Danger of the Sun

Long ago, in a land that was rich with warmth and sunshine, there lived a rabbit and his older brother, Hummingbird. These brothers spent their days taking care of the Old Owl and playing along the coast, which was not far from their home in the jungle. Rabbit loved rolling about and feeling the hot sand in his soft fur as he watched his brother soar through the blue sky above him. Rabbit could gaze up at his brother for hours without getting bored. He liked to watch the little yellow form dance across the endless plane of deep blue. When the setting sun began to color the sky with splendid shades of oranges, pinks, and yellows, Rabbit would no longer be able to distinguish Hummingbird’s yellow feathers from the colorful backdrop on which he danced. This was the brothers’ signal to return home to the Old Owl, which they did every evening after much begging by Rabbit- he wanted his brother to teach him how to fly so that he could dance in the sky, too. At this, Hummingbird would always chuckle and say to him, “Rabbit, one day, you will become a man, and you will be able to leap so high into the sky that you will be the most magnificent dancer of all!” Rabbit liked this idea, but he wanted to fly *now.*

One day, as the brothers were out playing on the coast, a group of eagles flew in from the north. Rabbit was scared of the unfamiliar creatures, but Hummingbird, who was already a man, flew up to meet them. This was difficult for him because the eagles were able to fly much higher than he could. “Hey, there!” he called up to them. “Where are you going?”

“We have come south for the sunlight!” They replied. “We are going to keep flying until we reach the top of the mountain, for it is the highest in all the land, and the closest to the sun!”

At this, the brothers tried to stop them, for they knew that the mountain was a great danger: years ago, the evil monkeys had inhabited the mountain, slaughtering all native animals who dared to stop them. The Old Owl had always told Hummingbird and Rabbit to stay far away from the mountain.

The eagles said that they did not plan to stop. In fact, they suggested that Hummingbird join them. Why, he could fly, they said, so he and the other native birds must join them in overthrowing the evil monkeys. That way, they could restore the mountain to the animals! Hummingbird liked this idea, and knew that the Old Owl would encourage him in going. She had always hoped that she would live long enough to see the day that the mountain was returned to its rightful owners, and Hummingbird was determined to make her dream come true.

“I want to come, too!” Rabbit called up to his brother. He tried to hop with all his might, but his little back legs were not strong enough. His brother told him that he must remain with the Old Owl, and take care of her, until he was grown enough to fly. One day, Hummingbird promised his brother, the mountain would be theirs, and they would travel to its peak together, as a family. At this, Rabbit knew that his brother’s departure was for the best, and with a joyful but heavy heart, he watched his best friend soar away with the eagles.

Rabbit was sad to see his brother go, and he wept for many nights. He became really concerned about Hummingbird when he heard of rumors of destruction from the other animals. Several villages on the way to the mountain had been ruined with stones that fell from the sky, and baby animals had been snatched up by strange birds. Could this damage have been done by the eagles? Could hummingbird be among them?

Several more days passed, and Rabbit decided that he needed to learn how to fly. He had to find his brother, and make sure that he was safe. Rabbit went to tell to Old Owl of his plans and ask for advice. The Old Owl, who always knew what to say to Rabbit, told him not to worry about Hummingbird. He was a man now, and he could take care of himself. Rabbit still had doubts and wanted to see his brother for himself, but Old Owl told him to have patience. “You are yet a boy,” she said, “and you cannot fly like the birds of our land. You must learn and become wise before you can fly.”

“But Owl,” Rabbit said, “you are old and wise. Why can you not fly?”

“Oh,” replied the Old Owl, who seemed to be looking off into the distance; perhaps she was being take back to the old days, before the evil monkeys had taken control of the mountain. “I had my time to fly, but my now wings are old and damaged.”

Hearing this, Rabbit grew sad. “But Owl,” he said, “don’t you miss flying?”

The Old Owl thought. “No,” she decided.

“No?” Rabbit was shocked.

“You see, Rabbit, through my stories, I am able to soar!” Said the Old Owl. Before Rabbit could ask what she meant by this, a torrent of heavy stones began to cascade on their village. One stone crushed Owl’s wing and held her to the ground, so that she could not move. “Run, Rabbit! Take cover!” she called to him through the tempest of rocks.

