

King Proboscis's Nose

Once, a gentle king named Proboscis ruled over a magnificent kingdom. The people of Apricus adored their king, for he was as kind and generous as they come.

Despite his great fortune and the loyalty and admiration of his citizens, the King had one shortcoming—he was very self-conscious about his appearance. King Proboscis (as his name suggests), had a long nose that curved down towards his chin like a tapir's snout. He tried in vain to hide it, but the makeup he applied and the moustache he grew only made his nose more prominent. Proboscis spent many sleepless nights worrying that his people mocked him behind his back. But the Apricusians were too loyal and grateful to mutter unkind words about their King. They loved him for who he was—long nose and all.

One spring afternoon, the King held a splendid garden party for the citizens of Apricus. He invited musicians and performers from neighbouring kingdoms, and spared no expense to ensure that his guests had only the best delicacies to eat and the finest wines to drink. Among the attendees were the palace cook and his closest friends. They sat on the lawn near the bandstand praising the King (as they so often did).

‘We are fortunate to have such a thoughtful king,’ said the cook.

‘He is a wonderful man,’ the butcher agreed.

‘I'm grateful to wake up in his kingdom every morning,’ the schoolmaster chimed in.

The doctor raised his glass. ‘A toast! To our most excellent King!’

‘I hope he knows how much we appreciate and love him,’ said the butcher.

‘Aye! Aye! As long as he knows ... ,’ the cook remarked, then took a long swig from his glass.

King Proboscis happened to stroll past at the tail end of this conversation. You might say his insecurities got the better of him because he thought he'd heard his cook say, “*Aye yai! How long is*

his nose?” Crestfallen, the King dashed into the palace and shut himself in his chamber, where he remained for seven days.

All the people of Apricus worried for their King, but none was more troubled than the palace cook. It wasn't like the King to refuse his meals, and he had done so for a week. On the eighth day, the concerned cook tapped on the King's chamber door.

When the King opened the door, he frowned. ‘It is he who mocks my nose.’

‘I've done no such thing,’ the cook said.

‘At the garden party ... I heard you say, “*Aye yai! How long is his nose?*”’

The cook thought back to that day then chuckled. ‘You must've misheard me on account of the music, sire,’ he said, then recounted the conversation, word for word.

‘You are a fine King, and we love you, just as you are.’

From this, the King learnt to never assume the worst when he's only heard a snippet of a conversation. More importantly, he learned to love himself—long nose and all.

THE END