AESOP'S FABLES

By JAMES BROCK

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PIONEER DRAMA SERVICE, INC.
Englewood, Colorado
AESOP'S FABLES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

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<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th># of lines</th>
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<td>AESOP</td>
<td>A small/man with a pleasant smile and cheerful manner that quickly wins him friends</td>
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<td>ENSEMBLE*</td>
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<td>BETTY</td>
<td>An &quot;uppity&quot; young lady who always wants to have her own way</td>
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<td>FOX</td>
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<td>DORIS</td>
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<td>EDGAR</td>
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<td>DONKEY</td>
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<td>HARE</td>
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*This group of players can vary in number and sex according to the availability of actors and according to the director's approach. Any actor may be called upon to momentarily assume the role of a FOX, CROW, DONKEY, or so on as the play progresses. The actors in the ENSEMBLE should be called by their given names. The names used in the script are arbitrary.

DIRECTION NOTE

The action of the play takes place in the present. The scenes blend into the main line of the play without need for pause or an indication of time lapse. The scene changes are done in full view of the audience and are incorporated as part of the play's action. The songs may be either sung or used as spoken verse.

SETTING

The set pieces are various shaped geometric forms that can be used much the same as children's building blocks to form the various settings needed for the fables. These forms can be as elaborate or as simple as desired. The main idea, however, should remain one of mobility and multi-use of the various shapes chosen. There should be one stepladder.
AT RISE: ENSEMBLE ENTERS carrying various building blocks of
the scenery. They set their objects down at random on stage,
then rub and stretch their muscles as though they had been
carrying the set pieces for a long time. The stepladder should
be placed Center Stage.

ARTHUR: Boy! Am I glad to get rid of that thing. I was
going tired of carrying it.

BETTY: Yeah, me too. I don’t see why we had to bring all this
stuff out here anyway.

CHARLES: I don’t either. All I know is that Aesop told us to
bring them.

DORIS: Oh, so this was Aesop’s idea. I should have known.

EDGAR: I wonder what he’s up to now?

FERN: He said he had some fables he wanted to present to the
girls and boys today.

ARTHUR: Of course! Aesop is always making up fables.

CHARLES: I guess everybody knows Aesop’s fables.

BETTY: (Turning to Audience.) I’ll bet these boys and girls don’t
know all of Aesop’s fables. You don’t, do you?

(BETTY and ENSEMBLE listen to various comments of children.
Some will say yes but others will say no. CHARLES will select
a boy or girl who said no to direct his next line to.)

CHARLES: You don’t? My goodness! Well, you do know who Aesop
is, don’t you?

(ENSEMBLE listens to children again.)

DORIS: Some do and some don’t. (To OTHERS.) I thought
everybody knew about Aesop.

EDGAR: Perhaps we had better tell them!
ENSEMBLE: 
(Ad lib lines.)
  Good idea!
  Yes, let’s do that.
  He’s a wise man.
  A philosopher.
  A storyteller.

DORIS: Aesop has a very clever mind.

CHARLES: He makes up clever fabler.

DORIS: It’s really just like playing to listen to his stories.

ARTHUR: And they always teach a lesson.

ENSEMBLE: 
(Ad lib lines.) That’s Aesop! He sure knows how to
tell a story. Everyone has heard of Aesop. His fables are very
well known.

BETTY: That’s Aesop all right . . . but . . . (Confidentially to
children.) this is a lot of work. I’d rather do something else.

FERN: (Overhearing.) What do you mean? I think it’s fun!

EDGAR: Hey, everybody . . . here comes Aesop now!

(AESOP ENTERS, a short man with a ready smile and pleasant
voice. He is carrying a large sack thrown over one shouler.)

ENSEMBLE: 
(Ad lib lines.)
  Hello, Aesop.
  Where have you been?
  What kept you so long?
  Are you going to tell us some fables today?
  Please tell us some stories!
  Yes, please!

AESOP: My goodness . . . my goodness . . . I can’t answer all these
questions at once. One at a time, please! (Sets bag down.)

FERN: What’s in the sack, Aesop?

AESOP: You will learn that soon enough.

DORIS: You can leave, Betty, if you’re not interested.
BETTY: *(CROSSES to AESOP with exaggerated innocence.)* Why, Doris! I never said anything like that.

AESOP: Here, here! Let's not have a squabble. We didn't come here to argue. We came to show these boys and girls some fables.

ARTHUR: You mean to TELL them some fables, don't you?

AESOP: No . . . I mean SHOW them. It's much more fun that way.

CHARLES: Oh, now I see! That's why we brought all those blocks and things out here. We're going to use them as scenery!

DORIS: And I'll bet you have the costumes in that big bag!

