



Why Humans Have No Tails

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Animals, Retold Fairy Tales

Maybe you didn't know, but Man used to walk on all fours and had a tail like the other land animals. The animals all lived together in a very large compound and cared for one another. They had no leader- they didn't see the need for a leader, until things started to go awry. Some of the animals did whatever they liked, and since there were no laws to bring them to justice, they got away with their misdeeds.

One evening, the animals assembled and decided to appoint a king.

'I suggest Cheetah be crowned king,' said Reindeer. 'My! He runs very fast. He is fit to be king.'

'No. I think Lion is more deserving,' said Horse. 'He has a commanding presence.'

'Giraffe should be King,' said Rhinoceros. 'Our king should be very tall and able to see danger miles away.'

Thus they argued back and forth without reaching a conclusion and soon night was upon them. They decided to sleep over it and meet again the next day to crown their chosen king.

The next morning, to the dismay of the animals, Elephant was down with a severe illness. The animals were really worried. They loved Elephant very much. He was kind and always shared his food with others. They tried everything they could to make him better, but nothing seemed to work. In desperation, they promised to crown anyone who could come up with a cure, the king of all animals.

Lion crushed some herbs and leaves and gave to Elephant, but it didn't do much good. Zebra ground some maize and mixed it with a creamy, yellowish fluid. He believed this would do the magic, but it disappointed him. Pig brought some red pills, which he had been storing up for years. He said they were given to him by his father, and that they could cure any sickness. Elephant took the pills, but sadly, it was the same old story. Days passed. Weeks passed. Months passed. Elephant was not getting any better.

Meanwhile, Man had embarked on a journey to see a powerful sorcerer who lived in a tree in a very distant land. Man travelled for seven days before he arrived at his destination.

The sorcerer was so tall that Man could only see his shoes.

‘What do you want?’ he asked Man in a harsh tone.

‘Please I need your help,’ Man said. ‘My friend Elephant is dying. I need you to save him.’

‘Ha! Ha! What makes you think I can save your friend?’

‘Great One, I know you can do anything. Please help my friend. I don’t want him to die.’

The sorcerer thought for a while.

‘I will help you on one condition.’

‘I will do anything you ask.’

‘Well, you see, I am very tall and my height has become a burden to me. I can’t see what happens on the earth beneath my feet. And more so, the rays of the sun often hurt my eyes. I will help you on the condition that we exchange body forms. Henceforth, I will walk on all fours like you and you will stand upright like me. I want to be close to the ground.’

‘Ok, that’s fine by me,’ said Man, almost without thinking.

Man was afraid that Elephant would be dead by the time he arrived. But to his relief, Elephant was still alive, although his health seemed to worsen minute by minute. The animals were astonished to see Man standing upright, but first they wanted their friend to get well before they asked any questions.

Man brought out the powdery substance, which the sorcerer had given him, mixed it in water and gave to Elephant to drink. At once, Elephant felt strong and fresh breath returned to his nostrils. He jumped up in joy and hugged Man so tightly.

‘Thank you for saving my life. Thank you all. I thought I would die.’

Afterwards, Man narrated to them the story of how he met the sorcerer and struck a deal with him. That was why he could stand upright.

‘Let’s crown him king!’ cried Squirrel.

‘Yes,’ said Panther. ‘Long live the king!’

Thus Man was crowned king of all the land animals.

‘He looks like a true king,’ said Jackal, ‘since he stands upright. We can all see his face when he talks to us. But I

suggest we remove his tail too to further distinguish him from us, his subjects.'

The idea seemed good to the other animals and they agreed. This is why humans do not have tails to this very day.

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