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PRIVATE GAME RESERVE



WHY THE GIRAFFE HAS A LONG NECK



In the beginning, the Creator gave Giraffe the same legs and neck as all the other animals; in fact, Giraffe resembled some of the larger antelope such as Eland and Kudu. All was well, until one year a terrible drought afflicted the land. All of the animals began to go hungry, all of the grazing and browsing in the area had been eaten.

All that remained were the bitter tufts of yellowed turpentine grass and dry, shrivelled twigs. There was great competition among the animals and they had to walk many weary miles each day between feeding areas and the few remaining waterholes. In times like these, only the fittest and strongest of the animals could survive.

One day Giraffe met his friend Rhino on the scorched plains, where the dust-devils whirled and the horizon shimmered in the terrible heat. They trudged wearily along the trail back to the waterhole and as they walked, they complained about the hard times and the lack of food.

"Ah, my friend," said Giraffe, "see how there are too many animals searching out there on the plains – all they do is trample the remaining grass into the dust. And yet "look at those tall acacia trees over there." "Oomphhh," said Rhino.

(He wasn't – and still isn't – a very gifted talker.)

"How lovely it would be," continued Giraffe, "to be able to reach the topmost branches where the tender green leaves are. Now there you have plenty of food, but I can't climb trees and I don't suppose you could either."

Rhino agreed, squinting nearsightedly up at the beautiful canopy of thick green leaves. "Perhaps," he said, "we could see the Man-Magician." He paused. "He's very wise and powerful." And he nibbled a dry twig, thinking.

"What a good idea!" said Giraffe. "Which way, old friend? Do you think he could help us?" And the two friends set off into the sunset, stopping on the way for a quick drink at the muddy waterhole.

After a long and tiring walk through the night and half way through the next day, Rhino and Giraffe finally found the swelling of the witch doctor and explained their problem.

The Man-Magician laughed and said, "Oh that is fairly easy. Come here tomorrow at noon and I will give you both a magic herb to eat, which will make your legs and necks grow so long that you will be able to reach the tree tops."

The Man-Magician busied himself preparing his magic, and Giraffe and Rhino, both greatly excited, went back to the waterhole.

The next day, only Giraffe was at the witch doctor's hut at the arranged time. Poor dim-witted Rhino had found a patch of nice green grass which had somehow escaped the notice of the other animals. And, quite forgetting about his noon appointment, he was greedily tucking into his unexpected meal.

After waiting some time for Rhino to appear, the Man-Magician finally grew impatient. He gave Giraffe all of the magic herbs and disappeared into the shade of his hut. Giraffe ate them all up, and as soon as he had finished, he felt the strangest feeling in his legs and neck. He blinked. The ground was getting further away! What a funny feeling!

Giraffe closed his eyes in half-fear, half-giddiness. Then he opened them again. Oh, how the world had changed! He was high up in the air, he could see for miles! He looked down at his long, long legs and his long, long neck and smiled. The magic had worked wonderfully well. And there, level with his eyes and not two paces away, was the thick green canopy of a tall acacia tree.

Eventually Rhino remembered where he was supposed to be, and trotted hurriedly up to the witch doctor's hut. He was too late. He saw the new tall, elegant Giraffe browsing from the tree tops to his heart's content, free from the competition of all the other animals. When the Man-Magician told him that there was no magic herb left, Rhino lost his temper. Thinking that the Man-Magician had tricked him, he lowered his great sharp horn and charged, chasing him a long way into the bush.

Some say that to this day, Rhino is always bad-tempered and chases people whenever he is reminded of the Giraffe's greatest gift - his long, beautiful neck.

The END

