

The Unfaithful Friend

There was a large berry tree on the bank of a river. On this tree lived a monkey called Rhesa. He was a clever and good-hearted monkey. He offered berries to all the animals and birds who came to the river to quench their thirst. In the river, there lived a crocodile named Magar. He lived with his wife in a cave at the bottom of the river.

One day Magar the crocodile came to the river bank to catch his prey. It was a hot and sunny day and Magar had not caught anything the whole day. Tired and hot, he dragged himself to the shade of the berry tree for some rest. He had hardly closed his eyes when he heard somebody calling out to him. "Hello friend. I am up here."

Magar looked up to find Rhesa the monkey smiling down at him. The monkey plucked a handful of juicy berries and threw them down to Magar.

"Eat these. They will quench your thirst."

"Thank you," said Magar and ate the delicious berries.

From then on, everyday, Magar would come to the river's bank and eat the berries dropped by Rhesa. Both of them became good friends.

One day Magar took some berries home to his wife. She found them delicious. "Mmm... If the berries are so tasty, how delicious would the monkey's heart be that ate these berries," she said. "I want to eat the heart of this monkey."

"How can I do that?" replied Magar.

"He is my friend. How can I kill him?" But his wife would not accept no for an

answer. "If you don't bring me his heart, I will starve myself to death," she cried.

So Magar went to meet Rhesa the monkey. "My wife liked the berries you sent her very much. She wants to meet you. She has invited you home for dinner," said Magar to Rhesa.

"I would surely come," said Rhesa, "but I cannot swim and you live in the river."

"Do not worry," said Magar, "I will carry you on my back."

Rhesa readily jumped on to Magar's back. Magar began to swim away from the bank. On reaching the middle of the river, the crocodile began to dive under water.

"Hey! What are you doing?" panicked Rhesa. "I told you I cannot swim."

"Sorry my friend," replied Magar. "My wife wants to eat your heart. So I have to kill you," said Magar.

Rhesa realised that he was in grave danger. "Is it my heart you want?" he asked in an undisturbed voice. "Why did you not say so before? I would have gladly given it to you. We will have to go back because I usually leave my heart back at home when I go out."

The foolish crocodile immediately turned around and swam back towards the bank.

Rhesa immediately jumped down from Magar's back and bounced up the berry tree. "You are a fool Magar. How could I be alive if I left my heart behind? You have been an unfaithful friend. Our friendship is over," said Rhesa.