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Description: These are Swahili stories. The illustrations are by John Hargrave.

The Lion, the Hyena and the Hare

Once it happened that a lion, a hyena and a hare set out on a journey together.

The way was long, and they suffered much from hunger. Till one day, when they were as yet far distant from the end of the journey, they were so sorely pressed by hunger that they gave up all hope of getting any further. Then they took counsel together and said, "Now we shall all die, and not one of us will escape. It were better that we eat one of our number, so that the other two may get the strength to proceed."



So they all agreed that this must be done, but they could not agree as to who should be eaten and who should be saved. At last it was decided that the youngest amongst them should be eaten by the other two.

Then said the lion to the hare, "Now tell us your age, that we may know."

The hare replied, "Am I not the smallest and weakest here? It would not be fitting for me to speak before the great ones. You, my masters, tell your ages first, and then I will speak."

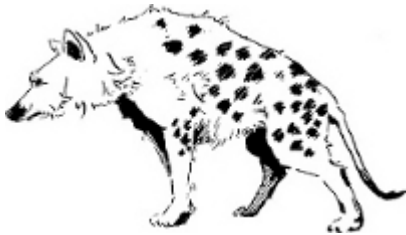
So the lion turned to the hyena and said, "You must then speak first."

The hyena thought awhile and then said, "My age is five hundred years old."

The lion then said to the hare, "You have heard the hyena, now you must speak."

But the hare said, "How can I speak before you, my lord, have spoken?"

The lion thought and then said, "I am two thousand years old."



When the hare heard these words he wept. The other two asked him why he wept, and he said, "Oh, my friends, I weep to think of my eldest son, my first born, for it was on a day just two thousand years ago that he died."



So the lion killed the hyena, and when he and the hare had eaten him they were able to get strength to go on, and they finished their journey in safety.

