

Lion's fire sticks

Traditional San story
English





This story starts in the old times when animals and people lived together. In those days people did not have the right to fire. They ate their food raw.

Only Lion had the power of fire.



The people and the animals came together to make a plan. "What can we do to get the fire from Lion so that we can cook our food?" they asked.

They decided to wait until evening and started singing and singing, clapping and clapping, calling everyone together.

"Come dance with us.
Come dance with us.
Come dance with us."

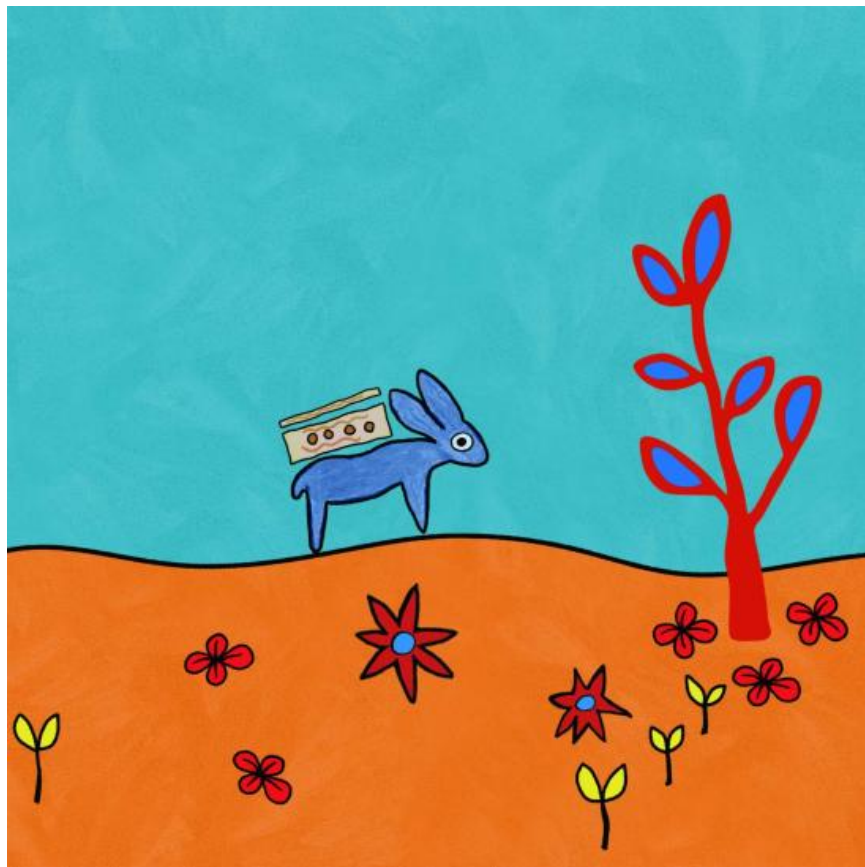


Many animals came from the bush to join in the dancing and singing. Lion brought his fire sticks. He rubbed the sticks, rubbed and rubbed. Soon a little smoke appeared beneath the sticks. Lion blew on the smoke and added some dry grass.

A little flame appeared and everyone brought a piece of wood. Soon everyone was dancing around a fire.

Rabbit was a cunning and fast animal. The people said to him, "While we are singing here and while Lion is dancing with us, you must take his fire sticks and run."

So Rabbit grabbed Lion's fire sticks and ran. He did not make it because Lion caught up with him and brought the fire sticks back.





The lion sang a boastful song:
"To me it does not matter.
I don't have a problem.
I can eat you with hair,
I can eat you without hair.
I don't have a problem.
All of you are food to me."

Springbok could run and jump very fast. The people said to him, “While Lion is dancing and singing here with us, you must grab his fire sticks and run.”



When they were dancing and singing, Springbok grabbed the fire sticks and jumped away into the veld. But Lion said, “Why do I not hear the clippety-clop clippety-clop of Springbok’s hooves behind me?”





