



Why Crocodile Has a Rough Back

(A story from Angola)

A long, long time ago, long before you and I were born, Crocodile had a back as smooth and flat as Python. One day he was sitting in the hot midday sun by the riverbank, enjoying a sleepy afternoon snooze. Suddenly Rabbit came crashing through the grass and smacked right into Crocodile's side. He sat down and panted and panted. Crocodile slowly swung his huge head around and sleepily blinked at his unexpected visitor.

"Rabbit, why did you wake me, and why are you puffing and blowing so hard?"

"My apologies, Crocodile, but Man sent Brother Dog to chase me down. I've been running all morning. I think Brother Man intends to eat me."

Rabbit thought for a moment and asked nervously, "You're not hungry, are you?"

Crocodile smiled a toothy grin and said, "No, I've eaten today."

Rabbit relaxed. "Thank goodness, I've had enough trouble today."

Crocodile smiled an even toothier grin. "Nothing ever troubles me," he boasted.

Rabbit eyed him and asked, "Nothing?"


"No, nothing. In fact," he said, his tail swishing behind him, "I'd like to see Trouble try to bother me."

"Oh, Crocodile, you should be careful what you say. Trouble doesn't like to be talked to like that." Crocodile laughed a toothy laugh and went back to his nap. Rabbit just shook his head and hopped on his way.

After a few hours, Crocodile began to think about what Rabbit had said and started to get angry. "What does Trouble care what I say? Who does he think he is?"

He got angrier and angrier until he decided to go find Trouble and give him a piece of his mind.





He crashed through the tall, dry grass, looking about. "Trouble, where are you? Come out and show yourself!" He was yelling so loudly with his big, toothy mouth that he startled Flamingo who was resting nearby. Flamingo flew up into the air and in turn startled Monkey, who was enjoying his afternoon pipe high in a tree. Monkey was always easily frightened and jumped away to hide. The pipe, which he had accidentally dropped, fell down through the branches and landed right in the middle of the grass.

Crocodile was so busy thrashing about that he didn't even notice that Monkey's pipe had set the tall, dry grass ablaze. By the time he smelled the smoke, he was completely surrounded by the hungry flames closing in faster and faster. Crocodile panicked and ploughed through the burning field, rushing for the safety of the river.

By the time he splashed into the cool, soothing waters the entire field was smouldering. Crocodile's back, once smooth and flat, was now burned and gnarled like the rocky riverbank. He floated along the water, watching the last bit of smoke rise into the sky, all the while grumbling and muttering to himself.

And he's been that grumpy ever since.

Don't trouble Trouble until Trouble troubles you.

