

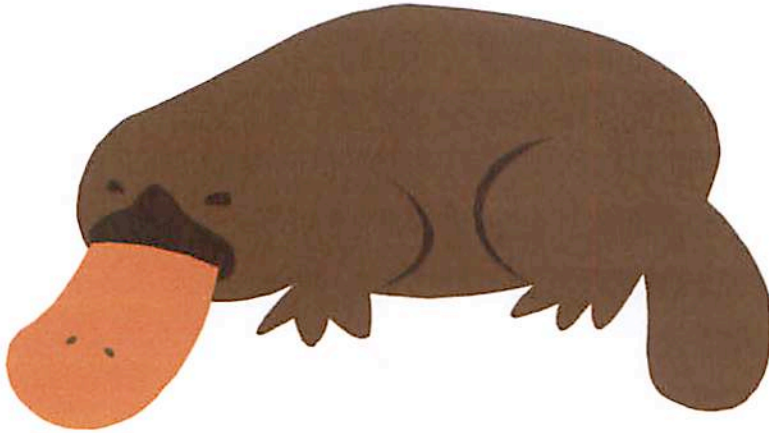
The Hoikers and the not-so-clever Badger

Once upon a time there was a Koala bear named Frank. He lived in a koala bear city named Zhang Hao along with many other Koala bears.

It was a beautiful afternoon and Frank's mother had asked him to go fetch her the freshest fruits of the forest. However, he had to be sure he would make it home in time for supper.



Frank had walked up the hill leading into the forest. As he began his stroll in the forest, he ran into an old Platypus who was slowly making his way towards town.



“Hello there Old Platypus”

“Hello young koala bear. Are you heading into the forest?”

“Well yes indeed, I certainly am. Mother asked me to fetch her the freshest fruits of the forest.”

“And only the freshest you will find, but careful boy, if you do come across the tallest and thickest tree of the forest, do not go near it, for in this tree, live two evil creatures. They eat the fruit which falls from this tree, and if you happen to eat any of their fruit, you will suffer an unimaginable punishment.”



“I will be sure to look out for that enormous tree! Thank you Old Platypus!” And with that, Frank began strolling through the forest.

Some time had passed, and Frank couldn't find any fresh fruit. As he was admiring the trees around him, he stepped into a pile of goop. This was no ordinary goop. It seemed to have fallen from a tree. Frank picked it up to smell it. It smelled so sweet and fruity that he ate the goop right off his hands. An overwhelming sensation filled Frank's mouth and soon he felt as happy and healthy as a horse.



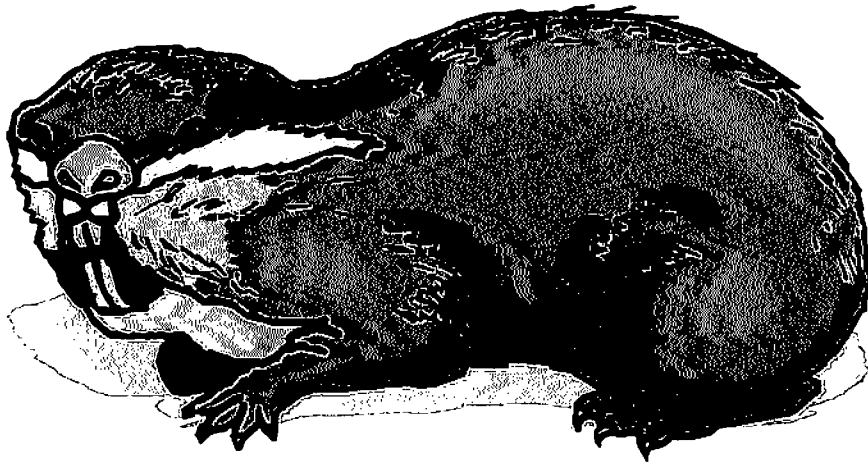
Frank liked the goop so much he searched for more. As he looked around, he saw that there were hundreds of piles of goop everywhere. The goop was in fact smushed fruit that had dropped from the tree.

