

Mrs Puss, Dog and Thieves

Bro Dog falls into hungry-time, bad-bad.

Bro Dog is starved. Every day Bro Dog gets thinner until he is almost skin and bone. All knock-kneed and tottering, all looking and feeling terrible, poor Dog goes on down the road and comes face to face with Mrs Puss.

Bro Dog stares at Mrs Puss with wide-open mouth, not able to say a single word.

Mrs Puss has to say, "Good morning, Bro Dog."

Still staring, Dog can't believe how well fed Mrs Puss looks. At last Dog says, "Mrs Puss, you look so well, so round, so shining! You look like a rich somebody, who hungry-time hasn't touched at all."

Mrs Puss looks down.

"I have to ask you," Dog says, "where d'you have your storehouse of food hiding?"

Mrs Puss gives a little smile and says, "Bro Dog, sometimes a thief from a thief makes even the good Lord smile."

"Mrs Puss," Dog says, "can't I smile too, even a little bit? Look how I'm all skin and bone."

Mrs Puss glances at Dog with a look of pity and says, "Oh Bro Dog, hungry-time wasted you bad-bad." Then Mrs Puss looks about her, making sure nobody overhears her secret. "Bro Dog," she says quietly, "it can't be a bad thing to share some goodness with a good friend. I'm going to tell you something. I've found a lock-up building where meat is kept."

"Meat!" Dog blurts out loudly.

"Shuuh!" Mrs Puss says. "Not so loud. I believe only a few people are getting the meat," she whispers. Mrs Puss explains that she believes the meat is stolen and that the thieves use the little building as their lock-up store. She has seen the men bring meat and then collect it later. The men come and go only at night. She has watched them from the avocado tree, sitting on the branches. And the big thing is, the men don't even use a key to lock up or open the place. They use magic words which Mrs Puss has learnt.

Mrs Puss explains all this and then she says 'But seriously Bro Dog, one thing is that no liver must be touched. Not one little piece of liver.'

Dog gives himself a hard smile and says "It would happen wouldn't it? Just because I'd give anything for a piece of liver, then that's the meat that mustn't be touched."

"Well Bro Dog," Mrs Puss says, "I know how much you like your piece of liver, but I've listened, I've watched, I know what will cause bad trouble."

That night, after the men come and leave again, Mrs Puss slides down the avocado tree and calls Bro Dog to come out of hiding.

Mrs Puss and Bro Dog stand in front of the door. Mrs Puss uses the magic words, ending with "Seven, eight, nine". Slow-slow the door opens. Mrs Puss and Bro Dog slip inside. Mrs Puss uses the magic words again, this time ending with "Nine, eight, seven". The door closes and locks them in.

They light up a tiny oil lamp.

Inside there are all kinds of meat: seasoned, corned, pickled and packed in barrel after barrel. Mrs Puss doesn't show Bro Dog the liver barrel. But Dog slides the lid of the liver barrel open with a nippy movement, has a peep, and slides it shut again.

They fill their bags full and Mrs Puss uses the magic words again and they slip out quickly.

Two nights later, Mrs Puss and Bro Dog come back again. Mrs Puss opens the door and closes it again using the magic words. Working quick-quick they load up their bags with meat.

“Are you ready?” Mrs Puss whispers.

“Yes, I’m ready,” Dog says.

“Right,” Mrs Puss says. “I’ll put out the lamp.” And she blows out the light.

Thinking Bro Dog is right behind her, Mrs Puss opens the door, slips out, then closes the door again. Immediately there is panic thumping on the door inside.

Mrs Puss uses the magic words. The door doesn’t open. Mrs Puss calls to Bro Dog inside, telling him to use the magic words. Bro Dog uses the magic words properly but still the door doesn’t open.

“Did you touch any liver?” Mrs Puss calls. “Have you any liver in your bag?”

“Just one – well – two little pieces,” Dog says, anxious-anxious.

“Oh Bro Dog you’re in trouble,” Mrs Puss says “And putting back the liver now won’t help one bit. In any case, it’s nearly daylight. I’ll have to go. I’ll have to go, Bro Dog. I’ll get some help. I’ll try and get some help.”

Mrs Puss hurries away leaving Bro Dog locked up with the barrels of meat.

When Anancy hears about Bro Dog’s trouble, Anancy sends Tiger a message and keeps it a secret.

The meat men come. To their great surprise they find Bro Dog locked up with their meat. They tie up Bro Dog in their cart, along with their load of meat and begin to take him away.

The men come out on to the country road. Sudden-sudden the meat men hear a song. They don’t see him but it’s Anancy. The meat men know it’s Anancy with a message in a song. They cannot ignore it. The men stop their cart to listen.

“There’s a man who’s no beggar:

Could it be the Bro Tiger?

No-beggar Bro Tiger?

No-beggar Bro Tiger?

Who for liver or leg

Just never learnt to beg

Who for liver or leg

Just never learnt to beg.

He never learnt to beg, O!...”

The meat men suddenly see Tiger in the road, coming towards them. The men become panic-stricken. They run away like mad, leaving their cart.

Tiger comes up to the cart in the road. Tiger unties a very grateful Bro Dog, who takes the liver out of his bag and leaves it for Tiger.

Bro Dog picks up his bag of meat and hurries off with Anancy, who waits for him in the road.

Tiger pulls away the meat men’s cart of meat for himself.

When people hear about what has happened, each person says, “Oh!” and then exclaims the proverb, “A thief from a thief makes the good Lord smile!”