

LUCKY *Go* HAPPY



MAKE HAPPINESS HAPPEN!

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1. A Beautiful but Boring Life

Lucky is no ordinary rat. He is happily married to his only wife. They have two children, ages two and five. During the week, Lucky works from nine to five, while his wife looks after the children.

Lucky showed enormous potential as a young rat. Everyone expected him to climb the corporate ladder like other rats, by starting as a runner in a laboratory. From an early age, however, he excelled at math, and it soon became evident that his passion for numbers would see him follow a different career.

Lucky worked hard in school and graduated at the top of his class. He received the prestigious World Wildlife Fund study grant to further his education.

Upon completion of his degree in applied mathematics, he started teaching students from all walks, crawls, and flights of life at the African Bushveld Technical Academy.

Lucky finds immense satisfaction in what he does. He has devoted many extra hours to his students and to the academy.

Lucky was promoted to senior lecturer two rainy seasons ago. The new role has been fulfilling and helped to repay most of the mortgage on their upmarket den not far from work.

Apart from his passion for numbers, Lucky is also a part-time writer. He gained acclaim across the Bushveld region with the publication of his first

book, *Surviving Global Warming: Raft-Building Techniques for Wingless Mammals*.

Lucky has a very good life, albeit monotonous at times. Arriving home from work, he helps with the afternoon routine of feeding and bathing the children. After the customary bedtime stories, Lucky spends a few hours with his wife to reflect on the day and to discuss their hopes and dreams for the future.

Weekends mostly involve extended family commitments or attending children's birthday parties. Birthdays are a big thing in the rat fraternity and occupy most of their weekends. On off weekends, they break away for a family camping trip or throw a few crickets on the barbecue with some friends.

Once a year, leave permitting, Lucky and his family spend their summer breakaway at their holiday den on the banks of the Mamba River. Here the focus falls on spending quality time with the kids. Fishing and swimming are the highlights during the day, while bonfires and stargazing fill their nights. During these weekends, the lecturer makes way for the dad.

It is a good life indeed. It is a life to be grateful for, but not one to be ecstatic about. This worries Lucky. There is so much to be thankful for, yet something is missing. He knows he is no ordinary rat, yet somehow he is leading an ordinary life. Is there something more to come, or is this it? Is this how he will spend the remainder of his life?

Lucky has pondered these questions so many times before. This time is different though. This time he is on the eve of an adventure that will change his life and the way he looks at it forever.

2. Lucky Is Summoned

It is a hot and humid Monday afternoon in the Bushveld. Conditions are perfect for a wildcat thunderstorm even though the rainy season had ended. Fifteen minutes before the end of class, Lucky is immersing himself in the theorem of Pythagoras.

Totally unannounced, and with the speed and ferocity of a lightning bolt, the classroom door swings open and crashes into the wall.

Lucky fractures the chalk and swings around from the blackboard. Several pupils fall from their chairs as they are torn from their daydreams in which Pythagoras played no part.

Pigeon stands in the doorway. His feathers are ruffled and his eyes even bigger than the twenty-six pairs staring back at him.

“Lion ... wants to see you ... now!” Pigeon utters between gasps for air.

“Class dismissed!” shouts Lucky as he storms out of the room. Lion is one of his former pupils. Moreover, he has been Lion’s confidant since the Trophy Hunters took Lion’s father in the year of the Big Drought.

In spite of their close-knit relationship, Lion still is the king of the Bushveld. He is a fair but demanding leader. No one dares dawdle once summoned to appear before the king.

“Hundred hungry hyenas!” Lucky cries as he pulls into the afternoon rush-hour stampede. “Traffic is definitely becoming worse. There are just

too many animals reaching old age since those human conservationists moved into this area,” he mumbles while overtaking a tortoise plodding along in the fast lane.

About an hour after abandoning his class, Lucky arrives at Lion’s den. He immediately walks up to Lion who is peacefully perched on an old termite mound. Lion stares across the savannah with his big amber eyes; his silhouette etched against a red African sunset.

Lucky clears his throat to announce his arrival. He looks up at Lion to gauge the purpose of his summons, but Lion continues staring into the distant beyond without uttering a word.

