Kalulu’s Trap

One day Elephant asked all the animals to come together. He announced that this spring they would not only clean house, but also would build a new village.

"We've grown too crowded here," explained the animal king, and all the others agreed.

But as elephant spoke, assigning everyone a task, Kalulu the rabbit was too busy watching Soko the monkey. Soko swung by his great tail from branch to branch, all the while chattering with delight. Kalulu gasped as Soko leapt this way and that, and when he twirled his tail like a noose around another monkey's neck and swirled that fellow in the air, Kalulu had an idea, for he was a trickster at heart.

The next morning, when all the animals set off to build their new village, Kalulu stayed behind in his warren finishing up the work he had begun. He had collected dozens of vines, and these he was weaving together to make an ingenious noose trap, an invention that would work almost like a monkey's tail.

When Kalulu was sure he was alone, he tiptoed toward Buzzard's nest and whirled his noose in the air, catching the nest. As he pulled it down to the soft forest floor, one of Buzzard's eggs rolled out. Kalulu picked it up and ran home to add it to his basket of treasures.

That evening when Buzzard discovered her nest lying on the ground, she called to the others. "A thief stole one of my eggs," she screamed. "We must catch him!"

"We must!" the others agreed, and they turned to Elephant for his guidance.

"We'll leave the nest here," Elephant said. "Surely the thief will return tomorrow to steal another egg. But this time we'll catch him."

Now all this time Kalulu was listening, and he heard the plan. They would leave behind the wiry Caracal, the cousin of the lynx, to catch the thief.

Strong and bold as Caracal was, Kalulu wasn't afraid, and that night while everyone slept, Kalulu spread his noose of vines across the forest path to Buzzard's nest, cunningly attaching it to two palm trees, disguising it beneath the forest floor. Then he returned home to sleep.

The next morning the animals set off to work, but Caracal stayed behind, hidden behind a tree.

Kalulu hid himself in some bushes near the fallen nest. "Watch out," Kalulu called from his hiding place. "Here comes a thief!" And then he rustled some leaves.

Hearing this, Caracal leaped from behind his tree to guard Buzzard's nest, but as he crossed the path, he tripped upon the noose. It wrapped around his paw, and a moment later he was swinging high in the air.

Wriggling helplessly, Caracal growled, "Someone help me," but the others did not hear him; they were too far away.

When Kalulu saw that Caracal was too busy snarling to pay attention to the nest, he sneaked out of his hiding place and snatched another egg.

In the evening when the animals returned, they found Caracal swinging from the noose and quickly set him free.

Then Buzzard checked her nest. "I've lost another egg!" she cried.

Caracal blushed with shame. "I saw no one!" he said. "Never mind," Elephant said. "We'll catch our thief."

The next day, Baboon stayed behind to guard the nest, and once again Kalulu set his trap. When the others were gone, Kalulu cried from his hiding spot, "Here comes the thief!" and Baboon shot out from hiding to give chase.

He, too, was caught in the trap by his foot.

Baboon was deeply embarrassed when the others returned. "A trickster lives among us," he muttered, and his comrades agreed. Leopard said he could outwit any trickster, but the next evening the animals found him swinging from the noose.

One by one the other animals all had their time in the trap, swinging foolishly in the air, unable to free themselves, and unable to protect Buzzard's nest.

Now only one egg remained.

"I'll catch the thief," Tortoise announced that night.

The others stared. "If Caracal, Baboon and Leopard cannot catch a thief, how on earth will you?" Elephant asked.

"Well, I may be small, but I'm wise," Tortoise said. "Just watch me." That very night, instead of hiding in the bushes, Tortoise climbed into Buzzard's nest, just beside the last egg. He was hiding there when Kalulu sneaked out of his house to prepare his noose.

In the morning, when all the others were away, Kalulu cried, as usual, "Here comes a thief!" He waited to see who might tumble out of the bushes.

When no one came, he crept to the nest and peered inside. "Two?" he said with surprise. "I was sure I'd left just one egg behind, but now I'll have more for my collection." He reached to grab that new, strange egg. As he did, Tortoise's mouth came out of his shell, and he bit down as hard as he could on Kalulu's foot.

Kalulu wailed. "Let me go!" he cried, "that hurts!" Tortoise did not let go.

"Please set me free! I'll share the eggs with you," Kalulu pleaded. "I'll do whatever you wish, Tortoise. We're friends!"

Still Tortoise held on — all day long. Kalulu's foot throbbed with pain. "Be kind," Kalulu begged. "It was only a joke. I meant no harm." But Tortoise did not let go, and when the others returned that evening, they saw their thief.

"Return Buzzard's eggs," they demanded.

This Kalulu did — after Tortoise let go of his foot.

Then the others wrapped Kalulu in his noose of vines and hung him between the trees. And there he swung, crying out, "Be kind, be kind!"

The next day the others decided Kalulu had learned his lesson, and so they set him free. But as he limped home, he thought about just one thing: "What trick shall I play next?" Because, you see, that's the sort of fellow Kalulu was.

Draw a picture of your favorite part.

Choose your favorite animal and explain why. (written or oral)

Would you like Kalulu to be your friend and why?

What do you think Kalulu did next? Write or tell a story.