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Goat, Hare
~ and ~
Antelope

By Sadiya Quazi.

Long ago, when the world was young, there lived three animals. A hare that could run extensive distances in the blink of an eye; an antelope that could leap exceptionally high in the air; a mountain goat that could climb up the biggest mountains in unthinkably short periods of time.

Every day, the animals would argue persistently, each of them claiming to be better than the other two.

"I am the best; I have beautiful, long legs so that I can run fastest," Hare said boastfully, throwing out his furry chest.

"You may be able to run, but you can't jump nearly as gracefully or as high as I can, *and* I have longer legs than you," Antelope declared boldly.

“Do either of you have *any* common sense? It’s easy enough to run fast and jump high, but climbing upwards is a whole new level. I can climb mountains that reach up towards space! Not to mention how fast I am when I climb,” the proud mountain goat sneered, showing off his skills by leaping elegantly up the rocks in front of him.

“Aha! I’ve got the greatest idea, why don’t all three of us have a race to the waterhole? Each of us can go our own way to suite our skills; therefore, the first one there will be the best!” Hare suggested, adding under his breath, “which will most definitely be me!” The other two looked at him suspiciously before agreeing to his brilliant plan.

So the three animals chose their different paths to the waterhole. Goat obviously chose the way up the mountain which he thought was the quickest and easiest way of getting there. The waterhole was just on the other side of the mountain. Antelope took the shortest route on land but his way was blocked by many trees and bushes, though it would not be a problem as he could soar through the air when he jumped. Hare took the route which was the longest by far but there were no obstacles in his path so he would be able to speed like a rocket and get there first.

“Go!” the Hare roared and the three animals sped off like blinding streaks of light, following each individual path. Goat darted off in the direction of the great, looming figure of the immense mountains up ahead. As soon as he was a mere few meters away from it, he took a huge leap and landed daintily on the jagged russet rock. With great speed and elegance, he leapt gracefully and ascended upwards, the tip of the mountain nearly in sight.

Meanwhile, Antelope was sprinting as fast as his slender legs could carry him, past vast fields, leaping over hedges and soaring over obstacles that were obstructing his path. It was lengthy and winding but

with his ultimate speed and grace, he was sure that he was most definitely the one to win.

On the other side of the mountain, Hare had stopped dead in his tracks. In front of him were three paths, all murky and uncertain. As he stood twitching his nose and sniffing the air, he heard a sudden movement with his extremely sensitive ears coming from the left path. Unexpectedly, he heard a soft growling and a hushed panting, followed by twigs snapping underfoot. Out of the gloom, three pairs of large, glowing ruby-red eyes stared back at poor Hare, before three colossal, fur covered bodies stepped forwards. The three bulky wolves approached Hare, tongues lolling, eyes like slits and razor-sharp fangs bared like shining white daggers ready for the kill.

Hare had been completely stationary up to this point but as soon as the dominant wolf lunged for him, Hare leapt out of the way just in time. The wolves crashed head first onto the ground and Hare sped off in the direction of the middle fork. At that instant, there was a blinding crack of lightning followed by a deafening roll of thunder and a mammoth-sized tree trunk fell in front of him, blocking his way once again. With speed unimaginable, Hare turned round and rapidly raced off in the opposite direction, taking the right route and disappeared into the darkness.

In the meantime, Goat was quaking uncontrollably, unable to face the fact that he was surrounded by complete and utter chaos. Behind him a mountain lion had appeared and was gaining on him fast. The ferocious beast, which was roaring in anger of almost being outrun by such small prey, took a huge leap forwards, gargantuan fangs bared. It was with enormous skill that Goat was not bitten by its chisels. With a leap that could have rivaled one of Antelope's, Goat evaded the attack.

However all had not gone well; Goat was now stuck in limbo between the mountain that would ensure his victory and a safe mountain.

The lion will be back again within minutes! What should I do? Goat stood, perplexed. Should he go back to his first mountain and take the risk of being eaten? Or should he go to the second mountain and be safe, however losing the chance of being first? Using all the energy he could muster, he kicked his back legs and landed swiftly on the other mountain. He decided that his safety was more important. If he was eaten, he would never be declared best out of the three animals!

Nonetheless, he continued with his spirits rising as the waterhole finally came into view. Looking round he realised that not one of the other two had reached their destination yet. He was going to be the winner!

Just as Goat's specially formed hooves touched level ground, Antelope made an elegant leap over the bushes that surrounded the waterhole and, at the exact same time, Hare zoomed out of an opening in the forest.

"I won!" each of the three animals screamed in delight.

"No, I did!" they simultaneously replied furiously.

"Actually, I don't think any of you did," whispered a soft, growling voice behind them, "because I'm going to eat all of you – breakfast, lunch and dinner, all in one! Ha-ha!"

At once, the three of them turned to face their company and to their horror, in front of them stood a growling, drooling mountain lion. Goat marveled at the fact it could have followed him. Crouching low, the great cat prepared to seize upon the animals, his large, topaz coloured eyes on Antelope.

Hare was petrified; Antelope was about to be devoured by a raving mountain lion! Now you must understand that before all this ridiculous rivalry came about, the three of them were great friends before even the time they could open their eyes, and as much as Hare wanted to be claimed as best, he could not just let his old friend be killed to become

cat food! He had to do something, but the problem was working out what that something was.

The mountain lion was starting to run. In a few moments, Antelope would be a living antelope no longer. Time was running out fast. Hare's mind was racing. What should he do, what should he do? At that moment, Hare was hit by the greatest idea, it wasn't much but it might just work.

Just as the immense cat was about to lunge and declare Antelope's fate, Hare flung himself out, spread-eagled, at the lion's feet, all four limbs stretched to their limits.

The affect was immediate. The moment the great fiend took his next step, he collapsed over the little animal's body and fell with a thunderous splash into the crystal-clear water.

But he wasn't finished yet.

The great animal staggered to its feet and a low, menacing growl escaped his throat. Filled with rage, the lion brought himself up to his full height and stared at the minute rabbit that still lay upon the ground.

The diminutive hare was trembling from head to foot. He tried to get to his feet and a make run for it but he was stuck. Where the water had washed over the bank, it had left behind a thick layer of vile mud, like thick icing on a cake, only less appealing. The mountain lion sprinted towards Hare. Hare had shut his eyes tight waiting in fear for the pain to come...

"You can open you eyes now," the low booming voice of Goat said gently. As he opened his eyes to see the lion in the water, Hare realised what had just happened.

At the very last minute, Goat had lowered his horns and collided with the mountain lion, which was now lying unconscious on the dirt covered bank. His old friend Goat had saved him, like he saved Antelope.

Goat tenderly lifted Hare's small body so that he could stand again.

"Thank you, Hare. You're a real life saver... literally," said Antelope.

"You're welcome. I couldn't bear the thought that the mountain lion would have finished you off," Hare replied. "Goat's a hero too, he saved me."

"There's something I'd like to suggest," Goat announced. "Instead of continuously fighting and wanting all the glory to ourselves, wouldn't it be better to be fearless companions? I mean look what good it did. Look at the mess we were in. We were almost killed!"

"You're right Goat," Hare said in a loud voice. "There's no point fighting. Each of us is just as good as the other."

"Yes, and not only that," Antelope added, "we're stronger when we work as a team. Together, we can beat anything!"

Antelope's speech was answered by a great chorus of cheering, and together, they pranced off, happier than they had ever been before.