

## THE WORDS OF THE JACKAL

A cowherd once left one of his cows in the forest. The cow was pregnant, and wanted to protect her calf that was soon to be born. So when she saw a lioness in the forest, she was very scared, thinking the lioness may kill her and her tiny calf for a meal.



But the lioness was kind and spoke nicely to the cow. Having no cowherd or other cows to protect her, the cow had to trust the lioness. And the cow noticed the lioness' large belly,

and saw that she too was going to have a baby.

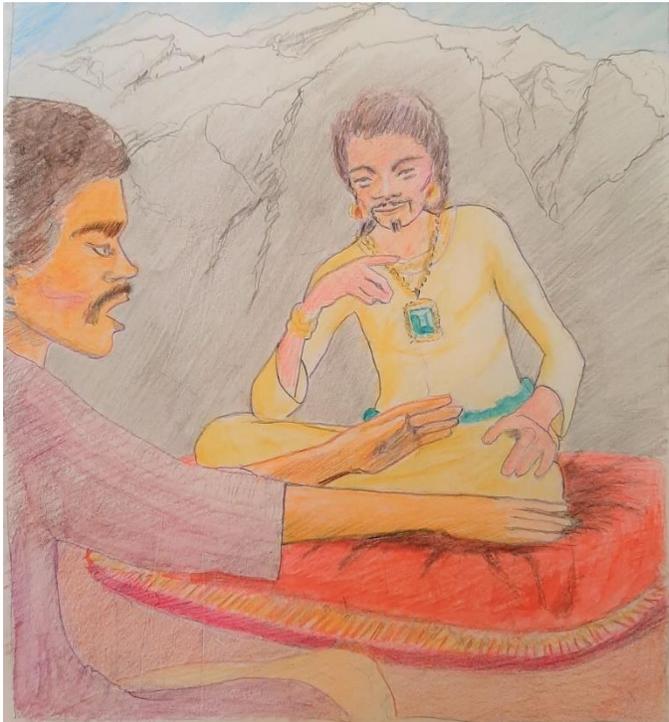


When the cow and lioness each had their baby, the newborn calf and cub became good friends, playing and roaming around together. Over the years they grew into a full-grown lion and bull, and they were the best of friends. They loved to race each other and explore new places together.

They never thought about the fact that other lions and bulls didn't play with each other.

And they certainly didn't think about the fact that lions often hunt bulls to eat, and therefore that bulls think of lions as an enemy.

One day, a man was gathering wood in the forest, and he saw them in the forest playing together.

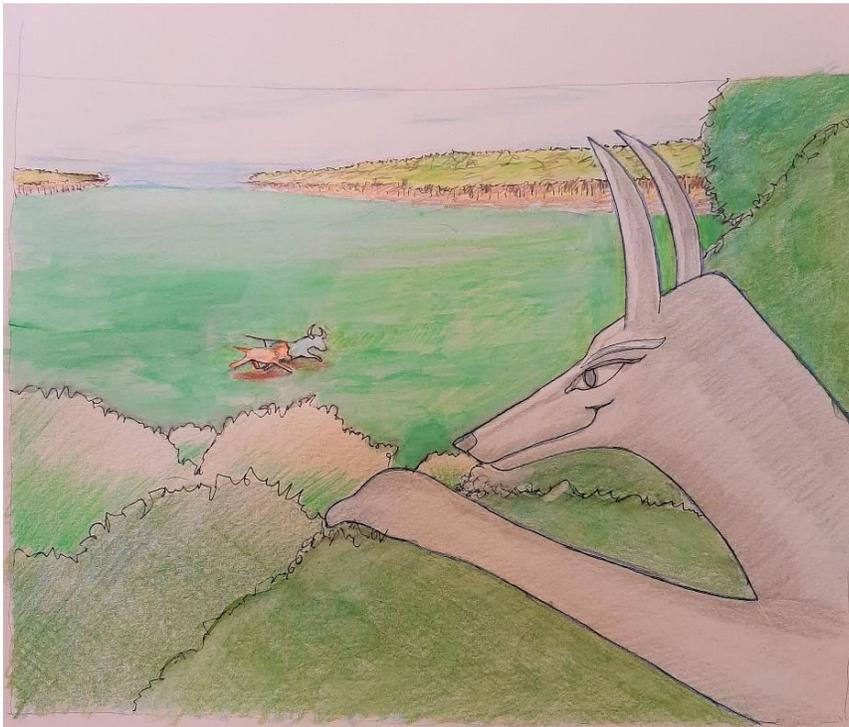


He then went to sell the wood to the king, who asked him, “Dear friend, have you seen anything unusually wonderful in the forest lately?”

