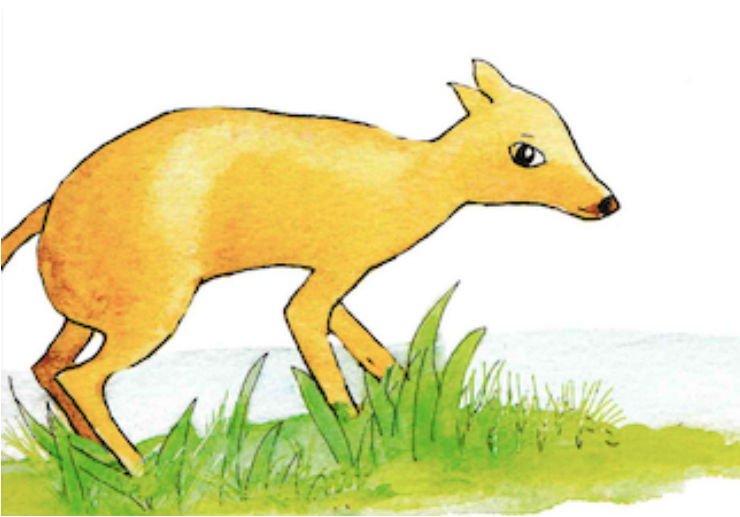


The Story of Kancil

By Linda Hibbs



Many stories are told in Indonesia and Malaysia about the timid and yet cunning kancil (pronounced "kan-chil") or mouse deer.

Not related to mice, and only distantly related to deer, they have hooves and are about the size of a rabbit. A kancil's legs are as thin as a pencil.

One day Kancil was trotting quietly through the forest. She was feeling very hungry and had so far had no luck finding food on her side of the river. She looked longingly over to the other side of the river and glimpsed rich fruit that made her mouth water.



She trotted down to the river's edge and was just about to hop on a log to carry her over when suddenly the log moved! Buaya, the crocodile rose to the surface and grabbed her leg in a flash. Squealing with fright Kancil tried to free herself. She was known for her cunning but she would have to think fast to get out of this alive and maybe still have a chance to eat that delicious fruit on the other side.

Suddenly Kancil found her voice. "Buaya you are such a big and strong animal. I cannot possibly satisfy your appetite," she said. "If I bring my family to you - my strong husband and children - then you have the chance to catch four instead of one kancil."



"The trouble is," she continued, "They swam across to the other side this morning. I was just going to meet them so we could return home together."

Buaya felt annoyed and slashed his tail in frustration. His friends had warned him about Kancil's cleverness but this all sounded fine. If Kancil made and kept the promise then he'd have a nice belly full of food. I'll take you across the river if you promise to return with your family."

"Of course I promise," Kancil quickly replied. "Our house is on this side, so how could we not return?"

Kancil stepped carefully onto the crocodile's back and travelled across to the other side of the river. She leapt lightly and landed on the riverbank. Kancil could already smell the beautiful aroma of the fruit that awaited her.

From the safety of the trees she turned around, and with laughter in her voice she said, "You silly Buaya. My family didn't swim over the river this morning! But thanks for taking me across the river... now I can eat as much fruit as I like."



The Buaya felt his own tummy groan with hunger and thrashed his tail about in anger. In the distance he saw Kancil prancing and jumping through the forest and knew that he had been tricked. And Kancil knew that when it was time to return... she could easily trick another crocodile!