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***The Book of the Beasts (translated by David Rosenthal)***  
**Ramon Llull**

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## THE BOOK OF THE BEASTS

RAMON LLULL

Here the seventh book, which treats of animals, begins:

Having bidden the philosopher farewell, Felix rode through a wooded glen blessed with many clear running brooks. As he was leaving this glen, he met two raggedly dressed men with long hair and beards. Felix saluted them, and they returned his greeting.

«Fair lords», asked Felix, «whence do you come and what is your order, for your attire shows that you must be in God's service.»

«Sir», replied the two men, «we come from afar and have just crossed a plain where many beasts have gathered to elect a king. We are Apostolic Brethren, and our rags and poverty signify the manner in which the apostles dwelt upon this earth.»

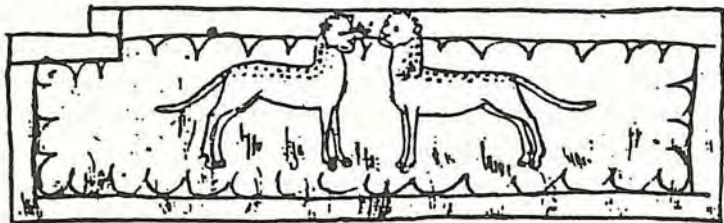
Marveling that the two men had become Apostolic Brethren, Felix said: «Members of your order, the loftiest in the world, should not fear death but show the true path to those infidels who dwell in darkness, just as God's doctrines should be taught through preaching and good works to errant Christians. Such men should preach and perform good deeds ceaselessly.»

«Sir», replied the two men, «though we lack the apostles' nobility, yet we imitate their holy ways through our vestments, our poverty, and our wanderings from land to land. We hope Our Lord will send saintly men to preach the Gospel, men whose wisdom and knowledge of tongues will help them convert infidels with His aid, and who will set a good example to other Christians through their lives and holy words, and that God may be moved to pity and that Christians may desire their coming, we seek to imitate the blessed apostles.»

Felix was moved by the men's words and, after they had all wept for a long time, he replied: «Alas, Lord Jesus! Where are

the apostles' holy fervor and devotion, for to love and know You they braved travails and death? Sweet Lord God, may it please You to send one who will lead the saintly life prefigured by these men.»

Having uttered these words, Felix commended the two men to God and set out for the plain where the animals had gathered.



## HOW THE KING WAS ELECTED

In a fair meadow through which a limpid stream flowed, many beasts had gathered to elect a king. Most favored the Lion, but the Bull opposed such a choice. «My lords», he said, «a king's lofty station demands the following traits: stature, humility, and respect for his fellow creatures. The Lion is not a towering beast, nor does he eat grass but rather devours other animals who do. The Lion's roar makes us quake with fear, wherefore I urge you to elect the Horse, who is lofty, fair, and humble. A swift beast, the Horse is neither haughty nor fond of fleash.»

The Deer, the Roe, the Ram and all the other grass-eating beasts were pleased by the Bull's words, but then Reynard the Fox rose and spoke in the following manner:

«My lords», said Reynard, «when God created the world, He did so not that man might be loved and known but rather that He might be loved and known by man, and likewise His intention was that man should be served by beasts, since man eats both plants and flesh. And you, my lords, should pay no attention to the Bull, who dislikes the Lion because he eats flesh, but rather respect God's ordinances, for He rules His creatures.»

But the Bull and his friends maintained that the Horse should be king because he ate grass. In fact, their words were just, nor did they speak in bad faith, for had they harbored ill will they would not have proposed the Horse, who ate the same food as they did. Neither should they had heeded Reynard, who spoke not in admiration of the Lion's nobility but because he ate what was left once the Lion had devoured his prey.

So many words were uttered on one side and the other that the entire assemblage was in an uproar, and the issue remained unresolved. Then the Bear, Leopard, and Lynx, who all hoped to

be elected, urged that the vote be postponed till they could determine which beast was most worthy of a royal crown. Understanding their ambitions, Reynard hastily replied:

«Once a group of canons met in a cathedral to elect a bishop, but the chapter was rent by a bitter dispute. Some canons favored the cathedral's sexton, who was a wise man of abundant virtue and vast learning. The archdeacon also hoped to be chosen, as did the precentor; and so these two proposed, instead of the sexton, an ordinary canon who, though handsome, was so ignorant, weak, and lascivious that no one believed he would make a good bishop. Then another canon rose and said: 'If the Lion is elected against the Bear's, Lynx's, and Leopard's wishes, there will be great enmity among them, and if the Horse is elected, how will he protect his subjects from one so much stronger?'»

Reynard's story filled the Bear, the Lynx, and the Leopard with such fear that they decided to support the Lion, and so great was the carnivores' might that the Lion was elected. The Lion then gave the carnivores leave to feed upon the beasts who ate grass.

One day the king summoned his lords to discuss the ordering of his court. He and his barons deliberated until nightfall, neither eating nor drinking, and when the parliament ended, they felt hungry and His Majesty asked the Wolf and Reynard if there was any food nearby. They replied that it was too late to go hunting, but that a calf, the Bull's son, and a colt, the Horse's son, were nearby and would certainly satisfy their needs. The Lion summoned the calf and the colt, who were promptly devoured. Enraged by their sons' deaths, the Bull and the Horse then called upon a man, whom they offered to serve in order to avenge the wrong their lord had done them. Accepting their service, the man mounted the Horse and set the Bull to work plowing.

One day the Horse and the Bull met, and each asked the other how he fared. The Horse said he had endure many ills, for he was constantly ridden and was his lord's prisoner day and

night. He now wished to be freed from such bondage and, indeed, would have happily submitted to the Lion again. But as the Lion was both king and a carnivore, the Horse feared to return home and preferred to toil for a man, who did not eat horsemeat, than to dwell with the Lion, who did.

When the Horse had told the Bull how he fared, the Bull replied that he did nothing but plow all day, nor did his master let him feed upon the wheat he cultivated, for when the weary Bull was at last unyoked, his lord forced him to eat the same grass that sheep and goats had already cropped. The Bull complained bitterly of his owner, and the Horse comforted him as best he could.

While the Bull and the Horse were conversing in this manner, a butcher came to see if the Bull was properly fattened, for his master had offered him for sale. The Bull told the Horse that if his master had his way, he would be slaughtered and eaten by other men, to which the Horse replied that it was a poor reward for all the service he had done him. After they had wept together for a long time, the Horse advised the Bull to flee and return to his homeland, as it was better to live amid perils and in fear of death than to serve an ungrateful lord.





## II

### THE KING'S COUNCIL

Having been elected king, the Lion made a fine speech to all his subjects: «Sirs, though it is your wish that I rule you, you all know my office is one of great dangers and travails. It is dangerous because a king's sins often incite God to plague a land with famine, illness, death, and wars, whereby the people are forced to pay for his misdeeds as for their own. And since a king must work hard to rule both himself and his subjects, I ask you all to choose counselors who may aid and advise me, thus assuring not only my safety but your own. Please select beasts who will be loyal, wise, and worthy of a monarch's trust and friendship.»