The man replied, “I didn’t see anything particularly wonderful. But I did see something quite interesting. I saw a lion and a bull wandering around together, very friendly toward each other.”

For a moment, the king looked like he was deep in thought, stroking his beard. Then he said, “If a third animal joins them,

there will certainly be trouble. Come and tell me if you see another animal joining them.”



A jackal also saw the young lion and bull playing together.

When the man returned to the forest, he saw the jackal in the bushes, secretly eyeing the young lion and bull. The man thought, “Ah, there’s a third animal. I will tell the king that a third animal has appeared.”

After gathering some wood, he returned to the city.

The jackal, as usual, was just thinking about his own belly - what food he wanted to eat. He thought,

“I have eaten the meat of almost all animals. But I have never eaten the meat of a bull. And I have never eaten the meat of a lion. I would really, really like to eat some bull meat and lion meat!”

But there was a problem. It wouldn't be easy for him to hunt and kill them when they are together. He realized, “These two will protect each other as long as they are friends, so I won't be able to get them. Hmmm, I must think of a way to change that.”

He thought for a moment, with a sly look on his face.

“Ah! I have an idea. If I make them dislike each other, then I will be able to eat them.”



When the jackal noticed the lion wander away from the bull in search of food, the jackal walked over to the lion and said, “Oh mister lion, did you know that your friend the bull said that you're arrogant and always showing off?”

The lion was surprised, and said, “What? He said that about ME?” No!”

The jackal, raising an eyebrow, had a knowing look on his face, and quietly walked away.

Then the jackal walked over to the bull and stood near him. When the bull looked in his direction, the jackal said walked up close to him as if he were a friend and said,

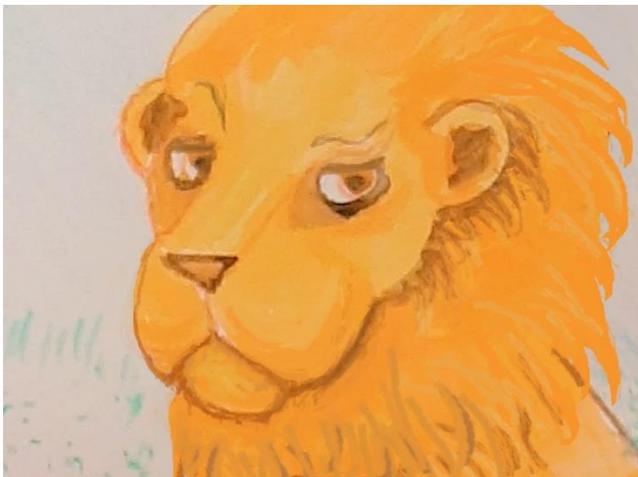


“Oh mister bull, did you know that your friend the lion said that you are clumsy and foolish?”

The bull looked at him in disbelief, and said, “I don’t think he would say that. He’s my friend.”

The jackal, raising an eyebrow with a knowing look on his face, glanced at the bull and casually walked away.

The bull could see the lion nearby, and imagined the lion saying that the bull is clumsy and foolish.



The lion looked over in the direction of the bull, and imagined the bull saying that the lion is an arrogant show-off. They didn’t look at each other with friendly feelings anymore. They each looked at the other with doubt and distrust. They didn’t speak much anymore. They felt uncomfortable with each other. Soon they began to argue.

The lion complained, “Hey, you almost stepped on my foot. Don’t you look where you’re going?”



The bull replied, "Well, you were stretching your foot out. Why do you have to lay here where I am trying to eat?"

The lion thought, "Maybe the bull is thinking I am arrogant."

