



# Stories From the Earth and the Stars

## The Circle of Life

A Swahili Story



THINK  
DIGITAL ACADEMY



One sunny afternoon, an enormous python emerged out of the scrub. It was larger than the length of two men and its scales had a beautiful brown and gold mottled pattern that glinted in the sunlight. Reptiles take their energy from the heat of the sun and this snake was no exception. He had not eaten for many days and was very hungry. But before he could hunt, the python needed to absorb the magical golden rays that would revitalise him. He slithered out from underneath a bush, and his scales gleamed as he coiled his body into a comfortable position. The python opened his jaws wide in order to taste the air.



It was peaceful and quiet in the clearing, and the snake congratulated himself on finding such a good spot. All of a sudden, he stiffened, and his forked tongue flicked back and forth. He had picked up the acrid scent of smoke on the air. Hunters must be burning the scrub to force the animals out, he thought to himself.



Quick as a blink, the snake glided out of the clearing towards the land of a farmer, calling, “Help! Help! The hunters are burning the shrubs and bushes of my home, and they mean to kill me.”

The farmer rushed out but stopped in his tracks at the sight of the enormous python. He began to back away, trembling all over the fear.

‘Do not be afraid – I mean you no harm. All I ask is that you help me to hide,’ said the snake.



The farmer was a kind-hearted soul. He loved animals and always did his best to rescue those in need. Swallowing his fright, he picked up a sack and beckoned the snake inside. As soon as the tip of the snake's tail had disappeared into the sack, two hunters rushed onto the scene. 'Farmer, we are looking for a huge python, the biggest of its kind for miles around. Have you seen it?'



‘Why no, I’m afraid I haven’t,’ said the farmer.

The hunters caressed their spears and stepped closer.

‘Then why do we see snake tracks leading from the scrubland and straight into your field?’

‘Are there? my goodness, I’d better go inside at once. I’m terrified of snakes!’ said the farmer.

He turned on his heel, rushed into his hut and barred the door. He peeked through the window at the hunters as they prowled around his fields. Finding nothing, they eventually slunk away, and the farmer breathed a relieved sigh.



He opened the sack and told the snake that the coast was clear. To his horror, the snake slid up his legs and coiled around his middle, squeezing tighter and as he went.

‘What are you doing?’ the farmer gasped. ‘I just saved you from those hunters!’

‘That is true, but nevertheless I am very hungry, and eating you will keep me going for a long time,’ hissed the python.



The farmer tried to prise the snake off, but it was no good.  
He was much too strong for him.

‘Wait a second,’ cried the farmer. ‘You can eat me, but first you must repay me for saving your life. It is only fair.’

The python relaxed his hold a little.

‘Yes, you are right. Go on then, Farmer – what would you like me to do for you before I eat you?’

‘You must agree to let others decide whether you should eat me.’

‘Fine,’ said the snake, sliding down from the farmer’s body.  
‘Come along, then. Let’s ask this banana plant.’.





The snake and the farmer approached the plant and explained what was happening. 'Surely you agree that the snake should have mercy on me,' pleaded the farmer.



‘What do you humans know of mercy? Do you show mercy in cutting down every bunch of bananas I ever grow? Are you merciful when you chop off my lovely leaves in order to thatch the roof of your house? No! you think only of yourselves. I say the snake should eat you!’

‘Good,’ said the snake.



‘Wait!’ shouted the farmer desperately. ‘Let us ask the bee.’

The bee listened patiently and shook her head.

‘I’m sorry, Farmer, but I agree with Snake. Humans do not deserve the compassion of animals. My family and I spend months making honey and then along come people with smoking torches to force us out of our hive. They take all of our honey and give us not a word of thanks in return.

Snake, you are welcome to him.’

‘Thank you,’ grinned the snake, opening his jaws wide.

‘Please! Let us ask one more animal!’ wailed the farmer.

‘Very well,’ said the snake.



An oryx stood grazing nearby, and the farmer approached to explain his plight.

‘You are my last hope. Will you tell the snake to spare me?’

The oryx looked at him with surprise and disdain.

‘Of course I won’t tell the snake to spare you! Humans kill us without a second thought. I have seen people hunt my kind when they did not even need to eat. They did it for sport. I’m sorry, Farmer, but it’s perfectly fair for the snake to eat you.’



Aghast, the farmer sank to the ground. Just then, a voice floated out from a nearby acacia tree. 'This is the circle of life. Every creature must eat to survive. You cannot blame the snake for his desire to live. Invisible threads connect all of us in this world. Humans must not forget their place in the fine balance. You are animals, too!'