The lords and commoners all rejoiced in the king's words and, feeling they had done well to elect him, they chose the Bear, the Leopard, the Lynx, the Snake and the Wolf, who swore in everyone's presence to counsel their lord faithfully.

But then Reynard, feeling vexed at not having been selected, said: «In the Bible it is written that Christ, who is King of Heaven and earth, befriended and sought the company of simple and humble men whom He chose as apostles, trusting that His virtue would exalt them. I believe that you have erred, as our king should have counselors who are modest, who will not exult in their power and lineage or haughtily seek to be their sovereign's equals, and who will be examples of hope and humility to all beasts who eat grass.»

The Elephant, the Boar, the Billygoat, the Ram and the other herbivores all applauded Reynard's words and advised the king to include him in his council, for he always spoke with great wisdom and eloquence, while Reynard, for his part, urged His Majesty also to select the Elephant, the Boar, the Billygoat and the Ram.



The Bear, the Leopard, and the Lynx were distressed to think Reynard might sit with them on the king's council, since they feared that Reynard, who was cunning and persuasive, would turn their Lord against them, and still more as it was Reynard who had most urged the Lion's election.

«Sire», said the Leopard, «the Cock, who dwells in your court, is handsome, wise, and experienced in the rule of hens. At dawn his song rings out sweet and clear. Surely he deserves a seat on your council more than Reynard.»

The Elephant also pleaded the Cock's case, since he would both show the king how to rule his queen and wake him for his morning prayers, but he said Reynard should be a counselor too, for he was clever and skilled in many arts.

Then the Leopard declared that no king should have two mortal enemies on his council, lest their ill will disrupt his deliberations. Reynard replied that the king should have large and handsome advisors like the Elephant, the Boar, the Billygoat, the Ram, and the Deer, as a monarch should always be surrounded by beauty.

The Lion wanted Reynard and his allies to join the court, and so it might have been had the Leopard not secretly approached his king and said: «Sire, a count once made war upon a king, and, unable to match his power, he resorted to trickery and bribed the king's scribe to tell him all his master's plans. Thus did the scribe check his monarch's might and prevent him from winning his war with the count.»

When the Leopard had finished and the Lion had grasped the significance of his tale, he declared that the Cock would be his counselor instead of Reynard, lest he tell the herbivores what their king and his companions planned to do.

### III

#### HOW REYNARD PLOTTED TO BETRAY HIS KING

Reynard and his friends raged at their exclusion from the king's council, and at that point Reynard began to harbor treasonous thoughts. Desiring the king's death, he told the Elephant: «Henceforth there will be great enmity between carnivores and herbivores, for all the Lion's councilors eat flesh, whereas you have no one to defend your interests before His Majesty.»

The Elephant said the Snake and the Cock might defend them, since they ate no flesh. Reynard replied that once upon a time a Christian had trusted a Saracen in his service and done his utmost to please him, but that the Saracen, being of a hostile faith, hated his master and plotted to slay him.

«Therefore, Sir Elephant», said Reynard the Fox, «you should realize that the Snake and Cock, though they eat no flesh, are not creatures of your sort and do not merit your trust, nor will they speak up when they see your friends abused.»

Feeling troubled by Reynard's words, the Elephant pondered all the harm the new king and his councilors might do the hervivores. While the Elephant was considering these matters, Reynard told him to fret no more, for if he wished to be king, he could rely on his aid, but the Elephant feared that Reynard would betray him, since he was a carnivore himself, and replied:

«It once happened that a hermit, seeing a kite with a rat in its beak, prayed that the rat might fall into his lap. God heeded his supplications and made the kite drop the rat, whereupon the hermit asked Him to change the rat into a fair damsel. This having been done, the hermit asked: 'My daughter, would you like to marry the sun?' 'No, my lord', she replied, 'for clouds may eclipse the sun's brilliance'. Then the hermit asked if she would have the moon, but she replied that the moon merely took

its light from the sun. 'Fair daughter, would you like to marry a cloud?' Again she declined, for winds bore the clouds whither they listed. Neither did she wish to marry the wind, as mountains might check its flow, nor would she wed the mountains, since rats burrowed within them, or a man, for men often killed rats. Finally the damsel asked the hermit to pray God to make her a rat again and to give her another handsome rat as a husband».

Upon hearing this tale, Reynard, who now realized that the Elephant suspected him, wished that he had asked the Boar, whom the Elephant himself had nominated. All the same, lest more animals learn of his treacherous plans, he persisted and said: «Once a knight and his lady had a handsome son. It happened that this lady died and the knight remarried, but his second wife hated the son as much as his father loved him. When the son had reached the age of twenty, the lady began plotting to rid herself of him and told her husband that his son had made advances to her. The knight loved his lady so much that he believed everything she said and threw his son out the house, ordering him never again to appear before him. The son felt very angry at his father, who had banished him for no reason and denied him his blessing».

The Elephant's courage was somewhat fortified by this parable. Hoping to become king, he asked Reynard how they might slay their monarch, since the Lion was mighty and well counseled, whereas Reynard was small and weak.

Reynard replied with another fable: «Once, in a far-off land, all the animals decided to give one beast a day to the lion, who they hoped would therefore hunt them no more, and the lion agreed. Every day they drew lots, and the animal chosen appeared before the lion, who would then devour him. One day a hare was chosen, but he did not visit the lion until midday, as his fear of death was great. The lion, who was very hungry, felt most vexed at this delay and asked the hare why he had tarried so long. The hare apologized, saying there was another lion nearby who had declared himself king of those parts and had tried to catch

him. The lion then grew much angrier and, believing the hare's words, asked to see this other lion. The hare led the way and the lion followed him to a big reservoir surrounded by a wall. When they had climbed the wall and saw their reflections in the water, the hare said: 'My lord, do you see that lion who is about to devour a hare?'

The lion, thinking his reflection was real, leapt into the water to do battle with his rival, whereupon he drowned and was slain by the hare's cunning ruse.»

After hearing this story, the Elephant told one of his own: «A king had two noble pages in his court, and one day, as he sat upon his throne before many knights and barons, one of the pages noticed a flea upon His Majesty's white samite cape. The page asked if he might remove it, the king gave him leave to do so, and the page plucked the flea from his master's garment. His Highness then asked to see it and showed it to his knights, marveling that such a tiny bug would dare to approach a monarch. The king gave this page a hundred bezants, but the other page, envious of his companion's good fortune, on the morrow placed a big louse upon His Majesty's cape and spoke as his friend had. The page gave the louse to His Majesty, who then cursed him, said he deserved to die for not keeping his robes free of lice, and ordered that he be given a hundred lashes.»

Reynard saw that the Elephant was afraid to be king and, amazed that so huge a beast could also be so timorous, he said: «They say the serpent who tempted Eve, though she was merely one woman, brought God's wrath down upon Adam and all his descendants. Well, if that serpent did so much evil with Eve, surely I, through my cunning wiles, can bring the people's wrath down upon their king.»

The Elephant then gave his consent and said he would gladly be king if Reynard could kill the Lion. Reynard replied that he would arrange it and the Elephant promised him great rewards and honors in return.



