

## The Rabbit and the Deer

It was party time for all the deer! Once a year the different types of deer gathered together and enjoyed the company of each other. They had firm guidelines about who could attend this celebration. Only animals who sported horns and did not have claws were invited to the gathering. The deer wanted to be sure their celebration was free from animals of prey. They feared the lion and other non-herbivorous creatures. The antelope, gazelle, and buffalo looked forward to this time of grazing with their own kind.

One year, the Rabbit heard about this party. As you know, Rabbit is not a creature who likes to be left out of fun! He wanted to attend the deer's party, but he knew that he needed horns. "I am a smart animal," said the Rabbit to himself. "Surely I can think of a way to grow horns. Rabbit sat down in a grassy spot to think. He put his paw to his head – no idea came to him. Next he crossed his arms and closed his eyes – no idea entered his head. Then he leaned forward, put his belly in the grass, and propped himself up with his forearms – still no idea! Finally, Rabbit grew tired of thinking. He lay his head down in the tall grass – BUMP! There was his idea! His head had fallen upon an old pair of deer antlers! Rabbit grabbed the solution to his problem. He knew just how to fasten this treasure to his head. He ran to a grove of special trees and shrubs. Looking over the vegetation, Rabbit finally spotted the shrub he needed.

Cutting open a branch of this miracle plant, Rabbit saw the gum that would attach the horns to his own bare head.

Satisfied that he now looked like a deer, Rabbit hopped to the site of the party. The gathered herd was surprised to see such a small horned creature enter their midst. “Look at that,” said one of the buffalo. “What kind of deer is he? I have never seen such a creature! Should he be a part of this dinner?” The other deer looked at the disguised Rabbit. They had never seen such a small animal with horns.

Finally a large gazelle spoke, “We must let him join our party. There are many different kinds of deer. We don’t know what type of deer he is, but he has horns, so he should attend this celebration.”

The deer talked together, laughed together, and most of all – they ate together! They ate, and ate, and ate. Around three o’clock in the morning, the deer all fell asleep, including Rabbit. His antlers still held tight to his head with the gum.

It was around six o’clock in the morning when the sun began its journey skyward. The exhausted, but happy Rabbit slept as the sun rose higher and higher. Its rays beat down on the Rabbit, and slowly the gum began to melt. By mid-morning Rabbit’s horns had fallen right down onto his face!

The large gazelle happened to walk by and see Rabbit with gum dripping on his face. One antler covered his nose and the other antler lay on the ground. “Oh, look at this! Our strange deer visitor is really a rabbit!” He called the other deer to come and look.

“What shall we do about this intruder who pretended to be a deer?” the animals asked each other.

After much lively discussion, one small antelope finally spoke up. “We should not kill this rabbit. Look, he is such a silly sight! Let’s just take him and throw him into the river.”

The other deer thought this was a fine idea. They picked up the sleeping Rabbit and tossed him into the river!

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

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

Reread the second paragraph of this folktale. Do you think the various positions of the rabbit helped you to better picture the scene? Write about a time you had to think about something. Describe how you might have looked.

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

Research the different kinds of deer that are found in Africa. Get a group of friends together. Ask each person to make a statue of one type of deer. Put them together to make a diorama of how the deer party in this folktale might have appeared.

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

Have you ever wanted to participate in something you could not? Write a journal entry telling about that time. Did you handle this situation differently than the rabbit? Tell what you did. If you have not had such an experience, imagine yourself in this type of situation and tell what you would do. Some possible situations might include not making the baseball team or not being invited to a birthday party.