AESOP: You're both right . . . more or less. Now, what shall we start with?

FERN: Let's do The Hare And The Tortoise! I like that one.

EDGAR: No, not that one! Let's do The Fox And The Sour Grapes.

ARTHUR: Or how about The Donkey In The Lion's Skin? That's a good one.

CHARLES: I like The Fox And The Crow! Let's do that one, Aesop.

DORIS: Yes, let's do The Fox And The Crow.

BETTY: Don't be silly! Aesop's fables always deal with animals. How can we play like we're animals?

AESOP: Oh, I think we can do just fine. All we need is a little imagination . . . and a few well chosen props.

FERN: That sounds like fun! Let's do it.

BETTY: Well, I don't like it! I think it's silly. *(BETTY CROSSES to side and sulks.)*
AESOP: All right, everybody. Gather 'round and we will begin. First we need a tree. (Two players of ENSEMBLE begin stacking blocks in front of the stepladder to form a Tree.) And a path through the woods. (Another ENSEMBLE member takes a brown roll of tarp from the bag, spreads it out as if it were a path.) Good! Now we need someone to play the part of the Crow.

ENSEMBLE: (Except BETTY. Ad lib lines.) Me! Let me! Choose me, Aesop! Let me do it! I can play the Crow!

AESOP: Patience, patience. Everyone will get a turn. Here . . . Charles . . . you be the Crow.

(CHARLES come CENTER STAGE as ENSEMBLE clears to the side. AESOP takes a square piece of black cloth out of his bag, in which a hole has been cut in the center. He places the cloth over CHARLES' head poncho style.)

AESOP: There! Now, let's see you walk like a crow. (CHARLES does but uses his arms.) Remember . . . a crow has wings, not arms. You must fold your arms back like they were wings. (CHARLES does, struts about the stage.) Good! That's very good, Charles.

ARTHUR: He looks more like a chicken than a crow. (ALL laugh.)

AESOP: He looks just fine. Now, let me see . . . Betty . . . how would you like to be the fox?

BETTY: No! I think the whole thing is silly.

DORIS: I'll do it, Aesop.

AESOP: Very well, Doris. Let's see what we have for you. (He pulls various items out of the bag to help DORIS dress as the Fox. [See COSTUME NOTES.] DORIS puts on costume, turns around for AESOP to see.)

DORIS: How do I look?

AESOP: Very foxy. Now, you go off over there and we'll begin.
(DORIS EXITS STAGE RIGHT, CHARLES goes back by Tree with his back to audience. AESOP reaches in his bag and pulls out a large red apple with a long stem and places it CENTER STAGE.)

AESOP: Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, the fable of the conceited Crow. Once there was a Crow ... (CROW turns around and begins to strut.) A very conceited, and I might add, a rather stupid Crow. (CROW gives AESOP a dirty look.) This Crow believed himself to be good at everything he tried to do ... and especially at finding food. Therefore, when he found a big, juicy apple all ready to be eaten you can imagine how pleased he was with himself.

CROW: Look at that apple! My, my, my ... how very clever of me to have found it. But wait! If I eat the apple down here on the ground, then Mr. Fox will come along and take it away from me. I know what I’ll do ... I’ll take the apple and fly up into that tree. That way I can enjoy my apple in peace and Mr. Fox will get none of it.” How very clever I am!

AESOP: So Mr. Crow got his apple in his beak and flew up to the top of the tree. And it was just in time, because no sooner had he got himself up there than sly old Mr. Fox came along looking for something to eat.

(CROW climbs up stepladder to the top of the Tree, holding the apple in his mouth by the stem. As soon as he is up in the tree, ENTER FOX.)

FOX: Oh me, oh my! I’m so hungry I could die! I think my stomach and my backbone are shaking hands! Oh, there’s not a bit of food to be had in this entire forest.

CROW: Cawww! That’s all you know!

FOX: What? Who said that? (FOX looks all around, finally looks up into Tree.) Oh, it’s you, Mr. Crow. And look at what a fine ripe apple you have found! Let me have a look at it!

CROW: (Mumbling with stem in his mouth.) Oh, no! I know you, Mr. Fox. You would steal my apple if you could.

FOX: And so I shall. Now give it here before I eat both you and the apple for my dinner! (FOX tries to jump up to where CROW is perched but can’t do it.)
CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Cawww! I outsmarted you this time, Mr. Fox. You’ll never get my apple unless you learn how to fly! Cawww, cawww, cawww.

FOX: Ha! You think pretty highly of yourself, don’t you Mr. Crow?

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* No higher than I deserve.

FOX: All right, you think you’re so bright . . . I vow that I shall get the apple away from you.

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* And if you don’t?

