



THE HUNTER AND THE SNAKE

A hunter once walked through a jungle, looking for some prey to hunt. As he sneaked through the thick undergrowth and hacked his way through the long vines, he noticed a giant snake right in front of him. He took quite a fright, because snakes are very dangerous and can attack you with their venomous fangs in the blink of an eye.

The snake couldn't hurt him, though, since he was pinned under a stone, unable to move and writhing in pain. When the hunter took a step closer, the snake called out: "Good man, please, help me and set me free. If you won't, I'll certainly die!"

The hunter stopped, gave it a short thought and said: "I can't help you. If I did, you would surely stick your venomous fangs in me and I'd die. I have a wife and children at home to feed and there's no one else to take my place."

But the snake kept begging: "Help me, good man! I swear I won't bite you!"

The man finally agreed and rolled the stone away from the snake's back. "So, I'll be off now and you'll let me go peacefully, no pursuits," the hunter said to make sure the snake wouldn't attack him.

But then, all of a sudden, the serpent rose up before him and lifted his head to strike. "Well, I can't just let you leave now, can I? I must bite you and then, then

THE HUNTER AND THE SNAKE

"I'll eat you!"

"And why is that?" asked the hunter.

"By my law, every good deed must be punished. So now I'll bite you and eat you and we'll be even," hissed the reptile.

"Oh no, you won't! Not a dog's chance! First off, we'll take a nice stroll through the woods and find three judges to sort out which one of us is right. If all of them confirm your words, I will let you bite me and eat me. Do you agree?" proposed the hunter.

The snake said yes, eased his stance and set out with the hunter to search for three judges.

Before long they met an old buffalo and the hunter asked: "Hey, buffalo, we need you to settle a dispute for us. I saved this snake's life and he promised he wouldn't bite me if I helped him from under a stone. And now that he's free, he wants to repay me with death. What do you think of it?"

The buffalo snorted and said: "Oh, stop bothering me with this balderdash! I served a man my whole life. I ploughed his fields and pulled heavy loads and now that I'm old and weak, he chased me far far away, deep into the mountains where I am barely scraping by. And you dare to badger me with your petty dispute?! Well, I don't give a moo! The snake can eat you for all I care!"

The serpent, rejoicing at the thought of victory, was about to bite the hunter and kill him with his deadly venom.

"Hold on a moment! This was just the first judge! We still have to find two more," said the hunter quickly.

And so they went on until they chanced upon an old mustang. The man at once approached him, explained everything that happened and that they were looking for someone to settle their dispute.

The horse reared up and loudly neighed: "Oh, stop bothering me with this balderdash! I served a man my whole life. I valiantly carried him on my back at times of war and when he got wounded, I took him to safety, so that his injuries could be tended to. After the war I served the whole family at their farm. And when I grew old, he chased me away, into this dry prairie where I am barely scraping by. And you dare to badger me with your petty dispute?! Well, I don't

THE HUNTER AND THE SNAKE

give a neigh! The snake can eat you for all I care!”

The snake cheered up again. One more judge and he could bite the man and swallow him whole.

They set out again and the hunter, fearing for his life, started praying to finally meet someone who would see that the truth was on his side. Not even a minute later they came across an old fox.

“Please, fox, help us judge who’s right! This snake was buried under a heavy stone and I helped him out and saved his life. But he wants to repay me with killing me,” explained the hunter.

“All right, I’ll help you settle your dispute, but first you have to promise you will let me chase the hens in your village. And no laying traps or hunting me whatsoever,” said the old fox.

The hunter had no choice. If he wanted to live, this was his last chance, so he promised everything that the fox was asking for.

And the fox began judging straightaway. “Well, if I want to be absolutely sure what exactly happened and judge fairly, I have to see the whole thing with my own eyes.”

The hunter promptly looked around and pointed to a nearby rock. “I’d say the snake was buried under a stone around this big.”

But the serpent started protesting immediately. “Oh no, no, no, the stone was definitely bigger,” he said and quickly found a much bigger rock.

“Now, if you want me to give a truly fair judgement, you have to let us bury you with the stone once again so I can understand the situation” said the fox. The snake willingly agreed, stretched out and let the other two roll the stone over his back.

“So is this how it was?” asked the fox.

“Yes, yes, precisely!” said the snake.

“And what do you say, hunter?” asked the fox again.

“Yes, this is exactly how I found him,” answered the man.

“All right. So hurry now and let’s run away!” the fox proposed, looking forward to chasing hens in the village of this odd hunter who trusted a snake not to bite him.