

THE RABBIT, THE FOX AND THE WOLF -- A FABLE

COMMENT: The following fable was shared with us by Patricia Holland, Ph.D. who had received it from a colleague of hers, Yaron Moshe Schwartz. It is a good example of folklore about dissertation advisors and committees. As amusing as the fable is, however, we believe it rests upon a dysfunctional assumption about the dissertation. Maria Piantanida & Noreen Garman.

One sunny day a rabbit came out of her hole in the ground to enjoy the weather. The day was so nice that the rabbit became careless, so a fox sneaked up to her and caught her.

“I am going to eat you for lunch!” said the fox.

“Wait!” replied the rabbit, “You should at least wait a few days.”

“Oh yeah? Why should I wait?”

“Well, I am just finishing writing my Ph.D. thesis.”

“Hah! That’s a stupid excuse. What is the title of your thesis anyway?”

“I am writing my thesis on ‘The Superiority of Rabbits over Foxes and Wolves’.”

“Are you crazy? I should eat you up right now! Everybody knows that a fox will always win over a rabbit.”

“Not really, not according to my research. If you like, you can come to my hole and read it for yourself. If you are not convinced you can go ahead and have me for lunch.”

“You are really crazy!” But since the fox was curious and had nothing to lose, it went with the rabbit into its hole. The fox never came back out.

A few days latter the rabbit was again taking a break from writing and, sure enough, a wolf came out of the bushes and was ready to eat her.

“Wait!” yelled the rabbit, “you cannot eat me right now.”

“And why might that be, you fuzzy appetizer?”

“I am almost finished writing my Ph.D. thesis on The Superiority of Rabbits over Foxes and Wolves’.”

The wolf laughed so hard that it almost lost its hold on the rabbit.

“Maybe I shouldn’t eat you, you are really sick in your head, you might have something contagious,” the wolf opined.

“Come read for yourself, you can eat me after that if you disagree with my conclusions.” So the wolf went to the rabbit’s hole and never came out.

The rabbit finished writing her thesis and was out celebrating in the lettuce fields. Another rabbit came by and asked, "What's up? You seem to be very happy."

"Yup, I just finished writing up my dissertation."

"Congratulations! What is it about?"

"It is titled 'The Superiority of Rabbits over Foxes and Wolves'."

"Are you sure? That doesn't sound right."

"Oh yes, you should come over and read for yourself."

So they went together to the rabbit's hole. As they went in, the friend saw the typical graduate student abode, albeit a rather messy one after writing a thesis. The computer with the controversial dissertation was in one corner, on the right there was a pile of fox bones, on the left was a pile of wolf bones, and in the middle was a lion.

The moral of the story is: The title and subject of your dissertation doesn't matter; all that matters is who your thesis advisor is.