

THE LION AND THE RABBIT

A tale from India

Adapted by Carole L. Cooney

Setting: The jungle of Gir in India

Characters:

Narrator

Rajan, the *King* lion

Ahbijat, a *wise*, old rabbit

Nirdhar, a *fearless* Black Buck

Giridhar, a *strong* Elephant

Rajan's echo

(The above italicized words give the meaning of the Indian name.)

Narrator: In the jungle of Gir in India, there lived Rajan, a most ferocious lion. All of the jungle animals were fearful of Rajan because he hunted and killed more animals than he needed for food. He did this just to show off his power.

Rajan: Grrrr! I am so tired of these easy catches. (yawn) I think I'll lie under that Banyan tree and catch a few winks.

Narrator: While Rajan slept, all the animals gathered to decide how they might peacefully persuade Rajan to end his wasteful hunting and killing.

Ahbijat: What will be our plan?

Nirdhar: We have plenty of offspring, don't we?

Ahbijat: Yes. What if we do?

Nirdhar: Well, we could send *one animal a day* to Rajan to be his supper.

Ahbijat: This is a very brave plan. Let us ask all of the animals if they agree.

Narrator: All of the animals gathered and agreed to the plan. They decided to send Ahbijat, their eldest and wisest to speak with Rajan.

Rajan: Ahh... I see another easy catch. Grrrrrowl! I'm going to catch you, you ancient rabbit, without moving from this spot. That's right, just hop a little closer.

Ahbijat: (with a great bow) O Rajan, mighty King Lion, we animals have been thinking and thinking how we can please you. We decided we would like to send you one animal a day to be your supper.

Rajan: (loudly) Why have you come to me with this plan?

Ahbijat: You are our mighty King and we want you to live like a king. In this way you would live freely without having to hunt for food.

Rajan: Yes, yes. I *am* beginning to get bored with hunting and killing. I like this plan. It pleases me. Just make sure my supper arrives *on time!* I don't like to wait for my food.

Narrator: The next day, the animals sent Ahbijat, to be the lion's meal. The crafty rabbit walked very, very slowly, eating fresh grass and berries along the way. The sun was beginning to set when he *finally* arrived at the lion's den.

Rajan: (roaring) WHY ARE YOU LATE!

Ahbijat: I'm so sorry to be late, but a ferocious lion was stalking me. Oh, oh, you should have seen him! His claws were much sharper than yours; his teeth were much larger and pointier than yours; and his mane was ever so much larger and grander than yours.

Rajan: (roaring) GRRROWL! WHAT! A LION IN MY JUNGLE!

Ahbijat: Would you like me to take you to him?

Rajan: LEAD THE WAY!

Narrator: Ahbijat cleverly led Rajan to a deep well in the heart of the jungle.

Ahbijat: Look carefully into the well, Rajan and you will see the most terrible lion in your jungle.

Narrator: The lion crept up to the edge of the well and slowly peeked in. His eyes widened when he saw his own reflection in the water. He thought it was another lion!

Rajan: R-O-A-R-R! WHO ARE YOU?

Narrator: The well's echo answered the lion.

Echo: R-O-A-R-R! WHO ARE YOU?

Rajan: I AM KING OF THIS JUNGLE!

Echo: I AM KING OF THIS JUNGLE!

Rajan: HOW DARE YOU CALL YOURSELF KING?

Echo: HOW DARE YOU CALL YOURSELF KING?

Narrator: Rajan became so angry that he bared his teeth and claws and sprang into the well for the attack. Suddenly, all that was heard was a giant splash coming from the bottom of the well.

Ahbijat hopped quickly back to the other animals to tell them how Rajan attacked his own reflection in the well and would never be seen again.