

The Rabbit Grows a Crop of Money

A Tale from Central Africa

When the rainy season began and the chief was arranging the gardening program, he called the animals and asked what each would sow. One chose maize and another millet. One promised to grow kassava and another rice.

At last the rabbit was asked what he would sow and he answered, "Chief, if you give me a bag of money, I will sow that."

"Whoever heard of sowing money?" asked the chief.

"Then I will show you how to do it," answered Kalulu.

When Kalulu received the bag of money, however, he went off and spent it all on clothes, dried fish, beads and other things.

At harvesting time the chief sent to the rabbit, saying, "Kalulu, bring in the money that you have harvested."

"The money grows very slowly. It is just in the blade," said Kalulu.

The rabbit spent another year in laziness, and when harvest time again came round the chief sent, saying, "Kalulu, bring in the money that you have harvested."

"The money grows very very slowly. It is just in flower," answered Kalulu.

Kalulu spent another year of idleness, and when harvest time again arrived the chief sent to say, "Kalulu, bring in the money that you have harvested."

"The money grows very slowly," said the rabbit. "It is just in the ear."

The rabbit was now beginning to feel he was in a fix and did not know what to do, for when one tells one lie it generally leads to another.

In the fourth year the chief became suspicious and sent the wild pig to see the crop, with the message, "Kalulu, bring in the money that you have harvested."

Kalulu knew now that he must do something, but he did not know what to do. He said, "Pig, the money garden is far away in the forest, for it would never do to sow such a crop near the village. Everyone would want to steal it."

"Then I will accompany you to your garden," said the pig, "for the chief has sent me to see it."

Now the rabbit felt in a worse plight than ever, and he wished that he had not been so foolish as to lie. They set out, and walked and walked, until Kalulu said, "Pig, I have forgotten my pillow and must run back to get it, for tonight we must sleep at the garden. It is now too far to get back in one day."

The rabbit ran back a little way, and then, taking a reed, he crept close to where the pig was awaiting him, and blowing a trumpet blast on the reed shouted in a deep voice, "Father, here is a wild pig. Come quickly and let us kill him."

The pig thought that the hunters were upon his track and ran for his life. Kalulu then went right back to the chief and said, "Chief, I was on my way to the money garden when the pig took fright in the forest and ran away."

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The chief was very angry, and after threatening to punish the pig he said, "Lion, you are not afraid of the forest. Go with Kalulu, that he may show you his money garden."

Now She rabbit felt in a worse plight than ever, and he wished that he had not been so foolish as to lie. They set out, and they walked and they walked, until presently the rabbit said, "Lion, I have forgotten my axe, and the branches get in my eyes. Just wait till I run home for the axe."

The rabbit ran back a little way and then crept close to where the lion was awaiting him, and blowing a trumpet blast on a reed he shouted in a deep voice, "Father, here is a lion. Bring your arrows and let us shoot him."

The lion was so frightened when he thought that the hunters were upon his track that he ran for his life. Kalulu then went straight to the chief and said, "Chief, I was taking the lion to see the beautiful crop of money that I have grown for you, but he took fright in the forest and ran away."

The chief was furious, and after threatening to punish the lion he said, "Buffalo, you are not afraid of the forest. Go with Kalulu, that he may show you his money garden."

Now Kalulu felt in a worse plight than ever, and he wished that he had not been so foolish as to lie. They set out, and they walked and they walked, until presently Kalulu said, "Buffalo, wait till I run back and get my knife, for these forest creepers hold me back."

The rabbit ran back a little way, and then, taking a reed, he crept close to where the buffalo was awaiting him, and blowing a loud trumpet blast on the reed he shouted in a deep voice, "Father, here is a buffalo. Bring your spears and let us kill him."

The buffalo thought that the hunters were upon him and ran for his life. Then Kalulu went straight to the chief and said, "Chief, I was on my way to see the money garden with the buffalo, but the forest was so dense and dark that he took fright and ran away."

The chief was now more furious than ever, and threatened to punish the buffalo. "Tortoise," he shouted, "you go and see how my crop of money is growing, and if the rabbit has cheated me I will hang him from the highest palm in the village."

Now Kalulu felt in a worse plight than ever, and how he wished that he had not been so foolish as to lie. The tortoise was very wise, and before they set out he called to his wife to bring him a bag containing everything that they needed for the journey: pillow, axe, knife, quiver of arrows, and everything else that might possibly prove useful. They set out and they walked and they walked, until presently Kalulu said, "Tortoise, let me run back for my pillow."

"It's all right," said the tortoise. "You can use mine."

They went on and on, until Kalulu said, "Tortoise, let me run back for my axe." "Don't worry," said the tortoise. "I have mine here."

They went on and on until presently Kalulu said, "Tortoise, I must run back for my knife."

"It does not matter," said the tortoise. "I have mine here."

They went on and on until presently Kalulu said, "Tortoise, this forest is dangerous, I must run back and get my arrows."

"It's all right," said the tortoise. "I have my arrows here."

The rabbit now felt in a worse plight than ever. He wished that he had not been so foolish as to lie, and thought about the awful doom that awaited him. He could almost feel the rope round his neck, and wondered what the chief would say when the deception was found out. Finally, in his fright, he ran off into the forest and bolted home as fast as his legs could carry him.

"Quick, wife!" he shouted. "We have not a moment to lose. You must pretend that I am your baby. Pull all my fur out, and rub me over with red clay. Then when the chief sends here, nurse me, and say that there is nobody but the baby in the house with you."

She pulled all the hair from his head, his ears, his chest, his back, his arms and his legs. Oh, how it hurt! Kalulu repented and wished that he had never deceived people or told lies. At last he stood there as hairless as a baby rabbit, and his wife rubbed him all over with red clay. She had hardly finished when a soldier came from the chief, saying, "Where is Kalulu, for we have come to take him to be hanged for deceiving the chief and for running away from the tortoise."

"Baby and I are the only rabbits in the house," said Kalulu's wife.

"Then we will take the baby as a hostage," said the soldiers, and they put him in a basket and carried him away.

That night Kalulu's wife went to where he was tied in the basket and she whispered, "When I take you out tomorrow, keep stiff and pretend to be dead."

Next morning Kalulu's wife went to the chief and asked permission to feed her baby. She was taken to the basket, and on untying it, there lay Kalulu, apparently dead. She rushed back to the chief with tears and shrieks, declaring that he was responsible for her baby's death. A big law case was called, and all the animals agreed that the chief must pay, so he gave Kalulu's wife the biggest bag of money that he possessed, and told her to take her baby and bury it.

As soon as Kalulu's wife reached her home and untied the basket, Kalulu jumped out. "Oh, how I have suffered," he groaned. "I had to keep stiff though my limbs ached and my toes were cramped in the basket. I will never deceive anyone or tell lies again."

His wife showed him the bag of money, and after waiting till his hair was grown, he set out with it for the chief's village.

"Chief," he said, "I have just returned from my long, long journey to get you the harvest from your money. Here it is. The tortoise was too slow, and I could not stop for him."

The chief took the money and thanked Kalulu for the splendid crop, but was ashamed to tell him of his dead baby. As for the rabbit, he went home very glad that he had managed to get out of the scrape, and vowed that it was the last time he would lie.