The python and farmer looked up to see a large baboon.

‘So, Baboon, you, too, agree that I should eat the farmer?’  
asked the snake.

‘Not so fast. First, show me exactly how this all came about.  
Is that the sack? I do not believe that a sack so small could  
hold a snake as large and fine as you.’

‘Well, I shall show you,’ said the python as he slithered into  
the sack.

‘What happened next?’ asked the baboon.

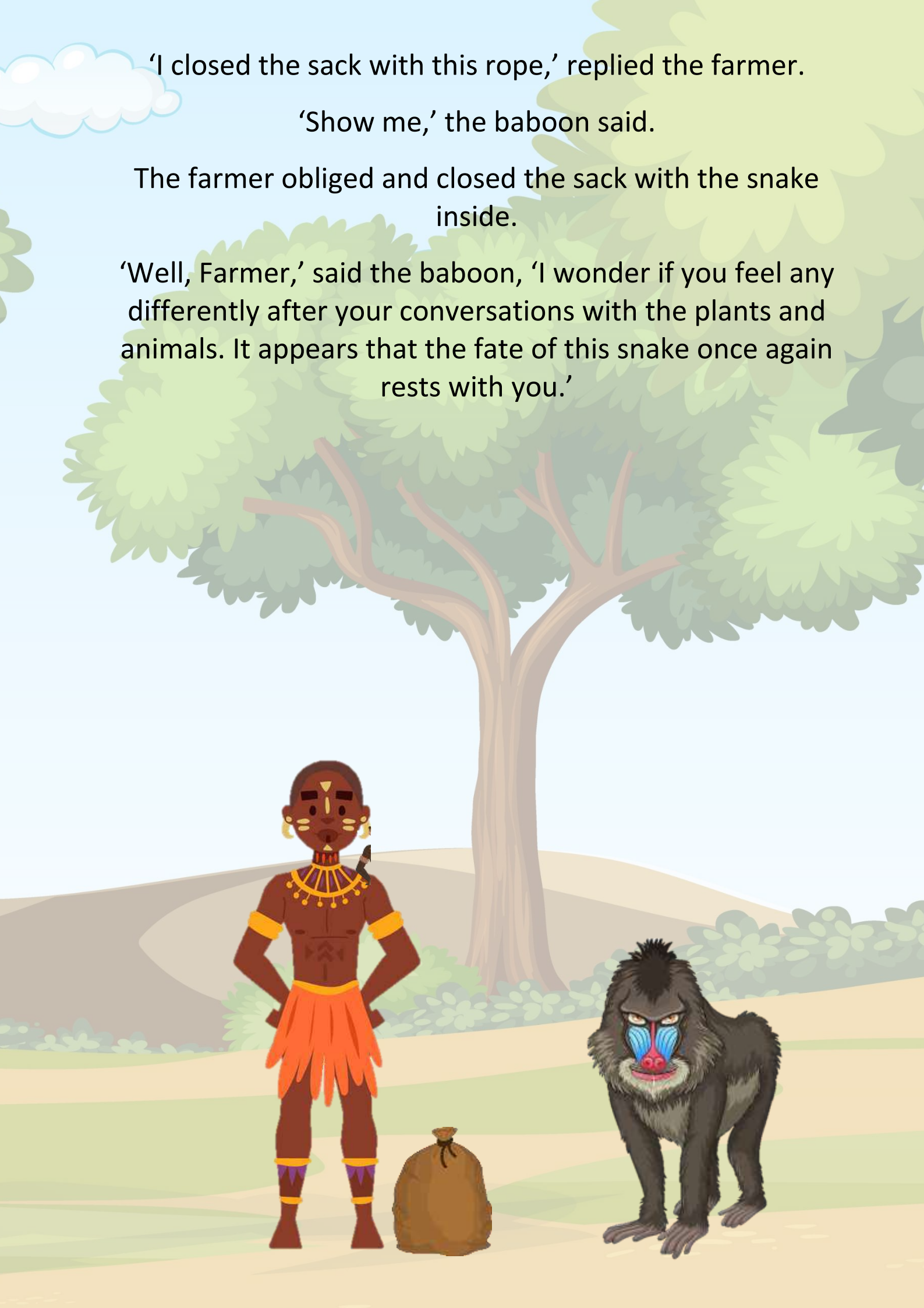


'I closed the sack with this rope,' replied the farmer.

'Show me,' the baboon said.

The farmer obliged and closed the sack with the snake inside.

'Well, Farmer,' said the baboon, 'I wonder if you feel any differently after your conversations with the plants and animals. It appears that the fate of this snake once again rests with you.'





# THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY

