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## The hare and the lion

One afternoon, Soongoora the hare was wandering through the forest, looking for food. As he wove between the tangled roots and hanging vines, a glimmer above caught his attention. Peering up through the leafy boughs of an enormous calabash tree, he spotted a gaping hole in the upper trunk, with bees swarming about. His heart leapt. Honey.

Grinning at his good fortune, Soongoora turned on his heels and raced back toward town, mind already spinning with plans. He needed help - someone daring enough to climb, clever enough to trust. As he walked past Bookoo the big rat's place, Bookoo waved him over. "Come on in," he said with a grin.

Soongoora stepped inside, got comfortable, and said with a serious look, "My dad just passed away, but he left me a stash of honey. I could use some help eating it."

Bookoo's eyes lit up at the mention of honey. Without hesitation, he leapt to his feet. "Say no more!" he cried. Without delay, the two set off.

When they reached the towering calabash tree, Soongoora pointed up toward a dark hollow in the trunk buzzing with activity. "There it is," he said, eyes gleaming. "Climb up." With bundles of dry straw in hand, the two scrambled up the rough bark. They reached the nest, lit the straw, and waved it carefully to send smoke into the hive. The bees, dazed and confused, buzzed away in a thick cloud. The moment the air cleared, they stomped out the embers, sat themselves down, and began gorging themselves with honey.

Just as they were mid-mouthful, Simba the lion approached the tree. His eyes narrowed and he looked up and growled, "Who are you?"

Soongoora leaned toward Bookoo and whispered, "Say nothing. Don't let him know we are here."

However, Simba's voice suddenly exploded like thunder: "Who are you, I said! Speak!"

Bookoo jumped at the roar, heart pounding. He couldn't help himself. He panicked and shouted, "It's only us!"

Hearing this, the hare leaned in and said, "Here's the plan. Wrap me up in this straw, tell the lion to step aside, and toss me down. Trust me, just watch what happens."

Bookoo, a little unsure, but too scared to argue, bundled Soongoora tightly in the straw. Then he called out, trying to sound confident, "Hey Simba! Step back! I'm tossing this straw down first, then I'll come down."

The lion took a step back, eyes fixed upward. A moment later, the bundle hit the ground with a soft thud. As Simba kept his gaze on the branches above, Soongoora silently

slipped out of the straw and darted into the underbrush. He was gone before the lion even realized what had happened.

Simba let out a thunderous roar. "Well? Come down, I said!"

Bookoo froze. His legs felt like jelly, but he knew there was no way out. Heart pounding, he began the slow, shaking climb down - one step, then another - descending straight into danger.

The moment he was within reach, Simba lunged and grabbed him. "Who was up there with you?" the lion growled, his eyes narrowing.

Bookoo stammered, "It was Soongoora, the hare! Didn't you see him when I tossed him down?"

Simba's eyes flared with fury. "Of course I didn't see him!" he snapped.

And without a moment's hesitation, he sank his teeth into the big rat. When the deed was done, he stormed around the base of the tree, searching for the hare. However, Soongoora was long gone.

Just then, out from the trees stepped none other than Mr. Simba - the true owner of the honey. He spotted them high in the branches and called out sharply, "Hey! Who's up there?"

Soongoora leaned over to Kobay and whispered, "Don't say a word."

But Simba's voice rose, louder and more forceful, "I said - who's up there?!"

Kobay's eyes narrowed. Doubt crept in. He turned to Soongoora and said, "Wait a minute... You said this honey was yours. But now I'm starting to think it actually belongs to Simba, doesn't it?"

The lion's voice boomed once more. "I'm asking you one last time - who are you?"

Kobay hesitated, then called back, "It's just us!"

Simba growled from below. "Then come down."

"We're coming," the tortoise replied, his voice small and uncertain as the tension thickened in the air.

Now, ever since the day he'd caught Bookoo, Simba had been watching for Soongoora like a hawk. And now, seeing the two figures high in the calabash tree, he narrowed his eyes and growled to himself, "This time, I've got him for sure."

Up in the branches, Soongoora knew they were in trouble. Calmly, he turned to Kobay and whispered, "Quick! Wrap me in the straw. Tell Simba to step aside, and throw me down. I'll be waiting for you at the bottom. Don't worry, he can't hurt you."

Kobay nodded slowly. "All right," he said. But as he bundled the hare tightly in the straw, a different thought crept into his mind. *This clever little trickster wants to make a getaway again... and leave me to face the lion's wrath alone. Not this time.*

Tightening the last fold, Kobay straightened up and called out, loud and clear, "Soongoora is coming!"

Then, with no delay, he tossed the bundle down.

Simba caught the hare with a triumphant swipe of his paw and pinned him down. "Now," he growled, his voice low and dangerous, "what should I do with *you*?"

Soongoora looked up with a sly grin. "Honestly, you'd be wasting your time trying to eat me. I'm tough as bark. Chew on me, and you'll break your teeth."

Simba narrowed his eyes. "Then what do you suggest I *do* with you?"

The hare tilted his head thoughtfully. "Well... if you *must* try, you'd better grab me by the tail, spin me around, and slam me to the ground. That's the only way you might have a chance."

Not suspecting a thing, the lion nodded and seized him by the tail. He whirled him once... twice... building speed, ready to strike.

But just as he was about to smash him down—*whoosh!*—Soongoora slipped right out of his grip and darted off into the forest.

Simba stood there, tail still in paw, stunned and seething. Once again, the trickster hare had outwitted him.

Furious and humiliated, Simba spun around to the tree and snarled, "*You!* Come down here - *now!*" Kobay, slow but steady, made his careful descent. When he finally reached the ground, the lion loomed over him, still fuming. "You're tough as stone," he growled. "What am I supposed to do to make you even remotely edible?"

The tortoise chuckled, cool as ever. "Oh, that's simple," he said with a grin. "Just drop me in the mud and rub my back with your paw until my shell peels right off."

Immediately on hearing this, Simba carried Kobay to the water, placed him in the mud, and began to rub his back. However, the tortoise had slipped away, and the lion continued rubbing on a piece of rock until his paws were raw. When he glanced down at them, he saw they were bleeding. Realizing he'd been tricked once again, Simba

growled under his breath, "That hare's outsmarted me *again*. This isn't over. I'll search every inch of this land until I find him."

Soongoora and his wife had agreed it was best to leave. They packed up and left quietly, without telling anyone. That meant when Simba, the lion, set out in search of Soongoora, the hare, no one knew where they were living. However, Simba wasn't ready to give up. He kept asking around, one animal after another, until finally, someone pointed up and said, "That house at the top of the mountain, that's his."

Quickly, the lion climbed the mountain and soon arrived at Soongoora's house, only to find that there was no one at home. This, however, did not trouble him. Instead, with a sly plan forming in his mind, Simba crept into the house and hid himself inside, intending to ambush Soongoora and his wife when they returned.

Not long after, the hare and his wife arrived, unaware that danger was near. However, as they climbed the steep path, Soongoora noticed unmistakable lion tracks. He stopped immediately and concerned for his wife, he urged her to turn back, certain that Simba had come looking for him.

Soongoora continued following the footprints and saw, as he had suspected, that they went into his house.

"Aha," he thought, "So the lion's hiding inside, is he?" Stepping back a little, Soongoora raised his voice and called out, "Hey there, house! How's it going?" He paused, then continued louder, "That's odd... Every time I pass by and say hello, the house always says hello back. But today - nothing. Someone must be in there."

Hearing this, the lion, trying to keep up the ruse, called out, "How's it going?"

Then Soongoora burst out laughing and shouted, "Oh, Mr. Simba! You're inside, and I'll bet you want to eat me, but first tell me where you ever heard of a house talking!"

On hearing this, the lion, seeing how he had been fooled, replied angrily, "You wait until I get hold of you."

"Oh, I think you'll have to do the waiting," cried the hare, running away with the lion chasing him.

