

The Cunning Mediator



A Panchatantra series tale

“Beware of the rascal who pretends to be holy”

Two partridges (quail like birds) lived in a certain tree in the jungle. While one of them lived on the branches, the other lived inside a hole at the foot of the tree.

They became good friends and they would spend long hours with each other telling each other stories and events of their lives. In this manner, the partridges spent their time in happiness.

One day, one of them went away with some more partridges in search of food.

As was usual, when he did not return even at sunset, the other partridge started worrying. He thought, “He has not done this ever. Why has the partridge not returned home today? Has he been trapped by a hunter? Or maybe even killed? I cannot live without him. I am certain there is some reason why he has not returned even at nightfall.”

He did not return even the next day, or the day after. For several days, the partridge kept worrying and then gave up hope of his friend’s return. “And so, I spent several days worrying.”

On nightfall, a hare came to the tree and observing an empty hole at the bottom of the tree took shelter inside. Since, the partridge had given up hope, he did not object to the hole being occupied by the hare.

After a few days the partridge returned. He had gone to a place where there was plenty of food to eat. He had grown fat, but remembering his dear friend, he thought of returning.

On his return, when he found that a hare had taken over his house, he objected strongly,

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“Hare! This hole is my home, and you have taken over during my absence. This is very unfair of you. I demand you to leave immediately.”

The hare disagreed. “This place is mine now. I am not leaving. I found this hole empty, and therefore made it my home.” Thus, they began to quarrel.

The partridge understood there was no point in quarrelling with the hare, and said, “Hare! You seem to lack the basic ethics. Let us approach someone holy and knowledgeable. Let someone well-versed in holy books decide who is right, and thus, who shall have the right to occupy the hole.”

The hare agreed, and as suggested they went to look for a holy man to settle their dispute. Meanwhile, a wild tomcat became aware that they wanted to settle their dispute through a holy man. He quickly posed as a learned animal. He held a blade of kusha grass in his paw and stood on the bank of a river where he will quickly be spotted.

Standing on his hind legs, with his eyes closed, he started chanting.

When the partridge and the hare came across him, the hare said, “He looks holy, and a learned person. Let us go and seek his advice.”

The partridge agreed but said, “Yes let us seek his opinion. But he is a wild cat by birth, and a natural enemy for both of us. We should be careful and speak only from a distance.”

As decided, they came to the wild tomcat, but stood at a distance, “Holy person! We have a dispute amongst us. Will you please settle our dispute and advise us who is right in accordance to Holy Scriptures? If you decide that one of us has sinned, you may as well eat him!”

The tomcat replied, “O my friends, I have denounced the violent life as it leads to hell. Non-violence is the very essence of true religion. I shall not harm any of you. However, I will hear both of you and settle your dispute with the knowledge I have gained.”

Both the partridge and the hare were impressed. The wild tomcat continued, “But I am old, and cannot hear you from that distance. Fear not! I do not even harm a louse, bug or a mosquito. Come closer and explain the reason of your dispute. I shall make the most just settlement.”

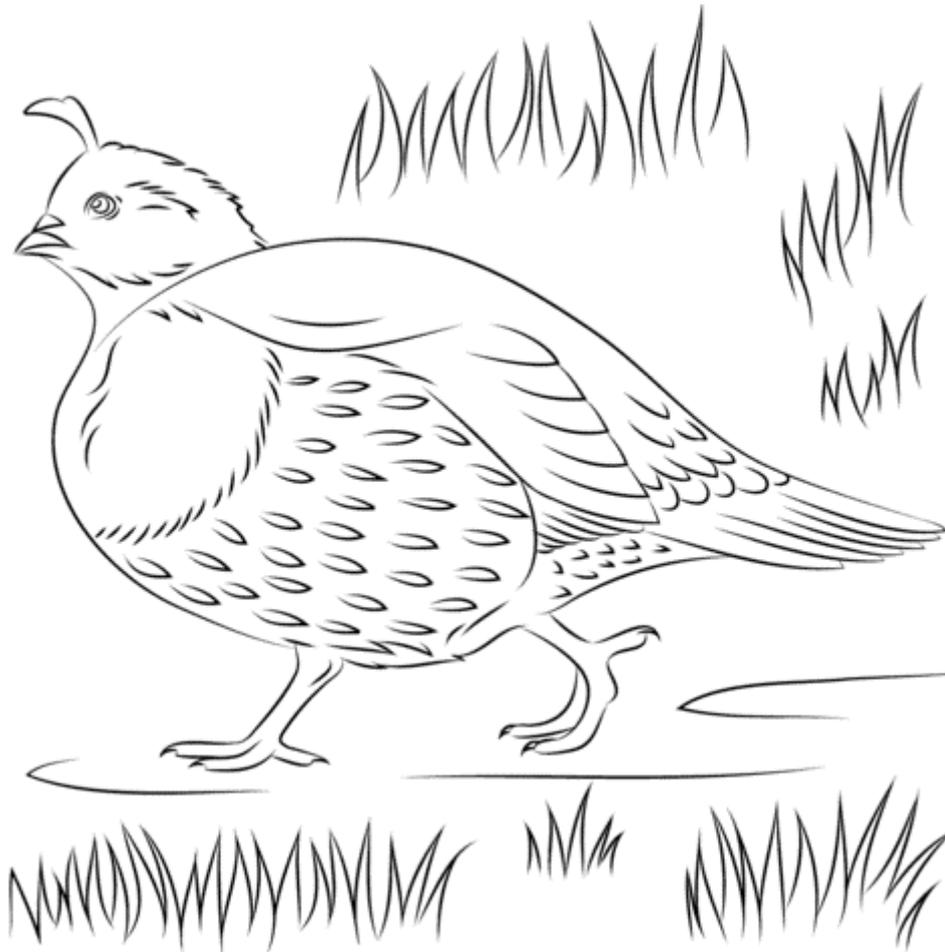
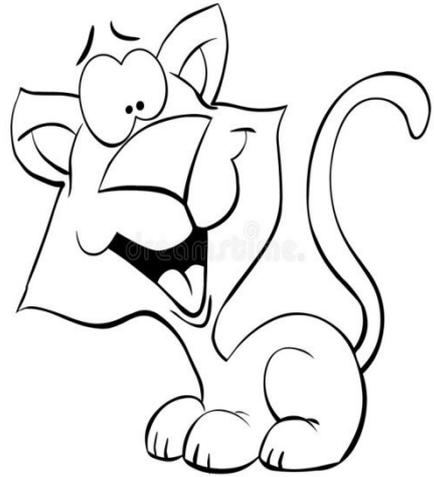
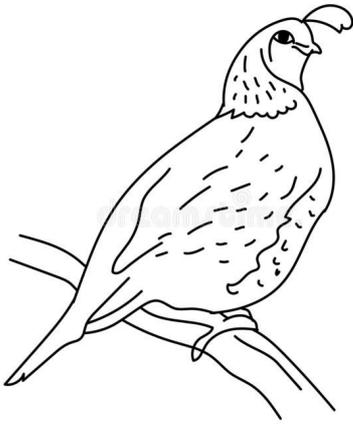
With all these sayings, he won the confidence of both of them. Both the partridge and the hare came near him and sat close to him to explain the reason of their dispute.

This was the very opportunity that the tomcat was looking for. As soon as they sat beside him, he jumped and seized one of them in his teeth and the other with his claws. He killed them both and made a meal out of them.

Moral of the story: “Beware of a rascal who pretends to be holy.”

There are some drawings for you to colour on the next pages

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