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# The Heifer, The Goat and The Sheep in Company with The Lion

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# The Heifer, The Goat and The Sheep in Company with The Lion

Jean de la Fontaine

#### **Abstract**

This fable was published for the first time in 1668 in the collected "Fables" by Jean de la Fontaine (Book I, No. 6). It was inspired by a fable by Phaedrus (Book I, No. 5). From this fable comes the French proverbial expression, "la part du lion," and its English equivalent, the "lion's share."

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### The Heifer, The Goat and The Sheep in Company with The Lion

To Pierre-Antoine

The heifer, the goat, and their sister the sheep, Combined their earnings in common to keep, Tis [It is] said, in times past, with a lion, who swayed Full lordship over neighbors, of whatever grade. The goat, as it happened, a stag having snared, Sent it off to the rest, that the beast might be shared. All gathered; the lion first counts on his claws, And says, "We'll proceed to divide with our paws The stag into four pieces, as fixed by our laws." This done, he announces the first part as his own; "Tis [It is] mine," he says, "truly, as lion alone." To such a decision there is nought [nothing] to be said, As he who has made it is doubtless the head. "Well, also, the second to me should belong; Tis mine, be it known, by the right of the strong. Again, as the bravest, the third must be mine. To touch but the fourth whoso maketh a sign, I'll choke him to death In the space of a breath!"

## La Génisse, la Chèvre et la Brebis, en société avec le Lion

Pour Pierre-Antoine

La Génisse, la Chèvre et leur sœur la Brebis, Avec un fier Lion, Seigneur du voisinage, Firent société, dit-on, au temps jadis, Et mirent en commun le gain et le dommage. Dans les lacs de la Chèvre un Cerf se trouva pris ; Vers ses associés aussitôt elle envoie : Eux venus, le Lion par ses ongles compta, Et dit : Nous sommes quatre à partager la proie ; Puis en autant de parts le Cerf il dépeça; Prit pour lui la première en qualité de Sire : Elle doit être à moi, dit-il, et la raison, C'est que je m'appelle Lion : À cela l'on n'a rien à dire. La seconde par droit me doit échoir encor : Ce droit, vous le savez, c'est le droit du plus fort. Comme le plus vaillant je prétends la troisième. Si quelqu'une de vous touche à la quatrième, Je l'étranglerai tout d'abord.