

The Fox with the Golden Tail

(A Fable)

Once upon a time, there was an old she-fox whom here fellow-foxes of the Fox-land detested very much, for she was very plain-spoken and very proud. And so they cut off here tail as a sort of punishment.

She said: "Oh my dear brethren, won't you make me your ruler?" On hearing this, all the foxes laughed a big laugh and drove her away with jeers and scorn. She then purchased an artificial gilt tail and having fastened it to her back, emigrated to the ancient land of Asses and Apes.

The Asses asked her "Who are you?" She said "I am the great she-fox of the golden tail, the wisest among all the foxes of Fox-land. They asked me over there to be their ruler. But I did not care for that position. I have a contempt for the intelligence of foxes and I have become a great admirer of the wisdom of the Asses, especially the older ones. And I have decided that it is better to be a humble pupil among the Asses than a great teacher and ruler among my own kind. Oh venerable Asses, teach me your wisdom."

On hearing this, all the Asses, especially the old ones, brayed for joy. And they began to speak to one another in their homes and councils, "What thinkest thou, brother? While the ordinary foxes pretend that they are much wiser than we and behave haughtily and contemptuously towards us, the wisest Fox of them all has discovered that we, we the Asses, are the noblest and most thoughtful among animals and she has come to be a pupil among us. Yet the Apes in our own land have been mimicking the ways of the foxes and foolishly despising our great and ancient asinine institutions and traditions. Oh, what will the golden tail will once for all stop their poisonous chattering and they will here-after cease teasing and humiliating us by their so-called criticism of our time-honored Ass-traditions."

And the Asses had rightly judged their fellow-countrymen, the Apes. For the latter also were greatly impressed by the strange act of the Fox of the golden tail. "Whatever a fox says must be right" so argued many of the Apes, "and if the wisest of them all comes and pays homage to the culture of the Asses, we have reason to pause and consider if we have been quite right in laughing at our compatriots in such an outrageous manner as we have been doing."

But a few advanced Apes thought to themselves, "Nonsense! How can we give up the convictions of a life-time and begin to respect these Asses on the Assertion of a single old fox, while all other foxes still treat them with open contempt? What the foxes do, we must do. And if there is a split among the foxes themselves, we Can't help it. We shall merely cling to the doctrines of the majority of the foxes. "Thus thinking, they kept themselves aloof from the new movement of Assiatic Revival.

But the Revival itself progressed wonderfully, thanks to the winning ways of the Fox of the golden tail who gradually dropped her old pride and intolerance but substituted instead the worst type of cunning and sedulous flattery.

The Apes bent their heads low before the triumphant march of Assiatic reaction, and the Asses put on pontifical airs. Naturally, all this moved the simple hearts of the Asses, especially ;the older ones, very deeply and the emotions of joy and gratitude rose to such a high pitch among the long-eared ones that they soon elected the old Fox as their leader and High-priestess and gave her the improved title of the Golden Fox.

The Golden Fox was much delighted at this favorable turn of affairs. "After all, "She thought, " it is something to be a ruler even among Asses. Of course, old age is an intolerable nuisance and so is the enforced company of the long-eared species. But then I have got this consolation that I can make those d-d foxes see that I am not an ordinary person and that I am as cunning as the cunnings of them all. While other foxes merely strive for economic advantages in this Ass-land, I have easily gained a spiritual domination and this includes your economics and everything else. And the Asses call me the Golden Fox, confound their dear, stupid heads!" Her position among the Asses subsequently induced the emigrant Foxes to show her some outward respect and sometimes even take her advice on economic matters. All this success soon made the Golden Fox lose her head. Her rule over the Asses gradually became more and more harsh, arrogant and whimsical, so that she soon began to tire the ;patience of even the most patient of her asinine followers. Discontent began to spread, especially among those who were her personal attendants.

One morning a middle-aged Ass whispered to an old comrade, "What thinkest thou, brother? The Golden Tail of the Golden Fox, I say, is a false and artificial one. She does not always wear it. I have seen her removing it and depositing it into a box before going to bed, each night. What sayest thou to this?"