Lion turned and saw Springbok running into the veld with his fire sticks. So he ran after Springbok, caught him and came back with his fire sticks.

Again, Lion sang his boastful song.

Then the people whispered to each other. They said, "Let us ask Duiker. He is small and very fast." "Duiker," they said, "while Lion is dancing and singing here with us, you must grab his fire sticks and run away."





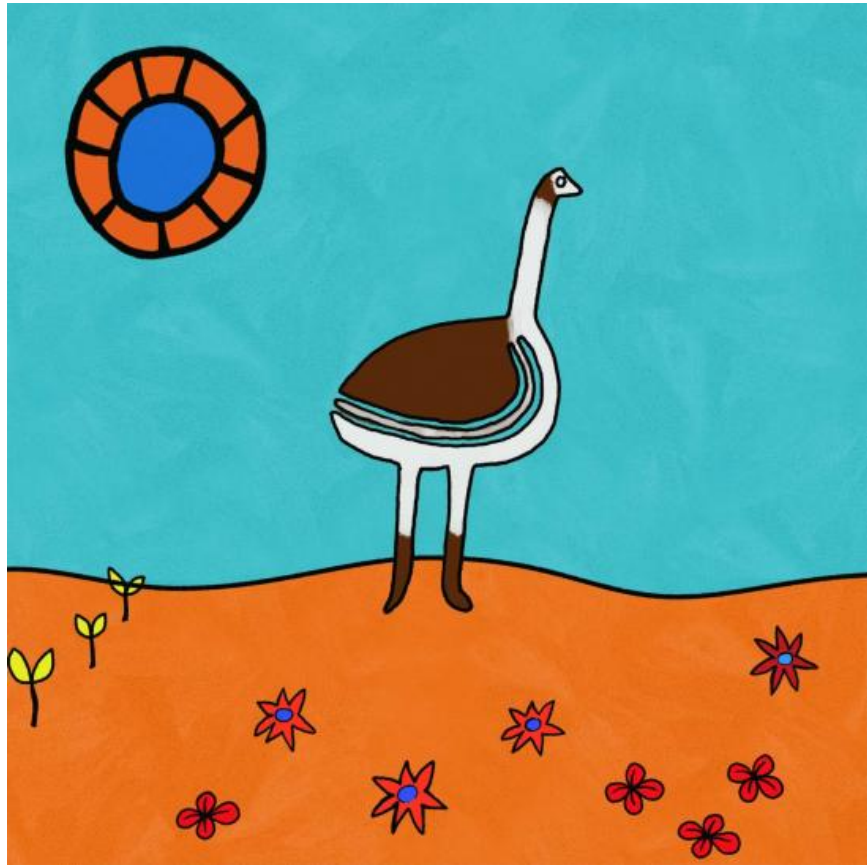
When they were dancing around the fire, Duiker grabbed Lion's fire sticks and ran into the veld. But Lion said, "Why do I not hear Duiker snort-snorting behind me as before?"

He turned around and chased after little Duiker who was leaping into the veld. Lion caught up with him and returned to the fire with his sticks.



Again, Lion sang his boastful song.
"To me it does not matter.
I don't have a problem.
I can eat you with hair,
I can eat you without hair.
I don't have a problem.
All of you are food to me."

“Oh,” sighed the people, “Which animal can help us now? Ostrich has the longest legs of all, let us ask him.” They explained the plan to Ostrich and he grabbed Lion’s fire sticks this time.





Lion said, “Why do I not hear Ostrich’s high singing voice behind me anymore?” He looked around, saw Ostrich and chased after him.



After a long time, Lion returned with a tired face, for Ostrich ran too fast for him. "From this day on," he said, "I will not leave any of you alone. I will hunt you and chase you and eat you!"

And this is how Lion came to be everyone's enemy and how people got the power of fire.

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Writer: Traditional San story

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The Manyeka Arts Trust celebrates the traditions of southern African San storytellers.
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