Not wanting to interrupt the moment, Lucky joins in with a stare of his own. His heart drops down from his throat as he switches from rush-hour stampede to total serenity.

And so, the two of them sit side by side and in total silence until the red-orange sky makes way for a million bright flickering stars that gaze down upon them.

3. Lion's Predicament

“How long have we known each other, Lucky?” Lion finally breaks the silence. His voice is a lot calmer than usual.

“We met two rainy seasons before the year of the Great Drought, Lion,” Lucky says. “So that means we’ve known each other for twelve rainy seasons.”

“Yes, and you have seen me grow into what I am today. You know the Lion behind the wild mane and ferocious roar. You have probably taught me everything I know, other than hunting impala of course.”

“Where could this be going?” Lucky thinks. “Lion is a lot more brain than brawn tonight. Maybe this is a good time to suggest my solution for the rush-hour stampede. If only lionesses hunted more often, the roads wouldn’t be so full of animals, meaning less traffic congestion.”

“Something is terribly wrong with me, Lucky,” Lion says, “but I can’t put my paw on it. I’m not sick or hungry or anything. I just miss being happy. It’s not that I’m *unhappy*. It’s just that I’m *not* happy.”

“I have a good life and so much to be thankful for. In spite of all my blessings, Lucky, I’m still not happy. An empty feeling has become part of me.”

“I don’t quite follow you, Lion,” Lucky replies, somewhat hesitantly. He searches Lion’s face for a clue to where the discussion is going.

“Everything we do is done for one of two reasons,” Lion responds. “We either do something because it makes us happy, or we do something to *avoid* unhappiness. Either way, the objective of everything we do is to be happy.”

“Okay, now you’ve really lost me,” Lucky replies.

“Think about it, Lucky,” Lion says. “First, there are the *nice-to-dos*. We do these things because they make us happy. We expect happiness as the result. We play with the kids, watch the sunset, read a hunting magazine, or take a dip in the river because we like doing it. Doing these things give us pleasure and make us happy.

“Secondly, there are the *have-to-dos*,” Lion continues. “Take eating for example. We’re not happy when we’re hungry. We then eat to still the hunger, but subconsciously we’re eating to make the associated unhappiness go away. We’re actually eating to move from our unhappy state to a happy one. We eat to be happy.

“Similarly, we’re unhappy when we’re out of shape. We then exercise to get into shape in an attempt to move from being unhappy to being happy. We’re therefore exercising in order to be happy.”

“Now I see where you’re going with this!” Lucky says. “So your argument is that we work to be happy? We’re unhappy when we don’t have money. We then work to earn money so we can eradicate the associated unhappiness. By eradicating the unhappiness, we’re moving toward happiness. We’re therefore working so we can be happy?”

“Exactly!” Lions purrs with a sense of accomplishment. “Everything we do ultimately has the same objective. That objective is to be happy, either directly or indirectly, by avoiding unhappiness.”

“I’m not sure how I can help with this,” Lucky says with a puzzled look on his face.

“My problem, Lucky,” says Lion, “is that I have read many books on topics such as eating right, exercising, and excelling at my job. Although these

books addressed the subject matter, they completely missed the point. They cover the stepping-stones to happiness but not happiness itself.

“I’m not interested in stepping-stones anymore, Lucky. They are only secondary objectives. I need to understand our primary goal. I need to understand happiness. If I understand how happiness works, then surely I can make happiness happen, right?”

Before Lucky can respond, Lion continues. “I need you to travel throughout my kingdom and ask every animal you meet what happiness is to them. I’m hoping their collective knowledge on happiness will restore my inner peace. You must report back to me before the start of the rainy season.”

The discussion ends with the same silence it started with. Lion has spoken his mind. It is a big request, and Lucky contemplates the consequences of declining it. He stares across the savannah as if looking for an answer. I will have to do this, he eventually concludes.

The pressure mounts as the silence drags on. “Why will they share anything with me?” Lucky finally responds. “I’m a tiny rat. Animals might be too busy, or simply not interested in helping me.”

