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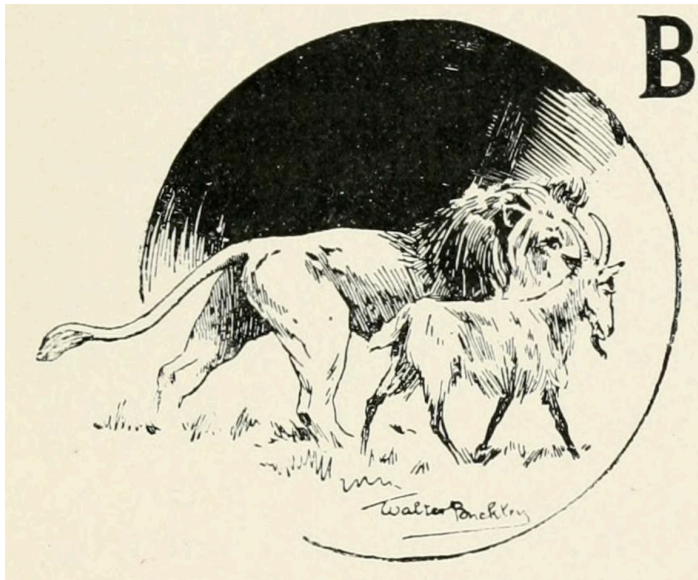
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I have added the subheadings and removed frametale material.

## **The Goat, The Lion, and The Serpent**

### ***The Goat and the Lion Make a Bet***



A Goat and a Lion were travelling together one day on the outskirts of a forest, at the end of which there was a community of mankind comfortably hutted within a village, which was fenced round with tall and pointed stakes. The Goat said to the Lion, “Well, now, my friend, where do you come from this day?”

“I have come from a feast that I have given many friends of mine—to the leopard, hyena, wolf, jackal, wild cat, buffalo, zebra, and many more. The long-necked giraffe and dew-lapped eland were also there, as well as the springing antelope.”

“That is grand company you keep, indeed,” said the Goat, with a sigh. “As for poor me, I am alone. No one cares for me very much, but I find abundance of grass and sweet leafage, and when I am full, I seek a soft spot under a tree, and chew my cud, dreamily and contentedly. And of other sorrows, save an occasional pang of hunger, in my wanderings I know of none.”

“Do you mean to say that you do not envy me my regal dignity and strength?”

“I do not indeed, because as yet I have been ignorant of them.”

“What? Know you not that I am the strongest of all who dwell in the forest or wilderness? that when I roar all who hear me bow down their heads, and shrink in fear?”

“Indeed, I do not know all this, nor am I very sure that you are not deceiving yourself, because I know many whose offensive powers are much more dangerous, my friend, than yours. True, your teeth are large, and your claws are sharp, and your roar is loud enough, and your appearance is imposing. Still, I know a tiny thing in these woods that is much more to be dreaded than you are; and I think if you matched yourself against it in a contest, that same tiny thing would become victor.”

“Bah!” said the Lion, impatiently, “you anger me. Why, even to-day all who were at the feast acknowledged that they were but feeble creatures compared with me: and you will own that if I but clawed you once there would be no life left in you.”

“What you say in regard to me is true enough, and, as I said before, I do not pretend to the possession of strength. But this tiny thing that I know of is not likely to have been at your feast.”

“What may this tiny thing be that is so dreadful?” asked the Lion, sneeringly.

“The Serpent,” answered the Goat, chewing his cud with an indifferent air.

“The Serpent!” said the Lion, astounded. “What, that crawling reptile, which feeds on mice and sleeping birds—that soft, vine-like, creeping thing that coils itself in tufts of grass, and branches of bush?”

“Yes, that is its name and character clearly.”

“Why, my weight alone would tread it until it became flat like a smashed egg.”

“I would not try to do so if I were you. Its fangs are sharper than your great corner teeth or claws.”