However, it was of no use. Soongoora completely tired out old Simba. Frustrated and thoroughly outwitted, Simba gave up the chase and turned back, deciding he wanted nothing more to do with that troublesome hare. He returned to his home beneath the great calabash tree.

## The lion, the hyena, and the rabbit

Once upon a time in a vast savanna, there were three unlikely friends: Simba, the lion; Fee'see, the hyena; and Keetee'tee, the clever rabbit. One day, they decided to try something different — they would become farmers. They traveled far into the countryside, chose a piece of land, and planted all kinds of crops: fruits, vegetables, and grains. After they had worked hard, they left the land to grow and returned to rest and relax, eagerly waiting for harvest time.

When the time finally came for the crops to be ready, Simba, Fee'see, and Keetee'tee decided to visit their farm and check on the progress. They set off early one morning, but since the journey was long, Keetee'tee had an idea. "Let's not stop along the way," he suggested. "If anyone stops, we'll eat them." Simba and Fee'see, not being as cunning as Keetee'tee, agreed, thinking they could easily outwalk him.

As they traveled, however, Keetee'tee couldn't resist stopping. Fee'see, always alert, noticed. "Keetee'tee has stopped! He must be eaten, according to our deal!" he declared.

Simba nodded and said, "Yes, the deal's the deal."

Keetee'tee, with his usual calmness, replied, "Wait, wait! I was just thinking."

"What were you thinking about?" asked Fee'see and Simba, curious.

"I was thinking about those two stones, one big and one small," the rabbit said, his voice serious. "The little one doesn't go up, and the big one doesn't go down. What's up with that?"

Simba and Fee'see paused to ponder the question. "Hmm, that's strange," Simba admitted, "but I guess it's just as you say." They shrugged and continued walking, and Keetee'tee took the chance to rest while his companions thought over the riddle.

They didn't get far before Keetee'tee stopped again. This time, Fee'see was quick to speak up. "Aha! Keetee'tee has stopped again. Now he has to be eaten!"

Simba agreed, "It seems like it's time for that."

"Well," said Keetee'tee with a grin, "I was just thinking about something else."

"What now?" Fee'see and Simba asked in unison.

Keetee'tee looked at them with a twinkle in his eye. "I was thinking — when people like us get new coats, where do the old ones go?"

The lion and the hyena stopped for a moment to consider. "Hmm, that's a good question," said Simba. "I wonder where they go?" Fee'see added.

Keetee'tee smiled, rested a bit more, and then, with a swift leap, continued on his way, leaving Simba and Fee'see to figure out the puzzle.

After walking a while, Fee'see, feeling a little too clever for his own good, decided it was time to show off some of his own "wisdom." He abruptly stopped.

Simba growled, "This can't be happening again. I guess it's time to eat you, Fee'see."

"No, no," the hyena said with a smug smile. "I'm just thinking."

"Thinking about what?" the lion asked impatiently.

"I'm thinking about nothing at all," Fee'see said, trying to sound witty.

Keetee'tee rolled his eyes. "Don't think you can fool us that easily," he said. And with that, he and Simba quickly took care of the hyena.

Afterward, Simba and Keetee'tee continued their journey, and soon they came across a cave. Keetee'tee, ever the curious and mischievous one, stopped again.

"Hmm," Simba said, "I'm not as hungry now, but I guess I can find some room for you, Keetee'tee."

The rabbit shook his head. "I think not," he replied. "I've been thinking again."

Simba raised an eyebrow. "What now?"

Keetee'tee gave a mysterious look. "I was thinking about that cave," he said. "You see, long ago, our ancestors used to go in one side and out the other. I think I'll follow their footsteps."

With that, the rabbit hopped into the cave, disappearing inside and reappearing on the other side. He turned to Simba. "Come on, Simba, let's see if you can do it."

Simba, proud as ever, walked into the cave — but, as large as he was, he got stuck halfway through. Keetee'tee seized his chance. Before Simba could react, the rabbit hopped onto his back and began nibbling away. Simba, unable to move and frustrated, cried out, "Come on, Keetee'tee, be fair! Don't just eat me from the back. You need to eat some of me in the front, too!"

