



The Camel

A traditional tale retold by Rosie Mapplebeck

The biting sun rose sharply over the forest, glinting off the cloudy eyes of an old camel. He heaved himself upwards and splayed out his twin-toed feet. He began to travel slowly, his rolling gait echoing his absent stare, his munching mouth, his cloudy eyes. His pungent scent pierced the air before him.

In the deeper forest a tiger lay waiting. She was hungry. Her eyes gleamed when she caught the scent of large beast.

"At last, my hunger will be satisfied" she thought.

Knowing every track, the tiger hid behind a large tree with a dense, shadowy leaf canopy above. She saved her energy for one mighty pounce. A pounce, then a feast to come.

The tiger waited, only the tip of her tail twitching in the dappled light of the forest floor.

And the camel plodded onwards, up the jungle path, towards the tree where the tiger lay waiting.

A forest is a lively place, shared by many creatures, large and small. In the branches above where the tiger lay in wait, a chattering monkey swung from branch to branch, looking for nuts and fruit. He saw the tiger crouched near the pathway. His nose caught the savoury smell of the approaching camel.

"Ah, the tiger is hunting that camel today, is she? I think I will have a little fun with her. How would it be if when the camel comes close to the tree and the tiger goes to spring upon him, I threw fruit peel at the tiger? She will get such a fright, she is bound to miss her pounce."

The monkey thought how cross the tiger would be and he chuckled. He waited in the tree above the tiger. The tiger's tail twitched and lashed and the camel plodded slowly onwards, munching and chewing, chewing and munching.

From tree to tree leapt a squirrel. Her bright eyes spotted the monkey feasting on fruit, ready to fling peel. "That's my fruit" she thought, "that monkey eats too much. Why does he stay in that tree?" then he noticed the tail of the tiger, twitching in the dappled sunlight as the sun climbed higher into the sky. "Oh that monkey thinks he can control all the jungle. But what if I bit his tail? He would not look so clever when the tiger spots him. Then all the fruit will be left for me."

The squirrel watched the monkey, who watched the tiger, who watched for the camel, slowly plodding onwards through the jungle.

High above the canopy of the forest, little birds flitted, catching insects, singing forest songs and praising the beauty of the new day. One little bird was fluttering through the branches and saw Squirrel poised, motionless. He was curious.

"Why is that squirrel so still?" he thought. Then he saw the monkey below them.

"Oh, he is jealous of that monkey. He plans to bite his tail. But what if I give her a surprise? I'll peck her head, she'll will have such a fright"

The bird waited; the squirrel poised; the monkey paused; the tiger coiled ready to spring and the camel plodded slowly onwards.

All of a sudden... the camel stopped. He yawned, he rolled his cloudy eyes.

And then, he turned about and headed back the way he had come.

The tiger, crouched under the tree could not pounce on the camel.

And the monkey, clutching peel, did not throw at the tiger

and the squirrel had no excuse to bite the monkey

The little bird did not peck the squirrel.

For a moment all the animals were frozen.

Then the little bird began to sing and to hop

And the squirrel began to chatter and twirl in the branches

And the monkey began to laugh and scream, hurling fruit peel all over the forest floor

And the tiger slunk away into the shadows of the jungle to hunt another day.

The other birds called out "Why are you all so noisy? What has happened?"

And the animals replied: "What has happened? Why nothing has happened. Nothing has happened at all"

Along the forest path, a camel plodded slowly, rolling her eyes and munching.

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