

Eco-Sys Action presents

BOOPY AND THE TREASURE OF CAMBODIA



"Little Heroes of the World" collection

www.ecosysaction.org/boopy



Close to the family stilt home constructed of precious wood, bamboo and braided palms, Kateka is playing with his little brother, Touch, and his little sister, Sorya.

“Listen!!!” exclaimed Kateka in panic.

“What?” Touch and Sorya responded in unison, surprised by his sudden cry.

“The forest, all the noise has stopped, everything is quiet; the birds and insects all seem to have left. It is very strange!”

Pricking up his ears, Touch confirmed, “Ah, yes, you’re right, very strange, this silence hurts my ears!...”.

“Let’s go see Yey, maybe she knows what happened.”



“Yey, grandmother, what’s going on? Have you heard?” asked Kateka.

“You’re asking if I hear nothing? Have I noticed that the forest is silent?” Yey responded calmly.

“What’s happening?” chorused the children.

“Don’t worry, it’s a trick that clever little Boopy played on you, he will explain...” reassured their grandmother. “But of course you remember the story of the king and queen, their four ministers and astrologer, who, a long long time ago, came back from the kingdom of Tak-kasilâ using the magic powers of Disapamoka to save themselves from the jungle in which they were lost by transforming themselves into a tiger, the first tiger that ever existed in the world.” The children were captivated and knew the legend well.



Meanwhile, Boopy, our eco-detective sparrow, had entered and didn't wait long to start talking. "Yey is right, it was me that asked all the animals in the forest to remain silent for a few hours. A forest without noise is very sad, isn't it?"

The children nodded in agreement, still shocked by the silence.

Boopy continued: "I wanted you to be able to fully understand what is known as Empty Forest Syndrome. I wasn't able to stand by and see your beautiful forest disappear; cut down for its wood, stripped of its trees and robbed of its animals. While flying here I saw vast expanses of dead forests, roads cutting through it and trucks transporting logs. I am angry!"



Boopy had other evidence to share: “Do you know that the Kouprey, a wild ox, and the magnificent Schomburgk’s deer have already disappeared from your forest, hunted to the last by man? Poachers are everywhere, even in your village, and they think that they can fight poverty by killing animals. They are wrong, because soon, there will not be any trees and the animals will have all disappeared. Life will be even more difficult. I have seen bears, thousands of pangolins, clouded leopards, banteng cattle, and Sambar deer, captured or killed by gun or crossbow. Carnage!



“And, of course,” added Boopy, “at the top of the ecological pyramid, there is the tiger. It is not spared. To the contrary! I saw one taken away by two poachers. They will sell it to a middle man to make a few dollars. The middleman will then sell it to a store or market, probably in China or Vietnam for a bit more money. The store-keeper will then sell it at a very high price to its rich client who will surely use the claws and other body parts for traditional Chinese medicine. While this is certainly a very old and respected science, there are many misconceptions fuelled by crooks who only think to exploit people’s naiveté and destroy to earn money. It is a vicious chain which is very dangerous to get involved in.”



“The tiger skin will also be sold to buyers as wealthy as they are ignorant, while the paws will have been cut to crush the bones and make quack remedies.” Boopy could have talked for hours, but the children had a thousand questions.

“But what can we do? We want to keep our animal friends, we don’t want them to disappear!” exclaimed Kateka, indignant.

“You can change things and I am going to prove it to you,” resumed Boopy. “But first of all, and with consent from Yey, who is the only person who knows this secret, I am going to show you a magical place.



Boopy and the children walked more than an hour in the direction indicated by Yey. Crossing the mysterious jungle, Boopy's presence reassured the children.

"Here we are!" shouted Boopy. He had stopped in front of a gigantic tree that seemed to be growing out of an enormous rock.

"Look, there's a drawing on it!" exclaimed little Sorya.

Pushing back the overgrown vegetation, Kateka and Touch discovered a beautiful sculpture of a tiger.

"It's magnificent!" Kateka's voice was full of wonder.

"And it looks very very old!" added Touch.



Boopy unveiled the secret of the area. “You are at the exact spot where the first tiger appeared, by Disapamokka’s magic, saving the life of the king, the queen, their four ministers and astrologer. Listen carefully to the stone!”

The children leaned against the rock.

“But where is that music coming from? It’s unbelievable!” said Kateka timidly, amazed.

Boopy responded proudly: “It’s the heart of the forest, these are the three Apsaras, nymphs of the water, air and earth, who, with their melodious voices, ask you to help save this jungle in peril. It is an ancient song that has been passed down through centuries. It says that the tiger saved your king and queen who choose to never return, but you, children, you are the ambassadors of the forest and must return to the village with a message.”



“And now, here is another surprise for you!” announced Boopy.

Turning, the children were flooded with emotion! A magnificent tiger and her two cubs were standing just a few meters away.

“Don’t be afraid, these are my friends” Boopy reassured them. “Please meet Sovandara and her little ones, Hok and Nara.”

Sovandara started: “You now know this sacred place. Few tigers remain in Cambodia. We try to be as discrete as possible, but our habitat is being dramatically reduced month by month. I don’t know what the future holds for Hok and Nara. The first tiger was born here. Maybe it will also be here that the last tiger will die.”



She continued: “Of eight sub-species of tigers, three have already disappeared (Caspian Sea, Java and Bali) one, in southern China, is on the edge of extinction and the others (Siberia, Indochina, Malaysia, Bengal) have seen a very disturbing decrease in their numbers. We are Indochinese tigers and there are, at most, 350 (compared to 1200 fifteen years ago) of us spread across Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, and possibly China. And yes, not even one for each day of the year! At this rate we will soon disappear, like numerous other over hunted animals.”

Then the mother tiger added: “Kateka, your name means “promise”, so with your friends, please promise to help us...”.



Kateka barely had time to answer “yes” before the tigers disappeared in a flash. Far away it was possible to hear the sounds of men, perhaps poachers. Like in a dream, the children turned towards Boopy, their eyes still sparkling from the encounter.

“We are going to have to think hard!” said Boopy very seriously.

On the way back Kateka presented an idea to his friends, “What if we distributed drawings to all the adults that we meet? That’s hundreds of drawings, maybe even thousands because we will encourage other villages to do the same. We will tell them about our mission and never slacken the pressure.”



Many great ideas were proposed and Boopy loved all of them. A movement was born, a refusal to see the treasure of Cambodia be pillaged, a bit of hope.

Kateka and his friends even gave shadow theatre performances... with a very clear message:

“...and the king and queen changed into a tiger, they forgot their kingdom for the beauty of the forest, but today, they need help again, and we, the children of Cambodia, China and all countries of the world, we will save the tigers!”

The audience applauded warmly. Among them, you could even pick out some poachers...



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Boopy Edition

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