“Well, we have heard you are the best runner. So we don't know if we can run that fast,” said Thin Bull.

“Well, let us run against him anyhow,” said Fat Bull. “There will be no shame if we are beaten, for he is a good runner.”

“You know, I have heard you are fast runners,” said Coyote, “but you are always denying it like this. Let's see who is the best.”

“Which way shall we run then?” said Fat Bull, who was now eager to test Coyote. He began to paw the earth a little.

“Over that way, where that hill is,” said Coyote, pointing to a place where the sun was going down. He had just come from there, and he knew there was a cliff at the top of the hill. No person could run over that cliff and not be killed. A person running a race with the sun in his eyes would not see the cliff when he came to it and would fall right off unless he knew the cliff was there and could stop in time.

“How far shall we run?” asked Thin Bull.

“Over that hill and down the other side,” said Coyote. “Are you ready? All right. Here we go!”

Coyote ran out in front with the bulls right after him, straight into the blinding sun. “I'm very fast,” called Coyote back over his shoulder. “You will find this out now.” But the bulls were right behind Coyote and anxious to beat him when they got to the foot of the hill. The ground was shaking under their hooves.

“This is steeper than I thought,” puffed Coyote, slowing down a little. The bulls started to come past him. “I have a lame leg,” yelled Coyote. “But I will catch you on the other side near the bottom.” He was yelling into the dust, for the two bulls were already past him.

Coyote saw the sun blind the bulls and watched them run off the top of the hill.

“Ha-ha-ha-ha,” laughed Coyote. “I told those two fools I would catch them on the other side. I spoke plainly, but I guess they did not understand me.” He trotted around the cliff, down to the bottom. “These persons do not even know their own country. They did not even know that the cliff was here. Humph. Well, this fat one will be





good for eating. I'll give that skinny one to Raven if he comes along."

The bulls were both dead. Coyote felt Fat Bull's ribs and smiled, but when he looked over at Thin Bull, he said, "You wasted your time running. You are too thin for a hunter like me to fool with."

Just as he started butchering, he saw a small gray person coming along. It was One Man, the Kit Fox. "Brother," called Coyote. "Come over here. I have a job for you, and when it is finished, we will both have a good meal. I have plenty of meat."

One Man was hungry, and he asked Coyote what he wanted him to do.

"You see that mountain? I left my Mountain Lion's paw on a rock over there. I will need it to taste the soup. I can't taste the soup without it."

"That mountain is too far away. My moccasins will not last that far and all the way back," protested One Man, smelling Fat Bull.

"Go on, get going," said Coyote. "I have plenty of work to do here to get ready. I will be butchering and making a paunch kettle and gathering wood for a fire and finding roots for the soup, heating stones to boil the meat and everything."

"I will taste the soup. I don't need any Mountain Lion's paw for this," yelled One Man.

"Go! Get out of here!" said Coyote. He was getting very mad. He wanted the Mountain Lion's paw, which he was always forgetting and leaving behind.

One Man started toward the mountain, but he was afraid Coyote would eat everything before he came back, so he went only a little way. Then he came back. "I can't go that far, Old Man. Look how thin my moccasins are." He held up his moccasin to show where his foot was coming through.

"Well, you do the butchering and gather roots and wood and make the paunch kettle and heat the stones. I will get that paw."

One Man watched Coyote disappear in the distance, going toward the mountain. "That Coyote is a bigger fool than I thought," he said to himself. "He has left me here with all this meat. It will take him a few days to get over there and back. I will get fat on this meat and be gone before he returns to this place."

One Man filled his belly on the fat bull.

A few days later Coyote came back, and all the meat was gone. "And I called him brother," said Coyote, looking at the broken bones where One Man had built his fire. "Well, when I catch that One Man person, I will call him something besides brother."

He took off on the trail One Man had left and soon came to a river. "He crossed the river here to throw me off the trail," thought Coyote. He smelled along the grass to make sure One Man had really gone across. Then he saw a patch of rye grass on the other side. "That One Man is foolish enough to be sleeping over there in that bunch of rye grass."

He slipped quietly into the water, swam across, put his nose on the ground again, and began looking for One Man. He found the

tracks right away. "Just as I thought," said Coyote to himself, "he headed for that rye grass."

Coyote went over and found One Man curled up asleep. "Now I've got you, you thief," whispered Coyote. "I once called you brother. Now things will be lively for you."

He cut a stick and sharpened one end and pushed it into the ground near the rye grass. He tied One Man's tail to the stick and then got out his fire kit and lit the grass. Flames shot up all over. "Fire! Fire!" shouted Coyote, fanning the flames.

As One Man jumped up from his bed and tried to run, he heard something break. Coyote laughed out loud.

