



Why Old Baboon Has That Kink in His Tail

Captain Arthur Owen Vaughan
South African

Intermediate
32 min read

The day was hot, and the koppies simmered blue and brown along the Vaal River. Noon had come, dinner was done. “Allah Mattie!” said the grey old kitchen boy to himself, as he stretched to sleep in the shade of the mimosa behind the house. “Allah Mattie! but it near break my back in dem tobacco lands dis mawnin’. I sleep now.”

He stretched himself with a slow groan of pleasure, settling his face upon his hands as he lay, soaking in comfort. In three minutes he was asleep.

But round the corner of the house came the three children, the eldest a ten-year-old, the youngest six. With a whoop and a dash the eldest flung himself astride the old Hottentot’s back, the youngest rode the legs behind, while the girl, the eight-year-old with the yellow hair and the blue eyes, darted to the old man’s head and caught him fast with both hands. “Ou’ Ta! Ou’ Ta!” she cried. “Now you’re Ou’ Jackalse and we’re Ou’ Wolf, and we’ve got you this time at last.” She wanted to dance in the triumph of it, could she have done it without letting go.

Old Hendrik woke between a grunt and a groan, but the merry clamour of the little girl would have none of that. “Now we’ve got you, Ou’ Jackalse,” cried she again.

The old man’s yellow face looked up in a sly grin. “Ah, Anniekye,” said he unctuously; “but Ou’ Wolf never did ketch Ou’ Jackalse. He ain’t never bin slim enough yet. He make a big ole try dat time when he got Oom Baviyàan to help him; but all dey got was dat kink in Ou’ Baviyàan’s tail—you can see it yet.”

“But how did old Bobbyjohn get that kink in his tail? You never told us that, Ou’ Ta’,” protested Annie.

The old Hottentot smiled to the little girl, and then straightway sighed to himself. “If you little folks only knowed de Taal,” said he plaintively. “It don’t soun’ de same in you’ Englis’ somehow.” He shook his head sadly over English as the language for a Hottentot story handed down in the Boer tongue. He had been long enough in the service of this “English” family (an American father and Australian mother) to know enough of the language for bald use; though, being a Hottentot, he had never mastered the “th,” as a Basuto or other Bantu might have done, and was otherwise uncertain also—the pronunciation of a word often depending upon that of the words next before and after it. But English was not fond enough, nor had diminutives enough, for a kitchen tale as a house Kaffir loves to tell it.

None the less, his eyes brightened till the smile danced in his face as his words began. “Ou’ Wolf—well, Ou’ Wolf, he’d a seen a lot less trouble if he ha’n’t had sich a wife, for Ou’ Missis Wolf she yust had a temper like a meer-cat. Folks use’ to won’er how Ou’ Wolf manage’ wid her, an’ Ou’ Jackalse use’ to say to him, ‘Allah man! if she was on’y my wife for about five minutes she’d fin’ out enough to tink on as long’s she keep a-livin’.’ An’ den Ou’ Jackalse, he’d hit ’is hat back on to de back of his head an’ he’d step slouchin’ an’ fair snort agen a-grinnin’.

“But Ou’ Wolf ud look behind to see if his missis was hearin’, an’ den he’d shake his head, an’ stick his hands in his pockets an’ walk off an tink. He’d see some mighty tall tinkin’ yust up over his head, but he couldn’ somehow seem to get a-hold of it.

“Well, one mawnin’ Missis Wolf she get up, an’ she look on de hooks an’ dere ain’t no meat, an’ she look in de pot an’ dere ain’t no mealies. ‘Allah Crachty!’ says she, ‘but dat Ou’ Wolf is about de laziest skellum ever any woman wore herse’f out wid. I’ll ketch my deat’ of him afore I’s done.’

“Den she look outside, an’ dere she seen Ou’ Wolf a-settin’ on de stoop in de sun. He was yust a-waitin’, sort o’ quiet an’ patient, for his breakfas’, never dreamin’ nothin’ about bein’ banged about de yead wid a mealie ladle,

when out flops Missis Wolf, an' fair bangs him a biff on one side his head wid de long spoon. 'You lazy skellum!' ses she, an' bash she lams him on his t'other year. 'Where's darie (that there) meat for de breakfas' I don' know?' ses she, an' whack she smack him right on top his head. 'Off you go an' fetch some dis ver' minute,' ses she, an' Ou' Wolf he don' say no moh, but he yust offs, an' he offs wid a yump too, I can tell you.

