



Educational Exchange Project "Harambee Gwassi Kenya"

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"The Lion's cub's haircut"

Luo's Stories

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Lion, the King of animals, was jealous of tortoise. The other animals were always talking about how wise and clever tortoise was. The way they talked, one would think tortoise, rather than lion was the King.

Tortoise, Lion thought, was tiny, very slow in motion and weak. Almost any of the other animals could kill him easily.

Why, then, did they talk about him with such respect? Lion was fed up; he had learned enough!

He decided to get rid of tortoise and he wanted to do it in a way that would seem to be right to the other animals.

One day, Lion sent for tortoise. When tortoise arrived, Lion said: "*I understand that you are a very good hair dresser. I want you to give my first son, my heir, a hair cut and I want you to do it very quickly*".

Tortoise was, of course, not a hairdresser at all, good or bad. But he dared not argue. However, he gave one condition: "*All right, your majesty*" - he said, flattering Lion - "*but first, I want to make a drawing of what the prince's hair looks like now, so that when I finish the haircut, you can compare the new haircut with the old*".

Lion could not see anything wrong with that request, so he agreed. Then tortoise made a drawing of Lion's son's head in the sand and when he had finished, he said: "*Your Majesty, could you ask your second son to come and guard this drawing for me so that no animal can walk on it and damage it?*".

Smiling to himself, Lion again agreed. Tortoise could have almost anything he wanted, he thought, since he did not have much longer to live.

While the tortoise was cutting the cub's hair, Lion sent for the other animals. He wanted witnesses to the rest of his plan. By the time tortoise finished, the other animals had arrived.

In their presence, Lion said to tortoise: "*Now put my son's hair back on his head exactly as it was before you started. Every single hair should be back exactly where it was.*"

You say you are clever, so it should be easy for you. If you fail, you will be killed".

"*I have caught him now*" - Lion thought to himself. He could hardly hide his joy.

"*I shall do so at once, Your Majesty*" - said tortoise - "*but what if another animal does something to stop me from carrying out your order, shall I die too?*".

"*Of course*" - roared Lion - "*We shall have a double execution*".

Tortoise then said: "*Well, let us go and look at the drawing that I left in the sand for your second son to guard so that you can remember exactly what your first son's hair looked like before I started. After that I shall put your first son's hair back on his head*".

"*All right*" - said Lion - "*Let's go!*"

Meanwhile, it had been raining, as tortoise had guessed it would, since it rained rather often in the afternoon at that time of the year. Thus, when they got to the drawing, they found that it had been damaged by rain.

"*What a pity!*" - wailed Tortoise, pretending to be sorry - "*Now we can never see what your son's hair looked like. It is all your second son's fault. Now, O just and terrible King, I am ready to die, but your son must die with me, as you have just declared*".

Tortoise knew that Lion was very fond of his second son and that he could not possibly have him killed. In presence of all the witnesses whom he had gathered, Lion felt he could not condemn Tortoise to death and, at the same time, forgive his son. So he was forced to let Tortoise free.

He felt humiliated in the presence of all the other animals.

He was, therefore, all the more determined that, the next time, he would get Tortoise. Next time, he promised himself, there would be no escape for Tortoise.