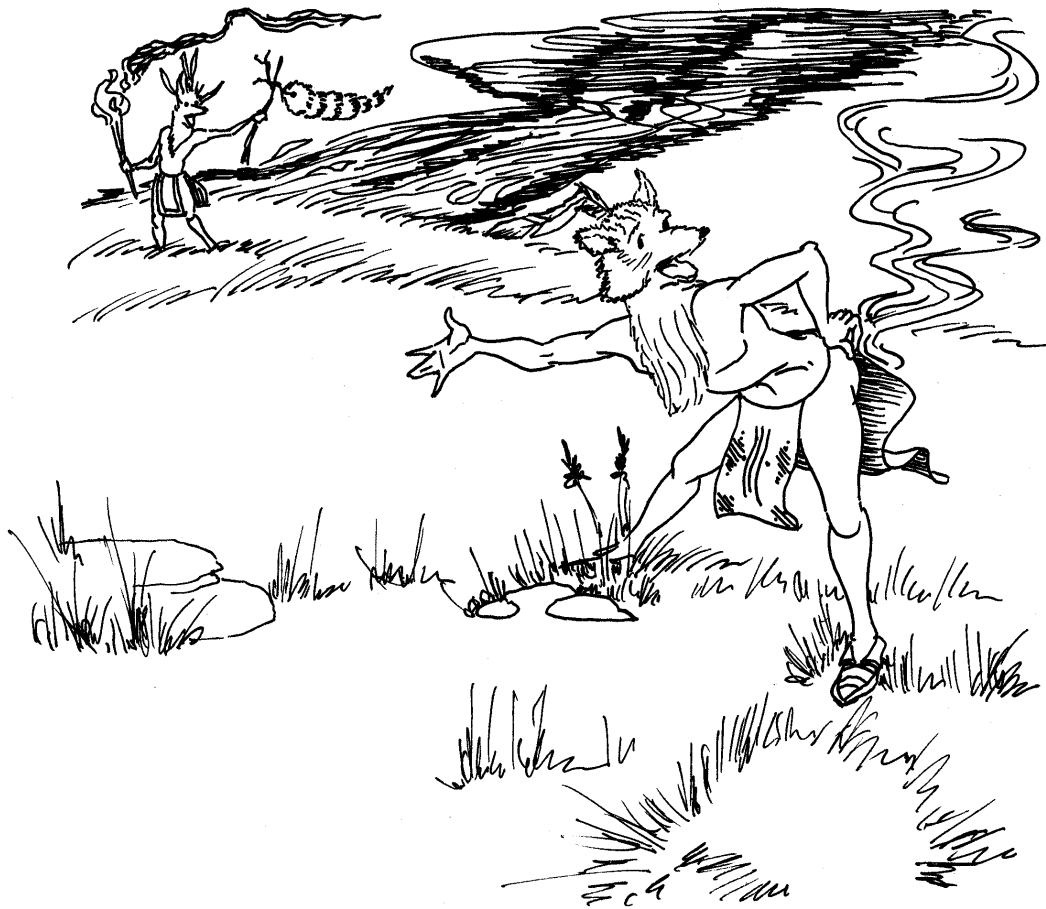
"What have you done to me, Old Man?" whimpered One Man, looking at what had happened. His sides were burned and his tail was gone. "My beautiful tail! Where is it?"

"It's right here on this stick. You were in such a hurry that you left it behind," laughed Coyote. "I have punished you for stealing my meat while I went for that lion's paw. Now listen to me, you thief, you forked-tongue person. I'm going south. You go north, and stop taking things that do not belong to you."

"But my tail, Old Man, what about my tail?"

Coyote took the tail and put it back on One Man's rump.

One Man went up north. He was afraid to go any other way.



How Well Did You Read and Understand the Story?

Hint: *Most stories teach a lesson. These lessons, or morals, not only make the story interesting, but also make readers think. It's up to the readers to apply these morals to their own lives.*

1. Who is the only person Coyote offers to share the bull meat with at no cost?
2. Why doesn't One Man want to cross the mountains for Coyote?
3. Use context clues to determine the meaning of the word *fork-tongue*.
4. There are three tricks in this story. Find and list them.
5. If you could change the title of this story, what would you change it to?
6. What lesson did you learn from this story? How will you apply it to your life?
7. Find and copy one passive sentence in the story. Change the verb so that the sentence is no longer passive. (This **is** a hint!)
8. Estimate the amount of time this story covers. Use the text to support your answer.
9. Think of the characters in the story. How do they compare to characters you have read about in other stories?
10. If this legend had a sequel, what do you think would happen next? Write what you think would logically occur based on what has happened so far.