## HOW REYNARD BECAME THE KING'S GATEKEEPER

The king appointed the Cat as his chamberlain and the Dog as his gatekeeper. The Cat was chosen because he would eat the mice that nibbled His Majesty's clothes and also because he resembled the Lion, while the Dog, with his keen hearing, would bark and let his master know he had visitors. When the Cat and Dog had been installed in their offices, Reynard went to look for the Horse and Bull, who had left their king. On his way, Reynard met the Bull, who was returning to the Lion's court. They lay down in a fair meadow, and, after greeting each other warmly, the Bull told Reynard what had become of him: that he had freely entered a man's service and had toiled for him day after day, but that his master had tried to sell him to a butcher who wished to slaughter him. Reynard then told the Bull how things stood at the Lion's court.

«Lord Bull», Reynard asked, «what do you intend to do?»

The Bull said he planned to rejoin the king's court and to flee the man who had thought to sell him, to which Reynard replied: «A land was ruled by a wicked and ill-counseled king, whose sins had brought God's wrath and many sorrows upon his subjects. At last the people could bear such wrongdoing no longer and began plotting to kill their sovereign and his council.»

The Bull understood from Reynard's words that the Lion and his advisors were wicked, and he wondered whether to submit to their rule. Then Reynard said: «In a city, there was a bishop who did not deserve his office and who, through his malice, his dishonesty, and the bad example he set before his chapter and the populace, did much evil, though had he imitated Christ's apostles and behaved as he should, such harm might have been averted. One day this bishop, having done someone a

great wrong, went to say Mass, and one of his canons, appalled by the bishop's foul deeds, left the city and went to live among shepherds in the wild, saying it was better to dwell among pastors who protect their sheep from wolves than to serve a pastor who slew his sheep and fed them to the wolves.»

When the Bull had heard this story, he told Reynard that he would sooner leave his homeland than serve such a wicked king and council.

«Lord Bull», replied Reynard, «have you heard the story about the ermit who put a question to his king?»

«What question was that?» asked the Bull.

Reynard replied that a hermit had dwelt upon a mountain, where every day people told him of their country's wicked king, who was a sinful man and a bad ruler and against whose wrongdoing they cried out. Displeased by His Majesty's evil deeds, the hermit pondered how he might induce him to mend his ways. Finally the good man left his hermitage and entered a fair city where the king dwelt. «Sire», the holy man asked, «what do you think is more pleasing to God: to live as a hermit or to be a monarch who rules his people well and wisely?». His Majesty thought for a long time before answering, but at last he declared that a king whose works are good is better than a hermit. «Sire» said the hermit, «I hold myself well served by your reply, which shows that an evil king does more harm than the good a hermit can do in his hermitage. Therefore I have left my abode and come to your court, where I intend to stay until you and your kingdom are well and justly governed». The hermit stayed for a long time with the King, praising God and leading the monarch to mend his ways.

When Reynard had finished his story, he added: «Lord Bull, you resemble that hermit, and if you wish, I shall tell you how to induce our king, who is your lord and mine, to act righteously, whereby you will do a great deal of good.»

Once the Bull had promised to do his utmost to assure both

the king's and his subjects' well-being, Reynard told him to abide and graze in a fair meadow near the Lion's court. When he was sleek and fat, he was to begin to bellow: «And Lord Bull, when you are big and strong, bellow thrice each day and thrice each night, and meanwhile I shall speak of your case to the king.»

The Bull promised to follow Reynard's instructions, and Reynard returned to court.

When the Bull felt strong enough, he began to bellow. Reynard then went to visit His Majesty, who was so dismayed that he could not keep from quaking and felt ashamed to think his barons would notice his cowardice. While the Lion trembled with fear, though none of his councilors saw it, Reynard approached him. The Cock crowed and the Dog barked to warn His Highness, who was pleased to see Reynard and asked if he knew what beast was making such a noise, for his voice showed that he must be huge and mighty.

«Sire», replied Reynard, «once a minstrel hung his tambourine from a tree in a valley, and the wind blew it against the branches so that a mighty din arose and echoed through the countryside. There was a monkey in that valley who heard the noise and approached it, thinking that since the tumult was so great, the tambourine must be full of butter or something else good to eat, but upon tearing the tambourine from the tree, he found there was nothing in it. Likewise, sire», said Reynard to the Lion, «you may suppose that such a noise comes from some trail and empty beast. Rouse your ardor, for no king should feel afraid, and still less without knowing precisely what it is he fears.»

While Reynard was speaking, the Bull bellowed so loudly that the entire court resounded and the Lion and his friends shook with fright. The king could scarcely keep from betraying his terror and said that if such a beast was anything like his voice, it would be a black day for the kingdom. Then the Bull bellowed again and everyone trembled, but Reynard acted as carefree and



cheerful as before. Amazed by his demeanor when the others were so dismayed, the king asked: «Reynard, why are you not afraid of so strange and dreadful a voice? You can see that I, the Bear, the Leopard and many others stronger than you are most alarmed.»

Reynard replied: «Once a crow made her nest on a cliff, and every year a huge serpent ate all her children. Although the crow raged against the serpent, she feared to attack her foe, whom she felt too weak to best in equal combat, wherefore she instead pondered how to slay him through guile. One day the princess of that kingdom, who was frolicking with some other damsels in a garden, hung her gold and silver coronet adorned with jewels on the limb of a tree. The crow plucked it from the limb and bore it through the air until a great crowd began to chase her to see where she would drop the coronet, which the princess loved dearly and wept to think of losing. At last the crow dropped it near the serpent's lair, and when the crowd went to retrieve it, they saw the serpent and killed him. Thus, through cunning, the crow was able to best her foe, and likewise», said Reynard to the Lion, «though I might not be able to slay that beast with the dreadful voice, I should certainly find some clever way to make an end of him.»

As soon as Reynard had told his story, the Snake, who was among the king's counselors, began another: «A heron, who lived by a lake in which he often fished, grew so old that he frequently lost his prey, but by trying to compensate for his debility through cunning, he lost his very life.»

The Lion asked the Snake to explain how this had happened.

«Sire», replied the Snake, «the heron spent a whole day sulking upon the shore of that lake. A crab, seeing that the heron did not fish as was his wont, asked the cause of his despondency. Weeping, the heron explained that he pitied the fish with whom he had lived for so many years and mourned their imminent demise, as two fishermen were fishing in another telse but would

soon visit that one: 'And they are so crafty that no fish will escape them'. Terrified by these words, the crab hastened to tell the fish, who all went to the heron and asked his advice. 'The only solution', he replied, 'is for me to take you one by one to another lake one league hence. Since that lake is muddy and full of reeds, they will be unable to catch you'. All the fish approved his words, and every day the heron took as many as he liked, pretending he was going to bear them to the other lake, but in fact he landed on a hill, and after eating the fish, he returned to the lake for more. This scheme lasted a long time, during which the heron saved himself the trouble of fishing, but one day the crab asked to be taken to the other lake. The heron stretched his neck, the crab grasped it with his claws, and they set out together, but the crab was surprised to see no lake below them. As they approached the hill, the crab saw a pile of fishbones and, realizing that the heron had tricked his friends, he thought to himself: 'Save yourself from this scoundrel while you can!' He then squeezed the heron's neck until it broke and the bird fell down dead, whereupon the crab returned to his companions, whom he told how the heron had deceived them and paid for his treachery».