The bull thought, "Maybe the lion is thinking I am clumsy and foolish."

The more they thought about each other, the more they disliked each other.

They got into a terrible argument, and then started attacking each other with

hoofs and claws. Soon each of them had bleeding wounds.

The man by this time had arrived at the king's palace. He told the king, "You told me to tell you if I see a third animal with the bull and lion. Well, I did see another animal with them."



The king asked, "What kind of animal was it?"

The man replied, "A jackal, my lord."

The king raised his eyebrows, and said, "The jackal will cause the lion and bull to fight to their death.

We shall find them both dead when we arrive."

The king took the man out to the forest in a chariot, and the man pointed out the way. Soon, they found the jackal happily eating. With great delight, it took a bite of meat from the lion's body, and then took a bite of meat from the bull's body.

The king, seeing that the lion and bull were dead, knew what happened. He knew that the jackal secretly had said bad things about each friend to the other. Talking badly about someone, especially when it's not true, is called slander. The jackal had slandered each of the friends. The king stood up in his chariot and announced,

“See how slander is like a sword. It cuts two friends apart. This is how friends will be if they listen to slander – they will end up in misery. Those who turn away from slander live happily.”

*Questions (answers in parentheses):*

1. How did the bull and the lion become friends? (their mothers were friends)
2. What did the jackal want? (to eat the lion and bull)
3. What did the jackal say to the lion? (that the bull said the lion is arrogant and always showing off)
4. What did the jackal say to the bull? (that the lion said the bull is clumsy and foolish)
5. Why did the bull and jackal begin to dislike each other? (they believed what the jackal said)
6. Did the jackal's plan work? (yes)

*What the Buddha said:*

“He who speaks kindly, truthfully and with good advice, who does not speak hurtful words, I call him a holy person.”

- Dhammapada 408

*Dharma Discussion: saying bad things about others:*

The jackal said to the bull something bad about the lion, and said to the lion something bad about the bull. He slandered them – he talked badly about them behind their backs.

When you say something bad or embarrassing about a person that is not true, or not completely true, that is called “slander.”

Whether it’s true or not, we might also call it “gossip” or “spreading rumors.”

Has someone ever told you something bad or embarrassing about a friend? Did it change your feelings about your friend?

Have you ever found out that someone talked badly about you behind your back? If so, how did you feel?

If someone says to you bad things about others behind their backs, he or she might be trying to manipulate you, to change your mind and make you dislike the others, like the jackal.

But often, people say bad things about others without really thinking about it. We might do it too.

We might whisper to a friend about how ridiculous someone looks.

We might talk about how ugly someone’s clothes are.

We might whisper and giggle about how strange someone speaks.

We might tell a friend that a classmate did something embarrassing.

It’s fun to giggle with friends, and to make them laugh.

But when we say bad things about others, is that kind? No.

They may notice us glancing at them and then whispering, giggling or frowning.

They may suspect that we’re thinking or saying negative things about them. And how would they feel? Probably very hurt.

Also, we can develop a bad habit of gossip, slander, and criticizing others.

Talking bad about others causes misery and cuts friends apart, like the king said in the story. And it is a bad karma that will result in harm to ourselves:

What we do to others, good or bad, comes back to us sooner or later.

What should we do if a friend says something negative about a person?

Instead of agreeing or giggling, you can ignore it, or be a good example to your friend by saying something nice about the person.

For example: He is a good artist, she is friendly, he helped me in class, she is a good soccer player.

Or you can explain how the negative thing really might not be their fault. For example: Maybe his parents didn't buy him better clothes, maybe he is shy, maybe she didn't have someone to teach her how to do better, maybe he is having a bad day.

There are some situations where it is appropriate to say something bad about a person: when we are trying to protect someone. For example, our parents may say something negative about another child to protect you from getting involved in his misbehavior. Or you can warn a friend about someone's dangerous or wrong behavior to protect your friend.

*Activity to reinforce the lesson:*

Think of a person you might have criticized or gossiped about. Next, think of some good qualities or talents of the person, or some good things they have done. Finally, think about how the criticism you had about the person might not be his fault.