

## The Man and the Alligator

From the book "Children's Classics in Dramatic Form" by Augusta Stevenson  
From a folk tale of Spanish Honduras

### CHARACTERS:

*The Man*  
*The Alligator*  
*The Wolf*  
*The Leopard*  
*The Rabbit*

### SCENE I

*TIME: The morning after the cyclone*

*PLACE: The Man's garden*

*(The Man enters the garden carrying his big stick and small net. The garden has been almost destroyed by the Alligator, who still wallows among the beds.)*

MAN: There should be enough apples on the ground to fill my net. 'T was a fierce storm last night! *(He looks about; sees the Alligator; shows indignation.)* Thou—within my garden!

ALLIGATOR: *(Meekly.)* Be not angry with me, O master! By accident I—

MAN: *(Indignantly.)* Accident! Thou hast wallowed among my flowers by accident, hast thou?

ALLIGATOR: It is true; not of my own will came I hither.

MAN: *(More indignantly.)* Thou hast broken my fruit trees by accident, I suppose!

ALLIGATOR: *(Nodding.)* It was not of my own intentions, I assure you. I—

MAN: *(Interrupting.)* Thou art this moment crushing my strawberry plants beneath thy great body! I've a mind to beat thee with my big stick!

ALLIGATOR: Do not beat me, O master! The cyclone is at fault.

MAN: *(Surprised.)* The cyclone?

ALLIGATOR: *(Nodding.)* Aye, it blew me here from the river last night.

MAN: Ha, ha! A likely story!

ALLIGATOR: I speak the truth. A great waterspout lifted me out of the river. Then a fierce wind caught me and blew me about as if I were a feather. Finally, I was dropped here within thy garden.

MAN: (*Only half convinced.*) Well, there's no cyclone to blow thee back. Wilt thou be good enough to walk thyself out?

ALLIGATOR: Alas! I can scarcely move me. I fear some of my ribs are broken.

MAN: Nonsense! Out with thee!

ALLIGATOR: But see how the wind has crippled me! It has even blown some of my claws loose—

MAN: (*Interrupting.*) I am sorry for thee, but thou canst not remain here.

ALLIGATOR: I will go now, if thou wilt help me.

MAN: (*Surprised.*) I help thee?

ALLIGATOR: (*Nodding.*) I will be so grateful to thee!

MAN: Oh, I know how grateful thou canst be! The other animals have told me that!

ALLIGATOR: What say they?

MAN: That thou art the most cruel of all the animals—that thou never dost anyone a favor—

ALLIGATOR: (*Interrupting.*) Nonsense! No one could be more grateful for favors than I! I'll prove it to thee!

MAN: Prove it? How?

ALLIGATOR: If thou wilt help me to the river, I'll show thee where to find the biggest fish.

MAN: Well—that's something—

ALLIGATOR: And when thou wouldst cross the river, I'll carry thee.

MAN: Of a surety, that's good of thee! Perhaps, after all, thou art not so black as thou art painted. I'll help thee this time.

ALLIGATOR: Thanks to thee, master. I will never forget thy kindness; I will always be thy friend.

MAN: Why, I am glad to help thee. Now how am I to get thee to the river?

ALLIGATOR: Carry me, please, O master!

MAN: What! Carry thee?

ALLIGATOR: (*Nodding.*) I'll get into thy net.

MAN: Thou get into my small net!

ALLIGATOR: Only hold thy net open!

MAN: (*Holding his net open.*) I tell thee, thou canst never get in!

ALLIGATOR: See how I fold my arms! My legs go under—so! No I roll myself up and up and up! And now I am in—all in!

MAN: Well, seeing is believing!

ALLIGATOR: Please to tie up thy net, master, that I may not fall out.

MAN: (*Tying net.*) 'T is done! (*Throwing net over shoulder.*) Thou art heavy!

ALLIGATOR: I know, it will be hard work for thee, but some day thou wilt see how grateful I am.

(*The Man goes, carrying the Alligator over his shoulder and his big stick in his hand.*)

## SCENE II

*TIME: The afternoon of the same day*

*PLACE: The river bank*

(*Enter the Man carrying the Alligator over his shoulder. He stops, throws down his big stick and places the Alligator carefully on the bank.*)

MAN: Our journey is ended, brother. (*Untying net.*) Now then, roll thyself out!

(*The Alligator comes out of the net.*)

MAN: Well, how dost thou feel now?

ALLIGATOR: Much better, thanks to thee; but I'm very hungry and I find I'm still quite weak. I pray thee help me down the bank, O master!

MAN: (*Helping the Alligator down the bank.*) Now, then, thou art close to the water. (*He turns to go.*)

ALLIGATOR: Just a little farther, please. I am still so weak!

MAN: Then I'll help thee into the water. (*He helps the Alligator into the water.*) Now thou art in; and now I will depart. (*He turns to go.*)

ALLIGATOR: (*Seizing the Man's leg.*) Not yet!

MAN: Let go of my leg!

ALLIGATOR: Why?

MAN: (*Indignantly.*) Why! Why!

ALLIGATOR: (*Nodding.*) Why and wherefore?

MAN: Thou art hurting me!

ALLIGATOR: It will soon be over.

MAN: What dost thou mean?

ALLIGATOR: What I have just spoken.

MAN: Why dost thou look at me so?

ALLIGATOR: (*Slowly.*) Because—I—mean—to—eat—thee.

MAN: Eat me!

ALLIGATOR: (*Nodding.*) Eat thee.

MAN: Me?

ALLIGATOR: (*Nodding.*) Thee.

MAN: Thou didst promise to be my friend.

ALLIGATOR: I was only fooling thee.

