

The Blue Jackal Who Showed His True Colors



*O*ne day a scrawny jackal, driven by hunger, left his pack and crept toward a village in search of food. A fierce pack of dogs began to chase him as he approached the house of a cloth dyer. He dashed into the dyer's house, stumbled over pots and piles of cloth, and tumbled into a huge vat of indigo dye. Heart pounding, the jackal waited until the dogs were gone. Then he crawled out of the vat and crept back to the jungle.

Throngs of animals gaped at his extraordinary color. Dyed by the juice of indigo, his fur was a deep blue-purple. "What is this exotic creature who has fallen out of the sky?" cried all the animals. "He is beautiful and strange!" They cowered in fear and awe.

The blue jackal looked down at himself and admired his own fur. He slyly announced, "Creatures of the jungle, gather around and hear my words! I am your new king!"

Word quickly spread through the jungle as each animal informed the next, "A mysterious creature of royal color has fallen from the sky and is now our rightful ruler!" All the animals of the jungle gathered to pay homage to the king.

The blue jackal was delighted as lions, tigers, leopards, monkeys, rabbits, jackals, gazelles, and others, big and small, bowed before him. "Tell us our duties, O great king!" they pleaded.

The blue jackal began to give out jobs, imitating as best he could the royal bearing of a king. He appointed the lions as his prime ministers and lords. The

tigers became keepers of his bed chamber. The monkeys took turns carrying his parasol. The leopards served his food. Each creature except the jackals had a royal task. When creatures of his own kind came forward to bow before him, the blue jackal sent them away with disgust. He wanted nothing to do with them, for they reminded him of his own humble origins. The jackals left grumbling.

Time passed and the blue jackal enjoyed the privileges of being a king. When he was rude, crude, or unreasonable, no one challenged him. After all, he was their leader. All bore his behavior with great tolerance.

One day the jackals began to complain to each other. "He does not give us any honor. We know who he is by his smell. That fancy blue color of his fur does not fool us!"

An old jackal advised, "What belongs to one's nature is difficult to disguise. Even a well-fed cat will still chase mice. Let us howl as a pack and watch how he shows his true colors."

The next morning as the blue jackal berated and bullied the animals who were serving him, the jackal pack began to howl together loudly. Unable to restrain himself, the blue jackal leapt up and joined in with a loud howl too.

The lions, tigers, and leopards suddenly realized that their king was just an ordinary jackal pretending to be what he was not. Outraged at his deception, the animals attacked the blue jackal and drove him away. He tried to return home to the pack of jackals, but they refused to welcome him in their midst, for he had despised them so when he was king.

Alone and miserable, without a family or a community, the crestfallen blue jackal crept into the shadows of his cave to lick his wounds.

scrawny: weak and skinny

vat: a large tub for holding liquids

indigo: a blue/purple color

exotic: Strikingly strange or unusual

sly: tricky

homage: respect

bearing: the way someone holds himself when he walks; how someone presents himself

chamber: room

parasol: an umbrella used to shade someone from the sun

origins: The very beginning of something; where it started or came from.

berate: To talk to in an angry manner. To angrily tell someone all the things they have done wrong.

restrain: stop

deception: A form of trickery. Something done to fool someone into believing a lie.

crestfallen: disappointed or humiliated; made sad or humble

wounds: injuries