

The Clever Little Bird

South African Folktale
English





Once long ago, the birds had a meeting. They wanted a king.

The Eagle wanted to be king.
The other birds said, "Your call
is too sad to be king".

The Ostrich wanted to be king.
The other birds said, "You can't
fly".





Peacock wanted to be king. The other birds said, "You are too proud. You cannot be king".

Owl wanted to be king. The other birds said, "You sleep during the day. You cannot be king".

And so they did not get too far.

Then one bird said, "Who can fly the highest? That bird should be king".

All the birds flew up up up into the sky.





Goose flew over the highest mountains in the world.

Eagle flew into the blue above the mountains.

But Vulture flew without stopping, up towards the sun.

High above them, the birds
heard Vulture cry, "I am the
highest, I am king!"





Vulture heard a tiny voice,
"Tink, tink, tink! I am the
highest, I am king." It was
Ncede, the Neddicky, the
smallest bird of all!

He had held onto the feathers
of Vulture as he flew up into the
sky!

So Vulture flew down with the little bird still under his wing.

The other birds were cross with Ncede. They waited for him, ready to pluck out all his feathers





But the quick little bird saw how angry they were, and flew into an empty snake hole.

The birds told Owl to wait near the hole and catch him when he comes out.

So Owl sat in front of the hole.



But the sun was warm and soon Owl was fast asleep.

The little bird peeped out, saw that Owl was asleep, and z-zip, away he went.





Owl was very ashamed that he had let the little bird escape.

Now he only hunts at night.

In the day, he sleeps, away from the sight of the other birds.

The Clever Little Bird

Writer: South African Folktale

Illustration: Wiehan de Jager

Translated By: Liz Ralfe and Suzanne Singh

Language: English



Adapted from a story in South-African Folk-Tales, by James A. Honeÿ, 1910 See:
folklorefairytales@wordpress.com

© African Storybook Initiative, 2014



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution
(CC-BY) Version 3.0 Unported Licence

Disclaimer: You are free to download, copy, translate or adapt this
story and use the illustrations as long as you attribute or credit the
original author/s and illustrator/s.

Saide 
South African Institute
for Distance Education

www.africanstorybook.org
A Saide Initiative