



Across the Big River

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6/7

The hare once said to the raccoon:

“I have to go on a journey and I can’t take you with me, not the duck, the elephant or the mouse.”

“Oh no”, said the raccoon, “You can’t go alone, we have to go with you as you have to cross the big river and the big river is wide and deep.”

8/9

“Yes”, said the hare, “I know that river, but I have to cross it alone. You can come with me as far as the river though.”

They went to the big river together.

The raccoon was feeling very queasy.

10/11

When they reached the river the little hare said, “I have to go now, you stay here. You can think about me and it is good when you tell the duck and the elephant and the mouse about me. They like hearing stories and you know which stories you can tell them, but I...”

The hare faltered and a hare’s tear rolled down his cheek.

“I, I have to go. Take care, I love you all.”

With that, the hare gave the raccoon a hug. They held each other tight. The raccoon squeezed him closed to his raccoon heart. The hare let go and said “I have to go now”.

The hare held up his paw.

The hare waved and went to the river.

14/15

The raccoon told later of how the hare went into the water but did not sink. It was as if he was sitting in a boat which was carrying him. But he couldn’t see a boat.

Then the hare disappeared out of sight. The little raccoon stood there and felt a pain in his heart.

He sat down on a stone and cried. He stayed there for half a day and the tears just kept on coming.

16/17

After some time the raccoon blew his nose. He lifted his head, brushed the tears aside and thought about how they always used to give each other hope. You are strong as a hare and I am strong as a raccoon, and that had been enough.

“That is enough” said the raccoon quietly.

Then he took a deep and said quietly but firmly, “that’s enough”.

18/19

Then the raccoon went back. He took the duck and the elephant by the hand and the mouse on his arm. He kissed them.

“The hare will not be coming back”, he said quietly.

The elephant was the first to ask “is he dead?”

“Yes”, said the raccoon.

Then they got up.

20/21

They took a walk around the block together. Everyone was very quiet. Everyone kept themselves. Then the elephant tripped over a tin can. He fell over and out of his bag rolled his trumpet.

22/23

The elephant took up his trumpet and played a song.

Oh when the saints go marching in...

The duck began to tap the beat and the mouse got his recorder out his bag.

24/25

They played the evening away and even the raccoon was dancing. It was long after midnight when they made their way back home and laid down to sleep.

26/27

As the mouse opened his eyes in the middle of the night, He said “Raccoon, are you awake?”

“Yes”, he murmured.

“Do you think that the hare heard us playing?”

“Of course”, said the raccoon and stroked the mouse.

“Then we should play more often.”

“Hmm”, murmured the raccoon.

And then they heard the wind through the trees.