Ririro
READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Judge Owl's Cleverness

Abbie Phillips Walker

Mr. Raccoon had lost a bright tin spoon, and it was not the first time that he had lost one. This time, however, he was not able to get it back from Mr. Crow because he could not catch him using it.

"But I know Jimmy Crow has my spoon. There is no one else who would care enough about bright things to carry it off," said Mr. Raccoon.

"But you will have to prove it," said Mr. Fox, who was quite wise about such things. "Just because there are a few feathers in front of my house, and the farmer has lost a chicken, does not PROVE I took it, you know."

"No," faltered Mr. Raccoon with a smile, "I suppose it doesn't; but how am I to prove Jimmy is the thief, Mr. Fox? You are so clever — can't you think of some way to help me get my tin spoon back?"

"Suppose I arrest Jimmy on suspicion," said Mr. Fox, "and, to be fair about it, we will have one of Jimmy's tribe for the judge. He cannot object to that, and everybody knows that Judge Owl is very clever and wise."

"Very well. You arrest him," said Mr. Raccoon. "I know he has my bright tin spoon, and I hope he has kept it bright. I would not care a rap about it if it is not shiny."

Mr. Fox had to wait until he caught Mr. Crow on the ground, and one day, when he did, he crept up behind him and caught him by one leg. "I arrest you, Mr. Crow, for stealing Mr. Raccoon's bright tin spoon," he said.

"Prove it!" cawed Jimmy Crow. "How do you know I stole it?"

"We will let Judge Owl decide that," answered Mr. Fox. "He is very wise, you know."



"He will have to prove I have the spoon, and he can't do that," said Mr. Crow. "He has got to catch me with it, and he can search me if he likes; he won't find it."

Judge Owl looked very solemn and wise as he sat on a low limb of a tree looking down on Mr. Crow and Mr. Fox and Mr. Raccoon as they sat on the ground. "We will hear what the prisoner has to say," he said.

There were many other wood folk there, all listening to what the judge said, but now every eye was turned on Jimmy Crow as he began to speak.

"I have not his tin spoon," said Jimmy, looking very boldly at Judge Owl. "You can search under every feather on me, judge, and you won't find it."

Jimmy ruffled his feathers as he spoke, and all the animals began to wonder if, after all, Mr. Raccoon was not mistaken, for of course the spoon would have fallen if Jimmy had it hidden.

"Well, perhaps you did not take it," said Judge Owl. "I know one thing; the one who did steal Mr. Raccoon's bright tin spoon hasn't any tail feathers; he has lost every last feather."

"They were all there this morning," said Mr. Crow, looking around at his tail before he thought what he was doing.

"You are the thief, just as I thought," said Judge Owl. "Go home and get that spoon, or you will lose all your feathers."

It was no use to deny it now. Jimmy Crow knew that when he turned around and looked at his tail and made that remark he had acknowledged his guilt, so off he flew, with a flock of Blue jays around him to make sure he did not run away. "Wasn't Judge Owl clever to catch Jimmy the way he did?" asked Mr. Raccoon as he sat in the moonlight talking it over with Mr. Fox, and Mr. Fox, who admired a clever trick, allowed that Mr. Owl was a very clever old bird.

Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why ririro.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share ririro.com and spread the joy of reading.