

THE WOODPECKER AND THE LION JATAKA TALE

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One day while a Lion was eating his dinner a bone stuck in his throat. It hurt so that he could not finish his dinner. He walked up and down, up and down, roaring with pain.

A Woodpecker lit on a branch of a tree near-by, and hearing the Lion, she said, "Friend, what ails you?" The Lion told the Woodpecker what the matter was, and the Woodpecker said: "I would take the bone out of your throat, friend, but I do not dare to put my head into your mouth, for fear I might never get it out again. I am afraid you might eat me."

"O Woodpecker, do not be afraid," the Lion said. "I will not eat you. Save my life if you can!"

"I will see what I can do for you," said the Woodpecker. "Open your mouth wide." The Lion did as he was told, but the Woodpecker said to himself: "Who knows what this Lion will do? I think I will be careful."

So the Woodpecker put a stick between the Lion's upper and lower jaws so that he could not shut his mouth.

Then the Woodpecker hopped into the Lion's mouth and hit the end of the bone with his beak. The second time he hit it, the bone fell out.

The Woodpecker hopped out of the Lion's mouth, and hit the stick so that it too fell out. Then the Lion could shut his mouth.

At once the Lion felt very much better, but not one word of thanks did he say to the Woodpecker.

One day later in the summer, the Woodpecker said to the Lion, "I want you to do something for me."

"Do something for you?" said the Lion. "You mean you want me to do something more for you. I have already done a great deal for you. You cannot expect me to do anything more for you. Do not forget that once I had you in my mouth, and I let you go. That is all that you can ever expect me to do for you."

The Woodpecker said no more, but he kept away from the Lion from that day on.

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