

Hare Heralds the Earthquake

by Rosalind Kerven

There was once a hare who was always worrying. “Oh dear,” he muttered all day long, “oh deary, deary me.”

His greatest worry was that there might be an earthquake. “For if there was,” he said to himself, “whatever would become of me?”

He was feeling particularly anxious about this one morning, when suddenly an enormous fruit fell down from a nearby tree—*CRASH!*—making the whole earth shake.

The hare leaped up.

“Earthquake!” he cried.

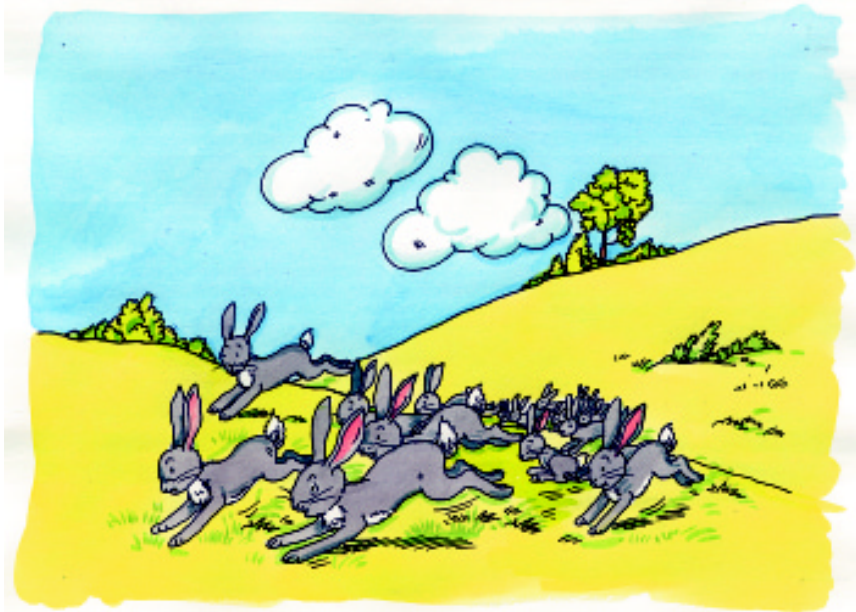
And with that he raced across the fields to warn his cousins.



“Earthquake! Run for your lives!”

All the hares left the fields and madly followed him.

They raced across the plains, through forests and rivers and into the hills warning more cousins as they went.



“Earthquake! Run for your lives!”

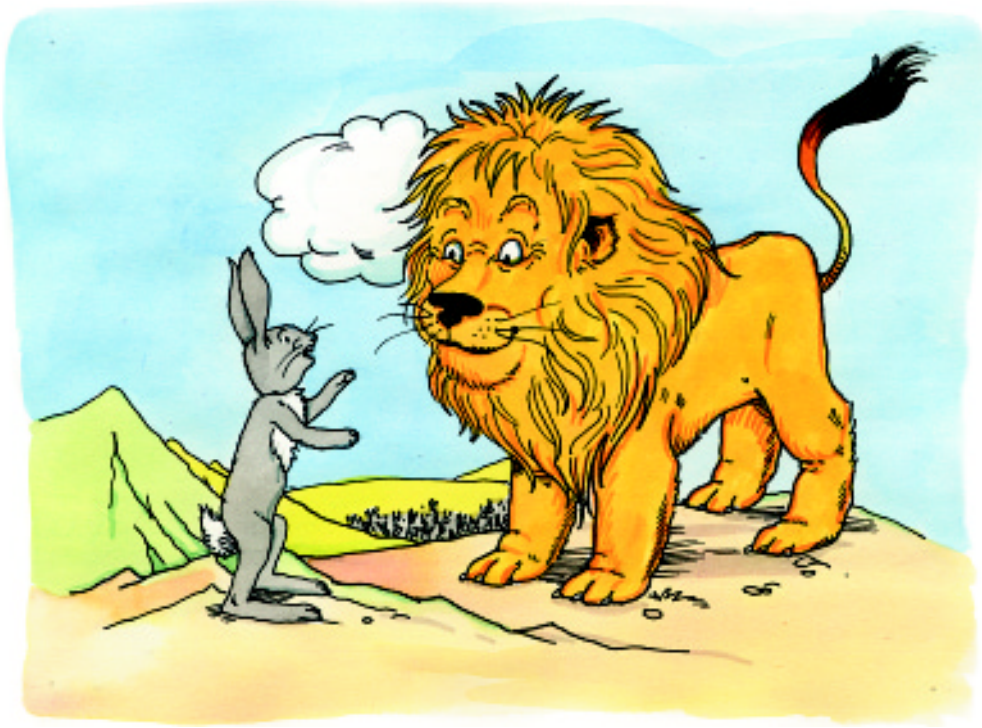
All the hares left the rivers and plains, the hills and forests and madly followed.

By the time they reached the mountains, ten thousand hares pounded like thunder up the slopes.

Soon they reached the highest peak. The first hare gazed back to see if the earthquake was coming any closer, but all he could see was a great swarm of speeding hares.

Then he looked in front but all he could see was more mountains and valleys and, far in the distance, the shining blue sea.





As he stood there panting, a lion appeared.

“What’s happening?” he asked.

“Earthquake, earthquake!” babbled all the hares.

“An earthquake?” asked the lion. “Who has seen it? Who has heard it?”

“Ask him, ask him!” cried all the hares, pointing to the first one.

The lion turned to the hare.

“Please Sir,” said the hare shyly, “I was sitting quietly at home when there was a terrible crash and the ground shook and I knew it must be a quake, Sir, so I ran as fast as I could to warn all the others to save their lives.”

The lion looked at the hare from his deep, wise eyes.

“My brother, would you be brave enough to show me where this dreadful disaster happened?”

The hare didn’t really feel brave enough at all, but he felt he could trust the lion.

So, rather timidly, he led the lion back down the mountains and the hills, across the rivers, plains, forests and fields, until at last they were back at his home.

“This is where I heard it, Sir.”

The lion gazed around—and very soon he spotted the enormous fruit which had fallen so noisily from its tree.

He picked it up in his mouth, climbed onto a rock and dropped it back to the ground.

CRASH!

The hare jumped. “Earthquake! Quickly—run away—it’s just happened again!”

But suddenly he realised that the lion was laughing. And then he saw the fruit rocking gently by his feet.

“Oh,” he whispered, “it wasn’t really an earthquake after all, was it?”

“No,” said the lion, “it was not and you had no need to be afraid.”

“What a *silly* hare I’ve been!”

The lion smiled kindly. “Never mind, little brother. All of us—even I—sometimes fear things we cannot understand.”

And with that he padded back to the ten thousand hares that were still waiting on top of the mountain, to tell them that it was now quite safe to go home.