“Take this,” Lion says, handing Lucky a tuft of hair from his golden mane. “This way they will know it’s I who sent you. They will know the consequences of not helping you.”

As Lucky heads home, his mind is in turmoil. “What a crisis! This was supposed to be just another Monday. How will my family cope without me? It’s too long to be away from home. My students will fall behind. Where will I sleep at night?” he thinks, trying to make sense of the crisis that has befallen him.

When Lucky arrives home, the children are already asleep. His wife is reading a book in bed. Lying down beside her, he shares the conversation he had with Lion. When she learns of Lucky’s brief, tears well up in her eyes.

“I couldn’t say no to Lion, dear,” says Lucky. “He is the king of the Bushveld, and he needs my help. I must honor and obey his request however arduous it may seem.”

With these words, they close their eyes and start drifting off. Their minds race ahead to sunrise as they hold each other’s claws. Tomorrow at dawn, the rising sun will mark the separation of their lives for a while.

4. The Elephant Crisis

As the sun rises, Lucky emerges from his den with a backpack full of necessities for his trip—a sleeping bag, firefly lantern, mosquito net, snake repellent, and a lunch pack that his wife prepared for him.

With a hug and a “Love you, dear; see you soon,” Lucky starts his journey into the vast expanse of the Bushveld.

Two hours into his journey, Lucky spots Elephant beside a water hole. “What an intimidating figure,” Lucky thinks. He nervously feels his pockets for the tuft of mane Lion gave him as travel insurance.

Walking up to Elephant, Lucky notices that both of his tusks are missing. Only short stumps remain on either side of his massive head.

Lucky introduces himself, making sure that Lion gets a mention. “Good morning, Elephant. My name is Lucky, and I’m on a fact-finding mission for Lion.”

“And a good morning to you,” Elephant replies as he continues to chew on a bushel of grass. “What kind of facts are you hoping to find?”

“Happiness,” Lucky answers. “I need to find out what makes animals happy. Is there any wisdom you can share with me?”

“That’s a tough one,” Elephant says while uprooting another bundle of grass with his trunk. “It may not be exactly what you’re looking for, but

I do have a story I can share with you. I'm sure it will help you with your quest."

"I'm a surgeon," Elephant begins. "I used to practice homeopathic medicine when I still had my tusks, you see."

"What happened?" Lucky asks the inevitable question.

"Love happened. The things we do for love," Elephant shyly sighs. "Both my tusks broke off in a fight with another bull over an elephant cow. It wasn't just any old cow. She was the matriarch-in-waiting. The fight was definitely worth it, even though the price I paid was very high.

"Anyway, I used my tusks to earn a living as a homeopath. They were the tools of my trade. I used them to dig up roots and to peel bark from medicinal trees. After drying them, I placed the roots and bark into a hollowed-out section of bedrock. I used the ends of my tusks to grind them into a fine powder in this bedrock.

"I mixed these fine powders in various combinations to make my medicines. My medicine treated anything from tuberculosis to predator-induced anxiety syndrome, or PIAS, as it's more commonly known.

"After losing my tusks, I could no longer dig for roots or peel bark from trees. I was unable to make the medicine that was the cornerstone of my practice. I started losing patients and eventually had to close my doors. I was officially unemployed. I couldn't pay the bills or do the thing I loved most: helping other animals.

"I was faced with the biggest crisis of my life. The weight on my shoulders grew heavier with each passing day. All of that changed, however, the day I met the weirdest-looking creature I had ever seen.

"He called himself Panda. He had the colors of a zebra, the body-fat percentage of a hippo, and fur like a baboon. Panda visited the African Bushveld as part of a habitat-scouting delegation from China. Our local cuisine gave him severe stomach cramps. When Panda's condition didn't improve, he was referred to me by a former patient.

“I was unable to help Panda as a result of my crisis. I told him my unfortunate story, as I didn’t want to appear unwilling to help a stranger.

“Panda then told me that a crisis had the potential for a positive outcome,” Elephant continues. “Panda added that the word *crisis* is written in Chinese using two different characters. The characters look something like this.”

