

THE JAGUAR, THE DEER AND THE MONKEY

One day, the jaguar decided to go visit an old family friend. This friend lived on a farm and really enjoyed receiving visitors. But the farm was a long way away, and the jaguar didn't want to make the journey alone. She wandered off into the forest and came across the deer and the monkey having a chat. She invited them both to join her, but only the deer accepted. They arranged to set off the next day, and the jaguar went about her business.

As soon as she was gone, the monkey said:

- My friend deer, I wouldn't go, if I were you. The jaguar is being a little too nice, and that is never a good sign.

- Nonsense, my dear monkey – said the deer, with assurance.

- Well, don't say you weren't warned – said the monkey. – I've known that cat for a long time, and she's no good.

The deer, who was delighted about the trip, shrugged and took no notice. He was a good-hearted animal who saw no malice in anyone.

They set off as soon as the sun rose, making their way through the forest and climbing and descending hills, until they came to a wide river.

- Don't be afraid, dear deer – said the Jaguar. – It's a shallow river, easy to cross.

The deer believed her and off he went - Splash! Up to his ears in water; it was all he could do not to drown. With great difficulty, he managed to swim across to the other side, and while he was coughing and spluttering, the jaguar calmly crossed a little further up, where the water was only knee-deep.

They continued on their journey and soon came upon a group of workmen clearing a roadside. The deer stood still and piqued his ears. He was afraid of the man-animal. The jaguar reassured him:

- Don't worry, my friend. As you pass them, just say this: "May the Devil take those who work". They'll be so pleased they'll let you pass.

So off went the deer, calm as you like. As he passed the group of men, he raised his head and said:

- May the Devil take those who work – and had to run for his life, because the men charged at him, wanting to beat him.

The jaguar smiled as she passed and said:

- God bless the worker.

The workmen raised their hats and thanked her, and she passed by them sprightly.

The deer felt hurt, and complained:

- Are you trying to trick me, friend Jaguar?

- Of course not, dear deer. I think you must have misunderstood me.

And the pair continued on their way.

Further on, they reached a stand of banana trees, and the jaguar said:

- Dear friend, let's do as follows: climb up the banana tree and take the greener bananas for yourself, because they're the sweetest and the best. You can throw me the yellow ones, which are old and rotten.

The deer did as she asked. He tried to eat one of the green bananas, but it was awful. He even felt a knot in his gut, but he thought it would be rude to complain; after all, maybe he didn't like the bananas, but the jaguar had been kind. He threw a bunch of ripe yellow bananas to the jaguar, who ate until she was full.

After a good while walking, the jaguar saw a coral snake wrapped around a tree branch, and she said to the deer:

- My friend deer, look at that, what a lovely bracelet for your daughter!

The deer thought this was a splendid idea and went to fetch it, only to receive a fierce bite from the snake. The deer turned to the jaguar, groaning and nursing his throbbing wound, and said:

- My good jaguar, you must need glasses, that's no bracelet, it's a snake!

The jaguar, feigning regret, apologized to the deer:

- So sorry, dear friend. You are quite right, I was mistaken – and off she walked, with a crooked smile on her face.

A while later they arrived at the farm of the jaguar's family friend, where they were greeted by their host. As it was already night, the farmer prepared a bed of leaves for each of his guests and they all went straight to bed.

In the middle of the night, the jaguar woke feeling hungry. She went out to the chicken coup, where she chose the plumpest, most succulent chicken and – chomp! She ate it up in one go. But before going back to bed, the jaguar took a bottle gourd and collected some of the chicken's blood. She then tiptoed to the deer's bedside and smeared him with it.

Early the next morning, their host was furious.

- Jaguar, some thief broke into the chicken coup and ate my best hen. All that's left is a pile of feathers!

The jaguar pulled a face of shock and horror.

- How terrible, my friend! Who would do such a barbarous thing! Let's ask the deer if he heard anything strange last night.

So they went straight to the other bed, where the deer was still sound asleep. But when the farmer saw the deer all wet with blood, he grabbed a cudgel and began to pummel him.

