

BEWARE OF MEAN FRIENDS

image: <http://www.kidsgen.com/stories/panchatantra/img/mean-friends.jpg>



There in a deep jungle, lived a lion by the name of Madotkata. He had three selfish friends—a jackal, a crow and a wolf. They had become friendly with the lion, because he was the king of the forest. They were always at the service of the lion and obeyed him to meet their selfish ends.

Once, a camel got disorientated in the jungle while grazing and went astray. He tried hard to find his way out, but could not succeed.

In the meantime, these three friends of the lion saw the camel, wandering in a confused manner.

"He doesn't seem to come from our forest", said the jackal to his friends. "Let's kill and eat him."

"No", said the wolf. "It's a big animal. Let's go and inform our king, the lion."

"Yes, this is a good idea", said the crow. "We can have our share of flesh after the king kills the came. "Having decided upon this the three went to meet the lion.

"Your Majesty", said the jackal, "a camel from some other forest has entered into your kingdom without your permission. His body is full of delicious flesh. He may prove to be our best meal. Let's kill him".

Hearing the advice of his friends, the lion roared in anger and said, "What're you talking about? The camel has walked into my kingdom for the sake of his safety. We should give him shelter and not kill him. Go and bring him to me."

The three became very disheartened to hear the lion's words. But they were helpless. So having no alternative, they went to the camel and told him about the wishes of the lion who wanted to meet him and have dinner with him.

The camel was terribly frightened to learn the awkward proposal. Thinking that his last moment had arrived and soon he would be killed by the king of the forest, he resigned himself to the mercy of his fate and went to see the lion in his den.

However, the lion was very happy to see him. He talked to him sweetly and assured him of all the safety in the forest, so long as he stayed there. The camel was simply astonished and was very happy to hear the lion's words. He began living with the jackal, the wolf and the crow.

But once, bad luck struck the lion. One day, while he was hunting for food with his friends, he had a fight with a huge elephant. The fight was so fierce that all his three friends fled the spot in panic. The lion was badly wounded in the fight. Although, he killed the elephant, but he himself became incapable of hunting for his food. Day after day, he had to go without food. His friends too had to starve for days together as they depended entirely on the lion's prey for their food. But the camel grazed around happily.

One day the three friends-the jackal, the wolf and the crow approached the lion and said, "Your Majesty, you're becoming weak day after day. We can't see you in this pitiable condition. Why don't you kill the camel and eat him?"

"No", roared the lion, "he is our guest. We can't kill him. Don't make such suggestions to me in future."

But the jackal, the wolf and the crow had set their evil eyes on the camel. They met together once again and hatched a plan to kill the camel.

They went to the camel and said, "My dear friend, you know our king has had nothing to eat for the last so many days. He cannot go hunting due to his wounds and physical infirmity. Under these circumstances, it becomes our duty to sacrifice ourselves to save the life of our king. Come, let us go to our king and offer our bodies for his food."

Innocent camel didn't understand their plot. He nodded and consented in favour of their proposal.

All the four reached the den of the lion. The jackal said to the lion, "Your Majesty, despite our best of efforts, we couldn't find a prey."

First, the crow came forward and offered himself for the noble cause.

"So, you can eat me and assuage your hunger", said the crow to the lion.

"Your body is too small", said the jackal. "How can the king assuage his hunger by eating you?"

The jackal offered his own body to the lion for food. He said, "Your Majesty, I offer myself. It's my solemn duty to save your life."

"No", said the wolf, "you too are too small to assuage the hunger of our King. I offer myself for this noble task. Kill me and eat me, Your Majesty," he said lying prostrate before the lion.

But the lion didn't kill any of them.

The camel was standing nearby and watching all that was going on there. He also decided to go forward and fulfil the formality.

He stepped forward and said, "Your Majesty, why not me! You're my friend. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Please kill me and eat my flesh to assuage your hunger."

The lion liked the camel's idea. Since, the camel himself had offered his body for food, his conscience won't prick and the jackal had already told the lion about the intense desire of the camel to sacrifice himself for the welfare of the king. He immediately pounced upon the camel and tore him into pieces. The lion and his friends had a good and sumptuous meal for days together.

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