



Why the Warthog is on His Knees

Zulu

“Oh, Gogo,” little Siphoh asked one evening. “Could you tell us the story of clever Jackal again?” Siphoh, whose nickname was Mpungushe “jackal”, never tired of hearing tales of his beloved namesake.

“Hawu, Siphoh,” moaned several of his siblings. “Not again, little Jackal! You will wear out our ears with stories of Mpungushe!”

Gogo laughed her deep, round laugh. Soon each of her grandchildren were laughing along with her. “I, too, love the stories of the Jackal.” She looked at Siphoh. “But we do not want to cause your brothers and sisters to become deaf. I think there is another tale that I can tell you of an animal who tried to be as clever as Jackal...”

Warthog had made himself a lovely spacious home in an old termite mound that an aardvark had cleared out. He had built it up and made a wide entrance. He thought it was the most magnificent home in Africa, and would often stand at the entrance of his dwelling, with his snout in the air, as the giraffe, wildebeest and zebra passed to the watering hole.

“Hah,” he thought to himself. “No one has such a fine home!”

One day, as he looked out from the entrance of his cave, he was horrified to see a huge lion stealthily stalking towards him. He started to back away, but because he had made the entrance to his place so grand, the lion would have no difficulty in following Warthog right in.

“Ahhhh,” panicked Warthog. “Bhubesi will eat me in my own lounge! What will I do?”

Warthog decided to use an old trick he’d heard Jackal bragging about. Warthog pretended to be supporting the roof of his hole with his strong back, pushing it up with his tusks.





“Help!” he cried to the lion. “I am going to be crushed! The roof is caving in! Flee, oh mighty Bhubesi, before you are crushed along with me!”

Now Lion was no fool. He recognised Jackal’s old ploy straight away, (“Do you remember that story, children?”), and he wasn’t going to be caught out again. He roared so fiercely that Warthog dropped to his knees, trembling.

Warthog begged for mercy. Luckily for him Lion was not too hungry, and so he pardoned the warthog and left, saying: “Stay on your knees, you foolish beast.”

Lion laughed to himself and shook his shaggy head as we walked away. Imagine, slow-witted Warthog trying to copy Jackal’s trick! Warthog took Lion’s order to heart. That is why, to this day, you will see Warthog feeding on his knees, in a very undignified position, with his bottom up in the air and his snout snuffling in the dust.

