

Short Stories with Peter: The Banyan Deer

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

75 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Welcome to Short Stories with Peter, from Your English Toolbox.

Today, The Banyan Deer, a tale of compassion from the Indian Jataka tradition.

This is an original, abridged adaptation for English learners, based on the story retold by Ellen C. Babbitt in nineteen twelve.

It includes a threat to animals but no graphic scene.

Listen for the moment when one character decides that another life matters as much as his own.

Long ago, two herds of deer lived in a green forest beside a city.

One herd followed a beautiful golden deer, known as the Banyan Deer.

The other herd followed a different leader.

But the human king of the city loved to hunt.

They built a large park with grass and water, then drove both herds through its gate.

The gate closed behind the deer.

We cannot go back to the forest?

Stay close to the young ones.

When the human king came to see the park, the golden deer caught his eye.

That deer is extraordinary.

No one is to harm either herd leader.

The two leaders were safe, but the rest of the deer were not.

Whenever hunters entered, frightened animals ran in every direction.

The Banyan Deer looked for a way to reduce their suffering.

He spoke to the leader of the other herd.

If one deer goes forward each day, the others will not be injured in the chase.

Each day, one herd and then the other took a turn.



The sound of the gate became a sound every deer feared.

Then the turn fell to a mother from the other herd.

Her little one was still too young to live without her.

Please let someone take my turn until my child is older.

Her own leader refused.

He said the rule had to be the same for everyone.

The mother crossed the park and found the golden Banyan Deer beside the river.

I know you cannot change the rule.

But my little one needs me.

The Banyan Deer listened without speaking.

He also could not turn away from her fear.

Go back to your child.

I will go in your place.

At sunrise, the golden deer walked alone across the wet grass.

He waited where the chosen deer was expected.

When the royal cook arrived, he stopped in surprise.

The cook ran to the palace, and the human king came at once.

Why are you here?

I promised to protect you.

A mother was chosen today.

Her child cannot survive without her.

I could not ask another deer to take her place, so I came myself.

For a moment, the king said nothing.

He looked at the golden deer, then at the mother waiting far away with her child.

Stand up.

You and the mother are safe.

The golden deer did not move.

And what about the other deer?

The king lowered his eyes.



You are right.

I will stop hunting them, in the park and in the forest.

The gate opened, and the deer went back among the trees.

The mother walked beside her child.

The Banyan Deer stayed close enough to see them reach the river.

His courage had saved more than one life because he had asked the king to see every life.

End of the story.

Now, let's dive into the language and break down some of the key vocabulary from the story.

First, take someone's place means to do something instead of that person.

The Banyan Deer took the mother's place when her turn came.

At work, you might say, I can take your place at the meeting.

Second, turn away from can mean to refuse to help or face something difficult.

The deer could not turn away from the mother's fear.

You might say, She did not turn away from a friend in trouble.

Third, stand up for someone means to defend a person who needs support.

The golden deer stood up for a mother, and then for both herds.

Notice that this phrase describes a choice, not just a feeling.

Now, try a sentence of your own.

Who stood up for you at a difficult moment?

And when might you take someone's place to help them?

The story asks what leadership looks like when the person with power is safe but others are not.

Compassion can begin with one person, then widen to everyone affected.

You can find the full transcript, vocabulary and practice at Your English Toolbox.

Thank you for listening, and I will see you in the next story.