"Ou' Wolf as he go he won'er how he's goin' to get dat meat quick enough. 'I tink I'll get Ou' Jackalse to come along a-huntin' too,' ses he. 'He's mighty slim when he ain't no need to be, an' p'raps if he'd be slim a-huntin' dis mawnin' we'd ketch somet'in' quicker.' An' Ou' Wolf rub his head in two-t'ree places as he tink of it.

"Now Ou' Jackalse, he was a-sittin' in de sun agen de wall of his house, a-won'erin' where he's gun' to get breakfas', 'cause he feel dat hungry an' yet he feel dat lazy dat he wish de grass was sheep so he could lie down to it. But grass ain't sheep till it's inside one, an' so Missis Jackalse, inside a-spankin' little Ainky, was a-won'erin' where she's gun' to get some breakfas' to stop it a-squallin'. 'I yust wish you' daddy 'ud tink a bit oftener where I's gun' to get bones for you,' ses she.

"Little Ainky, she stop an' listen to dat, an' den she tink awhile, but she fin' she don't get no fatter on on'y talk about bones, an' fus' t'ing her mammy know she puts her two han's up to her eyes an' fair dives into squallin' agen.

"Missis Jackalse she ketches hold o' Ainky an' gives her such a shakin' till her eyes fly wide open. 'T's yust about tired o' hearin' all dat row,' ses she. An' while Ainky's quiet considerin' dat, Missis Jackalse she hear Ou' Wolf come along outside, axin' her Ou' Baas ain't he comin' huntin' dis mawnin'? Den she hear Ou' Jackalse answer back, sort o' tired like. 'But I cahnt come. I's sick.'

"Den Ainky lets out a squall fit to split, an' her mammy she biffs her a bash dat s'prise her quite quiet, before she stick her head out o de doh an' say, mighty tremblin' like—I don't tink we got no meat fo' breakfas' at all, Ou' Man'.

"But Ou' Jackalse he ain't a troublin' hisse'f about no women's talk. He don't turn his 'ead nor not'in'. He yust hutch hisse'f closer to de wall to bake hisse'f some more, an' he say agen—I tell you I's sick, an' I cahnt go huntin' dis mawnin', nohow'.

"Missis Jackalse she pop her head inside agen mighty quick at dat, an' Ou' Wolf he sling off down de spruit wid his back up. Ou' Jackalse he yust sit still in de sun an' watch him go, an' he ses to hisse'f ses he: 'Now dat's big

ole luck fo' me. If he ha'n't a come along like dat I don' know but I'd a had to go an' ketch somet'in' myse'f, I'm dat 'ongry. But now it'll be all right when he come back wid some sort o' buck.'

"Den he turn his head to de doh. 'Frowickie,' ses he to his missis inside, soft an' chucklin', 'tell Ainky to stop dat squallin' an' bawlin'. Ou' Wolf's gone huntin', an' yust as sure as he come back we'll have all de breakfas' we want. Tell 'er if she don't stop anyhow I'll come inside to her.'

"Missis Jackalse she frown at Ainky. 'You hear dat now,' ses she, 'an' you better be quiet now 'less you want to have you' daddy come in to you.' An' Ainky she say, 'Well, will you le' me play wid your tail den?' An' her mammy she say, 'All right,' an' dey 'gun a-laughin' an' a-goin' on in whispers. But Ou' Jackalse he yust sit an' keep on bakin' hisse'f in de sun by de wall.

"By'n'by here comes Ou' Wolf back agen, an' a big fat Eland on his back, an' de sweat yust a-drippin' off him. An' when he comes past de house he look up an' dere he see Ou' Jackalse yust a-settin' an' a-bakin', an' a-makin' slow marks in de dust wid his toes now an' agen, an' lookin' might comfy. An' Ou' Wolf he feel darie big fat Eland more bigger an heavier dan ever on his back, an he feel dat savage at Ou' Jackalse dat he had to look toder way, for fear he'd let out all his bad words Kerblob in one big splosh on darie Ou' Jackalse head. But Ou' Jackalse he say nawt'in'; he yust sit an' bake. But he tink inside hisse'f, an' his eye kind o' 'gun to shine behind in his head as he watch darie meat go past an' go on, an' he feel his mouf run all water.

"But he ha'n't watched dat breakfas' out o' sight, an' he ha'n't quite settle hisse'f yust how he's goin' to get his share, when up hops Klein Hahsie—what you call Little Hare.

