

NEEDLE BOY



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Once upon a time, a boy as thin as a needle lived with his grandmother. His friends always made fun of him, called him 'Needle boy' believing that he could be blown away in a strong wind.

Tired of all the taunting, he asked his grandmother, "What should I do to get these rascals off my back?"

The grandmother, who didn't have enough to feed him, suggested, "Why don't you visit your uncle and stay with him for a few weeks? He will feed you well and take good care of you. When you return, you will be plump and fat."

Needle boy loved the idea.

He started his trip through the forest to his uncle's town, but darkness was setting in. All of a sudden, a wolf sprung up. "Where do you think you are going?" it asked. "You would make a good dinner, boy," it smirked menacingly.

The Needle boy, who was a smart lad, had his wits about him. Though scared, he quickly thought of a response and answered, "Wolf, I am thin and bony now, but I am heading to my uncle's house to spend the summer. After eating all sorts of delicacies at his house, I will become plump and fat. On my return, I will make a much better meal!"

The wolf was enticed. "Ok, but if you don't keep your promise to return, I will hunt you down," he threatened as he walked away.



The boy continued for only a short while before running into a tiger, an even more dangerous predator.

“Hola my dinner!” the tiger remarked. My forecast for the day said EASY DINNER, but I didn’t expect lean cuisine,” he joked.

Eyes wide in fear and shock, the Needle boy finally managed to find his words, “Tiger, I am thin and bony now, but I am heading to my uncle’s house to spend the summer. After eating all sorts of delicacies at his house, I will become plump and fat. On my return, I will make a much better meal.”

The tiger imagined a plumper version of the boy and succumbed to that prospect. “Ok, I will find you on your way back,” he replied licking his tongue as he prowled on.



Heaving a sigh of relief, the Needle boy moved on.

But as fortune would have it, he met the mighty bear, of course! Looming in height and girth, the bear scanned the Needle boy and mocked him, "You are so small that you will vanish in my throat before reaching my stomach. But that's ok," he continued. "I haven't had a bite all day, so I am willing to take the few morsels I can get."

"Wait bear!" Needle boy interjected and tricked the bear into letting him go like he had with the wolf and tiger.



Finally, the Needle boy reached his uncle's house and spent the rest of the summer with him. As his granny had predicted, he had become considerably larger.

When time drew close to depart, he began to worry. Noticing the boy's concern, his uncle asked, "What's the matter, my boy?"

The boy, now no more needle-thin, narrated his encounter with the animals in the jungle.

His uncle thought for a while and made a plan. "I have an idea," he said pointing to a huge pumpkin. "I will hide you inside the pumpkin and roll you into the forest."

He whispered the rest of his plan into the boy's ears.

The relieved boy climbed into the pumpkin and with one kick from his uncle, rolled into the forest.



First he ran into the bear.

The bear stopped the pumpkin and questioned, "Have you seen a plump boy on your way? He said he would be returning today."

The pumpkin spoke, "Oh yes, I saw a plump boy on my way. He kicked me so that I could give you news of his coming. Would you please do me a favor by kicking me so I can roll on?"

The delighted bear smacked its lips in anticipation and kicked the pumpkin so that it rolled on merrily.

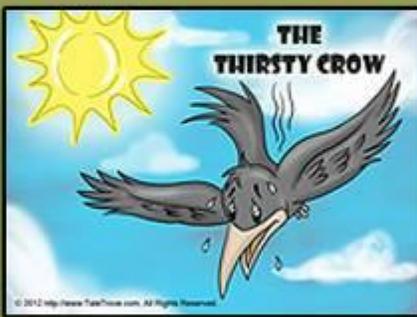
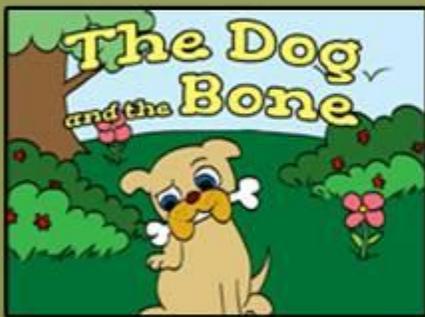
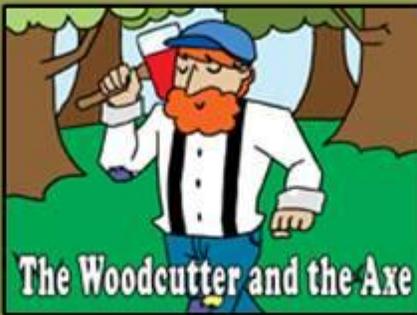
The tiger stopped the pumpkin and asked the same question and received the same response.

Gaining more momentum, the pumpkin bounced along until the wolf stopped it. The same story was repeated, and with a final kick from the wolf, the pumpkin reached home.

The boy broke out of the pumpkin and told his grandmother of his adventures in the jungle. The delighted granny, relieved that the boy had reached home safely, smiled and declared, "Now you have become 'Pumpkin boy'."



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