MAN: But I helped thee out of trouble.

ALLIGATOR: No matter—I mean to eat thee.

MAN: Is that the way to repay a favor—by doing a wrong?

ALLIGATOR: *(Nodding.)* That's the way of all the animals.

MAN: Thou art surely mistaken—not all the animals—

ALLIGATOR: *(Interrupting.)* There's not one of them remembers a favor or a friend when hungry.

MAN: I cannot think that! Suppose we ask the first animal that comes to drink?

ALLIGATOR: Ask any of them—I know what they will say.

*(Enter the Wolf. He comes down the bank to drink.)*

MAN: Wolf, I would question thee.

WOLF: *(Gruffly.)* Well?

MAN: How dost thou repay the one who doth thee a favor?

WOLF: *(Gruffly, as before.)* By doing him a wrong. *(The Wolf drinks and goes.)*

ALLIGATOR: Ha, ha, ha! Just what I said! Now I shall eat thee forthwith!

MAN: I can't believe that every animal would so answer.

ALLIGATOR: I don't intend waiting for thee to find out.

MAN: I pray thee wait till the next animal comes to drink!

ALLIGATOR: *(Impatiently.)* Have I not told thee of my hunger?

MAN: Listen! Some animal comes through the forest now.

*(Enter the Leopard. He comes down to drink.)*

MAN: Leopard, I would question thee.

LEOPARD: *(Curtly.)* Well?

MAN: How dost thou repay the one who doth thee a favor?

LEOPARD: (*Curtly, as before.*) By doing him a wrong. (*He drinks and goes.*)

ALLIGATOR: Ha, ha, ha! It is just as I said! I will now eat thee forthwith!

MAN: I pray thee—

ALLIGATOR: (*Interrupting.*) It is now all over with thee!

MAN: (*Calling.*) Help! Help!

(*Enter the Rabbit.*)

RABBIT: A word with thee, Ally dear!

ALLIGATOR: I shall be busy for a few minutes, Brother Rabbit.

RABBIT: (*Going down bank quickly.*) Who is this thou art about to dine upon? Why, 't is the Man!

MAN: How dost thou repay a favor, Brother Rabbit?

RABBIT: Why dost thou ask?

MAN: I found the Alligator in my garden this morning. He had destroyed my plants, my fruits, and—

ALLIGATOR: (*Interrupting.*) I was blown in by the cyclone last night.

MAN: He said he had been hurt and begged me to help him to the river. He promised me his friendship if I would do so.

ALLIGATOR: Ha, ha, ha! I told him I'd show him where to find the biggest fish.

RABBIT: And now thou wilt not?

ALLIGATOR: But I will. He'll find it after he is *inside* of me. Ha, ha!

RABBIT: Ha, ha! A good joke!

ALLIGATOR: I told him I'd carry him across the river. I didn't explain he'd go *inside*. Ha, ha!

RABBIT: What a joker thou art, Ally dear! (*He turns to the Man.*) But how didst thou get him here?

MAN: I carried him in this small net.

RABBIT: (*Looking surprised.*) Thou art trying to fool me!

MAN: No, Brother Rabbit, it is quite true.

ALLIGATOR: (*Nodding.*) Yes, it is true.

RABBIT: But, Ally, try as thou mightst, thou couldst not so much as get thy head into that net.

ALLIGATOR: But I tell thee I did!

RABBIT: Ha, ha, ha! That's too funny!

ALLIGATOR: (*Angrily.*) I do not like thy manners, young man.

RABBIT: But it's such a joke! Ho, ho, ho!

ALLIGATOR: Cease thy laughing or I shall eat thee some day!

RABBIT: I laugh because I must laugh! Ha, ha, ho, ho!

ALLIGATOR: Thou wilt not believe it, eh?

RABBIT: Well, not unless I see it.

MAN: We can prove it to thee, Brother Rabbit.

RABBIT: Oh, that's good too! Ha, ha, ho!

ALLIGATOR: Dost thou think we cannot?

RABBIT: Of course thou canst not! If thou couldst, thou wouldst.

ALLIGATOR: And we will! Get thy net ready, Man.

MAN: But how? Thou art holding my leg.

ALLIGATOR: (*Freeing the Man; turning to the Rabbit.*) We'll show thee just how it was done, young man.

RABBIT: Seeing is believing.

(*The Man brings his net; opens it.*)

ALLIGATOR: See! I put my legs under—so! Then I fold my arms—so! Now I roll myself up and up and up. And now I am in—all in!

RABBIT: As I live—thou art! Well, seeing is believing. But how couldst thou remain within the net? It is quite open.

ALLIGATOR: Tie it up, Man. Show him exactly how we did it.

MAN: (*Tying net.*) I tied it tight—like this, Brother Rabbit.

RABBIT: Is it quite tight?

ALLIGATOR: Let him try the knot, Man.

RABBIT: (*Trying knot.*) Most truly, it is tight. (*Turning to the Alligator.*) Thou dost look as if thou couldst not move, Ally dear.

ALLIGATOR: Of a surety—I cannot.

RABBIT: Well, Brother Man, now that thou hast him, don't be foolish enough to let him go. Get thy big stick and beat him to death.

ALLIGATOR: (*Surprised.*) Eh?

MAN: (*Not heeding the Alligator.*) That is just what I will do, that I will! Thanks to thee for helping me, Brother Rabbit.

ALLIGATOR: Have pity!

RABBIT: (*Not heeding the Alligator.*) No thanks are necessary, Brother Man. I haven't forgotten the good turnips thou didst give me last winter when the ground was covered with snow. Some of us know how to return favor for favor.