“My goodness!” shouted Frank, “These must have fallen from this big tree! Could these be the freshest fruits of the forest?” Frank shouted so loud his voice echoed throughout the forest. Frank had forgotten about the old platypus's warning and ate as much fruit as he could.

As it was getting near dark, Frank decided to begin to head back home for he was full to the brim from eating all the goop. He needed to find some more to fill his empty basket.

As he began his journey back home, he heard some scratching coming from behind him. Frank quickly whirled around and saw a badger climbing down the biggest tree he had ever seen.

“You there,” exclaimed The Badger, “You have eaten Sir Peter Robin’s precious fruit! You must now be punished!”



“Who are you?” Frank said immediately. The Badger came closer to Frank.

“I am Bruce the Badger, or some like to call me The Clever Badger.”

“Well, I didn’t know this fruit belonged to anybody...they were on the ground...I was just...”

“Ah, but I have heard this before, you are no different from the rest, you must come with me now to be punished by Peter Robin the Crow.”

“Wait, please forgive me, can I come back tomorrow and you can punish me then? I have to be home for supper.”

“Ha! I have not the time for you silly games, you must come now or I will be punished. You see, I come down to collect the fallen fruit. The Crow will ask where some have gone and that’s where you would come in!”

Frank was speechless, he had tried apologizing to The Clever Badger but it was no good. The Clever Badger was determined to bring him to Peter Robin so he could apologize directly to him and face his punishment. Frank was worried.

“Please Mr. Clever Badger...”

“Hmm...well, as a matter of fact, The Crow may be getting ready for bed and does not particularly like to deal with rascals such as yourself so late in the afternoon. I’ll make you a deal. You can come back early tomorrow morning and we’ll figure out this mess you’ve created, but, you have to bring along a friend.”

“A friend?” asked Frank.

“A friend!” said The Clever Badger.

And with that, The Clever Badger scurried up the trunk of the tallest tree in the woods.



Its trunk was so thick it would take Frank many hours to walk around it, and it was so tall that it would take many days to climb. Frank thought of how to escape his punishment as he walked back to the village. When he arrived, he went over to visit his friend Busker.

“Busker!” said Frank.

“Well hello there my good friend. What can I do for ya?” asked Busker.

“I’m in a bit of a pickle you see...shoot, there’s no time to explain, you see, I have to be home for supper. Do you think you can follow me into the woods tomorrow?”

“Well I suppose I could do that. I have to be home by five o’clock though.”

And with that, Frank ran home to make it just in time for supper. When he arrived, his mother saw the empty basket and was upset he didn’t find any fruit. But she was glad to see he had made it home in time for supper and asked him to go fetch some fresh fruit tomorrow.

The next day, Busker met Frank by the path that lead into the woods.

“So what are we doing Frank?”

“Well, I ran into The Clever Badger just yesterday, and I accidentally ate some of his fruit. Then, he was ready to punish me but I simply could not be late for supper so he told me to come back tomorrow and bring a friend.”

“Will he punish me?”

“Don’t you worry Busker, I won’t let anything happen to you,” Busker smiled as Frank led the way into the forest.

“Well, I suppose it’s alright so long as I get some fruit!”

After a good half hour or so, Frank and Busker came across the enormous tree that produced the magnificent fruits.

“Holy jumpins!” shouted a surprised Busker, “That may well be the biggest tree I’ve ever seen!”

Frank looked around on the ground and saw that there were twice as many fruit piles as he’d seen yesterday.

“Look Busker! Look at all the fruit!”



Frank and Busker took a good whiff of the afternoon air. The smell of the fresh fruit tickled their nostrils and made their mouths water.

As Frank and Busker were about to eat some of the freshest fruit of the forest, The Clever Badger made his way down the trunk of the tallest and thickest tree in the Zhang Hao forest.

