

This simple story was originally written for the BBC School Radio series 'Together' and is based on a fable. It can be used with children up the age of about 7 or 8 to explore the idea of being confident to form your own ideas and not to just follow the crowd. You could extend this to talking about how to step back and think before you react to things.

The Sound the Hare Heard

A traditional story retold by by Gordon Lamont

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One morning a hare was happily dozing under a fruit tree in a land far away. The hare's name was Moonbright but all her friends called her sleeptight because sleeping was all she seemed to do.

As she dozed, deep in her favourite forest, Moonbright listened to the familiar sounds; there were the birds high up in the canopy of trees and flitting about the sky...

There were the grazing animals, the wild oxen, buffaloes and elk...

And further off, too far off to worry about, there were boars and tigers.

There was the sound of the river and the breeze in the trees. All these sounds Moonbright had known all her life so, 'Nothing much to get up for' she thought, 'I'll just doze here a little longer.' But then a thought wiggled its way into her dozy mind, it was a 'what if...' sort of thought; and the 'what if' sort of thought whispered, in its 'what if' sort of voice, 'What if it all stopped suddenly, just like that?

'What if the whole world stopped, Moonbright? What would become of you then?' continued the 'what if' thought. And just at that moment...

Thud, crash, boom, bang!

She heard the huge crashing and thudding sound and the boom and the bang and she hadn't a clue what it was. What could it BE? Then, 'Ah!' Thought Moonbright and 'Eeek!' and 'Oh my giddy aunt! That must be it! The world is breaking up. Help! Help!

And she jumped up, wide awake now and ran off towards the west. Then, without stopping, she switched round and ran towards the east, then the north, then the south, then west, then north again and finally east again, as if she had a hurricane up her tail. She ran and ran and ran...

She ploughed straight through another family of hares, sending the little ones skidding all over the place.

'Hey mind out!' cried the mother hare but Moonbright only had time to shout, 'Sorry, can't stop, the world's ending.' as she went zooming by.

The hare family quickly decided to follow; after all if the world was ending they didn't want to be left behind.

So they all ran on, and soon, all the other hares had heard about it and before long there was a whole army of silvery hares like a giant river cutting through the forest and of course, the other animals began to take notice too.

The wild oxen were curious:

'What's the commotion, what's the fuss,

We're trying to chew, why are you bothering us?'

But when they heard that the world was breaking up, they thought about it, chewed a bit more grass, thought some more, chewed some more, then as one they dived after the river of hares – after all, the world was breaking up and they didn't want to live in a world with no grass to chew.

Now a stream of hares, even a river or a torrent of hares doesn't make much noise but once you add in a herd of wild oxen, you have a serious disturbance in the forest and before long the buffaloes, rhinoceroses and boars had heard the sound, picked up the news and joined the stampede.

A tiger was on the prowl when he heard a distant sound and to the tiger it sounded exactly like a fifty course banquet rushing to present itself to him and soon, sure enough there was hare for starters followed by rhinoceros, boar, elk and goodness knows what; and as much as you could eat a hundred times over. Without waiting to wash his paws the tiger set off in pursuit, but as he grew closer, he started to hear some disturbing news – you know the news, the world was going to end and it was breaking up already. The tiger had a choice, one last meal now or join the rush to get away. He decided to join the gang and hope to live, and eat, another day.

Next the elephants heard the news and trumpeted it all over the forest as they joined the rushing army of animals .

Now just waking up in another part of the forest was the King of the Lions and he listened to the elephants' message and thought to himself,

'Oh dear, I shall have to get up and sort this out.', and get up he did and with a few leaps he placed himself right in the path of the animal army and with one enormous roar he stopped them dead in their tracks.

Hare skidded into hare and oxen and buffalo got tangled up with elephants and boars until the whole thing looked like a squirming pile of panting puffing animals, which is what it was. Only the tiger kept his distance, waiting to see what would happen and wondering if he might get a feast after all.

An elephant spoke up,

'Lord Lion,' he said, 'please do not hold us up for the world is about to end, it is breaking up already'.

'Ils it indeed, Master Elephant', said the Lion 'and how do you know?'

'We heard it from the boars.'

The Lion turned to the boars, 'And who told you?'

The boars shuffled and sniffled but eventually said that they'd heard it from the rhinoceroses and they said that they'd heard it from the buffaloes who said they'd heard it from the hares and so, finally, the Lion found himself in front of Moonbright.

'And who did you hear it from little hare?' he asked

'No one, Lord Lion' said Moonbright, 'I heard it happen?'

'You heard it happen?'

'Yes sir,' I was dozing in the forest under a fruit tree and I began to think what would happen to me if the world ended and just at that moment, there was an enormous thud, a crash, a boom and a bang and I knew the world was breaking up and it must be true because the whole forest believes it'.

The Lion saw immediately what had happened but all he said was,

'Jump on my back little hare.'

Moonbright did as she was told and instantly the lion leapt off through the river of animals, retracing their path back through the forest – they'd made such a mess of the undergrowth as they'd charged through it that it was easy for the lion to find the way and all the other animals followed, wondering what they would find.

When they arrived at the spot where Moonbright had heard the world breaking up the lion set the hare down and said, 'Where did the sound come from?'

Moonbright pointed and the lion walked calmly in that direction and disappeared from view.

All the animals waited. What was going to happen? Would the world break up and swallow the lion? They listened carefully, hardly daring to breathe, then they heard a sound, but it wasn't the dreadful sound they were expecting. It was the lion laughing, and then a strange sort of sound as if he had suddenly been choked and lost his voice – all their fears returned, perhaps the world really was ending.

Just then the lion emerged with a big yellowy orange belli fruit in his mouth. He put it down on the ground and spoke to them all, 'Little hare, a fruit fell to the ground just when you were thinking about the end of the world and so, without finding out the truth you believed that the world was breaking up.'

The other animals were so relieved, and they began to laugh at Moonbright but the lion stopped them with a look. 'So then each of you: the oxen, the buffalo, the boars, the elephants and even you Master Tiger, all of you animals believed a silly rumour and passed it on. None of you sought the truth and all of you would have run yourselves into the sea before you stopped to think. Now, off you go, back to your business, let our forest return to its usual calm and quiet; and as for you young hare...

But as he turned to Moonbright he saw that she was already sleeping, and the lion, deciding that the hare had had too much excitement for one day, let her be and walked quietly away.

In the forest a belli fruit fell to the earth with a crash, but no-one took the slightest notice.