

# AESOP'S FABLES



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COVER NOT  
FINAL



Hare threw back her elegant long ears and laughed and laughed. "And who do you think is going to win a rapitty-race?" she laughed. "No, I won't race this dawdling dullard. It wouldn't be fair. He'd still be in a cloud of starting-line dust when I got to the finish line."

But Tortoise shook his scaly head. "I think Frog is wise. I'll meet you in the woods at the edge of town at dawn tomorrow," Tortoise said to Hare. "Tell your friends! It'll be the race of the year! Everyone will come to see you!"

Hare loved the idea of everyone coming out to watch her victory, so she agreed to the plan. But she did shake her head as she sped off to spread the news. "Tortoise must have a slow mind too. Racing a hoppity-hare? I almost feel sorry for him!"

The day of the race dawned clear and crisp. And, as Tortoise had predicted, quite a crowd had gathered. It seemed that everyone was cheering for Hare. A family of mice were waving a banner with Hare's name on it and the birds were dropping flowers on her head from above. Even Fox thumped her bushy tail on the ground in encouragement.

Hare put on an impressive display for her supporters: she jumped up and down very fast, she turned cartwheels and she made a great show of stretching out her long limbs so everyone could see how strong and athletic she was.

"We love you, Hare!" squeaked the mice.

Tortoise waited patiently beside the starting area and gathered his strength by slowly munching a juicy cabbage leaf. Nobody paid him much attention at all.

Finally, Frog drew a long line in the dust with his elegant toe and told the two animals to

line up behind it.

"Rib-rib-ribbet!" he said. "The race is over the plain, over the hill and then an easy run down to the town square. Ready, set, GO!"

And they were off!

Hare sprinted away, her legs a blur, her ears streaming behind her, her powerful feet pumping as they carried her away.

Tortoise was barely over the starting line when Hare disappeared over the hill. But he didn't worry. He just sang his marching song to himself and kept putting one foot in front of the other:

*Dum-dum, dum-de-dum*

*Slow and steady, here I come!*

Hare was running through a copse of trees in the hills above town. She didn't have far to go until the finish. Hare thought this had been too easy! She had her own song for travelling and she sang it now:

*Hoppity-hippity-Hare-I-come.*

*Quick-quick-quick as a beating drum.*

*Hoppity-hippity, watch me pass –*

*If you can see me – I'm that fast!*

