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THE MAN WHO GAVE PEOPLE THINGS TO LOOK AFTER

illustrated by Axel Scheffler

Once there was a little old man, walking along the road with a walking-stick. Soon, he came to a house and knocked on the door with the stick, *tratt, tratt, tratt.*

A woman came out and he said to her, "Good woman, would you be so kind as to look after my walking-stick? Now don't go burning it in your stove, will you? I'll be back for it in the morning."

And so he went on his way.

Later that day, the woman was baking some bread in her stove, and this stove didn't run on electric or gas – it burned wood. Well, she was running out of wood and, as she picked up the last bits and pieces off her wood pile, she picked up the little old man's walking-stick and without a wink or a blink she poked it into the stove, *pook, pook, pook.*

Next day the little old man was back.

"Where's my walking-stick?" he said.



"Oh dear me," said the woman, "I must have burnt it. Now don't you worry yourself. I'll get you a new one just as soon as ever."

"Oh no," said the little old man, "oh no. You burnt my stick in your stove, so I'll have your stove, indeed I will."

And, with no please or thank you, he picked up



the woman's little clay stove and hurried off with it.

Soon he came to a woman who was looking after some goats and he said to her, "Good woman, would you be so kind as to look after my stove for me? Now don't go letting your goats trample on it, or it'll break. I'll be back for it in the morning."

And so he went on his way.

Later that day, the woman fell asleep under a tree and while she lay there, not knowing a wit or a twit, two of her goats trampled on the little clay stove and broke it up, *crack, crick, crock*.

Next day, the little old man was back.

"Where's my stove?" he said.

"Oh dear me," said the woman, "my goats must have trampled on it. Now don't you worry yourself. I'll get you a new one just as soon as ever."

"Oh no," said the little old man, "oh no. Your goats broke my stove, so I'll have your goats, indeed I will."

And with no please or thank you, he grabbed the woman's goats and hurried off with them.

Soon he came to a house where the people were having a wedding feast and he said to the bridegroom, "Good man, would you be so kind as to look after my goats for me? Now don't you and your new wife go eating them for your feast. I'll be back for them in the morning."

And so he went on his way.

Later that day, the wedding feast was in full swing and they ran out of food. No one likes to run out of food at a wedding and it wasn't long before the guests were tucking in to roast goat, *chobble, chobble, chobble*.

Next day, the little old man was back.

"Where are my goats?" he said.

"Oh dear me," said the bridegroom, "we must have eaten them. Now don't you worry yourself. I'll get you some more just as soon as ever."

"Oh no," said the little old man, "oh no.





You and your wife ate my goats, so I'll have your wife, indeed I will."

And with no please or thank you, he grabbed the bride and hurried off with her. Further down the road he popped her into a sack and tied up the top.

Soon he came to the house of an old, old woman.

He knocked on the door, *tratt, tratt, tratt*, and when the old, old woman came out, he said, "Good woman, would you be so kind as to look after my sack for me? Now don't you go opening it and I'll be back for it in the morning."

And he went on his way.

Later that day, the old, old woman heard a noise from the sack, *ayee, ayee, ayee*, so she opened it and out came the wife.

"Oh no, did you ever!" cried the old, old woman. "Now listen, girl, away with you! Hurry! Get away from here just as fast as your legs will take you."

Away ran the wife into the forest, and the old, old woman was not long following her. There she hunted out snakes, seized them and stuffed them into the sack, *sleess, sleess, sleess*.

Next day, the little old man was back.

"Where's my sack?" he said.

"Right here where you left it, old feller," said she.

"You're a good woman, indeed you are," he said, and he put the sack on his back and he was away out the door, down the road and into the forest. Once he was deep, deep among the trees, he sat himself down and set to opening the sack with his knife, *kwerk, kwork, kwerk*. But the moment the hole was big enough, out came the snakes. They slithered all over him and bit him more times than you could count and that was the end of the little old man.



JAMAICA

FOX, ALLIGATOR AND RABBIT

illustrated by Louise Voce

Once there was a fast, wide river. On one side stood a market and on the other a town. So to get to the market from the town, you had to cross the river. But – and this was a mighty big "but" – in the middle of the river was Alligator. Now alligators have got their own special way of letting you know they're around – they try and eat you.

One day, Fox and Rabbit wanted to cross the river to the market. Rabbit was working on some kind of a plan.

"Say, Fox," he says, "is it true you foxes are known for being just about the smartest, cleverest creatures around?"

"Yep," says Fox.

"Then hows about you taking me across the river?"

"Sure," says Fox, "I'll do it for some of those melons you got there."

"That's fine," says Rabbit.

"Then you just watch me, Rabbit," says Fox, "and you'll see how to lick this alligator thing, no trouble."

So Fox hightailed out into the river, and you can be sure he knows some things that no one else knows. He knows that Alligator likes his porridge so hot it'd burn your eyelashes to eat it. And another thing – Alligator is stupid. He is so stupid he's been known to think his tail was a fish and give himself a terrible bite. WHEEEEE, that hurt!

So Fox is swimming along and he meets Alligator. One more thing about Alligator, he may be stupid, but believe me, he *thinks* he's one smart guy.

Fox gives him something like this: "Say, Alligator, if I can come home with you and have a bite or two to eat with you, would you let me across this river?"

And something else about Alligator. He just loves to give people some of his roasting hot porridge and then sit back and watch them burn their mouths out – HOWOWEEE!

So you know what Alligator says when Fox is seriously inviting himself round to Alligator's place ...? "Sure – but I'll cook – and it'll be porridge."

And Alligator can hardly stop himself laughing thinking about Fox's tongue hitting that hot porridge.

As soon as they get to Alligator's place, Alligator starts cooking the porridge. About two hours later, it's ready and he pours it out into a big, big bowl to eat.

Fox takes his spoon down to the porridge real slow, he lifts it up to his mouth just as slow and then as soon as it hits his tongue he says, "Oooh no, this is much too cold for me, Alligator. Why not put it out in the sun to warm up, huh?"

Alligator loves that. Make it even hotter. Great idea. Then it'll be so hot, Fox won't even be able to bear looking at it. He won't be crossing the river today, thinks Alligator, and he puts the porridge out in the sun.

Two hours later he brings it back in.

"Try that, Fox," says Alligator. He can hardly wait for the screams.

Down goes the spoon real slow, up it comes just as slow and then as soon as it hits Fox's tongue, he says, "Oooh no, it's still too cold. Put it out in the sun for a while more."

So out goes the porridge again, for three hours more. This porridge is going to be awful hot, thinks Alligator. Even I might find it tough getting it down me.

After all this time, the porridge is stone cold.

"I'll give it a try now," says Fox. "I just hope it's hotted up some."

Down goes the spoon real slow, up it comes just as slow and as soon as it hits Fox's tongue he says, "Hey, Alligator, now we are really cooking on all four burners. This is what I call hot. Just give me that

