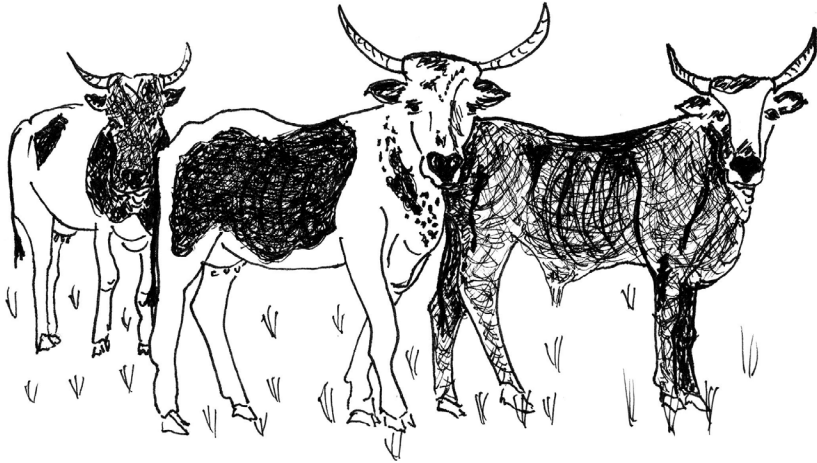


jabu and the Lion



READING IS THE KEY TO LEARNING

Jabu, the best herd boy in the village, cared for his father's cattle. His father was proud of his son and trusted him to look after many cows.



One day, as Jabu sat on a small hillock watching the animals feed, his friend, Siphon, ran up to him.

'My friend,' he panted, 'have you heard the news? Bhubesi, the lion, has been seen near our village. Last night he killed one of Thabo's father's cows. All the men in the village are setting traps. Come with me now and see.'

'Sorry,' said Jabu, 'I can't put the cattle back in the corral so early in the day. They need to be driven to the river for a drink before we go home.'

'I thought you would say that but do be careful!' shouted Siphon as he ran back to the village.

A little later Jabu began to gather the cows together. He waved his stick and gave a loud whistle. The cows stopped grazing and began to walk slowly towards him. Jabu counted them carefully as he led them to the river.



The boy bathed his feet in the cool refreshing water while the cows drank their fill. The air was quiet and peaceful, the sun was beginning to set, it was a beautiful evening.

Suddenly the silence was broken!

Grrrroar!

All the cows looked up in terror.

Grrrroar grrrroar!

It was Bhubesi, the lion, he was very near. Jabu jumped up, picked up his long stick and shaking with fear, herded the cattle together in a tight circle.

Rrrroar, rrrroar, rrrroar, rrrroaw!

Jabu listened: that sounded more like a cry of pain, he was no longer afraid. Still holding his staff, he left the cows and walked carefully towards the roar.

He found Bhubesi in a small clearing across the river. The beast was caught in one of the villagers' traps with his head firmly wedged in the bars of a kind of cage. The more the lion struggled, the tighter the trap closed on him.

Jabu stared in wonder: never before had he been as near a lion. What a majestic animal it was, but it was crying like a wounded cow. Jabu could not help feeling some pity.

Bhubesi cried, 'Dear boy, it is good that you are here, please, please, help me, I am caught in this stupid trap and I cannot free myself. Please, please, come and pull up the bar that has trapped my head. I beg you to help me.'



Jabu had a tender heart but he was not stupid. 'I am sorry for you, Bhubesi,' he said, 'but I know you will have me for dinner as soon as I open the trap.'

'Oh, no, my kind friend. I could never eat the person who set me free! I promise I will not touch a single hair on your head! Upon my honour as king of the beasts, I swear I will not harm you or your herd.'

The lion cried and begged so pitifully that Jabu gave in, raised the bar of the trap and freed the beast.

The lion leapt out, shook his mane and roared, 'Oh thank you dear boy! I really owe you something. Now, please do me one more kindness. Being in that trap has made me confused and thirsty, please lead me to the river.'

Very carefully, Jabu took the lion back to the river. Bhubesi stuck out his tongue and lapped the water up greedily. With one eye he watched the boy, thinking, 'Hmmm, nice young flesh on those legs, and the arms look delicious as well, what a pity to miss such a tasty meal!'

All the while Jabu watched the beast and understood what he was thinking, so he moved back saying, 'You promised, Bhubesi! I saved you from the hunters and you swore you would not eat me!' 'Yes,' said the lion, 'but that was before I was free. Now that promise seems far away and I am very, VERY, hungry!'

He walked towards the boy and was about to eat him when Mugushe the Jackal stepped between them as if he was just strolling past.



Without being noticed, the jackal had been following the lion to eat the remains of its prey. But Bhubesi did not like to share even the scraps, and often chased Mugushe from his kill.

Jabu's family and the rest of the villagers, on the other hand, were not as tidy or careful and the jackal always enjoyed the scraps that the villagers threw out.

'Greetings to you,' barked the cunning Mugushe, 'if all is well, I'll be on my way.'

'No,' shouted Jabu, 'all is not well. This bad lion has broken his promise.'

'A promise,' repeated the jackal, 'who made a promise?' And Jabu told him how he had freed the lion because the beast had promised not to eat him and now this animal was about to chew him up!

'Oh, what a silly story!' said Mugushe. 'The great king of all animals stuck in a little trap? I cannot believe such a story.'

'Yes, it is true, the trap was strong and nearly killed me!' roared Bhubesi.

'Then I must see this snare,' laughed the jackal, 'before you eat the boy. Show me this trap or I shall tell all the other animals that you have become weak and feeble.'

'March to the trap,' shouted Bhubesi. 'You will see I am strong.' So Jabu, knees trembling, led the lion and the jackal back to the trap.

'I still cannot believe that this wooden cage could hold such a mighty beast,' teased the jackal when he saw

the trap. 'You will have to show me how you were caught before I let you eat your meal in peace.'

Furious, Bhubesi put his head between the bars, and quicker than lightning Mugushe threw the top bar in place. Once again the great beast was a prisoner.

'He he!' laughed the jackal, 'Now I see how you were trapped. What a pity! **BROKEN PROMISES ALWAYS CATCH UP WITH YOU,**' and he walked away as the lion, held in a strong trap, roared with rage.'

Thanking his saviour, Jabu ran back to his cows and drove them home into the coral.

Just then Sipho came running. 'Jabu, Jabu come and see! The lion has been caught in one of our snares.'



'No thank you,' replied Jabu, 'we have had all the adventure we need for one day.' And he went out to his mother in the cooking house where he sat down, happy to still be alive.

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5 Questions

1. Why did Jabu not go with Sipho to see the villagers setting a lion trap?
2. Why did Jabu release Bhubesi the Lion?
3. Why did Mugushe the Jackal want to help Jabu?
4. How did Mugushe trick Bhubesi?
5. What do you think the story teaches us?

Something to do

In groups make a play out of the story and act it for your classmates. Which group has made the best play?

Find another traditional story from someone in your family in the holidays and write it down. This could be a class project.



These books have been developed from an idea by Hugh Hawes and Sam Muwonge and used since 2007 in schools in and around Kampala. The books have been revised since 2014 and new titles created.

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Third stage



a hanging library book

Story re-telling by Colette Hawes. Pictures by Ruth Herbert.