

## The Lion and the Jackal

One day Jackal was prowling near the home of man. He knew he had to be careful as humans were very clever creatures. They could construct fine traps for the animals that threatened their farms and livestock. But, Jackal had a taste for the chickens. The desire for the taste of chickens in his mouth was stronger than the fear of man's traps. So Jackal had learned to spot the carefully constructed traps.

Today he stepped vigilantly, always watching the ground in front of him. A telltale soft spot could alert Jackal to one of these traps. Man dug a hole, stood thorns up inside it, and then covered the hole with light branches and a thin layer of dirt. Any animal stepping upon the dirt, immediately fell into the hole. The sharp thorns pierced its paws like swords. But, Jackal knew his eyes were equally sharp, and he was just as cunning as the men who built the traps.

This day Jackal's stomach rumbled like thunder as he prowled along the fence line, eyes alert for the traps and nose anxious for the smell of chicken. Suddenly, another of Jackal's senses picked up a strange noise. "What is that soft moaning sound?" he asked himself. He gazed at the landscape all around him. Jackal nearly missed the sight of four paws raised in the air with knife-like thorns jabbed into the soft cushions of a lion's paw.

Jackal chose his steps carefully. He walked over to the hole and looked down upon a huge lion. The creature was lying on his

back, legs in the air, and moaning softly. When the lion saw Jackal, he began to beg. “Oh, please, kind Jackal, won’t you help your brother Lion? Take these thorns from my paws so that I might walk again.”

Jackal knew he faced danger. “No, I will not help you, Lion,” he answered. “I know that you will eat me once you are free.”

“Oh, never, never,” replied Lion. “You will save me. I would never eat you.” Lion continued to beg until Jackal finally agreed to pull the thorns from the lion’s paws.

When Jackal pulled the last thorn from him, Lion jumped up. With hungry eyes, he stared at Jackal and roared, “Now I will eat you. I must devour you because you are prey to me!” With that, the lion lunged at Jackal.

Jackal jumped back. He held up a paw. “Oh no, Lion. You cannot make a decision like this. We must first go and ask the other animals. If they agree, then you may eat me.”

Lion shook his paw at Jackal, “All right, but you will see. The other animals know that lions eat jackals. I will have you for a tasty meal before the sun sets.

Lion and Jackal then walked and walked. Finally, the pair spotted a tiger. After considering the situation, Tiger said, “Jackals are trouble for me. They try to get everything I want to eat. You may eat him, Lion.”

Lion looked at Jackal, but Jackal quickly said, “Now we must continue on to see what the other animals say about this.” The pair continued their journey. Finally, they saw an elephant.

“Let me think about this,” Elephant said slowly. He stood motionless for a few minutes except for the swish of his tail brushing flies from his sensitive skin. “Yes, I have it,” Elephant finally said. “You may eat Jackal only if he agrees to it.” With that, Elephant turned his huge body, fanned the still air with his ears, and ambled away.

“All right, Lion. Let’s go to see the last animal. If he says you can eat me, then I will be your dinner,” said Jackal.

The two continued on their way until they met wise Rabbit. After hearing of the dilemma, Rabbit rubbed his chin and responded, “I cannot make a decision until I see where you were held prisoner, Lion. Take me to the trap.”

The three animals returned to where Lion had been captured. Rabbit studied the sight. “Now I must see how you were laying,” she said. Lion entered the hole and lay on his back. “That still doesn’t help me,” said Rabbit using her wisest voice. You need to put the thorns back in your paws. Then I will have all the information to make a decision.” Clever Jackal glanced at the equally clever Rabbit. They picked up the thorns. The two pushed them back into the lion’s paws. He groaned and roared for the pain of the thorns entering his paws was very great.

Now Rabbit and Jackal stepped back from the trap and the prisoner it once again held. They looked at Lion – lying on his back with the thorns piercing his paws. “Is this the way it was?” asked the Rabbit.

“Yes,” said Jackal.

“Good,” replied Rabbit. “Now let’s go! Bye-bye, Lion!”

## **Activities to Extend Your Thinking...**

### **Expressive Language...**

Conversation helps tell the story in this folktale. Rewrite this folktale without any conversation. Read both versions. What does conversation add to a story?

### **Creature Characteristics...**

Do one of the following:

- List the character traits of the rabbit and the jackal. Make a Venn Diagram showing the unique traits of the jackal and the unique traits of the rabbit. How many traits overlap?
- Get a long piece of bulletin board paper. Draw a timeline showing the events in this folktale.

### **Life Lessons...**

Write a journal entry telling which creature's characteristics you would most like to have. Explain your choice.