

## THE INDIGO JACKAL by Kamini Ramachandran

Once upon a time in a forest In India, when the moon was big and round and up in the night sky, a Jackal decided to go and look for food. Jackal lived in the forest together with all the other animals. He was very smart and cunning but also verrrry lazy. He did not like to work hard to hunt for his food. He preferred to steal food for free!

Well ... on this moonlit night, Jackal was verrrry hungry. He was sooo hungry he decided to leave the forest and go to the nearby village and steal some food!

He walked into the nearby village. The entire village was fast asleep.

Well, Jackal crept quietly, and he snooped here and snooped there. He poked his nose into the baskets of rubbish and sniffed and sniffed.

Jackal smelled something delicious! And he was soo hungry! Jackal began to tear and scratch and bite at the basket! And all of a sudden the basket fell over! And there was such a terrible noise that the village dogs woke up! Oh no! The dogs smelled the Jackal! They saw the Jackal! And they CHASED the Jackal! Jackal ran and ran and ran! The dogs chased and chased and chased! The Jackal ran up and down the alleys! He jumped over the walls! He ran across the rooftops! And the dogs chased and chased and chased! Jackal JUMPED off the rooftop and landed SPLASH! He fell into a vat of indigo dye!

Jackal swam to the edge of the vat and climbed out. He was all wet and he was all cold. BUT ... he noticed that the village dogs had stopped chasing him. The dogs were whimpering and whining, they were afraid of him! They had never, ever seen such a strange creature before, all indigo in colour! All the dogs ran away and they left the Jackal alone.

In the light of the full moon, Jackal carefully looked at himself, and he saw that his legs were indigo, his nose was indigo, his tail was indigo, his nails were indigo, HE was ALL indigo! No wonder the dogs were afraid and ran away! Clever Jackal had a plan for himself! He knew what to do!

Jackal slowly walked back home to the forest. It was already early morning. The moment the forest animals saw the strange indigo creature, they were all afraid and they ran off to hide! They had never, ever, ever seen such a strange creature before!

The Jackal climbed onto a big rock and announced: "Animals of the forest! Do not be afraid of me! I have been sent by the God's above. I am your new King! From now on you must give me food and shelter and make sure that I am comfortable! If you do not obey me, the Gods will be angry and you will ALL be punished!"

Quickly the other animals dashed off to bring their new King some food! Oh! The Jackal was hungry! He hadn't eaten for more than a day! The Jackal ate and ate and ate! He was sooo happy! He was a King now! He did not have to go and scavenge and look for food! He could sleep all day long and have the others bring him all of his favourite food to eat! This was truly the life of a King!

Well the Jackal lived like this for many days and many weeks. In fact 30 whole days passed. One night, the moon was once more big, round and full in the night sky. Suddenly, he heard a familiar sound from far away. It was the sound of howling! The sound of all his brothers and cousins howling up at the full moon! The Jackal could not control himself and he got up, lifted his head up at the moon and let out such a looong and loud howl. AWOOO

All the other animals stared at him in shock! They knew that sound! It was the howl of a jackal! Their King was simply a Jackal pretending to be a King sent down from Heaven! The animals became so angry for they had been fooled and tricked by the cunning Jackal! All the animals chased the Jackal! They chased and chased and chased him and he ran and ran and ran! Jackal ran right out of the forest into the city! He ran into the city to hide. From that day onwards, Jackal was banished from the forest. And now, you can find Jackal rummaging in our dustbins, digging up our gardens and looking for food near our homes. If you see a little bit of indigo colour on your walls, perhaps on your gate or your dustbins, hmm, you know that Jackal has been to visit you!