



more jātakā tales
The Foolhardy Wolf



A lion bounded forth from his lair one day, looking north, west, south, and east. He saw a Buffalo and went to kill him. The Lion ate all of the Buffalo-meat he wanted, and then went down to the lake for a drink.

As the Lion turned to go toward his den for a nap, he came upon a hungry Wolf.

The Wolf had no chance to get away, so he threw himself at the Lion's feet.

"What do you want?" the Lion asked. "O Lion, let me be your servant," said the Wolf. "Very well," said the Lion, "serve me, and you shall have good food to eat." So saying, the Lion went into his den for his nap. When he woke up, the Lion said to the Wolf: "Each day you must go to the mountain top, and see whether there are any elephants, or ponies, or buffaloes about. If you see any, come to me and say: 'Great Lion, come forth in thy might. Food is in sight.' Then I will kill and eat, and give part of the meat to you."

So day after day the Wolf climbed to the mountain top, and seeing a pony, or a buffalo, or an elephant, he went back to the den, and falling at the Lion's feet he said: "Great Lion, come forth in thy might. Food is in sight."

Then the Lion would bound forth and kill whichever beast it was, sharing the meat with the Wolf.

Now this Wolf had never had such fine meat to eat, nor so much. So as time went on, the Wolf grew bigger and bigger, and stronger and stronger, until he was really proud of his great size and strength. "See how big and strong I am," he said to himself. "Why am I living day after day on food given me by another? I will kill for my own eating. I'll kill an elephant for myself." So the Wolf went to the Lion, and said: "I want to eat an elephant of my own killing. Will you let me lie in your corner in the den, while you climb the mountain to look out for an elephant? Then when you see one, you come to the den and say, 'Great Wolf, come forth in thy might. Food is in sight.' Then I will kill the elephant." Said the Lion: "Wolf, only Lions can kill elephants. The world has never seen a Wolf that could kill an elephant. Give up this notion of yours, and eat what I kill."

But no matter what the Lion said, the Wolf would not give way. So at last the Lion said: "Well, have your own way. Lie down in the den, and I will climb to the top of the

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mountain.” When he saw an elephant the Lion went back to the mouth of the cave, and said: “Great Wolf, come forth in thy might. Food is in sight.” Then from the den the Wolf nimbly bounded forth, ran to where the elephant was, and, howling three times, he sprang at the elephant. But the Wolf missed his aim, and fell down at the elephant’s feet. The elephant raised his right foot and killed the Wolf. Seeing all this, the Lion said, “You will no more come forth in your might, you foolhardy Wolf.”

