

- In what ways might this story particularly appeal to younger listeners?

THE MONKEY'S FIDDLE

HUNGER and want forced Monkey one day to forsake his land and to seek elsewhere among strangers for much-needed work. Bulbs, earth beans, scorpions, insects, and such things were completely exhausted in his own land. But fortunately he received, for the time being, shelter with a great uncle of his, Orang Outang, who lived in another part of the country.

5 When he had worked for quite a while he wanted to return home, and as recompense his great uncle gave him a fiddle and a bow and arrow and told him that with the bow and arrow he could hit and kill anything he desired, and with the fiddle he could force anything to dance.

The first he met upon his return to his own land was Wolf. This old fellow told him all the news and also that he had since early morning been attempting to stalk a deer, but all in vain.

10 Then Monkey laid before him all the wonders of the bow and arrow that he carried on his back and assured him if he could but see the deer he would bring it down for him. When Wolf showed him the deer, Monkey was ready and down fell the deer.

15 They made a good meal together, but instead of Wolf being thankful, jealousy overmastered him and he begged for the bow and arrow. When Monkey refused to give it to him, he thereupon began to threaten him with his greater strength, and so when Jackal passed by, Wolf told him that Monkey had stolen his bow and arrow. After Jackal had heard both of them, he declared himself unqualified to settle the case alone, and he proposed that they bring the matter to the court of Lion, Tiger, and the other animals. In the meantime he declared he would take possession of what had been the cause of their quarrel, so that it would be safe, 20 as he said. But he immediately brought to earth all that was eatable, so there was a long time of slaughter before Monkey and Wolf agreed to have the affair in court.

Monkey's evidence was weak, and to make it worse, Jackal's testimony was against him. Jackal thought that in this way it would be easier to obtain the bow and arrow from Wolf for himself.

25 And so fell the sentence against Monkey. Theft was looked upon as a great wrong; he must hang.

The fiddle was still at his side, and he received as a last favor from the court the right to play a tune on it.

30 He was a master player of his time, and in addition to this came the wonderful power of his charmed fiddle. Thus, when he struck the first note of "Cockcrow" upon it, the court began at once to show an unusual and spontaneous liveliness, and before he came to the first waltzing turn of the old tune the whole court was dancing like a whirlwind.

Over and over, quicker and quicker, sounded the tune of "Cockcrow" on the charmed fiddle, until some of the dancers, exhausted, fell down, although still keeping their feet in motion.

35 But Monkey, musician as he was, heard and saw nothing of what had happened around him. With his head placed lovingly against the instrument, and his eyes half closed, he played on, keeping time ever with his foot.

Wolf was the first to cry out in pleading tones breathlessly, "Please stop, Cousin Monkey! For love's sake, please stop!"

40 But Monkey did not even hear him. Over and over sounded the resistless waltz of "Cockcrow".

After a while Lion showed signs of fatigue, and when he had gone the round once more with his young lion wife, he growled as he passed Monkey, "My whole kingdom is yours, ape, if you just stop playing".

45 "I do not want it," answered Monkey, "but withdraw the sentence and give me my bow and arrow, and you, Wolf, acknowledge that you stole it from me."

"I acknowledge, I acknowledge!" cried Wolf, while Lion cried, at the same instant, that he withdrew the sentence.

50 Monkey gave them just a few more turns of the "Cockcrow," gathered up his bow and arrow, and seated himself high up in the nearest camel thorn tree.

The court and other animals were so afraid that he might begin again that they hastily disbanded to new parts of the world.

James A Honeÿ, *South-African Folk-Tales* (1910)