

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Hare and the Fox**



A hare and a fox were travelling together. It was wintertime, nothing green was growing, and neither mouse nor louse crept through the fields. "This is hungry weather," the fox said to the hare, "my insides are all laced together." "Indeed," the hare replied, "all this land belongs to Fasting Farm, and I would eat my own ears if I could get them into my mouth."

So they trotted hungrily on, side by side. Then in the distance they saw a country girl coming towards them, carrying a small basket; and from the basket a pleasant smell wafted towards the fox and the hare, the smell of fresh rolls. "I'll tell you what," said the fox, "lie down flat and pretend to be dead. The girl will lay down her basket so she can lift you up and obtain your poor pelt, for gloves are made from hare skins; in the meantime, I'll snatch the rolls, which will give us some comfort."

The hare did as the fox had advised, falling down and pretending to be dead, and the fox dived behind a snowdrift. The girl came along, saw the still fresh hare lying sprawled out on the ground, put the basket down as expected, and bent over the hare. At that moment the fox darted out, snatched the basket, and swept across country; the hare suddenly came to life and hurriedly followed his companion. But the fox would not stop, and he showed no sign of sharing the rolls, rather making it clear that he was going to eat them all himself. The hare took this sorely amiss.

Now when they were in the vicinity of a small pond, the hare said to the fox: "What do you say to procuring some fish for our meal? Then we'll have fish and white bread, like the great lords! Dangle your tail a little in the water, and the fish, which have very little to bite on right now, will cling to it. But make haste, before the pond freezes over." That made sense to the fox, so he went to the pond – which was just about to freeze over – and dangled his tail in it, and in a short while the fox's tail was frozen fast in the ice. Then the hare took the basket, ate the rolls before the fox's eyes, very slowly, one after the other, and said to the fox: "Just wait until it thaws, just wait until the springtime, just wait until it thaws!" And he ran away, while the fox barked after him like an angry dog on a chain.

