

The Jackal and the Baboon

A long time ago the Jackal and the Baboon were friends. It was at this time that all the animals of the forest loved to eat honey. The sweet, golden food was their favorite treat. The animals shared the much loved cuisine and lived together in harmony.

There came a time, however, when a honey shortage fell upon the forest. There was only enough honey for the King - the Lion. He enjoyed his honey and smacked his lips after eating his lion's share of this delicious treat.

The Jackal's stomach ached for his favorite food. He often watched the honey dripping from the King's beard and longed for just one small taste of the sweetness.

The honey shortage continued for many weeks, and Jackal's longing for the honey grew stronger. Finally one day, he woke up with a brilliant plan. "By nightfall I will feast on the sweet honey again," he said to himself. Then he went to see his friend, Baboon.

"Dear friend," began Jackal, "I know your lips have missed the taste of the golden honey as much as mine. I have devised a plan to satisfy our cravings for this delicious treat. I could have kept this information to myself, but you are my friend. I wanted you to share this feast with me."

Baboon was very excited and grateful to Jackal for his kindness. He listened intently as Jackal described the plan. "We will wait for the time when the sun is high in the sky. It is then that Lion curls up in the shade of the trees and naps. We will steal away to the place where Lion keeps his honey. Then we can share a bit of the

golden substance. Lion will never know it is we who took his honey, ” teased Jackal.

Eager for a taste of honey and elated to be a partner with Jackal, Baboon agreed to the plan. That afternoon, when the sun rose high into the sky, Lion lay out in the whispering grass under the shade of the acacia tree. Jackal motioned to Baboon, and the duo snuck to the honey hiding spot.

Baboon reached into the store of honey and began eating the sweet substance for which he had so yearned. He devoured it with great gusto. Honey dripped from his beard, and he smacked his lips, grateful to Jackal for including him in this tasty adventure.

Jackal ate slowly and carefully. No honey slipped down his beard. Each drop of the longed for substance reached his waiting belly. When the two had eaten their fill, they nodded good-bye and headed off to rest.

The sun began to sink, and the mighty leader awakened from his nap. After stretching and yawning he thought, “I need a bit of my sweet treat.” The Lion eagerly approached the honey supply. When he drew close, he saw the empty honey pots. Shaking his mane and straightening up, he let out a tremendous roar, “Who has dared to steal the King’s honey? All the animals must gather before me this instant.” The roar echoed through the forest. Large and small animals alike began to shudder when the words of the mighty Lion reached their ears.

When the creatures circled before him, Lion demanded, “Who has dared to eat the honey of the King?” Baboon glanced at Jackal who stood silently. Not one creature stirred. Lion roared once more,

“I must know who stole my precious honey!” Again, the animals stood still as statues. Finally, Jackal spoke up.

“I have an idea King Lion. Why don’t you examine the beards of the animals. The one whose beard is stained with honey is the culprit.” Baboon looked at Jackal with horror. Lion nodded in agreement and began his examination of the troops lined up before him.

When he came to Baboon he saw the bits of honey on his beard and lips. He smelled the sweet odor on Baboon’s breath. “You are the thief, Baboon!” bellowed Lion. “Now you must find me honey to replace that which you stole!”

Baboon ran off in fear. He was terrified of the Lion who made this impossible demand. He was angry at the Jackal for playing such a trick on him. “I do not know where to find honey! Everyone knows the Lion had the last bit of it! Oh, what shall I do?” Baboon cried. Finally, he realized that he must get the trickster, and he ran off in search of his prey.

Later that day, Jackal was not surprised to see Baboon coming swiftly toward him. He looked around for an escape route. He was beside a large cliff so there was not an easy way for him to flee. Being a wily creature, Jackal merely leaned against the cliff. As Baboon got closer, Jackal pushed against the rock. He grunted and moaned. This behavior surprised Baboon. He forgot about his mission when he saw Jackal pushing with all his might on the immense cliff. “What are you doing? Why are you pushing on the cliff?” questioned Baboon.

“I am so glad to see you,” panted Jackal. “This cliff is about to topple over. I am holding it up. As you can see it takes all my strength to keep the cliff in its place. Why don’t you hold the cliff for me, Baboon. I will go and find a pole. Together, we can lodge it against the cliff, and then it will not fall down upon us.”

Baboon agreed and the two carefully changed places. Jackal raced off, leaving Baboon pushing against a sturdy cliff!

Hours passed. Baboon’s arms grew tired. His eyelids grew heavy. “Where is Jackal? Surely he must have found a pole by now. I cannot push against this any longer.” He looked up at the cliff. “Perhaps if I let go and leap quickly out of the way, I can avoid the falling rocks.” Baboon readied his legs, let go of the cliff, and made a frantic leap!

There was not a sound. No rocks rained down upon him. Not even a blade of grass fell from the cliff. “That Jackal has tricked me once again!” recognized Baboon. “First he saw to it that I was blamed for eating the Lion’s honey. Then he escaped from me by telling a tale about the falling cliff. I must find Jackal!” He searched and searched the land for him. But Jackal, being a wise and tricky fellow, hid until the Baboon forgot his anger.

Activities to Extend Your Thinking...

Expressive Language...

Find the following words in this folktale. Write a definition for each.

Then think of an antonym for each word.

- elated

- gusto
- culprit
- bellowed
- wily

Creature Characteristics...

Do one of the following:

- Make a list of words that describe either Jackal or Baboon. You may start with words used in the folktale. Then find your own descriptive words. Circle the five words you think are the best descriptors.
- Think about the characteristics of Baboon and Jackal. Choose a scene from the folktale that best illustrates these characteristics. Create a cartoon of this scene.

Life Lessons...

Write a journal entry about one of the following two topics:

- Have you ever been tricked by someone like Jackal? Tell about that time in a journal entry.
- What did you learn from Baboon's experiences? How could these lessons help you?