

Skill 11: Offering and Giving Help

Lion, Chameleon, and Chicken **A Gogo Bantu Folktale from Tanzania**

For a time, all was bountiful in the land, but then drought came. No rain fell for months, and it became drier and drier, hotter and hotter. The stream stopped flowing. The water hole turned first to mud and then to dry, cracked earth.

One by one, the animals slowly left or starved until no one was left except Lion, Chameleon, and Chicken. Lion lay in the scant shade of the withered leaves of a tree. Chameleon lost his bright color and turned to a dull, ugly brown. He clung to a dry tree branch. Chicken became thinner and thinner. He was hardly able to peck at the ground.

Desperate for something to eat, Chicken began scratching and digging and clawing at a lump in the dirt. He uncovered a small cache of seeds that had been covered with mud. Excitedly, he ate the seeds. As he did, he could feel his strength returning. He brightened and felt better.

Lion watched Chicken getting fatter and fatter from the seeds. He got up quietly and began creeping toward Chicken.

"I see you are nice and fat now, Chicken," said Lion. "You are just right for a tasty meal for me."

Lion heard a sharp voice call out from the tree, "Do not eat Chicken. If you do, I will eat you!"

Lion was puzzled. How could a tree be talking to him? Was another animal hiding behind it? He circled the tree and saw nothing. Then he began creeping toward Chicken again.

"Yes," said Lion, "you will make a nice, tasty meal for me now that you have grown fat."

Again a voice came from the tree: "Do not eat Chicken, or I will eat you, Lion."

Lion was now a bit frightened. What kind of animal was still around? Who was it that could eat him?

"I am not afraid of you," said Lion. "Show yourself or be gone. I am about to have my dinner." Lion crept closer to Chicken.

“I will eat you up right now!” said the voice, booming out louder than ever. Just then, something spat on Lion.

Lion was so afraid that he ran off and was not seen in those parts ever again.

Chicken looked and looked, but he did not see who had done the talking.

“Whoever you are, thank you,” said Chicken. “You saved my life. Lion would have surely eaten me if not for you.”

With Lion gone, Chameleon moved off the branch and came down to the ground.

“It is I, Chameleon,” he said. “Lion could not see me on that branch. If he had, he might not have been so afraid.”

“Thank you, Chameleon,” said Chicken. “For saving my life, I want to reward you.” And with that, Chicken laid an egg.

“This is for you,” said Chicken.

“Thank you, my friend,” said Chameleon, as he quickly devoured the egg. “I was about to starve, and you just saved my life.”

Chameleon changed into a bright orange, and he and Chicken were friends forever.

Offering and Giving Help

- Decide whether the person is hurt or in danger.
- If so, help right away.
- If not, ask whether you can help.
- Help the person.

OUR CLASS IS WORKING TOGETHER!

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