"Pooh!" said the old Ass w2ho was famous in the Ass-land for his great mastery of Assiatic culture and erudition. "We, older people, knew it long ago. It is the usual custom of the foxes. All of them, even those that have ordinary tails instead of golden ones as our leader, put them off before sleeping. "And the old one laughed scornfully at the ignorance displayed by his younger comrade.

The middle-aged Ass did not know what to say in reply. So he went home without further parley although he still had his own doubts about the accuracy of his old comrade's observation.

As time went on, other Asses also began to get suspicious about the genuineness of the golden tail and everywhere in the learned and erudite Ass-circles there were murmurings about the intolerable rule and incredible pretensions of the Golden Fox. The Golden Fox them thought that she must slightly change her tactics and so his on a new device to rekindle the waning loyalty of her followers. She knew she could always depend on the allegiance of the Elders of the long-eared community. So she induced the chief of the Elders to prevail upon a typically asinine member of the community to make an unconditional present of the latter's two colts to herself, so that, she declared, she might convert the little ones into golden-tailed Asses by initiating them in all the subtleties of the culture of the great Fox-race and by certain other mystic processes.

"Oh." She said, "after I succeed in making their tails golden like my own, you will see that all the animals will hold them in the highest reverence and teat them as Divine beasts. It will add to the glory of the entire Ass tribe. And great miracles will be wrought by them such as were never heard of before in the animals of Ass-land."

This sensational announcement and all the flattering hopes it held out to the vanity of the long-eared race pleased the latter beyond all measure. A bargain was soon struck and two little ones were entrusted to the care and guidance of the Golden Fox. The first thing she did with her new wards was to have their little tails secretly cut off and make them wear big hoops so as to hide this loss from the scrutiny of her not over-scrutinous followers. She also made the little ones to always confine themselves to a small room in her own house and there sit with their backs turned towards the wall whenever there was company. She then

proclaimed to the Asses that the tails of her young wards were slowly changing, that they had already become partly golden and that when the process was perfected they would be exposed to the sight of the whole world.

In the meanwhile, she ordered the more devoted and faithful Asses to come and offer daily worship to the little ones who were already alleged to be well advanced on the path to the Super-Ass condition. Great was the sensation which spread in the Ass-land, on account of these miraculous proceedings.

The older Asses were eagerly expecting the great day when the little Golden Asses, that were to be, would attain the Adept stage and the miracle of it all would once for all elevate the Ass-race to the highest point of spiritual glory.

But the parent who had more access to the little ones than others soon found out the real secret and felt greatly aggrieved and humiliated at the fate of his colts who had fallen into the unbearable degradation of being tail-less Asses. He therefore protested to the Golden Fox, and asked her to restore his little ones to himself. Trouble ensued and it was greatly feared by the High-priestess and other leaders of the Assiatic Revival that the whole fraud would be exposed and they would be covered with endless shame.

The Chief Elder, who had, by this time, passed the stage of the dupe and become a willing participant in the schemes of the Golden Fox, easily prevailed upon the parent to give up his fears, promising on behalf of the Golden Fox that the little ones would be sent to Fox-land and given a thorough training in the great Fox-Culture and no further outrage to the parental sentiments would be committed thenceforth.

The satisfied the parent and the Golden Asses that were to be were accordingly sent to Fox-land. In the meanwhile, the tongue of rumour somehow spread the entire story throughout the length and breadth of the ancient land of Asses and Apes. The Apes began to heap scorn and irony on the heads of the poor Asses. "So you would fain manufacture Golden Asses, would you?" chartered the Apes, "And the Golden Fox is going to elevate your children to the Super-Ass state! Super-Ass indeed! Tail-less, tail-less...." Information reached the Parent from Fox-land that his little ones had their long ears also cut off under orders from the Golden Fox and many other worse degradations were also mentioned, unworthy not merely of the sacred Ass-race but of any animal however vile it might be. "Ah, the shame of it! How we have been duped! Asses and no tails! Asses and no long ears! Alas, my dear little ones! Why did I ever listen to the perfidious brayings of the Chief Elder? Why did I ever trust the Golden Fox? Ah, my children, they will next cut off your dear silver noses. And you are so far away from me, removed by miles and miles of forests and seas."

