

Jason and the Lion

Jason placed his bow and quiver on his shoulder. Then he heaved a cloth bag full of food over his back.

“Where are you off to?” said his friend Heather.

“The King is angry because I gave some poor people leftover food from the court. It was going to be thrown out. He said I must bring back five golden nuggets from the wizard’s cave in payment for the food.”

“Oh, no,” said Heather, “that cave is guarded by the fiercest and biggest lion in the kingdom. No one has ever gotten past him. You can’t go.”

“It’s the King’s orders. I can’t stay if I don’t get the nuggets.” Jason turned and left before Heather could say another word.

After traveling many days, Jason stopped to hunt for food. As he listened for sounds of rabbits or squirrels, he heard whimpering. Following the sound, he came upon the largest lion he’d ever seen. Its hind legs were as big as Jason.

The lion’s head hung low as it whimpered more and more. It kept licking its paw.

Jason felt sorry for the lion. He crept up closer and closer to it. “Hello there. I’m Jason. I’d like to help if I can.”

The lion lifted its massive head. It opened its mouth to let out a roar, but could only let out a whimper.

“Let me take a look,” said Jason. “Ah, there is an arrow head lodged in your paw. If you let me, I’ll take it out.”

Jason took his knife and dislodged the arrowhead from the lion’s paw.

ROOOOAAAAAARRRRRRRR!

Jason dropped to the ground, shut his eyes tight, and held his breath. His body shook as he waited to be eaten.

But, instead of eating Jason, the lion licked his head.

Could it be the lion will not eat me for lunch?

Jason opened one eye to see where the lion was. It was nowhere to be seen. After gathering his

wits about him, Jason found a plum tree and ate till he was full. Then he continued on his journey.

After several more days, Jason could see the mountain before him. It was where the wizard lived. Fear grew from the soles of his feet to the tips of his fingers.

How will I get past the monster lion? Should I go back? Jason stood motionless for several minutes. "I must go on," he whispered to himself.

Jason took his bow and set an arrow in place. He marched forward. Soon, he was at the cave's entrance.

ROOOOAAAAARRRRRRRRR!

Jason's legs weakened. He steadied his bow and took aim. Then he saw the lion. And, the lion saw him.

"It's you!"

The lion leapt right in front of Jason and licked his face.

"So, you are the one who helped my lion." The wizard stood before Jason. "Tell me what I can do for you in return."

Jason explained all that had happened.

"You may take as many gold nuggets as you like, but you will only give the King the five he demanded. And, for being mean-hearted, he will lose his wealth. You will become rich and take over the kingdom."

Jason's brow rose high into his forehead. "But . . . I'm just a servant. I'm nobody."

The wizard put his hand on Jason's shoulder. "You are already a king in my eyes. You have kindness and compassion. Now, you will have gold and a kingdom to match it."

Questions

1. Why was the King angry at Jason?

2. Why did Jason help the lion?

3. How were Jason and the King different?

4. Why did the wizard want to make Jason rich?