«Sire», said Reynard, «when God expelled Adam from Paradise, He cursed the serpent who had tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, and since then all snakes have been hideous, venomous, and the cause of every ill, wherefore a wise man once made a king expel a snake he favored from his council».

The Lion asked Reynard to explain what had happened.

«Sire», replied Reynard, «a king summoned a holy man whose wisdom he had often heard praised. The sage went before the king, who asked him to become his counselor, correcting any vices he might behold and helping him to rule his kingdom. The holy man consented, promising to encourage good deeds and cry out against bad ones. One day the king convened his council to discuss a great event that had taken place, and near him was a serpent, his most trusted counselor. Seeing the serpent near his

Majesty, the holy man asked what the word 'king' signifies. The monarch replied: 'A king is God's representative; that is, he must behave justly and govern those God has entrusted to him'. 'My lord', asked the sage, 'what beast most defied God when the world was created?' The king replied that it was the serpent. 'Sire', said the holy man, 'according to your reply, you should slay the serpent, and you commit a great sin by letting him abide in your court, for if you, as a king, represent God on earth, you should dislike what God dislikes and abhor what He most abhors.' The king took this advice and killed the serpent, whose guile and cunning availed him nought.»

As soon as Reynard had finished, the Bull bellowed so loudly that the entire place shook. Seeing the Lion and his friends so terrified, Reynard asked if the king would like him to find out what manner of beast had made such a strange noise and whether he might be induced to come before His Majesty. The Lion and the others readily agreed, and Reynard asked the king to promise that if he could bring the beast to his court, no harm or villainy would befall him. Once the king had consented before all his councilors, Reynard went to the fair meadow where the Bull dwelt. After they had greeted each other courteously, Reynard described everything he had done.

«Dear friend», Reynard said, «when you see the king, approach him humbly and submissively while I tell him of your contrition, and then apologize for serving a man and promise never again to leave his court. Likewise, my friend, speak and behave in such fashion that your words and gestures will please the king and his counselors. Tell His Majesty about men, and advise him to befriend their king.»

Reynard and the Bull then went to the Lion's court, where everyone recognized the Bull and blushed to have behaved so cravenly, while the king marveled that a bull's voice could be so loud and frightening. The Bull knelt before his king, who asked how he had fared, whereupon his guest recounted all his

tribulation in man's service. The Lion said he was amazed at the change in the Bull's voice, to which the Bull replied that he had bellowed with fear and contrition, as he had used the king ill in forsaking him for another master, and since his heart had trembled with fear and remorse, his voice had changed, signifying fright and dread, for it came from a body filled with terror and repentance. The Bull asked the king's forgiveness, which he granted before his court. Then the Lion asked him how the King of Men lived, to which the Bull replied that a snake had told the truth, for the worst and falsest beast on earth was certainly man. The Lion then asked why the snake had said so.

«Sire», replied the Bull, «once upon a time a bear, a raven, a man and a snake fell into a deep pit. A blessed hermit, who was passing by, looked down and saw the four of them trapped there. They all begged the hermit for help, and each promised to reward him richly, so he pulled out the bear, the raven, and the snake, but once he had done so, the snake told him to leave the man where he was, since if he succored him his guerdon would be bitter indeed. The hermit, however, refused to heed this warning and helped the man as well. The bear then brought the hermit a beehive full of honeycombs, and once the hermit had eaten, he set out for a city where he wished to preach. As he was entering it, the raven brought him a precious coronet he had plucked from the princess's head. The hermit rejoiced to possess it, for it was worth a great deal of money. Meanwhile, a crier went through the city promising a reward to anyone who found the coronet and threatening whoever hid it with the direst of punishments. After finding the street where the man he had rescued dwelt and worked as a silversmith, the hermit asked him to keep the coronet, but instead the man bore it to court, where he accused the hermit of theft. The holy man was then arrested, beaten, and thrown into a dungeon, while the snake he had saved crept into the princess's chamber as she slept and bit her hand. The princess cried out and wept, for her hand was very swollen, and the king,

distressed by his daughter's illness, sent criers to offer a great reward to anyone who could cure her. As the king was sleeping, the snake approached him and whispered in his ear that in his dungeon lived a man whose herbs could save the princess. In fact, the snake himself had given them to the hermit, telling him to place them on the princess's hand and to ask the king to punish the silversmith, who had repaid his kindness with such recreant treachery. So it was done, whereby the hermit was freed and the silversmith duly chastised.»

The Lion and his councilors were all impressed by this tale, and His Majesty said that it seemed they should beware the King of Men, to which the Bull replied that it was better not to vex him, for no beast can defeat a man, who is wicked, strong, and crafty.

Upon hearing these words, the king fell into a study, and Reynard, beholding his fear of the King of Men, said: «Sire, man is the haughtiest and greediest of beasts, wherefore, if you and your councilors approve, it would be wise to send ambassadors to the King of Men, whom they should inform of the good will you bear him and offer presents in your name, for thus the king will love both you and your subjects.»

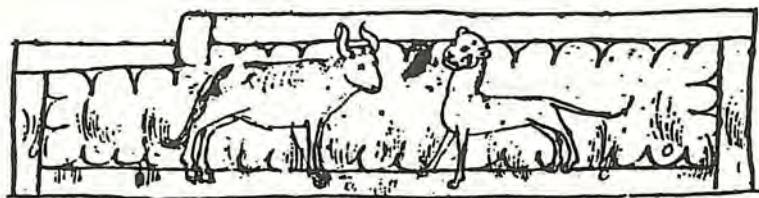
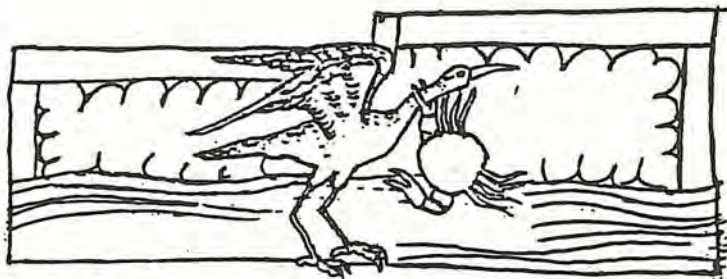
The king and most of his councilors held this advice good, but the Cock replied: «Once Force and Guile held a debate before a king, since Force claimed that it was superior to Guile, which maintained the contrary. Hoping to see which one deserved precedence over the other, the king bade them joust, and Guile bested Force. Therefore, my lord», said the Cock, «if you befriend the King of Men, sending ambassadors and receiving others in return, his vassals will see that neither you nor your barons have the skill or cunning to defend yourselves against men, who, by using both, always conquer those who possess only strength.»

Reynard retorted that God acts through strength and not

skill or cunning, wherefore those who battle with God's arms will always be victorious.