Elephant shows Lucky the tree where Panda scratched them into the bark:



Tree 4.1 – Crisis Written in Chinese

“The first character represents danger, while the second character represents opportunity,” Elephant says. “The word crisis is thus literally written as danger-opportunity.

“Panda explained that there was an element of danger in every crisis, but also an opportunity. Until Panda shared this wisdom with me, I had focused all my energy on the danger element of my crisis. I was thinking about what I had lost and how things had changed for the worse since losing my tusks.

“Panda asked if I ever considered the opportunities that my crisis presented. The thought of opportunities arising from my crisis never even crossed my mind.

“Anyway, I referred Panda to a former colleague of mine for treatment of his stomach cramps. I then purposefully tried to think of opportunities associated with *not* having tusks. Initially my thoughts were empty. Elephants are meant to have tusks, so my thoughts continued to stray down the danger element of the crisis.

“Slowly but surely, however, some opportunities entered my mind.

“First, having no tusks gave me access to the young and succulent leaves that other elephants couldn’t reach with their tusks in the way. Secondly, I had the option of becoming a surgeon. Previously, my tusks prevented me from getting close enough to patients to make incisions.

“The third benefit was no longer having chronic neck pain from carrying those heavy tusks around. I was also saving a small fortune on toothpaste, not to mention the time it took to brush my tusks every morning.

“That discussion with Panda changed my life. Today I’m a successful surgeon only because I saw an opportunity in the crisis that came my way,” Elephant concludes.

“Not only a successful surgeon, but a brilliant motivational speaker!” Lucky replies. “When Lion gave me this task, it had crisis written all over it. Up until now, I have been focusing on the danger element of my crisis.

“I’m stressing about being away from home. I’m worried about the safety of my family. I also fear that my students will fall behind. However, you have opened my eyes and my thoughts, Elephant.

“Come to think of it, I now see an opportunity of visiting new and exciting places. I can meet interesting animals and learn firsthand about a topic I have often wondered about myself.”

“I’m glad I could help!” Elephant obliges while patting Lucky on the head with his trunk.

“I’ll remember your advice and convey it to Lion,” Lucky says. He picks up his backpack and heads off with renewed purpose into the great unknown.

5. Cycles of the Blue Wildebeest

With Elephant's advice still fresh in his mind, Lucky heads out of a thicket of Mopani trees into an open patch of grassland. Lucky sees Blue Wildebeest, roughly in the middle of the patch, and changes course to meet up with him.

Blue Wildebeest hardly notices Lucky and continues to graze with Lucky standing right beside him. Unaware that these animals eat almost every waking moment, Lucky politely waits for Blue Wildebeest to finish his meal before introducing himself.

Eventually, Lucky interrupts the sound of grass being ground into pulp with a simple "Hi there, my name is Lucky." This seems to have the desired effect, and Blue Wildebeest lifts his head to signal the end of his meal—for the moment at least.

"I am Blue Wildebeest. Care for some grass? There's plenty for both of us," he says.

After a quick "no thanks," Lucky explains the purpose of his visit.

"So is there anything you can share with me?" Lucky finally asks.

"Yes there is, Lucky. You see, I have the most boring job in the world. I supposedly am a landscape architect. Quite a fancy job title, but practically all it entails is mowing the grasslands of the savannah. With all the good rains we've been having, it's a full-time job.

“I need to keep these grasslands in pristine condition for the human tourists who visit all year round. Do you have any idea how it feels to be working, eating grass for twelve hours a day, five days a week?”

“No, not really,” Lucky replies. “I have worked long hours before, but eating grass? I will leave you to it then.”

“But I thought you wanted to learn about happiness,” Blue Wildebeest says with a puzzled look on his face.

“I do, but your life seems too uneventful. With all due respect, you seem to be bordering on depression, so I doubt whether you have anything to contribute,” Lucky responds.

“On the contrary, my friend. All that time spent eating grass leaves lots of free time for the mind. I spend this time wisely to ponder many things, including happiness,” Blue Wildebeest says.

Lucky stops dead in his tracks.

