



Lazy, Lazy Hare

(A story from Nigeria)

Each day Sun shone brighter and hotter. And each day the animals looked up at the sky for a sign of rain. The land slowly dried up. Grass turned brown. Small bushes, whose roots were weak and thin, rolled about. The animals needed water.

Late one day, as Sun dipped behind a distant mountain, the animals gathered to talk about the problem of water. Soon they would be forced to walk miles in search of it. A sad silence fell over the group. Then a small, steady voice spoke up. Wise Tortoise had something to say.


"Why don't we dig a waterhole?" he suggested, in his slow, careful manner. The others blinked, thinking about the suggestion. Smiles crossed their faces. "What an excellent idea!" everyone shouted. So when Sun rose the next day, the animals searched together for the right spot to start digging. As luck would have it, Elephant found an underground spring that morning.

Everyone joined in the digging. Aardvark used his long claws. Rhino kicked soil and rocks away. Even Snake helped by wrapping her long muscular body around stubborn roots to pull them out. Everyone worked. Everyone, that is, but Hare.

Lazy, lazy Hare watched the others work as he lay hidden behind a large rock, his feet propped up on a round, empty calabash. He couldn't believe it took so many animals so long to dig a hole! He was thirsty and really wished they would hurry. You see, Hare had a plan for getting the water.

Finally, the hole was complete. Hare watched from his hiding place as the animals took turns drinking the clear water. Hare's throat itched with anticipation. Tortoise, being the slowest, was the last to drink. Just as Tortoise lifted his small head, Hare went into action. He yelled and banged on the calabash with a big stick.





Oh, what a racket he made! It was horrible and wicked, wicked Hare knew it. The noise frightened all the animals - including mighty Elephant - away. Alone now, Hare crept down to the waterhole. He took a long, slow drink of the cool, clear water. He drank so much his belly swelled and swelled until it was as round as a pumpkin.

When he was no longer thirsty, he dove in headfirst. He laughed as he washed and scrubbed the soles of his dirty feet and behind his pointy ears. With his thirst quenched and clean, Hare hopped away.


The next day the others returned to their waterhole and to their surprise the clear water was muddy!


With a mighty roar Lion pointed to the trail leading straight into the well. "These are Hare's prints. He tricked us! He was too lazy to help us and now he drinks our water and worse, bathes in it! We must teach him a lesson."

The animals put their heads together. Again, wise Tortoise had a suggestion. He whispered it to his friends. "Hare will be sorry he was so lazy," smiled Tortoise.

To carry out Tortoise's plan, everyone gathered the stickiest tree sap they could find. The animals piled the chocolate-coloured resin in front of the waterhole. Monkey, the most creative and the one with the lightest touch, carefully formed the sticky sap into the shape of a Human he had seen on one of his travels. The Human was made to look as if she were washing near the well.

Later that day, as was expected, Hare returned to the well for a drink. The other animals hid nearby. There sat the Human. Hare called out a greeting to her. No response. Hare took a step closer and repeated his greeting. Still, no response. He moved closer and tapped her on the shoulder. Hey! What was this? His paw was stuck. He pulled and pulled but couldn't free it. This wasn't a real Human after all!





Hare panicked. Not thinking, he used his feet as leverage against the sticky Human. Now all four paws were stuck. "Oh, help!" he wailed in pain and fright. "This Human has me and plans to eat me!"

At that moment, the others jumped out from their hiding places and glowered at Hare. "You thief!" they yelled. "You were too lazy to help us. Go away from here. You do not belong with us, you lazy animal!"

Hare was set free, and he ran and ran far away from there, never to be seen again!