Persuaded by Reynard's argument, the king persisted in sending gifts and ambassadors to the King of Men, and he asked which gifts and which lords would be best. Reynard replied that the Bull should tell them, as he knew men's customs and what would most please them. Once the king had promised to heed his counsel, the Bull said: «Sire, since men always send their noblest lords as ambassadors, you should appoint the Lynx and Leopard. Moreover, the king will deem it a great favor if you send the Cat and Dog as gifts, for the Cat was created in your image, the Dog is a fine hunter, and all men derive great pleasure from hunting».

As soon as the Bull had spoken, the Lion named the Lynx and Leopard as his ambassadors and told them to bear the Dog and Cat to the King of Men. Once they had set out, His Majesty made the Bull his chamberlain and Reynard his gatekeeper.





OF THE AMBASSADORS THE LION SENT  
TO THE KING OF MEN

That the Leopard and Lynx might know to behave, the Lion instructed them in the following manner: «A lord's wisdom is revealed by ambassadors who speak and counsel wisely and courteously, while a lord's nobility is manifested by well dressed and well bred ambassadors, whose retinue should also be properly attired, nor should avarice, gluttony, lust, pride, wrath or any other vice abide among them. A noble sovereign's representatives must possess these and many other qualities if they hope to please the king to whom they are sent.»

Once the Lion had taught his ambassadors how to speak and behave, they set out and journeyed through many lands till at last they reached the city where the King of Men's parliament met. As they entered the town, they spied a brothel full of prostitutes sinning in public view. The ambassadors were astounded, and the Leopard told his friends:

«A burgher who loved his wife dearly possessed an inn near his house, and he rented a room in this inn to a prostitute. Beholding all the men who called upon the harlot, the wife was overcome by lust and began to herself. This continued for a long time, but at last the burgher discovered her. Seeing his rage at her infidelity, the woman quickly declared: 'Once two wild bulls fought so furiously in a meadow that each drew blood from the other's brow, and as the blood dripped onto the grass, a fox lapped it up. The bulls charged each other with such force that the fox was caught between them and, gored by the two rivals, he died of his wounds, saying that he himself had been responsible for his demise'.»

«Sir Leopard», said the Dog, «I marvel that these men, who



believe in God, feel no pangs of conscience about the prostitutes sinning with those who enter and leave the city. It seems that the lord of this land and his subjects are as shameless as dogs in heat.»

As the Dog spoke these words, they entered the city and, after settling in an inn, the Leopard and the Lynx bore the king their gifts.

The ambassadors had to wait many days before they were granted an audience by the king, who thereby sought to impress his guests, who for their part chafed at such idleness. On one occasion they waited all day outside his door without gaining entrance. A man who had been slandered and had also waited a long time for an audience said: «God is humble, although He rules Heaven, earth, and all creation, for any man who wishes to address and see Him may tell Him all his woes. The King of Heaven has no servants to be bribed, nor will His counselors lie and sin for money. Neither does He love flattery or appoint haughty vainglorious, greedy, lustful, and slanderous magistrates, bailiffs, and lawyers. Blessed be such a king and all who love, know, honor, and serve Him!»

Thus the ambassadors learned that the King of Men was corrupt and wicked, and the Lynx told the Leopard: «A certain monarch, who contemplated giving his daughter to another king, secretly sent a knight to inquire about her suitor's customs. The knight asked both peasants and townspeople what their lord was like, and they all spoke ill of him. One day the knight met two minstrels who had just sung before His Majesty, who had rewarded them with money and rich apparel. The knight asked about the king's character, and they replied with words of praise, saying he was generous, a good hunter, a lover of women and much else besides. From such praise and the people's curses, the knight learned that the king was an evil man of low habits. Upon returning home, he repeated what he had heard to his lord, who decided not to give away his daughter, for his conscience warned him not to entrust her to a man of foul character.»

Once the ambassadors were before the king, they gave him the Lion's gifts, along with a letter containing words of the following tenor: «In a province lived a king who ruled many strong and worthy barons, and this monarch, that his lords might fear him and that peace and justice might rule his lands, allied himself with the emperor, who loved the king for his gifts and noble ways, nor did the king's vassals dare to disobey his orders for fear of the emperor. Therefore the king's barons were submissive and peace filled his kingdom».

When the King of Men had read the letter and accepted the gifts, he gave the Cat to a weaver and the Dog to a knight who liked to hunt. The ambassadors were greatly affronted that the king should give the Cat to one so lowly, since the Cat had been chosen because he resembled the Lion. When they returned to their inn after a long talk with the king, the Dog visited them and said he was sorely vexed at having to serve the knight, who would use him to hunt the Lion's subjects and thus oblige him to betray his lord.

One day the king invited the ambassadors to a great feast in a splendid hall, where the royal couple, their guests, and many knights and ladies dined. As they ate, strolling minstrels played and sang songs contrary to good morals, praising what should be blamed and blaming what should be praised, while everyone laughed and rejoiced in their music.

In the middle of this gaiety, a raggedly dressed man with a long beard entered and spoke these words to the king, his queen, and their vassals: «Let no one, great or small, who is here today forget that God created the diverse and delicious creatures you devour, which have been brought from afar to serve you that you, in turn, may serve God. Let neither king nor queen think that God does not behold their wickedness and shame in this hall, where He is dishonored and where praise and blame are unjustly accorded, nor is God thanked for the honor He bestowed upon you by making you mighty lords.»

When the good man had uttered these words, a wise squire knelt before the king, whom he asked to appoint him to praise what should be praised and blame what should be named in his court. The king refused lest the squire attack his vices, which he intended to pursue till the end of his days, only repenting upon his deathbed.

Meanwhile, the city's chief magistrate approached the king with a man who had unjustly slain a knight. The king sentenced the murderer to be hanged, upon which the man exclaimed: «Sire, God forgives those who beg Him for mercy! I ask you, who represent God on earth, to likewise forgive me, and you should do so that God may forgive you too.»

The king replied: «God, who is clement, acts justly in pardoning those who sin unwittingly or by accident and then humbly confess their wrongdoing, but His mercy would be abused if He forgave those who sin deliberately, planning later to repent of their misdeeds, and since you murdered that knight intentionally in the hope that I would pardon you, you deserve no pity.»

The ambassadors saw that the king contradicted what he had told the squire in denying him the office he had requested.

When everyone had feasted, the ambassadors returned to their inn, discussing the king's splendor, his wealth, and his many vassals, as well as men's folly, for God was not feared among them. Upon their arrival, they found the innkeeper weeping.

«Sir innkeeper», asked the ambassadors, «why do you weep?»

«My lords», replied the man, «in this city the king held a great parliament, to which he summoned many people from afar. Having spent a great sum of money to entertain them, His Majesty has now decided to tax our city, and I must pay a thousand silver coins, which I shall have to borrow from Jews.»

«But good sir», asked the ambassadors, «has the king no treasury?»

The innkeeper replied that the king, possessing nothing, was forced to borrow from those he ruled. Every time he held a

parliament, which was twice a year, he spent fabulous sums and levied new taxes upon his subjects, whom he ruined and undid through his lavish expenditures.

«My friend», asked the Lynx, «what good do these parliaments do?»