“Will you match it against my strength?”

“Yes.”

“And if you lose, what will be the forfeit?”

“If you survive the fight, I will be your slave, and you may command me for any purpose you please. But what will you give me if you lose?”

“What you please.”

“Well, then, I will take one hundred bunches of bananas; and you had better bring them here alongside of me, before you begin.”

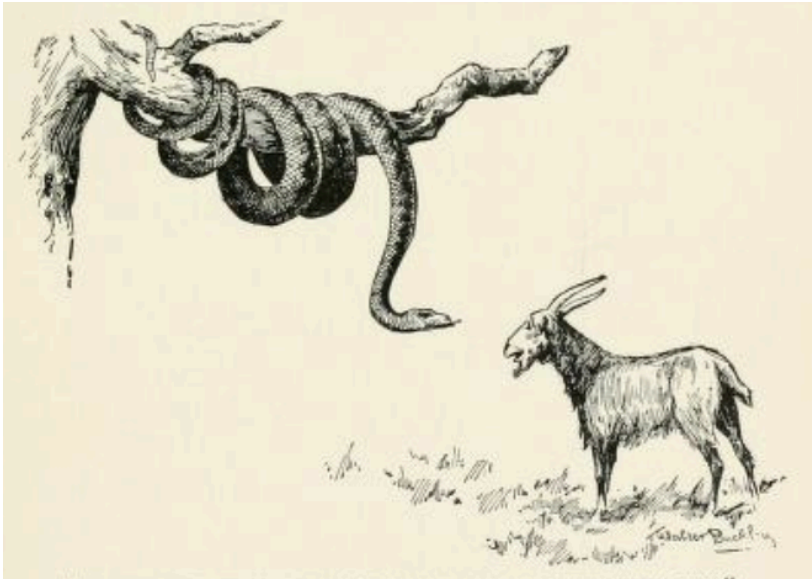
“Where is this Serpent that will fight with me?”

“Close by. When you have brought the bananas he will be here, waiting for you.”

The Lion stalked proudly away to procure the bananas, and the Goat proceeded into the bush, where he saw Serpent drowsily coiled in many coils on a slender branch.

***The Goat and the Serpent***

“Serpent,” said the Goat, “wake up. Lion is raging for a fight with you. He has made a bet of a hundred bunches of bananas that he will be the victor, and I have pledged my life that you will be the strong one; and, hark you, obey my hints, and my life is safe, and I shall be provided with food for at least three moons.”



“Well,” said Serpent, languidly, “what is it that you wish me to do?”

“Take position on a bush about three cubits high, that stands near the scene where the fight is to take place, and when Lion is ready, raise your crest high and boldly, and ask him to advance near you that you may see him well, because you are short-sighted, you know. And he, full of his conceit and despising your slight form, will advance towards you, unwitting of your mode of attack. Then fasten your fangs in his eyebrows, and coil yourself round his neck. If there is any virtue left in your venom, poor Lion will lie stark before long.”

“And if I do this, what will you do for me?”

“I am thy servant and friend for all time.”

“It is well,” answered the Serpent. “Lead the way.”

Accordingly Goat led Serpent to the scene of the combat, and the latter coiled itself in position, as Goat had advised, on the leafy top of a young bush.

### ***The Lion Arrives***

Presently Lion came, with a long line of servile animals, bearing one hundred bunches of bananas; and, after dismissing them, he turned to the Goat, and said, “Well, Goatee, where is your friend who is stronger than I am? I feel curious to see him.”

“Are you Lion?” asked a sibilant voice from the top of a bush.