"Mawnin', Klein Hahsie,' ses Ou' Jackalse, but yust so high an' mighty's he know how, 'cause little Hahsie he's de runner for Big Baas King Lion, an Ou' Jackalse he tink he'll show him dat oder folks ain't no chicken feed, too.

"Mawnin', Ou' Jackalse,' ses Little Hahsie, kind o' considerin' him slow out of his big shiny eyes. Den he make a grab at one of his own long years as if it tickle him, an' when he turn his face to look at de tip o' darie year he sort o' wunk at it, kind o' slow and solemn. 'Darie ou' year o' mine!' ses he to Ou' Jackalse.

"Den he sort o' remember what he come for, an' he speak out mighty quick. 'You yust better get a wiggle on you mighty sudden,' ses he. 'Ou' King Lion he's a roarin' for darie Ou' Jackalse fit to tear up de bushes. "Where's darie Ou' Jackalse? If he don't get here mighty quick he'll know all about it," roars he. "What's de use o' me

makin' him my doctor if he ain't here when he's wanted? Dis claw I neah tore out killin' a Koodoo yeste'day—he'd better be yust lively now a-gittin' here to doctor dat. Fetch him!" roars he, an' here I am, an' I tell you you yust better git a move on you,' ses Hahsie.

"Ou' Jackalse he tink, but he don't let on nawthin' but what he's yust so sick as to split. 'T's dat bad I cahnt har'ly crawl,' ses he—"but you go 'long an' tell King Lion I's a-comin' as soon's ever I get some medicine mix'."

"Well, I tol' you—you better be quicker'n blue lightnin' all de same,' ses Hahsie, an' off he flicks, as if he's sort o' considerin' what's de matter wid Ou' Jackalse.

"Well, Ou' Jackalse he tink, an' he tink, an' he know he'd better be gettin' along to King Lion, but yet he ain't a-goin' to give in about darie breakfas'. He ain't a-movin' mighty fast about it, but he goes into de woods an' he gets some leaves off o' one bush, an' some roots off'n anoder, an' yust when he tink dat's about all he want, who should he see but Ou' Wolf, kind o' saunterin' along an' lookin' yust good an' full o' breakfas', an' chock full o' feelin' fine all inside him.

"Dat stir Ou' Jackalse where he's so empty in his tummy, an' dat make it strike him what to do. He comes along to Ou' Wolf lookin' like he's in a desprit rush an' yust in de worst kind of a tight place. 'Here, Ou' Wolf,' ses he in a hustle, 'you's yust him I was tinkin' on. Hyer's King Lion about half crazy wid a pain, an' he's roarin' for me, an' I set off wid a yump, an' I got all de stuff for de medicine, but all de time I clean forgot de book to mix it by. Now you yust do me a good turn, like a good chap, an' you rush off to King Lion wid dis hyer medicine, while I streaks back for de book. You does dis foh me an' I ain't a-goin' to fo'get what I owe you for it.'

"Ou' Wolf he's quite took off his feet an' out o' breaf on it all. 'Why, o' course,' ses he. 'You gi' me darie medicine an' I offs right away. A good yob I had breakfas' a'ready,' an' he fair seizes darie medicine an' he offs.

"Ou' Jackalse lie right down where he's standin' an' he fair roll an' kick hisse'f wid laughin'. 'A good yob I ar'n't had my breakfas',' ses he. 'I'd a lost a deal more'n meat if I had a done,' ses he agen, an' den he ups an' he offs back to Ou' Wolf's house.

"All de way back he kep' on a-smilin' to hisse'f, an' every once in a while he'd give a skip an' a dance to tink what a high ole time he was a-havin'. Den by'n'by he picks up a piece o' paper. 'Yust de t'ing I's wantin',' ses he.

"Well, he come to Ou' Wolf's house an dere was Missis Wolf a-sittin' out on de stoop an' a pullin' down de flaps of her cappie to keep de flies off'n her nose. 'Mawnin', Cousin,' ses Ou' Jackalse; fair as polite as honey wouldn't

run down his t'roat if you let him hold it in his mouf.

“Mawnin’,’ ses she, an’ she ain’t a-singin’ it out like a Halleloolya needer, an’ she don’t stir from where she’s a-settin’, an’ she don’t say how-dy-do. She yust look at him like she’s seen him befo’e, an’ like she ain’t a breakin’ her neck if she don’t never see him agen.