Thus lamented the parent and finding that the Golden Fox was in no mood to return his little ones to his custody and that all his comrades were either unwilling or unable or both to render him any assistance in this matter, he went to a large-hearted and wise Bull-one of the stay remnants of a race which was very numerous in the land long long ago-and besought his counsel.

The Parent was especially wrathful against a compatriot of the Golden Fox, who was here chief accomplice and executed on the little ones all the degradations required by her and many other unutterable infamies for which she apparently gave no sanction. He had once prayed to the Golden Fox to remove his little ones from the foul association of her accomplice.

But she paid no heed to his prayers and turned him out, heaping contempt and abuse on his poor head, and calling him the stupidest Ass in the whole of Ass-land.

The Bull listened to all this and advised the parent to seek redress in courts of law. And the Bull promised him every assistance that such an unfortunate Ass deserved at the hands of a nobler animal.

And the parent went to a court of law accordingly and asked that the Golden Fox be compelled to restore the custody of his children either to himself or, in case the court should consider him to be too much of an Ass to be entrusted with the care even of his own little ones, to any other person whom the Court might deem fit. This bold step adapted by the Specimen-Ass encouraged many other members of the community to come out and openly denounce the ways and pretensions of the Golden Fox. The wave of asinine resentment and revenge was set in motion and, excepting the oldest ones like the Chief Elder, very few remained faithful to the Golden Fox.

One morning, the Golden Fox discovered to her amazement, that her personal attendant had committed a nocturnal burglary and run away with her golden tail. There were crowds of Asses standing outside her house waiting to see her walk out without any tail, golden or other.

The Golden Fox endured all this disgrace with much outward show of fortitude. The judge decided that the Golden Fox should restore the little ones to their parent, viz. the Specimen – Ass.

The Golden Fox then took a short trip to Fox-land. The Asses were expecting that when she returned she would bring the little ones with her. But no. She came alone and of course, she wore no gilt-tail this time. She had also dropped all pretensions to modesty and good manners. She defied openly the laws of men and of gods. The old spirit which cost her tail in her early days took possession of her soul once again.

She heaped words of very bitter contempt and very violent hatred on the Ass – race which she had once praised as the noblest, wisest and loveliest on earth.

She now began to humour the Apes, calling them the dearest creatures on earth and delivering a series of lectures on topics which were dear to the Apeheart, such as the following:

1. The superiority of tail-less animals over all tailed ones, always excepting the Foxes.
2. How, even among the Foxes, a tail-less one is superior to the rest.
3. The paramount importance to Apes and Asses of voyages to Fox-land.
4. The basest of animals-the Asses. (A jeremiad against long ears, white noses etc.)
5. How to convert an Ass into an Ape.
6. How to convert an Ape into a Fox; etc; etc.

But the Apes were not in mood to be won over by old she – foxes. They well remembered their old wrongs, how in the earlier days the Golden fox used to vilify and mock them and so on; so they drove her out with scorn and contempt. She then made a last desperate effort to win back the allegiance of the Asses. But there is a limit even to Asinine folly and credulity. They too brayed scorn at her. In the meanwhile the authorities of the law pressed her to bring the little ones to the Ass-land and deliver them to their parent. But she had so far disfigured the little ones that she could not dare to obey that order.

So she secretly fled away to the Republic of Bees and Ants, where warrants from Ass-land could not be executed and it is understood that she has started a new cult there whose chief doctrine seems to be that the land of Bees and Ants will become a paradise the day on which they elect an old and tail-less She-Fox as President of their Republic – a cult to which she has given the strange title of Foxo-Bees-Antism.

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