The little Rabbit did as he was told, and the last thing that he saw was a heavy stone heading straight for his beloved Owl’s head. And so the Rabbit was alone in the jungle, with no family or friends left to take care of him. For many days, he remained on the ground, travelling from village to village in pursuit of Hummingbird, whom he was determined to be reunited with. On his journey, Rabbit saw much of the damage that had been inflicted on his fellow ground animals. Many had been killed. Friends and families had been torn apart. In their pursuit of the sun, Rabbit realized from his place on the earth, the eagles’ heads had been filled with the clouds: they could no longer distinguish what was important from what was not. They only cared about obtaining more sunlight.

All around rabbit was devastation and loss. It was almost too much for his heart to bear. One day, Rabbit came across a Koala Bear who had just birthed two young cubs. These cubs, she told him through her tears, would grow up without a father. He had just been killed by the eagles. The sadness of Koala moved Rabbit. It was wrong for the babies not to know their father. He began to speak, and he told tales of their dad, the brave Koala. He told the family that the brave Koala could be seen at night, in the stars, where the sun and its blinding light could not extinguish him. Rabbit said that the brave Koala would watch over his family and protect them from his place among the stars.

Rabbit told these types of tales for many families, and he realized that his stories gave the ground animals hope. Hope made the dim jungle seem a bit brighter. Story by story, tale by tale, Rabbit began to understand what the Old Owl had meant just before she died: through his stories, Rabbit learned how to soar!

Rabbit was able to leap to incredible heights, just as his brother had predicted long ago. With this new skill, Rabbit made the journey up the mountain, which was a strenuous feat that required several days to accomplish. But with determination in his heart, Rabbit did not stop until he reached the highest peak, where he knew he would find Hummingbird.

When Rabbit reached the top of the mountain, it was nothing like he imagined it would be; it was frightening! Eagles, birds, and monkeys alike wandered about with fire in their eyes, demanding “Sun? Sun?!? SUN?!?” And they fought with one another over the sunlight! Rabbit saw many a monkey, bird, and eagle get thrown off the mountain to their deaths. Rabbit was about to lose hope of ever finding his brother when, at last, he saw him, resting on the highest boulder on the highest peak of the mountain.

“Hummingbird!” exclaimed Rabbit, with joy in his heart. But Hummingbird was not happy to see Rabbit.

“You are not supposed to be here!” Hummingbird told him. “You are of the ground, and are not allowed access to the sunlight. Go away, you are soaking up rays that others want. If you are discovered, you will be killed!”

“But Hummingbird!” Rabbit exclaimed, “I am your brother, and I have come to take you back home, to safety! This is no place for you. These birds and monkeys are killing each other for sunlight- for nothing! Please, return to the ground with me, and I will show you what is really worth fighting for: friends, family-”

But at hearing this, Hummingbird grew even angrier. “Sunlight is everything!” He shouted, “Now leave, before I throw you off this mountain! Go back to your precious ground!”

It was with a great sadness that Rabbit realized his brother was beyond saving. He had become so absorbed in the sun that he was blinded to what was truly important in life. Rabbit returned to the ground, and he had been made wise by his voyage up the mountain. He had seen, with his own eyes, the effects that the desire for sunlight had had on his own brother, who had been pure and noble on the ground. The obsession over sunlight was corrupting. This he now knew. And Rabbit also knew that he must share this with the world, so that future generations would not become victims to sunlight and greed’s disastrous effects.

So Rabbit continued to tell his stories, and through his words, the truth of what had happened became known. These stories are still passed down, from generation to generation, so that baby animals know that, when given the choice, one must stay grounded rather than risk getting his head stuck in the clouds.

The animals and birds who did not abide by this rule never did become grounded again. They either were shoved off the mountain to their death, or became so close to the sun that they burst into flames. There were no winners in this story, but there are lessons to be learned. Rabbit realized this, and he is remembered to this day for his good work of sharing these lessons, which have taught all children to beware of the dangers of the sun.