- Thief! Thief! – He beat him so hard that the deer died on the spot.

The jaguar stayed on the farm for a few more days, living the high life, before returning to the forest.

Some time afterwards, she decided to visit the farm again, and invited the monkey to join her. But the monkey had heard all about the fate of his friend, the deer. He was so angry about the whole thing that he decided to teach the jaguar a lesson. Monkeys are smart critters, not at all easily tricked. So the two set off on their journey and soon came to the wide river, where the jaguar said:

- Don't be afraid, dear monkey. It's a shallow river, easy to cross.

- Ladies first – said the monkey, pulling a face. – You lead and I shall follow.

The jaguar had no other option than to cross the river in the shallows, with the monkey skipping along behind her. After a good long walk, they came upon the workmen on the roadside.

- There's no danger, dear monkey – said the jaguar, with a false smile. – You needn't be afraid, just say to them as you pass: "May the devil take those who work". They'll be very pleased and let you pass.

The monkey approached the group of men and said:

- There's a jaguar coming who says she's going to eat you all – and he continued on his way.

When the jaguar tried to pass, the workers rushed after her with their hoes and rakes. The jaguar had to run like mad to escape them.

- Are you trying to trick me, my dear monkey? – asked the jaguar, near to tears.

- Of course not, dear friend – replied the monkey, rolling his eyes. – I think they must have misunderstood me.

And so they continued their journey.

After a while they reached the stand of banana trees. The monkey's mouth began to water.

- Dear friend, let's do as follows: climb up the banana tree and take the greener bananas for yourself, because they're the sweetest and the best. You can throw me the yellow ones, which are old and rotten.

The monkey climbed the banana tree, laughing merrily:

- You want to teach a monkey how to eat bananas, my dear jaguar?

He grabbed the ripe ones for himself and dropped a bunch of green bananas on the jaguar's head. The jaguar was now quite cranky, and thought to herself: "Just you wait, monkey. You'll get yours". She smiled bitterly, and they went on their way.

Further on, they saw the coral snake coiled around the branch.

- Monkey, look at that beautiful bracelet! Why don't you take it for your daughter?

- I don't have a daughter – said the monkey, cunningly.

- Well for your wife, then – said the jaguar.

- No wife either – said the monkey with a shrug. – I'm single. Let's go, my friend jaguar, it's getting dark.

The jaguar was livid, but there was nothing she could do.

They arrived late at the farm. Their host laid some beds of leaves for them and they turned in for the night. In the wee hours, the jaguar woke up famished. She crept into the chicken coup and did the same again, only this time she was so starving she ate two chickens. She collected a bottle gourd of blood and tiptoed to the monkey's bed, which she found empty. She went looking for him in all corners until she finally found him curled up in the highest branches of a tall tree, pretending to be asleep. As she was exhausted, she asked a snake to slither up there and smear the monkey with blood. The snake agreed, but no sooner had the jaguar turned her back than she discarded the gourd and went off about her business. The snake had two children to tend to and did not have time to waste on a jaguar's pranks.

The monkey had watched it all and thought: "Now I've got you, dearest jaguar".

After waiting a while, he heard the jaguar snoring. He tiptoed to her bedside and spilled the blood on her chest and paws.

Early in the morning the farmer noticed that two hens were missing. He was furious.

- What is going on? Every time this jaguar comes to visit, a thief appears in my coup! And this time he's taken two!

- Let's go to the jaguar's bed – said the monkey, who was waiting nearby. - Maybe she saw or heard something of the thief.

Just in case she had, the farmer grabbed his shotgun and the pair went to wake the jaguar. And there she was, sleeping peacefully, smeared from head to toe with blood.

- Aha! I've found the thief! - yelled the farmer. And he fired off a shot so fast and sure that the poor cat didn't even have time to open her eyes.

The deer was avenged. The monkey became good friends with the farmer, who was very grateful and gave him lots of gifts. After a good vacation on the farm, the monkey went back to the forest, where he told everyone about how the jaguar had learned her lesson.