Ja 298 — Udumbara Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol2/ja298.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 2, 1895

Pinned source revision: https://github.com/suttacentral/sc-data/commit/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

Scope: Complete numbered source article from the traditional Jātaka commentary; canonical verses appear in story context. This is not a verse-only edition.

Changes: Converted the pinned SuttaCentral HTML article to plain text; removed inline print page-reference labels and normalized whitespace. The original source retains references.

Text

“Ripe are the figs,” etc.—This story the Master told at Jetavana, about a certain Brother, who had made a hermitage to live in at a certain village on the frontier. This delightful dwelling stood upon a flat rock; a little well-swept spot, with enough water to make it pleasant, a village close at hand to go your rounds in, and friendly people to give food. A Brother on his rounds arrived at this place. The Elder who lived in it did the duties of host to the new arrival, and next day took him along with him for his rounds. The people gave him food, and invited him to visit them again next day. After the new-comer had thus fared a few days, he meditated by what means he could oust the other and get hold of the hermitage. Once when he had come to wait upon the Elder, he asked, “Have you ever visited the Buddha, friend?” “Why no, Sir; there’s no one here to look after my hut, or I should have gone before.” “Oh, I’ll look after it while you are gone to visit the Buddha,” said the new-comer; and so the owner went, after laying injunctions upon the villagers to take care of the holy Brother until his return. The new-comer proceeded to backbite his host, and hinted to the villagers all sorts of faults in him. The other visited his Master, and returned; but the new-corner refused him harbourage. He found a place to abide in, and next day went on his rounds in the village. But the villagers would not do their duty by hire. He was much discouraged, and went hack to Jetavana, where he told the Brethren all about it. They began to discuss the matter in their Ball of Truth: “Friend, Brother So-and-so has turned Brother So-and-so out of his hermitage, and taken it for himself!” The Master came in, and wanted to know what they were discussing as they sat there. They told him. Said he, “Brethren, this is not the first time that this man turned the other out of his dwelling;” and he told them an old-world tale.

Once on a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta became a Tree-spirit in the woods. At that time during the rainy season rain used to pour down seven days on a stretch. A certain small red-faced Monkey lived in a rock-cave sheltered from the rain. One day he was sitting at the mouth of it, in the dry, quite happy. As he sat there, a big black-faced Monkey, wet through, perishing with cold, spied him. “How can I

get that fellow out, and live in his hole?" he wondered. Puffing out his belly, and making as though he had eaten a good meal, he stopped in front of the other, and repeated the first stanza:

"Ripe are the figs, the banyans good,

And ready for the Monkey's food.

Come along with me and eat!

Why should you for hunger fret?"

Redface believed all this, and longed to have all this fruit to eat. So he went off, and hunted here, and hunted there, but no fruit could he find. Then he came back again; and there was Blackface sitting inside his cave! He determined to outwit him; so stopping in front he repeated the second stanza:

"Happy he who honour pays

To his elders full of days;

Just as happy I feel now

After all that fruit, I vow!"

The big monkey listened, and repeated the third:

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war;

A monkey scents a monkey's tricks afar.

Even a young one were too sharp by half;

But old birds never can be caught with chaff."

The other made off.

When the Master ended this discourse, he summed up the birth-tale: "At that time the owner of the hut was the little monkey, the interloper was the big black monkey, but the Tree-spirit was I myself."

The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births, edited by E.B. Cowell, published by The Cambridge University Press.

Vol. 1, translated by Robert Chalmers, 1895.

Vol. 2, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1895.

Vol. 3, translated by H.T. Francis and R.A. Neil, 1897.

Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

Vol. 5, translated by H.T. Francis, 1905.

Vol. 6, translated by E.B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse, 1907.

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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.