“But Ou’ Jackalse he ain’t a-seein’ nawtin’ but what she’s yust as glad to see him as if he was a predicant. ‘T’s got a bit of a note here from your man,’ ses he. ‘P’r’aps you don’t mind readin’ it an’ den you’ll know,’ ses he.

“Missis Wolf she cock her nose down at dat note, an’ den Missis Wolf she slant her eye up at Ou’ Jackalse. But Ou’ Jackalse he yust kep’ on between a sort o’ smilin’ to see her keepin’ so well, and a sort o’ dat tired feelin’ dat life’s sich a one-hawse business anyhow, till at last she up an’ took darie paper.

“She turn dis piece o’ paper dis way an’ turn it dat way, an’ upside-down an’ t’oder-side-to, an’ at last she ses, ses she, ‘I don’t never could read pen-writin’ so well’s I could book letters, an’ darie Ou’ Wolf he write sich a terr’ble fist anyhow. I al’ays said he ought to be sent to school agen. You better to read it fo’ me,’ ses she.

“Ou’ Jackalse he took de paper as if it ain’t nawtin’ anyhow, an’ he looks as if livin’ ain’t no more’n a team o’ donkeys an’ a ole rope harness to a buck waggon nohow. Den he reads it off to hisse’f, sort o’ mutterin’ it over fus’ to see what it’s all about, an’ den he ups an’ talks it off about as happy as if it give him a hoe an’ sent him into de to’acco lan’s.

“Oh,’ he ses. ‘Your man he yust ses for you to gi’ me dem hin’quarters o’ darie Eland I yust bargained for wid him. But, Siss! it ’pears he want me to car’ it home myse’f, an’ all de time he bargain to do dat fo’ me. Ne’er mind dough; now I’s here I met as well take it anyhow. But I’ll have a few remarks wid Ou’ Wolf when I sees him agen.’

“Missis Wolf she look at Ou’ Jackalse, an’ Ou’ Jackalse he smile as if it’s all right an’ quite nice dere in de sun. Den Missis Wolf she look at darie paper an’ she shake her head yust once. ‘Yes,’ ses she, ‘I s’pose you will ha’ to take it if you bargained for it atween you, but—you le’ me have darie paper an’ den I’s’ll have a few remarks too wid Ou’ Wolf when I see him agen,’ an’ she look at Ou’ Jackalse as if dat was gun’ to be a bit of all right.

“Ou’ Jackalse he han’ over darie piece o’ paper as polite as sugar cane, an’ he take over de hin’quarters of Eland wid a look on his face like dat meat was a hoe on a hot day. An’ he grunt an’ he grumble all de way he go till he’s out o’ sight an’ hearin’.

“Den,—well, if you wantto know yust what sort o’ good ole time he had over darie breakfas’, you should ha’ seen him comin’ out in de sun agen ahter it, his hair all shinin’ wid fat an’ his tail a-hangin’ down straight ’cause he’s too full to cock it.

“Well, ahter all, he’s got to be gittin’ away an’ seein’ to King Lion pretty quick if he ain’t a-goin’ to get into moh trouble dan he can comb out of his hair in a twel’-mont’, but he do feel so good an’ comfy all inside him dat he ain’t in any baiya hurry even yet. ‘I s’pose I better take a book wid me,’ ses he to hisse’f. ‘Wife,’ ses he over his shoulder, back t’rough de do’, ‘gi’ me some sort o’ book; any sort: darie ole almanac Ainky was a-screevin’ picters in’ll do me yust a treat. Ou’ King Lion he ain’t a-gun’ to look inside it.’

“So he gets dis almanac an’ off he sets, an’ if he don’t skip and flick dis time, it’s only because his wais’coat’s too tight. But he pick ’is teef wid a long stem o’ grass, an’ he biff his hat back over one year, an’ one time he’s a-winkin’ to hisse’f an’ t’oder time he wave one arm an’ sing ‘De Kimberleysa trainsa,’ like a location Kaffir wid two tickies in his pocket.

“Well, by’n’by he come to de place, an’ he hear King Lion a-roarin’ fit to shake de wind, till yust at first Ou’ Jackalse he miss a step or two, tinkin’ what nex’. Den he tink again, an’ it wahnt a minute till he wink at hisse’f, an’ he touch up darie ol’ almanac under his arm to make it look like it’s mighty important. Den he set his hat on mighty straight an’ pull down his coat, an’ in he go.

“‘Vah vas yeh all dis time?’ roar Ou’ King Lion, makin’ all de place tremble.

