



# *The Jackal and the Partridge*

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Indian

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*Easy*  
*7 min read*

A Jackal and a Partridge swore eternal friendship; but the Jackal was very exacting and jealous. 'You don't do half as much for me as I do for you,' he used to say, 'and yet you talk a great deal of your friendship. Now my idea of a friend is one who is able to make me laugh or cry, give me a good meal, or save my life if need be. You couldn't do that!'

'Let us see,' answered the Partridge; 'follow me at a little distance, and if I don't make you laugh soon you may eat me!'

So she flew on till she met two travellers trudging along, one behind the other. They were both footsore and weary, and the first carried his bundle on a stick over his shoulder, while the second had his shoes in his hand.

Lightly as a feather the Partridge settled on the first traveller's stick. He, none the wiser, trudged on, but the second traveller, seeing the bird sitting so tamely just in front of his nose, said to himself,

'What a chance for a supper!' and immediately flung his shoes at it, they being ready to hand. Whereupon the Partridge flew away, and the shoes knocked off the first traveller's turban.

‘What a plague do you mean?’ cried he, angrily turning on his companion. ‘Why did you throw your shoes at my head?’

[Illustration: The second traveler preparing to fling his shoe at the partridge]

‘Brother!’ replied the other mildly, ‘do not be vexed. I didn’t throw them at you, but at a Partridge that was sitting on your stick.’

‘On my stick! Do you take me for a fool?’ shouted the injured man, in a great rage. ‘Don’t tell me such cock-and-bull stories. First you insult me, and then you lie like a coward; but I’ll teach you manners!’

Then he fell upon his fellow-traveller without more ado, and they fought until they could not see out of their eyes, till their noses were bleeding, their clothes in rags, and the Jackal had nearly died of laughing.

‘Are you satisfied?’ asked the Partridge of her friend.

‘Well,’ answered the Jackal, ‘you have certainly made me laugh, but I doubt if you could make me cry. It is easy enough to be a buffoon; it is more difficult to excite the higher emotions.’

‘Let us see,’ retorted the Partridge, somewhat piqued; ‘there is a huntsman with his dogs coming along the road. Just creep into that hollow tree and watch me: if you don’t weep scalding tears, you must have no feeling in you!’

The Jackal did as he was bid, and watched the Partridge, who began fluttering about the bushes till the dogs caught sight of her, when she flew to the hollow tree where the Jackal was hidden. Of course the dogs smelt him at once, and set up such a yelping and scratching that the huntsman came up, and seeing what it was, dragged the Jackal out by the tail. Whereupon the dogs worried him to their hearts’ content, and finally left him for dead.

By and by he opened his eyes—for he was only foxing—and saw the Partridge sitting on a branch above him.

‘Did you cry?’ she asked anxiously. ‘Did I rouse your higher emo—’

'Be quiet, will you!' snarled the Jackal; 'I'm half dead with fear!'

So there the Jackal lay for some time, getting the better of his bruises, and meanwhile he became hungry.

'Now is the time for friendship!' said he to the Partridge. 'Get me a good dinner, and I will acknowledge you are a true friend.'

'Very well!' replied the Partridge; 'only watch me, and help yourself when the time comes.'

Just then a troop of women came by, carrying their husbands' dinners to the harvest-field.

The Partridge gave a little plaintive cry, and began fluttering along from bush to bush as if she were wounded.

'A wounded bird!—a wounded bird!' cried the women; 'we can easily catch it!'

Whereupon they set off in pursuit, but the cunning Partridge played a thousand tricks, till they became so excited over the chase that they put their bundles on the ground in order to pursue it more nimbly. The Jackal, meanwhile, seizing his opportunity, crept up, and made off with a good dinner.

'Are you satisfied now?' asked the Partridge.

'Well,' returned the Jackal, 'I confess you have given me a very good dinner; you have also made me laugh—and cry—ahem! But, after all, the great test of friendship is beyond you—you couldn't save my life!'

'Perhaps not,' acquiesced the Partridge mournfully, 'I am so small and weak. But it grows late—we should be going home; and as it is a long way round by the ford, let us go across the river. My friend the crocodile will carry us over.'

Accordingly, they set off for the river, and the crocodile kindly consented to carry them across, so they sat on his broad back and he ferried them over. But just as they were in the middle of the stream the Partridge remarked, 'I believe the crocodile intends to play us a trick. How awkward if he were to drop you into the water!'

'Awkward for you too!' replied the Jackal, turning pale.

‘Not at all! not at all! I have wings, you haven’t.’

On this the Jackal shivered and shook with fear, and when the crocodile, in a gruesome growl, remarked that he was hungry and wanted a good meal, the wretched creature hadn’t a word to say.

‘Pooh!’ cried the Partridge airily, ‘don’t try tricks on *us*,—I should fly away, and as for my friend the Jackal, you couldn’t hurt *him*. He is not such a fool as to take his life with him on these little excursions; he leaves it at home, locked up in the cupboard.’

‘Is that a fact?’ asked the crocodile, surprised.

‘Certainly!’ retorted the Partridge. ‘Try to eat him if you like, but you will only tire yourself to no purpose.’

‘Dear me! how very odd!’ gasped the crocodile; and he was so taken aback that he carried the Jackal safe to shore.

‘Well, are you satisfied now?’ asked the Partridge.

‘My dear madam!’ quoth the Jackal, ‘you have made me laugh, you have made me cry, you have given me a good dinner, and you have saved my life; but upon my honour I think you are too clever for a friend; so, good-bye!’

And the Jackal never went near the Partridge again.

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