

The monkeys and the hats

Once upon a time there was a hat maker who made all kinds of hats, big hats, small hats, tall hats, short hats, top hats and bottom hats. It was market day and the hat maker wanted to sell his hats there. He put his hats into a basket, one hat on his head and lifted the basket of hats onto his shoulder. He then set off to market through the forest. While he walked he sang a song.

*I am going to market, to market, to market
I am going to market to sell my hats.*

It was a hot day and the hat maker needed a rest so he put down his basket and lay down under a tree and fell asleep. When he woke up, all the hats in his basket had gone. "Oh no," he thought, "It took me months to make them. I must find them." He searched high and low and couldn't find them until, by chance, he happened to look and saw that in the trees there was a crowd of monkeys and every one of them was wearing one of his hats. He shook his fist at the monkeys. The monkeys copied and shook their fists back. He wagged a finger at the monkeys, the monkeys wagged their fingers back. He put his hands together and begged and again the monkeys mimicked him. This went on for some time until finally in frustration the hat maker threw his hat down onto the ground. Sure enough, up in the trees the monkeys copied and all the hats came tumbling down. The hat maker was happy, filled his basket up with hats and continued on his way to market singing his song. He got to market, sold the hats and returned home where he told his children the story of the monkey and the hats. His children loved the story and asked for it again and again and again over many years.

It came to pass that the hat maker's son grew up and he too became a hat maker and one day found himself walking through the forest to market with a basket of hats, singing –

I am going to market, to market, to market...

It was a hot day and the young hat maker like his father before him put down his basket and fell asleep beneath a tree. When he woke up, all his hats had gone. But the young hat maker wasn't worried. He looked up into the trees and, sure enough, saw a crowd of monkeys wearing his hats. "Hello monkeys," he called. "I've heard this story. I know what to do." He waved to the monkeys, they waved back. He put his thumbs up, they gestured back. Slowly and confidently, the young hat maker took off his own hat and threw it to the ground. Up in the trees, the monkeys did not move a muscle. "Come on! Copy me!" called the Hat Maker. He repeated the action again and again and again but still none of the monkeys moved. After a while, the biggest of all the monkeys, a large, sleek, long-haired monkey hung his hat up on a branch and climbed down the tree. He came right up to the young hat maker and pointed a long, monkey finger at him. "You think you're so clever because your father told you stories," he said. "Well, our father told us stories too and today we're keeping the hats!"

That's why it's very important to listen to stories because you never know what you might learn and when it might come in handy.