“‘Please, sir,’ ses Ou’ Jackalse, terr’ble busy to look at, ‘my fool missis she len’ de medicine book to darie ou’ gossippin’ Missis Duck, an’ I had yust a terror of a yob to spoor her out where she was a quackin’ an’ a scan’alin’ till I got it back. But I sent de medicine on by Ou’ Wolf here an’ tole him what to do till I come.’

“‘Did you?’ roars King Lion, fair a-lashin’ his tail in such a wax; ‘an’ here he’s bin standin’ like a clay man all dis time, yust a-holdin’ leaves an’ roots, an’ a-sayin’ nawtin’, an’ my claw gettin’ moh and wohse pain every minute!’

“Ou’ Wolf he look at de King an’ he begin to shake a bit. Den he look at Ou’ Jackalse an’ he won’er how in de

worl' he come to forget what he ses he tell him. But Ou' Jackalse he look at Ou' Wolf yust as if he was fair disgusted wid such forgettin', an' den he look at de King's claw an' he shake his head. 'It's gone pretty bad, but dere is yust one t'ing might cure it—it might.'

“What's dat?” roars King Lion, an' Ou' Wolf he begin to feel de air shake in de roots of his hair.

“Well, sir,' ses Ou' Jackalse, 'if Ou' Wolf'ud bring his uncle or his cousin I don't know. But,'—an' he shake his head, an' tap de ole almanac under his arm, an' look solemn all over—'dis book ses de same an' I agrees wid it, 'cause I's found it so; dere's nawtin' else for it but you take de skin of a live wolf an' wrop it roun' you' paw till it get well. Ou' Wolf's uncle now,' ses he.

“Ou' Wolf hisse'f!” roars King Lion, an'—clip!—he make a dive to gash a-hold of Ou' Wolf. But Ou' Wolf he'd bin a-feelin' somet'in' comin', feelin' it in his bones, an' Ou' Jackalse hadn't more'n said 'Wolf!' dan Ou' Wolf wasn't dere—he was yust a-streakin' out o' dat till you couldn't see him for heel dust.

“Well, sir,' says Ou' Jackalse, an' he heaves a whackin' big sigh 'cause he's tinkin' what Ou' Wolfs gun' to do to him now when he see him agen—'I'm a gall darn sorry, you' Majesty, but now you's let Ou' Wolf get away I can't do nawtin', on'y yust put some medicine on you' claw till you ketch him agen.' An' wid dat he ups an' he doctor darie ou' claw an' comes away. An' he ain't a skippin' an' he ain't a singin' nawtin' about de 'Kimberleysa trainsa' dis time nudder, 'cause he's tinkin' a deal about what Ou' Wolf's a-gun' to do.

“Ahter dat Ou' Jackalse keep his eye skin' pretty clear all de time, an' Ou' Wolf keep his eyes yust a-yinglin' till he hear King Lion's got well again. Den he say to hisse'f, 'Now I's gun' to get square wi' darie Ou' Jackalse—you watch me if I don't,' an' off he go to see Ou' Baviyàan in de koppies.

“Mawnin', Nief,' ses he.

“Mawnin', Oom,' ses Baviyàan.

“Very dry,' ses Ou' Wolf; 'd'ye t'ink we'l get rain pretty soon?' ses he.

“Ou' Baviyàan, he scratch his back, an' he look roun', an' he chew de bark off'n a piece o' stick. 'P'raps it rain by'n'by,' ses he. 'Dese yer koppies pretty hot dis mawnin'.'

“Well,’ ses Ou’ Wolf, now he’d cleared de groun’ polite like dat, ‘you ’members darie skellum, Ou’ Jackalse, dat never pay you yet for all dat lamb meat an’ dat kid meat you let him have, don’t you?’

“Don’t I,’ ses Baviyàan, puckerin’ his eyebrows down an’ makin’ sharp eyes, an’ grabbin’ a fresh twig an’ strippin’ de bark off it—rip!—wid one snatch of his teef. ‘I yust does.’

“Well now, look a-hyere, Nief,’ ses Ou’ Wolf. ‘I cahnt stan’ him no longer nohow. I’s yust a-gun’ to get even wid him. He done one t’ing an’ he done anoder t’ing, an’ he don’t pay me for de hin’quarters o’ de finest Eland you ever seen, an’ so I votes we yust stops all dese little die-does of his. Wat you say now if we go an’ give him such a shambokkin’ till he don’t stir out till dis time nex’ year?’

