



Aesop's Fables

5. THE BUNDLE OF STICKS

By Sharri McGarry

Mrs Mckenzie had six strong sons. They were Peter, Paul and Patrick, Philip, Frankie and Fred. The only trouble was they couldn't stop arguing with each other!

When Mrs Mckenzie wanted a well dug do you think six strong sons could do that?

'We'll dig a hole here!' said Peter.

'No, over here!' said Patrick.

And each of the six strong sons grabbed a spade and started digging different holes in different parts of the garden!

'That's no use at all,' she sighed.

Mrs Mckenzie asked her six strong sons to row her across the river to see her friend.

'We'll do it!' cried Peter and Paul. They leapt into the boat and sat down facing the front and picked up oars.

'No we will!' shouted Patrick and Philip. And they sat down facing backwards and picked up the oars.

And though they pulled at the oars until the sweat dripped off them - they were rowing the boat in opposite directions and the boat went absolutely nowhere!

'Oh that's no use at all,' she sighed.

One day there was a notice in the paper. 'Grand Competition to build the biggest barn in the county!' it read. '£600 prize!'

'I'll win that!' said Peter.

'No I'll win it!' said Paul.

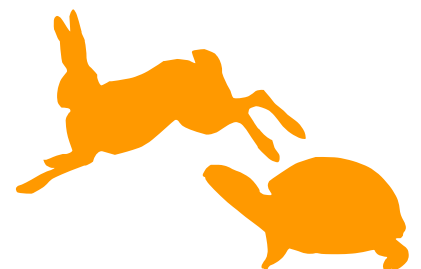
Patrick, Philip, Frankie and Fred all disagreed...and they all fell to arguing.

Suddenly, Mrs Mckenzie jumped to her feet. 'Quiet!' she said. Then she climbed up on her chair. 'Quiet!' she shouted. Then she climbed up right on top of the table. 'WILL YOU BE QUIET!' she roared.

Six sons went very, very quiet. They looked up at their mother in astonishment.

'That's better,' Mrs Mckenzie said. 'Now, you! Fetch me one of those big bundles of sticks that we keep for the fire.'

'Yes Mum!' said Peter.





He ran out the door and came back with sticks tied together in a bundle as fat as your arm. 'Here you are Mum,' he panted. Mrs Mckenzie folded her arms. 'Now, my fine strong son, break that bundle in two!'

Peter smirked at his brothers. 'Easy!' he boasted, and he took the bundle in both hands. He bent the bundle and he bowed the bundle but he could not break the bundle.

'Well?' said Mrs Mckenzie, tapping her foot.

Peter hung his head in shame. 'I can't do it!'

'Pass the bundle to Paul,' said Mrs Mckenzie.

'Ha, ha, ha! Watch this, ha, ha!' sneered Paul. He bent the bundle and he bowed the bundle but he could not break the bundle. And neither could Patrick, Philip, Frankie or Fred.

'Give it to me!' said Mrs Mckenzie. She took the bundle of sticks and untied the string. She gave one stick to each of her sons. 'Can you break that?' she asked.

CRACK! Went the sticks as the six strong sons easily broke them.

'And what have you broken?' asked Mrs Mckenzie.

'Er...a stick?' asked Peter, looking down at his hands.

'Yes,' Mrs Mckenzie nodded. 'But between you, you have broken the bundle of sticks.'

The six strong sons looked at each other. 'One of you wasn't strong enough,' explained Mrs Mckenzie, 'but when you all worked together...'

'We were much stronger!' cried Peter, Paul, Patrick, Philip, Frankie and Fred.

And so they were.

And do you know that when they went to the competition, the six strong sons of Mrs Mckenzie all worked together to build the biggest barn in the county and they won that prize money. All together.