

## Lion and Hare and what happened to their friendship

Lion and Hare were very good friends. Some animals thought that was strange – they were very different, after all. But Lion and Hare had always been friends and they expected to keep things that way. They liked to watch soccer together on the television at night. Hare would sit comfortably on Lion's head and, together, they would watch while Spain played The Netherlands or Belgium played Brazil. They were perfectly happy/

Some of the things that were different were:

Lion was much (much) bigger than Hare

Hare had longer ears

Hare could (probably) run faster than Lion – at least he thought so.

Hare was a vegetarian and Lion ate ... well, Lion ate meat, but he never did so in front of Hare in case Hare's feelings were hurt.

It was a good friendship. For many years they continued to be friends in a calm and uncomplicated way, and to watch soccer together. They never had a fight – even when Lion's team won, and Hare's team didn't. Or when Hare's team won and Lion's didn't.

Jackal (who was jealous by nature) didn't approve of this friendship.

'It's not right!' he said to himself. 'Hares and Lions have never been friends before.

Why should they suddenly start now?'

After a while, Jackal began to watch out for Hare and, when he saw him, he would say something about Hare's friendship with Lion.

'I see you were round at Lion's place again,' he would say, 'watching the soccer.'

Hare stopped to eat a bit of soft, juicy grass. 'Yup,' he said. 'Brazil against Spain; Brazil won. It was a good game!'

'Don't you feel,' Jackal went on, 'a little ... well, *unsafe* sitting up there on Lion's head?'

'You mean, in case I fall off?' asked Hare.

'Well, no ... I mean lions and hares are so very different.' Jackal stopped and pretended to think for a moment. 'I mean, lions have been known to *eat* hares!'

Hare threw back his head and laughed. '*Eat* hares! That will be the day, he said, and off he hopped.

The next time Jackal saw Hare it was size. 'Aren't you a little *small* to be friendly with Lion?' Jackal said. 'What? Because Lion might step on me?' Hare laughed. 'Never. Lion is very careful.

The next time it was looks. 'The two of you *look* so different,' said Jackal. 'It just doesn't look right – what with your long ears and Lion's long tail; your grey fur and Lion's golden mane. It just doesn't ... well, it's wrong, that's what.'

Even though Lion was his very best friend, Hare began to think about what Jackal said. It was true. Lions and Hares were very different animals. Maybe it *was* strange?

One day he had a good look at Lion, when Lion was having a little sleep. He noticed (as if for the first time) that Lion had very big teeth. He noticed (as if for the first time) a little pile of bones where lion had finished his dinner. He noticed (as if for the first time) that he, Hare, was much smaller and neater (and probably quicker) than Lion – a much better looking animal altogether.

That night, the two friends had a fight. Mostly it was because Holland scored a goal and Hare didn't think it was fair. But then, they started to argue. Hare got angrier and angrier.

'You great big ... golden *meat-eater*!' he shouted.

Lion was so surprised! He opened his mouth very wide and breathed in.

Whooooooooooooosh! Hare was swallowed right down. Lion was a bit sorry, but Holland scored another goal just then, so he settled down to watch the game. Maybe it hadn't been such a good idea to have a hare for a friend. They were, after all, rather *different* from lions.

And the moral of this story is: Your friends are your friends, whatever they look like and, never listen to jealous people (especially jackals).