“Ou’ Baviyàan look at de little bird in de tree, an’ Ou’ Baviyàan look at de little shiny lizard on de rock. An’ he looks at Ou’ Wolf an’ he looks round agen, an’ he yumps an’ he biffs a scorpion what he sees him wriggle his tail out from under a stone. Den he say, ses he, ‘Yeh, but how’s I know you ain’t a-gun’ to streak it out o’ dat as soon’s Ou’ Jackalse prance out for us? Den where’d I be, huh?’

“But who’s a-gun’ to run away?’ ses Ou’ Wolf, swellin’ hisse’f out mighty big. ‘D’ye mean to say I’s a-gun’ to run away f’m a skellum like dat? Me scared o’ him? Huh!’

“Ou’ Baviyàan, he scratch hisse’f on de hip, an’ he eat what you cahnt see out’n his finger an’ t’umb. ‘Den what you want me to help you foh?’ ses he, kind o’ pucker in’ his eyes an’ glintin’ here an’ dere in Ou’ Wolf’s face.

“Oh, dat’s all right,’ ses Ou’ Wolf, an’ he try to t’ink so quick dat de inside his head tumble all over itself like rags in a basket upside down. ‘On’y if I go an’ do it my lone se’f, den people t’ink it’s yust fightin’, an’ dey say, “Poor Ou’ Jackalse”. But if we go an’ do it, all two of us, den dey say, “What’s darie ou’ skellum bin up to dis time?” Dat’s why I come for you, Nief.’

“Ou’ Baviyàan, he screw hisse’f roun’ on his part what he sits on, an’ Ou’ Baviyàan, he screw hisse’f back, an’ he look at a fly dat wants to light on Ou’ Wolf’s nose. ‘Look a-hyer, Oom Wolf,’ ses he; ‘you show me some way to make sure dat you don’t run off an’ leave me on my own if Ou’ Jackalse do somet’in’, den I’ll listen to you. You can run yust as fast as he can, but dere ain’t no trees for me to yump for where Ou’ Jackalse live.’

“Ou’ Wolf he scratch his ear wid his back foot, but Ou’ Baviyàan he scratch his tummy wid his front han’. ‘Now you do dis, Oom Wolf,’ ses he; ‘you le’ me tie our tails togedder good’n fast so I know dey won’t come undone,

den I'll know you cahnt up an' dust it out o' dat an' leave me when de time comes. You say yes to dat, an' I'll come.'

"Ou' Wolf yust laugh right out. If he'd axed for it hisse'f he cou'dn't a done better. Dat way he's sure hisse'f dat Ou' Baviyàan can't skip out an' leave him needer, an' he know Ou' Baviyàan he's pretty full o' prickles to meddle wid in a tight corner. 'Dere's my tail,' ses Ou' Wolf; 'you tie it fas', an' you yust keep on a-tyin' till you's satisfied.'

"So off dey starts.

"Well, I tole you Ou' Jackalse he yust keep his eye a-rollin' all dese days, an' dis mawnin' he was out in front of his house a-choppin' out yokeskeys, an' you believe me darie axe in his han' was yust so sharp an' yust so bright in de sun dat it flashed like streaks o' hot lightnin' when he chop an' chip, an' keep on chip-a-choppin'. An' all de time his eye was yust a-smokin' an' a-burnin', till a long an' a long way off he sees Ou' Wolf an' Ou' Baviyàan a-comin' a-wobblin', terr'ble close alongside each oder, an' mighty awk'ard.

"Well, dat's about de funniest commando I ever did see,' ses he to hisse'f, wid his ear a-cockin' out, an' his nose a-cockin' up. An' den his tail begun to wilt a bit while he tink what he's goin' to do now.

"Den he scratch his ear, an' his tail begin to stick out agen, an' he wink one eye to his nose end. 'Ou' Frow!' ses he, back over his shoul'er to Missis Jackalse in de house.

"Ya, daddy!' ses Missis Jackalse, stickin' her nose half an inch out o' de door.

"Now you be careful an' do yust what I tells you,' ses he. 'When I stop choppin' den you pinch Ainkye, an' you pinch her till she fair bawls agen. An' when I shouts out for you to stop her a-squallin', den you answer up on you' top note an' say—"It's all you' own fault. You would bring you' baby up on nawtin' but wolf meat, an' now you shouts 'cause it cry fo' mo'." You hear me now, don't you forget,' ses Ou' Jackalse.