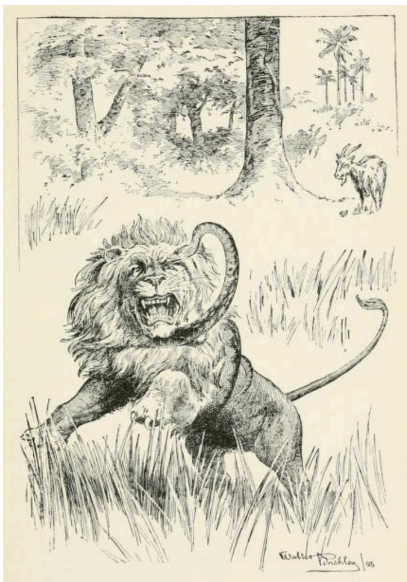
“Yes, I am; and who are you that do not know me?”

“I am Serpent, friend Lion, and short of sight and slow of movement. Advance nearer to me, for I see you not.”

Lion uttered a loud roaring laugh, and went confidently near the Serpent—who had raised his crest and arched his neck—so near that his breath seemed to blow the slender form to a tremulous movement.

“You shake already,” said Lion, mockingly.

“Yes, I shake but to strike the better, my friend,” said Serpent, as he darted forward and fixed his fangs in the right eyebrow of Lion, and at the same moment its body glided round the neck of Lion, and became buried out of sight in the copious mane.



Like the pain of fire the deadly venom was felt quickly in the head and body. When it reached the heart, Lion fell down and lay still and dead.

“Well done,” cried Goat, as he danced around the pile of bananas. “Provisions for three moons have I, and this doughty roarer is of no more value than a dead goat.”

Goat and Serpent then vowed friendship for one another, after which Serpent said, “Now follow me, and obey. I have a little work for you.”

“Work! What work, O Serpent?”

“It is light and agreeable. If you follow that path, you will find a village of mankind. You will there proclaim to the people what I have done, and show this carcase to them. In return for this they will make much of you, and you will find abundance of food in their gardens—tender leaves of manioc and peanut, mellow bananas, and plenty of rich greens daily. True, when you are fat and a feast is to be made, they will kill you and eat you; but, for all your kind, comfort, plenty, and warm, dry housing is more agreeable than the cold damp jungle, and destruction by the feral beasts.”

“Nay, neither the work nor the fate is grievous, and I thank you, O Serpent; but for you there can be no other home than the bush and the tuft of grass, and you will always be a dreaded enemy of all who come near your resting-place.”

Then they parted.

### ***The Goat and the Woman***

The Goat went along the path, and came to the gardens of a village, where a woman was chopping fuel. Looking up she saw a creature with grand horns coming near to her, bleating. Her first impulse was to run away, but seeing, as it bleated, that it was a fodder-eating animal, with no means of offence, she plucked some manioc greens and coaxed it to her, upon which the Goat came and spoke to her.

“Follow me, for I have a strange thing to show you a little distance off.”

The woman, wondering that a four-footed animal could address her in intelligible speech, followed; and the Goat trotted gently before her to where Lion lay dead. The woman upon seeing the body, stopped and asked, “What is the meaning of this?”

The Goat answered, “This was once the king of beasts; the fear of him was upon all that lived in the woods and in the wilderness. But he too often boasted of his might, and became too proud. I therefore dared him to fight a tiny creature of the bush, and lo! the boaster was slain.”

“And how do you name the victor?”

“The Serpent.”

“Ah! you say true. Serpent is king over all, except man,” answered the woman.

“You are of a wise kind,” answered the Goat. “Serpent confessed to me that man was his superior, and sent me to you that I might become man’s creature.

Henceforth man shall feed me with greens, tender tops of plants, and house and protect me; but when the feast-day comes, man shall kill me, and eat of my flesh. These are the words of Serpent.”

The woman hearkened to all Goat’s words, and retained them in her memory. Then she unrobed the Lion of his furry spoil, and conveyed it to the village, where she astonished her folk with all that had happened to her.

From that day to this the goat kind has remained with the families of man, and people are grateful to the Serpent for his gift to them; for had not the Serpent commanded it to seek their presence, the Goat had remained for ever wild like the antelope, its brother.

