

The RED and BLUE Coat

an African tale

There once were two childhood friends who were determined to remain close companions always. When they were grown, they each married and built their houses facing one another. Just a small path formed a border between their farms.

One day a trickster from the village decided to test their friendship. He dressed himself in a two-color coat that was divided down the middle, red on the right side and blue on the left side. Wearing this coat, the man walked along the narrow path between the two houses. The two friends were each working opposite each other in their fields. The trickster made enough noise as he traveled between them to cause each friend to look up from his side of the path at the same moment and notice him.

At the end of the day, one friend said to the other, "Wasn't that a beautiful red coat that man was wearing today?"

"No," replied the other. "It was blue."

"I saw that man clearly as he walked between us!" said the first. "His coat was red."

"You are wrong!" the second man said. "I saw it too. It was blue."

"I know what I saw!" insisted the first man. "The coat was red."

"You don't know anything," replied the second angrily. "It was blue!"

"So," shouted the first, "you think I am stupid? I know what I saw. It was red!"

"Blue!" the other man said.

"Red!" "Blue!" "Red!" "Blue!"

They began to beat each other and roll around on the ground.

Just then the trickster returned and faced the two men, who were punching and kicking each other and shouting, "Our friendship is over!"

The trickster walked directly in front of them, displaying his coat. He laughed loudly at their silly fight. The two friends saw that his two-color coat was divided down the middle, blue on the left and red on the right.

The two friends stopped fighting and screamed at the man in the two-colored coat, "We have lived side by side all our lives like brothers! It is all *your* fault that we are fighting! You started a war between us."

"Don't blame me for the battle," replied the trickster. "I did not *make* you fight. *Both* of you are wrong. And *both* of you are right. Yes, what each one said was true! You are fighting because you only looked at my coat from your *own* point of view "

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