"Dat's all right,' ses his ole missis.

"Well, along come Ou' Wolf an' his commando—one Baviyàan—an' Ou' Wolf he say, 'What's dat flashin' like lightnin' in Ou' Jackalse han'? Hyere; I don't know what's a-gun' to happen,' ses he, an' he ain't a comin' on so fast as he has bin.

“But Ou’ Baviyàan he answer pretty scornful like, ‘Dat’s jüst a axe he’s a-choppin’ out yokeskeys wid. You ain’t a-gun’ to turn afeard, huh?’

“Who’s afeard?’ ses Ou’ Wolf, in jüst such a bi-ig voice. ‘But it do look like a terr’ble sharp axe,’ ses he. ‘Why don’t he use a rusty ole, gappy ole axe, like anyb’dy else a-choppin’ out yokeskeys, I wantto know?’ An’ Ou’ Wolf he ’gun a-movin’ slower an’ slower. ‘I tink dat’s mo’en jüst a axe,’ ses he.

“No backin’ out now,’ ses Ou’ Baviyàan, kind o’ rough.

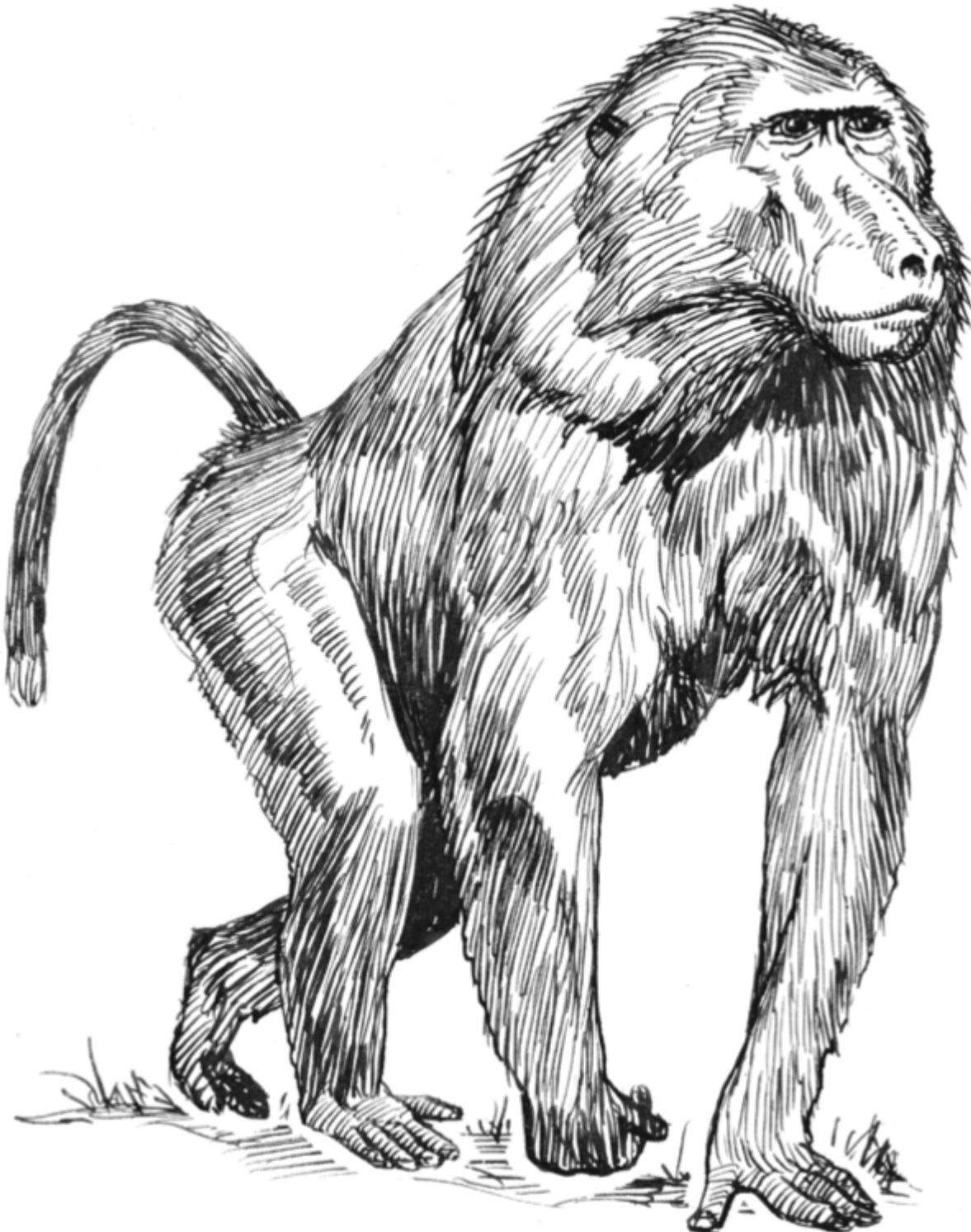


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“Ain’t my tail tied fast enough?” savages Ou’ Wolf. ‘Di’n’t you tie it yourse’f?’ ses he, trying to stop still an’ argue de point.

“Ou’ Baviyàan he give a yank. ‘Come on now,’ ses he.

“Ain’t I?” ses Ou’ Wolf, an’ he come yust half a step—to easy de pull on his tail. An’ while dey start to quar’lin’, Ou’ Jackalse he stop choppin’ an’ he lift up, an’ right den his Ou’ Missis she pincht Ainkye so she fair opens out a-bawlin’ till her eyes shut tight. You could hear it a mile off.

“Den Ou’ Jackalse he shout out, ‘If you don’t stop dat Ainkye a-squallin’ like dat den I’ll come inside dere, an’ she’ll get somet’in’ to squall for,’ ses he.

“It’s all you’ own fault,’ screams Ou’ Missis (an’ don’t she yust like to say it! It makes her feel good an’ good to talk back to her Ou’ Baas once, i’stead of on’y tinkin’ back). ‘You goes an’ brings up you’ chile on nawtin’ but wolf meat, an’ den you ’gins to shout when she’s yust so hungry fo’ mo’ dat she cahnt hold quiet.’

