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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Dr. Dolittle and the Unique Animal (10/21)

Pushing Pullyu animals are now extinct. Extinct means they are no longer around. But long ago, when Dr. Dolittle was still alive, there were a few in the deepest jungles of Africa. Even then, they were very, very scarce. They had no tail, but a head at each end and sharp horns on each head. They were very shy and terribly difficult to catch.

Strong men usually caught animals by sneaking up on them when they weren't looking. But you couldn't do this with the Pushing Pullyu animal because no matter which way you approached it, it always saw you. And furthermore, only half of it was asleep at any given time. The other head was always awake and watching. This was the reason why they were never caught and never seen in zoos.

Although many great hunters and clever animal keepers spent years of their lives, in all kinds of weather, searching the jungle for Pushing Pullyu animals, not one was ever caught. Even then, years ago, it was the only two-headed animal in the world. So the monkeys went on a hunt in the forest for the animal. And after they had traveled a considerable distance, one of them found peculiar footprints at the edge of a river; and they knew that a Pushing Pullyu animal had to be very close

to that spot. Then they went along the riverbank for a while and saw a place where the grass was high and thick; and they suspected that he was there.

So they all joined hands and made a large circle around the tall grass. The Pushing Pullyu animal heard them coming and he did his best to break through the circle of monkeys. But he couldn't. When he saw that it was no use trying to escape, he sat down and waited to see what they wanted. They asked him if he wanted to go with Dr. Dolittle to be exhibited in the land of humans. But he vigorously shook his two heads and said, "Absolutely not!"

They explained to him that he would not be locked up in a cage, but only looked at. They told him that the doctor was a very kind man, but had no money. People would pay a lot to see a two-headed animal and the doctor would become rich and could then pay for the boat he had borrowed to come to Africa. But he replied, "No. You know how shy I am - I hate being stared at." And he almost started crying.

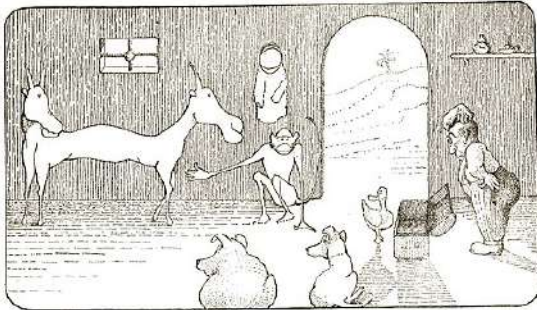
Then they tried to convince him for three more days. And at the end of the third day, he said that he would first go with them to see what kind of man the doctor was. So the monkeys traveled back with the Pushing Pullyu animal. And when they arrived at the doctor's grass hut, they knocked on the door. The duck, who was packing the suitcase, said, "Come in!" And Chee-Chee took the animal in, very proudly, and showed it to the doctor.

"What in the world is this?" asked John Dolittle, staring at the strange creature.

"This, doctor," said Chee-Chee, "is the Pushing Pullyu animal, the rarest animal in the African jungle, the only two-headed beast in the world! Take him home. Your fortune is made. You can charge a lot of money to the people who want to see him.

"But I don't want money," said the doctor.

"Yes, you do," said Dab-Dab, the duck. "Don't you remember how we had to scrape everything together to pay the butcher's bill in Puddleby-on-the-Marsh?



And how will you give the sailor a new boat if we don't have the money to buy one?"

"I was planning to make a boat for him," said the doctor.

"Oh, be sensible!" exclaimed

Dab-Dab. "Where will you get all the wood and nails to make a boat? And besides, how will we live? We'll be poorer than ever when we come back. Chee-Chee is absolutely right: take this funny-looking thing with you and make money with it!"

"Well, maybe there's something in what you say," muttered the doctor. "It would certainly be a nice new kind of pet. But will the eh-how-do-you-call-it again, really go abroad?"

"Yes, I'll go," said the Pushing Pullyu animal, who immediately saw from the doctor's face that the man was trustworthy. "You have been so kind to the animals here, and the monkeys told me that I am the only one who can do this. But you must promise me that if I

don't like it in the land of the humans, you will send me back."

"Well, certainly - of course, of course," said the doctor.

"Excuse me, you are a relative of the Deer, aren't you?"

"Yes," said the Pushing Pullyu animal, "I am a relative of the Abyssinian Gazelles and the Asian Chamois on my mother's side. On my father's side, my father's great-grandfather was the last of the Unicorns."

"That's interesting," muttered the doctor, and he took a book out of the trunk that Dab-Dab packed and began flipping through the pages. "Let's see if the naturalist Buffon says anything about this..."

"I notice," said the Duck, "that you only talk with one of your mouths. Can't the other head talk too?"

"Oh yes," said the Pushing Pullyu animal. "But I usually use the other mouth to eat. That way, I can talk while I eat without being rude. Our people have always been very polite."

When the packing was done and everything was ready to leave, the monkeys threw a big party for the doctor. All the animals of the jungle came to feast. And they had pineapples and mangoes and honey and all sorts of other delicious things to eat and drink.

When they were all done eating, the doctor stood up and said, "My friends: I'm not good at speaking long words after eating, like some men can, and I've just eaten a lot of fruit and a lot of honey. But I do want to say that I'm very sorry to leave this beautiful land. But I have things to do in my own country, so I must go.

When I'm gone, remember never to let flies sit on your food before you eat it, and don't sleep on the ground

when it rains. I - uh-uh - I hope further that you will all live long and happy lives."

When the doctor stopped speaking and sat down, all the monkeys clapped their hands and said to each other, "Let there always be a memory among our people that the doctor sat and ate with us, here under the trees. The doctor is the greatest of men!"

And the Great Gorilla, whose hairy arms had the strength of seven horses, rolled a large stone to the head of the table and said, "This stone will forever mark the spot where the doctor was."

And even to this day, in the heart of the jungle, that stone is still there. And mother apes, trekking through the forest with their families, still point to it from the branches and whisper to their children, "Shh! There it is - look - there sat the good doctor from the land of humans eating with us, in the Year of the Great Sickness!"

When the party was over, the doctor and his animals returned to the coast. And all the apes went with him to the edge of their land to bid farewell to the doctor, laden with bags and baggage.