“For blue wildebeests like me, happiness comes in two cycles,” the large, bearded antelope says. “There is a weekly cycle and a yearly cycle. Sadly, we only allow ourselves to be happy during a part of each of these cycles.”

“This sounds interesting,” Lucky thinks. So he picks a spot on the grass where he has full view of Blue Wildebeest.

“During the week, we work,” Blue Wildebeest says. “We eat grass for five days of the week and for twelve hours every day. We’re working all the time and can’t wait for the weekend to arrive. Weekends are our happy times. Lionesses are so tied up on weekends with shopping, kiddie parties, and sports events for the cubs that they don’t bother us one little bit.

“The other great thing about weekends is that we don’t have to eat any grass. We can simply chew the cud. Weekends are really, really great—a time to take a break, relax, and be happy.

“In the yearly cycle, we have a two-week summer holiday. During this holiday, we take part in the Great Migration. That’s the happiest time of the whole year. We get to travel and meet up with relatives and old friends. A few lucky ones even get to star in a National Geographic documentary. A bit of fame if you catch my drift.

“Do you see the problem with living life this way, Lucky?” Blue Wildebeest says, with his vision of fame making way for reality.

“Yes I do. You will either be eaten by lions or die of malnutrition from eating only grass,” Lucky responds.

“No, no, no!” Blue Wildebeest says, disgruntled. “The problem is that we *postpone* our happiness! We’ve come to believe we can only be happy on weekends or during holidays. We rarely give ourselves a chance to be happy during the workweek, or when we’re not on holiday.

“The math is quite simple here, Lucky,” Blue Wildebeest says after pausing for a moment. “Every week, we only allow ourselves to be happy for two out of the seven days. That equates to being happy only thirty percent of the week! Every year, we only allow ourselves happiness during the two-week holiday. That’s two out of the fifty-two available weeks, or permitting ourselves to be happy only four percent of the year.

“However you look at these low percentages, we’re failing. We’re failing to be happy simply because we’re not granting ourselves more time to be happy.

“Sadly, weekends and holidays also have unhappy moments. This means our *actual* happiness will be even less than the thirty percent weekly, or four percent yearly, time we *allow* ourselves to be happy.”

Lucky stares out in front of him as he takes it all in. “That’s both shocking and brilliant! But what can we do to fix this?” he asks.

“My herd has developed two methods. The objective is to *allow* ourselves more time to be happy. We focus on the five days of the week and the fifty weeks of the year that we generally wish away in anticipation of happiness

to come. We have a saying that the bigger a spider's web, the better his chances are of catching something.

"Back to the two methods," Blue Wildebeest continues. "First, we deliberately look for happiness that was always there, but overlooked as we set our sights on weekends. For example, take watching the sunset over the tree line or watching shooting stars at night. Knowing there is enough to eat and seeing your kids playing silly games in the long grass.

"We made a conscious decision to notice and appreciate these small, everyday things in our lives. This helped us to be content during the week, and strangely we drew happiness from this deep sense of satisfaction.

"Our second method required a change in routine. With a life of constant grazing, sleeping, and grazing some more, we had very little chance of being happy during the week unless we changed our routine."

"On Tuesdays, we now have a Chefs' Evening when we share different recipes for grass. Wednesday night is Horror Night when we take turns sharing some close encounters with predators.

"Thursday nights are the best of them all. We play Mock-the-Croc, which almost rivals the Great Migration in terms of having a good time. While the herd is watching from a safe distance, one of us pretends to be injured and moans and groans while rolling around on the bank of the river.

"The crocs, thinking it will be an easy catch, come waltzing out of the water with that macho, bodybuilder-like wiggle of theirs. Seeing the crocs' jaws drop when the uninjured animal jolts away is truly priceless. We crack ourselves up every time. We can never make out whether their jaws drop in disbelief or because of hunger.

"Our new routine during the workweek has given us something new to enjoy and look forward to. We now have more potential happy time than when we lived for weekends only. This has helped to increase our overall happiness."

"Your advice ties in nicely with what Elephant told me about a crisis," Lucky says. "You made a conscious decision to change your routine.

Sometimes, however, a crisis forces that change in routine, which then has the potential to increase our happiness. Thanks for sharing this with me.”

