



THE BLUE JACKAL

Once upon a time there was a village in the middle of a vast savannah. There were a lot of animals living in the savannah, including a spotted jackal. He would sneak through the tall grasses every day at dusk, looking for some tasty prey. He hadn't been faring that well lately, though, as it had been quite some time since he'd come across any leftovers from other animals or even a single tiny morsel. His empty stomach rumbled so loud it sounded like a full orchestra. One day, the jackal was so hungry he thought he could've eaten a horse, so he decided to go to the nearby village to look for something yummy to eat.

The village dogs noticed him the moment he arrived. There were at least six of them and they were a lot bigger than the frightened jackal. He was so scared he couldn't even count them properly. The dogs surrounded him, their blood curdling barking echoing, and tried to attack him with their razor sharp teeth. Finally the jackal managed to escape from their circle and quickly scurry toward safety. He ran and he ran, knowing that the dogs were rushing after him, hot on his heels.

Desperate to escape almost certain death, the jackal ran into one of the village houses. Inside, he found several large buckets. He knew the dogs would find him soon and he wanted to hide, so he jumped into one of the buckets, not realizing that it was full to the brim of blue paint. He thought he'd jumped into water and scurried back out. Looking down at himself, he realized he was

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completely blue from head to tail. He didn't look like a jackal in the slightest! Thanks to the unusual colour, the dogs didn't recognize him when they finally found him. He snarled and growled, and they thought the creature in front of them was some mysterious animal they had never seen before. Trembling and terrified, they fled.

The unhappy, hungry jackal returned to his den. On his way he stopped at a stream and tried to wash away the extraordinary colour, but he was unsuccessful and every time another animal saw him, they were scared to death and quickly ran away. Parrots screeched and even the lion hurried away at full pelt, thinking "That's a very odd animal, indeed! It's small but it looks very strong and that colour just isn't natural! Best to stay away."

When the jackal realised that all the animals were deathly afraid of him, the idea came to him that he could make this unfortunate turn of events very favourable for himself.

"Hey, animals!" he shouted. "Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you. The god of all things has sent me to you because you don't have a king. I will be your king now and I swear to protect everyone who lives here."

His speech was very convincing, indeed. All the animals took the bait without a second thought. They bowed and kissed his paws and said,

"We humbly await your instructions, Your Majesty. Your every wish is our command!"

And so the jackal happily assumed his royal duties, giving each animal specific tasks and responsibilities. They had to show the king proper respect and put up with his whim, of courses. His content and comfort were of paramount importance. Needless to say, this meant that he made every one of his subjects bring him food so he wouldn't have to hunt.

The only animals the blue king avoided were his fellow jackals. He knew he was blue, but he worried his pack might recognize him, and he didn't want to risk being found out. He even ordered the lions to drive the jackals out of the savannah, saying that they were a threat to everyone's safety!

The days flew by slowly and the blue jackal continued to reign. Smaller animals

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would constantly wait on him paw and foot, fulfilling all his wishes, and lions and tigers would bring him whatever prey they caught that day. The jackal would then split the food between himself and his subjects. The savannah had become a calm and peaceful place, but the happiest of all the creatures was, of course, the old jackal.

One evening, however, a distant howling echoed through the grasses and reached the blue king's ears. It was the exiled pack of jackals. He couldn't control himself! His innate instincts came alive and he started howling back to the pack.

The other animals were confused – why was their king howling like a jackal? But soon they realized that this was no mysterious animal, it was just an ordinary jackal who had been pulling their legs all this time!

They felt humiliated, then very, very angry! They couldn't forgive the trickster for fooling them like this. Finally, the lion spoke out. He was furious.

“That sly jackal tricked us, and he'll pay for it! He's in for a cruel punishment.”

The moment the jackal realised what was happening, he tried to flee as fast as he could, but the angry animals caught him and, along with the rest of his pack, exiled him to the edge of the savannah.

The reign of the blue jackal was over, and the rest of the animals went on to live happily without a king.