



## INSIDE STORIES

### Offline Story for Week 2

#### The Dog and the Fox

(Duncan Williamson, The Coming Of The Unicorn: Scottish Folk Tales For Children, Floris Books)

The old fox had lain in his den all day and he was hungry, because the days before he had been out hunting he had got very little to eat. In fact, he was terrified, because he had got hunted twice by gamekeepers. Nightfall was approaching and he said to himself, “Well, I will have to get something before night, because when it gets dark I’m not going to have much of a chance - all the birds will be roosting and all the rabbits will be in their burrows - I had better go out and get something to eat!”

So away went the old fox. He wandered here, he wandered there, he wandered everywhere that he thought he could find some game for himself to kill. But he could find nothing. He travelled on all his familiar paths, all his old hunting places. But not a hare, not a rabbit, nothing could he find. And the more he wandered the hungrier he got. Evening was approaching fast. So he sat down, considered for a while; he knew that he wasn’t going to find anything to eat that night.

He said to himself, “There’s only one thing I’ll have to do.”

He knew it wasn’t very far to the nearest farm because he could see the lights in the distance. But he was kind of afraid to go near the farm in case the farmer was around with his gun - might shoot him for hunting some of his hens.

“If I could only see my old cousin the dog,” he said to himself. “He probably has an old bone lying about, or maybe he has not finished his evening meal and would share it with me.” So, he finally made up his mind to go as quietly as he could, go and visit his old friend Cousin Dog at the farm. He knew there was no other way he was going to get anything that night.

Away he went walking as stealthily up the lane as he could so that nobody could see him. Finally, he came to the farm and round to the front where he knew his old cousin Dog had his kennel. By good luck he never encountered the farmer. As soon as he came round the corner to

the front of the farm the first person he met was his old cousin Dog! And the farmer was just after bringing his old dog his supper. It was lying in a little dish beside the dog's kennel - there were bones and pieces of meat, all kinds, lying in the dog's dish. The fox saw this and it just made his mouth water!

So, he said, "Hello, Cousin Dog, how are you?"

And the dog said, "Oh, it's yourself, Old Fox."

"Aye," he said, "It is."

"And what puts you down here at this time of night? I thought you would be away hiding out in your old den up in the cliffs for the night," said Old Dog.

"Well, to tell you the truth," said the fox, "the only reason I've come to visit you - and you know that it's not often that I come to see you - I'm asking...I just came to ask you a favour."

"Well," said the dog, "we're friends, we're relations. And you never trouble me very often. If there is anything that you want and I can help you out, I'll try my best. What is your favour?"

"Well," said the fox, "I have been hungry all day. In fact I am so hungry that I am no able to hunt. The gamekeeper hunted me all day yesterday, never gave me a chance to eat. I am so hungry I can barely walk. I just came down to see you, to see if you had an old bone lying about and any bits of scraps of food you could spare a poor hungry cousin."

"Oh," the dog says, "Is that all that's troubling you, there is plenty here! There's my supper, I've had plenty to eat and I'm no hungry. I'm just about to go for a sleep for the night, and if I dinna eat it up the farmer will think, what's wrong with him? And he'll no give me any more for breakfast. So, help yourself!"

So, the dog got into this dish of food, he just guzzled it up as fast as he could. He felt a bit better after he had licked the dish clean. So, he and the dog sat and talked for a wee while.

"You know," the dog said to him, "Cousin Fox, you are in the wrong kind of life."

"And what makes you think that?" the fox said.

"Well," he said, "look at me here: I sit here and I get plenty to eat, I have a nice warm kennel and plenty of straw to sleep in, I get plenty of food, plenty to drink, plenty bones and I have got a great life! You'll have to change your ways."

The fox said, "Ah, certainly! What have you got to do for all this? You must do something?. You cannae just stay on the farm all the days of your life and do nothing for all this food and this good bed you get, this nice kennel and everything you do."

“Well,” he said, “I guard the farm. And if anybody, any strangers or anybody comes about at night, I bark and waken the farmer up, let him know if there’s anybody around about the farm.”

“Ahem,” says the fox, “well, that’s not a very hard job.”

“No,” the dog said, “the fact is, I enjoy my life and I like it here.”

“Well,” said the fox, “what would I need to do to get the same kind of job that you’ve got?”

“Well,” said the dog, “The first thing you have to do is come down and see the farmer.”

“But if I come and see the farmer,” he said, “he probably will shoot me, because I am a fox and farmers don’t like foxes!”

“Well, that’s true,” said the dog, “but the main thing you have to get first is - you have got to get a kennel.”

“Well,” the fox said, “I like your kennel. It is fine and warm and comfortable.”

“And then,” he says, “you get your collar and your chain.”

“What did you say?” said the fox.

He says, “You get your collar, a nice leather collar round your neck and a chain.”

“And what’s the collar and the chain for?” says the fox.

“Well,” he says, “to tie you up.”

“Tie you up?” says the fox.

“Yes,” he says, “tie you up!”

“And you mean to say, you stay tied up there all day with a collar and a chain round your neck, tied up like a slave?”

“Aye,” said the dog, “that’s what I do - I’m tied up. Except sometimes when my master lets me out and takes me out for a walk for exercise. But never mind being tied up,” said the dog, “life is quite good and your belly is never empty!”

“Ah, no,” said the fox, “not me, Old Cousin Dog! I like your food and I like your bed and I like your home. But,” he said, “I like my freedom best! So, I will be bidding you goodbye, Old Dog. But thanks very much for the supper. If I ever have the chance to come and see you again, I will return and see you some other time. But you will never get me tied up with a chain or a collar for all the food and the beds in the world. For freedom is the thing that I love!”

At that the fox was gone, and the dog never saw him again.

And that is the last of my story.