“You’re most welcome, Lucky,” Blue Wildebeest obliges. “Hopefully my story will help you and Lion.”

It is with a strong sense of accomplishment that Lucky bids farewell to Blue Wildebeest. As he continues on his quest, he cannot help to see the smile on Lion’s face when he shares what he has learned.

6. Hyena Selling Unhappiness

Lucky wakes up to a hyena laughing as if he had just pulled off the best practical joke ever.

“This I need to see,” Lucky thinks. “Laughter like that can only come from a very happy animal. I’m sure he can teach me lots about happiness.”

Lucky gets out of his makeshift bed and heads in the direction of the laughter. The laughter continues to grow louder until Lucky eventually spots the hyena.

“Nothing hilarious that meets the eye,” Lucky wonders. So he walks up to the hyena to introduce himself.

“Hi there. My name is Lucky, and Lion has sent me on a quest to learn more about happiness. Do you have any words of wisdom on the topic?” Lucky says.

Hyena bursts out laughing again. After a while, his gasps for air die down enough for him to mutter, “Funny little guy. Really, really funny.”

Eventually, the hysterical laughter dies down a bit, giving Hyena the opportunity to attempt longer sentences.

“I am Hyena. My business is to make people *unhappy*, so I find it quite amusing that you want my advice on happiness.”

“I don’t quite follow you,” Lucky says.

“I’m a sales and marketing executive,” Hyena says. “My job is to make animals *un*happy. You see, Lucky, happy animals are not good for business.

“*Un*happy animals, on the other hand, are great for business. Unhappiness gives them an empty feeling. Spending money makes the emptiness go away. That’s where we come in. If we can create the unhappiness while also supplying the fix, the money comes our way.

“My marketing campaigns are designed to remove any contentment and to make animals realize they are imperfect. I let them feel they don’t have enough,” Hyena continues.

“Hippo used to be fine with who he was, until our weight loss ad campaign took to the printed media. After seeing our ads, Hippo became very self-conscious and unhappy about his weight. We purposefully made him unhappy with what he is, so he now mostly hides below water during the day. Our client makes a fortune selling anything from low GI grass to metabolism-boosting grass replacement tablets to him.

“Crocodile was perfectly happy with his roughly textured skin. He now applies moisturizing cream daily after seeing the ad campaign developed for one of our clients in the cosmetics industry. The cream, however, makes his skin soft and vulnerable to damage by prey and parasites. Crocodile now calls in sick for work almost twice a week. His once happy life has turned into a downward spiral.

“Zebra had the most beautiful girlfriend in the valley. That was until he saw pictures of a mare from Serengeti in a glossy wildlife magazine and became totally smitten with her. He then neglected the relationship with his girlfriend, which led to their breakup.

“The same Lion who sent you here,” Hyena begins to whisper, “and please don’t tell him this, but that same Lion thought he had the most beautiful mane until he saw our ads for anti-dandruff shampoo. My client is now making a killing out of sales to Lion every week.”

Lucky slowly puts his hand into his pocket, retrieves the tuft of Lion's mane, and drops it to the ground unnoticed. "I'll take my chances," he whispers to himself.

"What was that?" Hyena asks.

"Nothing," Lucky says. "It's all starting to make sense now! Since my children started watching Tom and Jerry, we've had to import cheese. No self-respecting mouse or rat even likes cheese! But Jerry loved cheese, and because he was their hero, it meant my children also had to have cheese."

"That's right down our alley," Hyena says. "It doesn't even have to be an ad or marketing material. Something as innocent as a story for children will also do the trick. The media is very powerful and it's here to stay."

"My advice is to be happy with the fur you live in, despite any shortcomings you may have," Hyena says. "You're not perfect, but then again, nobody is. You should work on your weaknesses and accept your shortcomings, but never ever become morally unhappy because of them."

"Thanks, Hyena, you have given me quite an interesting perspective on happiness," Lucky says. "I suppose it sometimes takes a crook to catch a crook?"

With these words, the two of them head their separate ways until Hyena's laughter fades away in the distance.