FOX: Then I will tell everyone that it is the Crow and not the Fox who is the cleverest fellow in the forest.

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* And how do you propose to get the apple away from me?

FOX: I’ll trick you, Mr. Crow!

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Oh no you won’t!

FOX: Are you afraid to let me try?

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Cawww! Not at all. But you won’t get the apple away from me.

FOX: *(Leans in to listen.)* What did you say, Mr. Crow. I can’t understand a word you’re saying the way you mumble.

CROW: *(Louder.)* I said you won’t . . . *(CROW almost loses the apple and suddenly realizes FOX’S trick.)* Oh . . . very clever. You thought you had me there, didn’t you? You thought you would get me to open my mouth to answer you and then I would drop the apple!

FOX: *(Leans in closer.)* What is it? I can’t hear you! Speak up!

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* No, no . . . it won’t work. I’ll not open my mouth and let the apple fall.

FOX: I must have been mistaken. You are smarter than I thought.

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Cawww, cawww! See . . . I told you so. Now you will have to admit I am the cleverest fellow in the forest.
FOX: So I will, Mr. Crow. *(Thinks a moment.)* But ... but, wait!

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* What? What is it?

FOX: I never noticed. Let me hear you caw again, my dear friend.

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Noticed what?

FOX: Never mind. Just let me hear you caw.

CROW: *(Still holding apple suspiciously.)* Cawww ... cawww.

FOX: *(Astounded.)* Well, I never! Who would have thought!

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* What? What is it?

FOX: My dear fellow, I never noticed before what a lovely voice you have.

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Really?

FOX: Oh, yes indeed. Not only are you the cleverest fellow in the forest, but you have one of the loveliest voices I have ever heard. Do you sing?

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* No ... well ... I've never really tried. I mean seriously tried.

FOX: But your voice is so full, so mellow. Surely you are a great singer?

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Do you think I could really sing?

FOX: No doubt about it. Why, you would even put the nightingale to shame. Go ahead, friend Crow ... try a few notes.

CROW: *(Beginning to puff up.)* Cawww, cawww, cawww!

FOX: Marvelous! Yes, I was right. You have a glorious voice. I have never heard one so grand.

CROW: *(Mumbling.)* Really?
FOX: Oh, yes. Yes indeed... a truly magnificent voice. Please, sing some more! This time sing something higher... louder. Let me hear the full glory of your voice!

CROW: (Opening his mouth wide.) Cawwwwww! (The apple falls out of CROW'S mouth and FOX quickly snatches it up.)

FOX: There! I got the apple!

CROW: Wait! Wait a minute, Mr. Fox. You tricked me! That's not fair!

FOX: Ho, ho, ho! Why, of course I tricked you. I told you I would. And now I have the apple. You see, Mr. Crow, you are not so clever after all.

CROW: I am so!

FOX: No, Mr. Crow, you are not very clever. But worse than that, you are conceited. If you hadn't thought so highly of yourself, I would not have been able to trick you.

CROW: (Sadly.) Maybe next time I will learn to keep my mouth shut!

(FOX and CROW FREEZE their positions to indicate the end of the fable, then come to CENTER STAGE to meet AESOP. THEY are now members of the ENSEMBLE again.)

AESOP: Very nice, Doris... Charles. (To Audience.) Wasn't that a nice fable, boys and girls? (Waits for response, then turns, faces BETTY.) There, you see, Betty? They played the parts of a Crow and a Fox and it wasn't in the least silly.

BETTY: (Turning away from AESOP.) Humpff!

ENSEMBLE: (Except BETTY. Come on stage to gather around AESOP. Ad lib lines.) Let's do another one. Choose me this time. Let me do one, Aesop! I want to be one of the animals. What will we do now?

AESOP: Very well. Here we go again. But this time we will need to make the stage into a meadow with rocks and shady bushes. And we will need a Hare and a Tortoise. Arthur and Fern, why don't you play those parts?
ARTHUR & FERN:  Okay!  Sure!

(ENSEMBLE rearranges the stage.  This time they have signs to hang on the blocks to tell which are rocks and which are bushes.  CHARLES and DORIS remove their Fox and Crow costumes and put them into the bag.  AESOP helps ARTHUR and FERN dress as TORTOISE and HARE.  [See COSTUME NOTES.]  When everything is ready, AESOP COMES CENTER.)

AESOP:  Now this is one of my best known fables.  The Hare And The Tortoise.  I'm sure you have all heard it many times before.

EDGAR:  It doesn't matter.  I always like to hear it again.

CHARLES:  Me, too.  Go ahead and tell it to us, Aesop.

AESOP:  Very well.  We shall begin.

(ENSEMBLE MOVES to side of stage or goes out to sit with Audience to watch.  TORTOISE and HARE remain CENTER STAGE and turn their backs to Audience.)