“Dat’s all right,’ ses Ou’ Jackalse, (‘an’ don’ you get too high, Ou’ Missis,’ he puts in on de quiet, ’cause he hears what’s in her mind). ‘I send Ou’ Baviyàan out t’ree days back to bring some wolf meat, an’ here he comes now wid yust an ole scrag of a one. It look a bit flyblow a’ready, but it’ll do better’n nawtin’ I s’pose,’ ses he, an’ he pick up his axe, an’ he gin it a swing up an’ roun’ as if he’s a-openin’ his chest to slaughter lots.

“Ou’ Wolf he hear dat an’ he yust make one yump an’ land right roun’ wid his head where his tail was. He tinks it’s nawtin’ else but Ou’ Baviyàan is drawed him on an’ in to it, as Ou’ Jackalse ses. ‘Dat’s why you wanted my tail tied so fast, is it?’ ses he. ‘Dat’s it, is it?’ an’ he ramp an’ he yerk, an’ car’ on.

“It ain’t, fathead! big fathead!’ ses Ou’ Baviyàan, rearin’ an’ yankin’ to pull Ou’ Wolf roun’ again to face it. ‘Dat’s yust Ou’ Jackalse’s lies to scare you.’

“But Ou’ Wolf he see Ou’ Jackalse comin’, a-skippin’ an’ a-runnin’, wid de axe a-frolicin’ in his han’, an’ he yust gi’es one yank an’ lan’s Ou’ Baviyàan a yard back. Baviyàan he try to hold him, but about dat time Ou’ Jackalse gets dere, an’ he ’gins to yump an’ dodge roun’, an’ all de time he’s shoutin’ out, ‘Stan’ over a bit, Nief Baviyàan; stan’ wide a bit till I gets a cle’r biff at him. Yust shift you’ head de oder side till I gaps him one wi’ dis yere axe.’

“Den dere was de fuss. De more Ou’ Baviyàan try to hol’ back de more Ou’ Wolf yerks him away, an’ de wusser Ou’ Jackalse sings out, till at last Ou’ Wolf he get dat ter’fied he fair yanks Ou’ Baviyàan right into de air an’ over an’ over, an’ den streaks out straight for de koppies, wid him on de end of him like a dog an’ a kettle.

“I tink dat’s about de finish to dat little lot,’ ses Ou’ Jackalse, watchin’ de dust an’ de hair fly.”

Old Hendrik paused, looked the little girl very seriously in the eye; and then concluded, using his most impressive tones: “An’ if you don’ b’lieve me, den you yust look at Ou’ Baviyàan’s tail nex’ time he comes stealin’ in de garden—you’ll see de kink yet where it ain’t never straighten out f’m dat day to this.”

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