Keetee'tee paused for a moment. "No, Simba," the rabbit said with a chuckle, "I'm ashamed to look you in the face." And so, the clever little rabbit ate his fill, leaving the lion trapped in the cave. From that day forward, Keetee'tee became the sole owner of the farm and the crops, proving once again that brains sometimes beat brawn.

## The Kites and the Crows

One day Koongoo'roo, sultan of the crows, sent a letter to Mway'way, sultan of the kites, containing these few words: "I want you folks to be my soldiers."

Immediately, Mway'way responded: "I should say not."

Hoping to scare Mway'way, the sultan of the crows sent him word, "If you refuse to obey me I'll make war upon you."

To which the sultan of the kites replied, "That suits me; let us fight, and if you beat us we will obey you, but if we are victors you shall be our servants."

So they gathered their forces and engaged in a great battle, and in a little while it became evident that the crows were being badly beaten. If something wasn't done soon, they would all be killed. One old crow, named Jeeoo'see, proposed that they should leave. Immediately they left their homes, flying far away to establish a new town. When the kites arrived at the town, they found the place deserted so they moved in.

One day, when the crows had gathered in council, Koongooroo stood up and said: "My people, do as I command you, and all will be well. Pluck out some of my feathers and throw me into the town of the kites, then come back and stay here until you hear from me." Without argument or questioning the crows obeyed their sultan's command.

Koongooroo had been lying in the street for only a short while when some passing kites spotted him and asked sharply, "What are you doing in our town?"

Groaning in pain, he answered, "My fellow crows beat me and cast me out because I urged them to follow, Mway'way, the sultan of the kites."

When they heard his story, they lifted him up and brought him before the sultan, saying, "We found this bird lying in the street. His reason for being here is so unusual that we thought you should hear it yourself."

Koongooroo was then asked to tell his story again, which he did—adding that, despite all he had endured, he still believed Mway'way to be his true sultan.

This pleased the sultan greatly, who said, "You have more wisdom than all the others of your kind put together. You may stay and live with us."

Gratefully, Koongooroo made himself at home, seemingly ready to spend the rest of his life among the kites. One day his neighbors took him to church with them, and when they returned home they asked him, "Who have the best kind of religion, the kites or the crows?"



To which crafty old Koongooroo replied, with great enthusiasm, “Oh, the kites, by long odds!” The kites were absolutely delighted by Koongooroo’s response and began to see him as a bird of great wisdom and insight.

Nearly a week later, under cover of night, the sultan of the crows quietly returned to his own people and gathered them together. “Tomorrow,” he said, “is the kites’ great annual religious festival. In the morning, they’ll all be at church. Gather firewood and prepare torches. Wait near their town until I give the signal—then rush in and set the church on fire.”

With that, he quickly made his way back to Mway’way’s town. The crows worked busily through the night. By sunrise, they had collected plenty of firewood and were hidden just outside the town, ready to act. As morning came, every kite left home to attend the festival. Not a single one stayed behind—except for old Koongooroo. When his neighbors stopped by to fetch him, they found him lying down.

“Why!” they exclaimed, “Aren’t you coming to church today?”

“Oh,” he moaned, “I wish I could, but my stomach hurts so badly I can’t move!”

“Poor thing,” they said kindly. “You’d better rest,” and they left him alone.

As soon as they were out of sight, Koongooroo flew swiftly to the waiting crows.

“Now’s the time—they’re all in the church!” he called.

The crows crept toward the church. Some stacked the wood against the doors while others lit the fire. The flames caught quickly and began to rage before the kites even sensed danger. As smoke filled the building and fire licked through the cracks, the trapped kites tried to escape through the windows. But most were overcome by smoke, or had their wings burned and couldn’t fly. Many perished in the flames, including their sultan, Mway’way. And so Koongooroo and his crows reclaimed their old town.

From that day on, the kites have kept their distance from the crows.