“You there!” exclaimed The Badger. “I see you have brought a friend along with you.”

“Yes I did just as you asked Mr. Clever Badger.”

“And you will now do just as Peter Robin the Crow asks. You must collect all the fallen fruit that has gathered here for I did not collect it yesterday because I left it for you to do today. And now Peter Robin the Crow is weaker because he has not eaten as much as he usually does.”

“But wait now Mr. Clever Badger, I must be home for supper,” said Busker in a nervous voice.

“Hmm,” thought The Clever Badger. “I will let you go then, Busker, since you must be home for supper, but tomorrow you will have even more fruit to gather for it is too much for me to do alone. And you must both come back tomorrow on one condition... You must *each* bring one more friend!”

And with that, The Clever Badger scurried up the tallest and thickest tree in the Zhang Hao forest.

Frank and Busker did just as they were asked. The next day, they brought two more friends to help collect twice the amount of fruit that was there from the day before, but they had to be home for supper that night as well. And the next day, their friends brought more friends, but they also had to be home for supper. And so this trend continued on until one day, all of the Koala bears of the village had to go see The Badger. There were hundreds and hundreds of Koala Bears that surrounded the tallest and thickest tree of the Zhang Hao forest. But there was even more fruit that had collected for so long

because The Clever Badger could not bring it all up himself. He was very angry that all the fruit had been sitting on the ground, and that Peter Robin had not eaten in days.

“Mr. Clever Badger, there are no more Koala Bears in my village for I have brought them all here,” said Frank.

“Well I don’t think any of you will be making it home for dinner on this night because there is nobody in your little village making supper now is there?”

The Clever Badger was right. He had outsmarted Frank and had him bring his entire village to be punished by Peter Robin the Crow.

“I’m afraid you’re right Mr. Clever Badger,” said Frank, “I have put off my punishment long enough, and now the whole village must also be punished because of me and there is nothing we can do about it.”

The Clever Badger chuckled, observing the Koala bears as they looked around the tree at all the fallen fruit.

“Now all of you must face your punishment and collect all the fallen fruit and bring them to Peter Robin the Crow immediately! He has not eaten in days so hurry up!”

And so, all the Koala bears began to collect all the fallen fruit that had gathered.



The Koala bears made a giant pile of all the fruit they had collected. The pile was so tall that it nearly reached the top of the tallest and thickest tree of the Zhang Hao forest.

“Master Peter Robin!” shouted The Clever Badger. “Does the pile of fruit reach you?”



A very small black crow emerged from the brush of the tree and slowly made his way to the edge of a branch where he could eat the fruit. Peter Robin began pecking away at the pile of fruit. He was so hungry for not being able to eat for many days. All the Koala bears stood and watched as Peter Robin ate and ate.

“Holy Cow!” said one of the koala bears, “Look how much bigger he is getting.”

Peter Robin was eating more and more as the pile grew smaller and smaller and he grew larger and larger. Soon Peter Robin was so large he began to wobble on the branch that looked so tiny compared to his massive girth.

The Badger was getting nervous his majesty might fall.



“Master Peter Robin! Let me bring the rest of the fruit up for you to eat. You are far too large to eat anymore and that branch will snap off if you make another move.”

Peter Robin was so hungry he leaned forward to try and reach the pile of fruit. With a snap and a crack, Peter Robin came down and landed right on top of The Clever Badger with such a thud, that it shook all the freshest fruit from the tallest and thickest tree of the Zhang Hao forest.



It was nearly raining fresh fruit and all the koala bears couldn't be happier. They had managed to free themselves from The Clever Badger and Peter Robin the Crow and were now free to eat as much fresh fruit as they ever could. Frank made sure he filled his basket for his mother who had been waiting for so long for him to retrieve the freshest fruits of the Zhang Hao forest.

The End

