

# *The Lion and the Rabbit*



*L*ong ago in India, there lived a vain and ferocious lion. He roamed the jungle and killed for pleasure. To show his power, he killed more animals than he needed to eat. The animals lived in terror of this beast. One day they gathered to decide how they might peacefully persuade the lion to end his evil ways. They agreed that each day, one animal would offer to be the lion's meal. Armed with this brave plan, the animals approached the ferocious lion.

"O Lion, king of the jungle," they cried, "if you will stop your unnecessary killing, we have agreed to send one animal each day to be your supper. Think of it! You will live a life of leisure. You will never need to hunt again. One animal each day shall come willingly to your den."

The lion considered the plan and, to everyone's surprise, roared, "I agree to this plan! The creature who is to be my dinner must come at the proper time. I do not like to wait for my meals!"

The next day the animals sent a wise old rabbit to be the lion's meal. As the rabbit went along the road to the lion's den, he walked very slowly. He dawdled here and there along the way, nibbling at leaves and conversing with friends. By the time the rabbit arrived at the lion's den, it was very late in the day. The sun was setting, and the lion was ravenous.

"Why are you late?" he roared. "You've made me wait!"

"Your Majesty," said the rabbit, "it is true that I am late. However, I am not to blame. A wicked, ferocious lion prevented me from arriving on time. I can picture him now. He had long, sharp claws, like yours, a swishing tail, like yours, frightening teeth and a huge mane, like yours."

The lion went into a rage. "Another lion in *my* jungle! Take me to him!"

"I can easily bring you to him," said the rabbit. "Come, and I will show you the lion."

The clever rabbit led the lion to a deep well filled with water. He pointed down into the well and said, "Look, Your Majesty, and you will see the most wicked lion in the jungle."

The lion walked to the well, looked down into it, and saw his own reflection in the water. Thinking it was another lion, he roared a terrible roar: "R-O-A-RRR!"

The sound of his roar filled the well and bounced back to him as an echo. "R-o-a-rrr!"

"Who are you?" he roared even louder.

His echo answered, "*Who are you?*"

"I am the king of this jungle!" he roared again.

His echo answered, "*I am the king of this jungle!*"

"How dare you call yourself the king!" he roared with even greater fury.

His echo answered, "*How dare you call yourself the king!*"

This was more than the proud lion could bear. He became so enraged that with claws spread wide and sharp teeth showing, he charged into the deep well with a great splash!

The wise old rabbit went back to the other animals to tell them how the wicked lion had violently attacked his own reflection—and would never be heard from again.