The innkeeper replied that they did nothing but harm, impoverishing the kingdom and driving men to dishonesty, wherefore the people cursed their king, who could not live within his means and who stole from some and rewarded others. When he summoned men to parliament, they thought he had some tidings to impart or some weighty matter to discuss, but in fact he said nothing and they left feeling ill-used, mocking and pouring scorn upon their natural lord.

Hearing these words, the ambassadors were filled with contempt for the king and all men, and the Leopard said: «Woe unto this land, whose ruler gives it neither peace nor justice!»

«My lord», replied the innkeeper, «a wicked monarch does inestimable harm, first by his evil deeds and secondly by the good ones he fails to perform. This king to whom you have been sent relies too much upon his counselors: recreant, base, and sinful knaves all plotting to replace their master. Together they ruin his subjects, while the king cares for nothing but hunting, merriment, fornication, and other vanities.»

The next morning our ambassadors returned to the palace, where they had to bribe the gatekeepers in order to speak with His Majesty, who honored the Leopard more than the Lynx, showing him more respect and seating him nearer the royal throne. The Lynx felt jealous and angry, for the thought he deserved as much or more attention. While the ambassadors were with His Highness, eight notables arrived from four cities that had sent them to complain of the king's corrupt officials. The notables asked the king, on behalf of all the cities' inhabitants, to replace the officials, and the king referred them to his council, which he said would attend to their grievances. Once the eight notables

had presented their case to the council, the king's advisors reproved and insulted them, for among the councilors were friends of the officials who knew what they did and shared the money they extorted. The eight notables were forced to return home unsatisfied.

«Sire», asked the Leopard, «what do you wish me to tell my king?»

The monarch told him to salute his lord and tell him to send a bear and wolf, as he possessed a fierce boar he wished to pit against a mighty bear and a mastiff that he hoped to match with the Lion's most vicious wolf. The ambassadors then took their leave of the king and set out for home, feeling so rely vexed with their host, who had offered no gifts and seemed to wish to subjugate their lord.

On their way, they met the eight notables, who had departed full of rage at the king and his council. They walked along together, speaking ill of the king, his counselors, and his wicked ways till at last the Leopard asked the men: «My lords, do you blame the king for the harm his evil rule does?»

One of the men replied: «In a city dwelt a rich and noble burgher who bequeathed all his wealth to his son. This son was besieged by a multitude of people. Some offered him their daughters, while other urged him to join an order, but the lad wished to sell all he possessed and to build a bridge and a hospice. The hospice would welcome pilgrims who came from overseas, while the bridge would keep them from drowning in a nearby river where many had perished on their way to and from the holy city of Jerusalem. When the bridge and hospice were completed, one night the lad dreamt that God would reward his good deeds.»

The Leopard then understood that the king would roast in Hell for his wickedness and the harm he and his council did. Their torment would be unspeakable, and the Leopard thought that he would sooner be a brute beast without an immortal soul than that King of Men, whose guilt was equal to all the evil he

did. The ambassadors and notables parted with many courteous words, and the Leopard advised them to pray God for a worthy king, counselors, and officials, for He would not suffer a wicked sovereign to long endure.

As soon as the ambassadors had departed with their gifts for the King of Men, Reynard, who was now the royal gatekeeper, declared that the Leopard's wife was the fairest beast on earth. He praised the Leopardess so much that the Lion fell in love with her and forced her to share his despite his queen and counselors, who all feared Reynard, seeing that he had persuaded their lord to betray his good wife and his faithful servant the Leopard.

«Friend», the Bull told Reynard, «I fear the Leopard may slay you when he learns that you persuaded the king to rape his wife.»

Reynard replied: «Once a lady-in-waiting betrayed the queen she served, but fearing the lady's intimacy with her husband, the queen dared not avenge herself.»

When the ambassadors had arrived home and delivered their message, the Leopard returned to his house, where he expected to find his beloved spouse. The Weasel and his other servants grieved to see their master, whom they told how the king had dishonored him, forcing the Leopardess to betray her marriage vows. The Leopard furiously asked if his wife was happy or sad that the king had taken her into his service.

«My lord», replied the Weasel, «she was greatly vexed by the king's lustful importunities and wept bitterly, lamenting her separation from one she cherished above all others.»

The Leopard's rage then waxed even greater, as his wife had been abducted against her will, whereas if she had gone willingly, he would have been less wroth, and he began plotting to avenge the king's treachery.



## VI

### THE DUEL BETWEEN THE LYNX AND THE LEOPARD

When Reynard saw the Leopard enter the king's court, he whispered to his master: «Sire, your fornication with the Leopardess has made her husband my enemy, and I fear that he will slay me unless you honor me above all others and keep me at your side.»

The Lion made Reynard one of his councilors and seated him near the throne, wherefore the Leopard dared not attack or kill his foe, while the Peacock, whose hearing was as keen as the Dog's, replaced Reynard as His Majesty's royal gatekeeper. All the king's councilors and barons were displeased by these changes, but especially the Leopard, who knew Reynard had caused him to lose his wife.

The Leopard then went before the Lion and his great lords, in whose presence he accused His Majesty of treacherously and deceitfully stealing his spouse. The Leopard declared that if any baron wished to defend the king, he would fight him in single combat until he confessed the truth. The Leopard offered his gage to the king, who, enraged by this accusation and ashamed to be called such names, asked his barons: «Who will defend me against such a charge?»

At first no one spoke, but finally Reynard replied: «God abhors treachery, and a nation is dishonored when its king is thus accused. Since the Leopard has shamed his lord and offered to risk his life to sustain his charges, any baron who defends our king will win glory and great rewards.»

The Lynx, both to protect his sovereign's good name and because he was still angry that the Leopard had been honored more than himself by the King of Men, accepted the challenge, but his conscience was uneasy, for he knew the king had betrayed and abused his loyal servant.



Once the two beasts had taken the field, everyone said: «Now we shall see which is victorious: truth or falsehood.»

The Cock asked the Snake who he thought would win, to which the Snake replied: «In such battles, truth should confound and discomfit falsehood, and as God is truth, liars defy both God and truth.»

Though the Snake spoke only to the Cock, the Lynx and Leopard overheard him. The Leopard felt comforted, but the Lynx's conscience was sorely troubled and he feared that he would die or be dishonored for the king's sin.

The duel lasted until dusk, and although the Lynx fought valiantly, his conscience kept him from slaying his foe, whereas the Leopard was emboldened by the thought that his cause was just and, whenever his forces flagged, his righteous wrath revived him. In the end he slew his foe to the king's great dismay, while his subjects felt ashamed of their lord's humiliation.

So great was the Lion's fury that he could not keep himself from killing the Leopard, who was too exhausted to defend himself properly. Everyone disapproved of the king's wrongdoing and fervently longed for another master, as it is dangerous to be ruled by a slanderous, vengeful, and treacherous king.

After brooding angrily all night, the Lion summoned his council in the morning and asked if he should send the King of Men a bear and a wolf.

«Sire», replied the Snake, who was the king's wisest counselor, «many bears and wolves dwell in your kingdom and you can choose among them as you like.»

Reynard then declared that the King of Men was the mightiest and noblest monarch on earth: «Wherefore you should send the wisest and strongest animals you can find, last you incur your ally's wrath and ill will.»