AESOP:  Once there was a Tortoise.  (TORTOISE turns around.) He was a very industrious Tortoise and although he was very, very slow, he was very, very persistent.  Therefore, anything the Tortoise set out to do he was sure to finish.

(SONG CUE:  The following may be done as rhyme without music or to the tune at the end of script.)

TORTOISE:  I'm slow, I know.
   I know I'm very slow.
   But slow or fast this much is true,
   I do the things I start out to do,
   And I don't stop 'til the job is through,
   Although I'm very slow.

(Repeat one chorus of song for a short waltz-clog type dance either alone or with AESOP.  At end of song TORTOISE turns back around in original position with back to Audience.)

AESOP:  Now in the animal kingdom there is one animal that is exactly the opposite of the Tortoise, and that is our friend the Hare.  (HARE turns around, reacts to what AESOP is saying.)  You see, where the Tortoise is slow, the Hare is very, very fast.  And while the Tortoise is determined, the Hare is really quite a scatter-brain.
AESOP: No, Betty. That is the way you may have wanted things to turn out, but that wasn’t the fable I was teaching. You see, in this fable the Fox never does get the grapes.

BETTY: (Snippity once again.) Well, I don’t even want the old grapes, anyway! They’re probably sour and full of worms. (She leaves the stage in a huff.)

AESOP: (Turning to face Audience.) It’s too bad about Betty. She wanted to win. But you see, we can’t always have our own way. Just like in the fable you just saw... The Fox And The Sour Grapes.

EDGAR: Let’s do another fable, Aesop!

AESOP: No, Edgar. We have to be on our way. There are other places to go and other children waiting to hear our fables, too.

CHARLES: What will we do with all of this? (Indicates set pieces and AESOP’S bag of costumes.)

AESOP: Why, take it all with us, of course. Come along, let’s gather everything up. (AESOP helps DORIS out of the OWL costume and puts it in the bag with other props. He puts the bag over his shoulder. ENSEMBLE pick up the various set pieces they brought in. AESOP leads the way OFF STAGE, calling to the Audience.) Good-by! Good-by children. We will see you again some day!

ENSEMBLE: (Ad lib lines as THEY pick up set pieces and follow AESOP.) Good-by! We enjoyed being here. See you again some day! Don’t forget the fables. Remember our stories, now. Bye!

CURTAIN

PROPERTIES

Ground cloth cut in the shape of a forest path.
Apple with a long, sturdy stem.
Signs saying, “Rock”, “Bush”, “Tree Stump”, etc.
(Number of signs is optional.)
Chalk
Finish flag to signal winner of Hare and Tortoise race.
Lion’s skin.
Grapes.
Masking tape.
COSTUME NOTES

The following ideas for costumes are offered merely as suggestions to help the director capture the flavor of the nature of the fables. The key is to use materials at hand with a minimum of specially made costumes.

COSTUMES: FABLE ONE

CROW - A piece of black felt material, waist length, with a neck hole slit in the middle to be worn as a poncho. A large, brightly colored bow tie may be either attached to the front or painted onto the material.

FOX - A red or reddish-brown vest with a piece of fur cloth attached to the back to indicate a tail. A fedora hat worn at a cocky angle with the brim turned down in front. A feather in the hat.

COSTUMES: FABLE TWO

HARE - A set of jogging sweats with a puff ball sewed on as a tail. A head-band with pipe cleaner ears attached.

TORTOISE - A green baseball cap worn backwards. A pillow that can be held onto the back with a green cloth cut in a turtle shell design and shape.

COSTUMES: FABLE THREE

HARE - Same as Fable Two

TORTOISE - Same as Fable Two

FOX - Same as Fable One

DONKEY - Straw hat with donkey ears attached. Brown, ruffled garters to be worn around wrists and ankles as hooves. It would add to the effectiveness of the costume if the person playing this role were dressed in overalls as normal dress before the fable begins.

COSTUMES: FABLE FOUR

FOX - Same as Fable One

OWL - Doctoral or Choir robe. Mortarboard hat with tassel. Large, round rimmed eyeglasses.
I'M SLOW!

CUE: AESOP "Tortoise set out to do, he was sure to finish." (Page 9)

slow, I knew!

know I'm very slow. But

slow or fast this much is true, I
do the things I start out to do, and

I don't stop 'til the job is through, al-

though I'm very slow!
CUE: AESOP - "... Here is really quite a scatter-brain."

(Hare) I'm fast, I'm quick! I'm really pretty slick! I run much faster than my friends. I'm even faster than the winds. I said it once and I'll say again. I'm...
I'M FAST (2)

fast, I'm fast, I'm quick!
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