The Lion asked Reynard to name the wisest and strongest bear and wolf in his kingdom, to which Reynard replied that they were surely the ones in his court.

The king took his advice, nor did the Bear and the Wolf protest, for they were too honorable, and in addition they feared to be accused of cowardice. Then Reynard said that, since the Lion would offer his noblest subjects to the King of Men, he should likewise send his wisest councilor to present the gifts. Deeming this advice sound, the king made the Snake his ambassador.

Before setting out, the Snake said: «Once a fox was walking through a fair meadow and spied a piece of liver, but a hook had been placed therein by a fisherman who hoped to catch him. Refusing to touch it, the fox said: 'This liver will bring me nothing but perils and tribulations'.»

The Lion, who was now in a state of sin and lacked his former acuity, failed to grasp the Snake's meaning and asked him to explain his story. The Snake replied that perils and travails had plagued their court ever since Reynard and the Bull had joined it, for by honoring them the king had caused his own troubles.

Hearing the Snake thus accuse him, the Bull assured the king that he wished him no harm but rather sought to preserve his honor, knowing that although he was good to eat the Lion had refrained from devouring him. Then the Bull told his lord how Reynard had advised him to bellow thrice daily and thrice nightly and to join the king's court, where he hoped to be the cause of many good deeds.

These words angered Reynard, who began to resent the Bull. One day when it had snowed heavily and was very cold, so that the court had no food and everyone was very hungry, the Lion asked Reynard if there was anything to eat. Reynard replied that he did not know, but he promised to ask the Peacock if he had heard any beasts nearby that the king and his friends might dine on. The Peacock trembled with fear at the sight of Reynard, who said that if the king asked whether there was some animal about who might be eaten, he should reply that the Bull's breath stank, showing that he was ill and would shortly die. Both for fear of

Reynard and because the Bull shared the grain he ate, the Peacock followed these instructions and helped bring about the Bull's death.

Hearing the Peacock's words, the Lion longed to eat the Bull, but he was troubled by certain qualms, as he had sworn to protect his vassal, who had served and trusted him. Seeing His Majesty hesitate, Reynard urged him not to fret about the Bull, whose life in any case would not last long, and moreover it was God's will that a king should have his needs satisfied by his subjects. The Lion replied that he could not break faith with the Bull, whom he had promised to protect.

«Sire», asked Reynard, «will you eat the Bull if he frees you from your oath?»

The Lion promised to do so.

Then Reynard approached the Crow, who was also hungry, and said: «The Lion is ravenous, and I shall see to it that he kills the Bull, who is so big and fat that we all shall eat our fill, but if you hear His Majesty say he is hungry, offer yourself to him. Have no fear, for I shall defend you and he always heeds my counsel, and likewise, if you see me offer myself to His Majesty, tell him my flesh is bitter and unwholesome.»

Having told the Crow what to say, Reynard went to see the Bull, whom he informed that the Peacock had advised the Lion to eat him, as his breath stank, thus showing that he would shortly die. Alarmed by these words, the Bull said the peasant had been right to speak as he did to the knight.

«What do you mean?» asked Reynard.

«A rich peasant who craved honor gave his daughter in marriage to a poor knight who desired riches, but since honor draws riches to it, the peasant gained no honor while the knight now had not only honor but much of the peasant's wealth. Thus was the peasant left with neither money nor honor, although the knight now possessed both. Then the peasant declared that when a man of his station treats with a knight, the knight's honor

increases, as does the peasant's poverty. Likewise», said the Bull, «when a bull associates with a lion, the former finds death while the latter enjoys a good meal.»

Reynard replied that the Lion had sworn to protect the Bull and would never betray him, wherefore the Bull should offer himself to his lord, who out of gratitude would be all the more loath to slay him. «And furthermore, I shall preserve you from all villainy an wrongdoing.»

Once Reynard had arranged everything to his satisfaction, he went before the Lion with the Bull and the Crow. The Crow said that, as he knew His Majesty was hungry, he was ready to be eaten by his natural lord, but Reynard defended him, saying his flesh was unworthy of a monarch. Then Reynard made the same offer, saying he could give no one but himself, and the Crow declared that Reynard's flesh was unwholesome. Finally the Bull offered himself to the king in the same fashion, saying he was big and fat enough to make a delicious meal, whereupon the lion slew the Bull and the three of them ate their fill.

Once the Bull was dead, the Lion asked the Cock and Reynard who should be his chamberlain. The Cock tried to speak first, but Reynard shot him an angry glance, so he decided to remain silent until Reynard had finished. Then Reynard proposed the Rabbit, who was of fair aspect, humble, and as qualified for the post as the Cat and the Bull had been. The Lion asked the Cock's opinion, but he feared to contradict Reynard, with whose suggestion he pretended to agree. Thus did the Rabbit become the Lion's royal chamberlain, thereby increasing Reynard's power in the court, for the Rabbit, the Peacock, and the Cock all feared him and the Lion believe every word he said.

One day a great event took place in the kingdom, and the Lion took counsel with the Cock and Reynard. The Cock said he was unfit to advise His Highness about such momentous affairs and suggested that he appoint more advisors, as he would thus augment his honor and his council was sadly diminished, having

lost the Snake, the Leopard, the Lynx, and the Wolf. The Lion approved of this suggestion, which he would have followed had Reynard not said:

«Once in a far-off land dwelt a man to whom God had given such wisdom that he understood everything the birds and beasts said, but there was one condition: that he never repeat their words to anyone, for if he did so he would die. This man had a farm where a bull turned a water wheel and an ass brought manure to fertilize his crops. One evening when the bull felt weary, the ass told him to refuse his fodder, for the man would think he was ill and let him rest on the morrow. The bull followed this advice, and the man, thinking he was ill, put the ass to work in his place the next morning. All day long the ass turned the water wheel till at dusk, exhausted by such strenuous labor, he returned to the stable, where he found the bull lying comfortably in the straw. The ass then burst into tears and said: 'Our master, who thinks you are ill, plans to sell you to a butcher, and if you value your life you must return to work tomorrow.'

The ass spoke thus because he preferred hauling manure to turning the wheel, which was harder work, while the bull, to save his life, ate with a hearty appetite to show he was cured. Having overheard their conversation, the man laughed in front of his wife, who asked the cause of his good humor, but he refused to tell her. She then threatened to neither eat nor drink and to let herself die if he did not tell her, and for an entire day and night she took no nourishment or water. Finally the husband, who loved her dearly, promised to tell her and made his will, but then he heard a conversation between the dog and the cock.»

«What did they say?» asked the Lion.

Reynard said that while the man was writing his will, the cock crowed and the dog reproached him for singing when his master was about to perish. The cock was amazed at this reproof, but the dog repeated that the man would soon die that his wife might live. The cock then declared that a man too stupid to rule

his wife deserved no better and, after summoning all his hens, he did as he liked with them, that the dog might be consoled for his master's demise. Then they both felt better, and the cock crowed while the dog barked cheerfully. «My friend», asked the dog, «if you had a wife as mad as our master's and as ready to sacrifice your life, how would you treat her?» The cock replied that if he were in their master's place, he would cut five switches from his pomegranate tree and beat her until they broke, either making her eat and drink or letting her die of thirst and hunger. Having heard the cock's words, the man rose from his bed and beat his wife until she ate, drank, and did everything else he wanted.

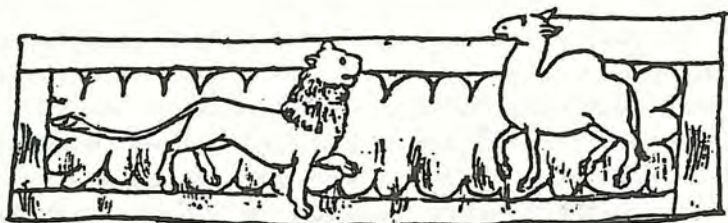
After telling this tale, Reynard said the Cock was wise enough to counsel his lord on any matter, wherefore he needed no other advisors, an still less since many counselors present too great a variety of opinions, thereby confusing a monarch instead of clarifying his intentions.

The Cock replied: «A parrot and a crow were perched in a tree beneath which a monkey, having piled wood on top of a glowworm, was blowing on it to make a fire, by whose heat he hoped to warm himself. The parrot called out to the monkey, telling him his huffing and puffing were in vain, while the crow warned his friend not to bother with one who would accept neither counsel nor correction. The parrot, however, persisted, while the crow continued to admonish him not to attempt to straighten what was crooked by nature. Finally the parrot flew down from the tree, hoping thus to better explain himself to the monkey, who, seeing him nearby, promptly caught and killed him.»

The Lion, who thought the Cock meant to compare him to the monkey, shot his counselor an evil look, whereupon Reynard seized, killed, and ate the Cock before his king.

Reynard, who was now the Lion's sole counselor while the Rabbit was his chamberlain and the Peacock was his gatekeeper, felt very happy and did as he liked with His Majesty, but he

remembered the treachery he had plotted with the Elephant, whom he had promised to crown in the Lion's place. Though Reynard would have gladly left things as they were, he feared betrayal by the Elephant and decided to follow their plan, giving him everything he had previously promised.



## OF REYNARD'S DEATH

Reynard did not forget to plot against his king, but he did forget that the Lion had exalted him above his other barons. One day Reynard told the Elephant that it was time for their lord to die, and all the more since it would be easy now that Reynard was his sole counselor. Though the Elephant pondered these words, his conscience was uneasy, while on the other hand he feared to defy Reynard, who might denounce him and thereby cause his death. Finally the Elephant decided that it was better to risk his life than to betray his natural lord, and that if Reynard thought to cunningly plot the king's death, he would cunningly plot to have the king kill Reynard.

«For if treachery, guile, and cunning can all fit in a fox's body, how much more loyalty, wisdom, and address», thought the Elephant, «should fit in mine, which is so much larger?»

«Lord Elephant», asked Reynard, «what are you pondering? Remember that the wise Snake will soon return from his mission. It would be well if you were already king when he arrives.»

The Elephant then decided to await the Snake, with whom he hope to plot Reynard's downfall. Seeing the Elephant procrastinate, Reynard feared such a plan and told his friend to hurry for otherwise he would take things into his own hands in a way the Elephant had never imagined.

The Elephant, who dreaded Reynard, asked what post he would like in exchange for making him king. Reynard replied that he wished only to retain the position he already held: that is, to be the king's sole counselor, while the Rabbit served as chamberlain and the Peacock as gatekeeper. Then Elephant asked how he planned to kill the Lion, to which Reynard replied:

«I shall tell the Boar, who thinks himself as fierce as the Lion,



to be on his guard, for our king plans to slay him, and I shall warn the king that the Boar covets his throne, thus inducing His Majesty to attack and kill the Boar. Once the Boar is dead and our monarch is exhausted from the battle», said Reynard, «you can easily kill him and become king yourself.»

Hoping to trick Reynard, who in turn sought to trick him, the Elephant said: «A promise means nothing without witnesses, Sir Reynard, wherefore I think you should find some who can attest to my words: that is, that you will be my sole counselor, while the Rabbit serves as chamberlain and the Peacock as gate-keeper. Otherwise, if I break faith you will have no way to prove it, and perhaps once I am king, I shall no longer need you.»

Reynard considered the Elephant's words for a long time, since he feared that witnesses might unmask his treachery. Seeing him in such a study, the Elephant said the best witnesses would be the Rabbit and the Peacock, who, as they feared Reynard and valued their positions, would certainly never betray his secrets. Thinking the Elephant's advice good, Reynard swore an oath before the Rabbit and the Peacock, who promised never to reveal what they had heard.

As soon as this oath had been sworn, the Elephant sent Reynard to warn the Boar and then the Lion, while he himself went to speak with the Lion, whom he told everything they had plotted, apologizing and saying he now repented of their plans, for he preferred being a loyal subject to being a treacherous king.

«How», asked the Lion, «can I be certain that you speak the truth?»

The Elephant replied that it was clear from what Reynard had done, plotting to become the king's sole counselor with no other company than the Rabbit and the Peacock, who by nature feared him and therefore did his bidding.

«Furthermore, sire, I shall tell you something else: Reynard has gone to warn the Boar that you wish to kill him, and he will tell you the same thing, urging you to treat the Boar so disdainfully that he will believe you seek his death.»

Then the Elephant said the Rabbit and the Peacock had also plotted his downfall. Marveling that Reynard, whom he had so honored, would thus deceive and undo him, the king replied: «My father once said that my grandfather, who ruled a vast kingdom, degraded barons who deserved high office and exalted vile beasts of scant merit. One such was the Monkey, who, because he resembled man, wished to be king and plotted against my grandfather.»

«Sire», said the Elephant, «a small goblet can hold but little wine, an likewise those of lowly station merit little honor and loyalty, wherefore you should slay Reynard, be generous in your rule, and not subject the noble office God has given you to a wicked counselor.»

Then the Elephant went to the Boar, told him that he knew what Reynard had said, and, to his great astonishment, explained everything that had happened. Meanwhile, Reynard told the Lion that the Boar wished to kill him, thus confirming the Elephant's accusations. The king then summoned many barons, including the Elephant, the Boar and Reynard, before whom he asked the Rabbit and Peacock about the oath they had witnessed. They were frightened, but not nearly as much as Reynard, who said:

«Lord king, in order to test your barons' virtue and fealty, I spoke thus to the Elephant and the Boar, but I never swore any oath before the Rabbit and the Peacock.»

Reynard believed that the Rabbit and Peacock were too terrified to accuse him before their king.

The Lion then glared at the Rabbit and Peacock and let out a mighty roar, hoping thus to inspire even greater dread than Reynard had. He furiously ordered them to tell what they knew, and as soon as they had done so, he slew Reynard.

Once Reynard was dead, tranquility returned to the animal kingdom. The Lion appointed the Elephant, the Boar, and other noble barons to his council and expelled the Rabbit and Peacock from his court.

Thus ends *The Book of the Beasts*, which Felix gave to a king that he might learn from the manner in which animals behave how to protect himself from bad advice and false counselors.

Translated by DAVID ROSENTHAL

