



The Quick-witted Farmer

ONCE a farmer was ploughing his field when a lion, a tiger and a cheetah came out of the forest and stood before him. The farmer was frightened but he quickly recovered and asked the animals what they wanted.

"Farmer," said the big cats in unison, "we have heard that man is the cleverest of all animals. So we would like you to decide who amongst the three of us is the best Big Cat."

Before the farmer could say anything, the lion stepped forward menacingly.

"If you don't choose me as the best, I will eat you," he roared.

"If you don't choose me as the best, I will eat you," growled the tiger.

"If you don't choose me, I will eat you," snarled the cheetah.

Now the farmer was in a fix. He had to

think fast to save himself from being devoured. So, he stalled for time, saying, "Sure, big cats. Just give me a few minutes to think." The big cats nodded.

The farmer looked around desperately for help, but all he could see was his pet cat, a falcon sitting on a rock nearby and a few clouds in the sky.

He got an idea.

"Big cats," he said, "I will conduct three tests. If you do well in even one test, you will be declared the best. Agreed?" he asked.

The big cats agreed.

The farmer began, "Now for the first test. Whoever runs faster than the falcon can fly, will be the winner."

The lion, the tiger and the cheetah got ready. The farmer made a loud shooping noise and threw a pebble at the falcon. Startled, the falcon took wing. The big cats

started running behind it. The bird saw the big cats chasing it and flew even faster. After a while, the lion and the tiger panted and stopped. But the cheetah kept on at it and finally outran the flying falcon.

"Good going, Cheetah!" said the farmer. "You win the first test. And now, we begin the second test," he continued.

The lion and the tiger were ready.

"Whoever amongst you can hunt as silently and cunningly as my house cat, wins," declared the farmer.

Now the lion was not very good at hunting alone by himself. He could hunt only with his pride. Even then, it was the lionesses who hunted, not he. So, the obvious winner of the second test was the tiger.

"Good job, Tiger," the farmer smiled. "You have won the second test. Now, for the final test," he announced.

The lion was ready.

"Whoever can make a sound louder than the thunder produced by the clouds, will win the last test," the farmer declared.

"Oh, that's easy! I can do it," the lion said, excitedly. He roared and roared so loudly that everyone's ears ached.

"Excellent!" said the farmer, still covering his ears. "Lion, you have won the last test. Now, for the results!"

The big cats waited anxiously.

The farmer declared, "The cheetah is the best runner, the tiger is the best hunter and the lion, is of



Dodo: My maths teacher is crazy.

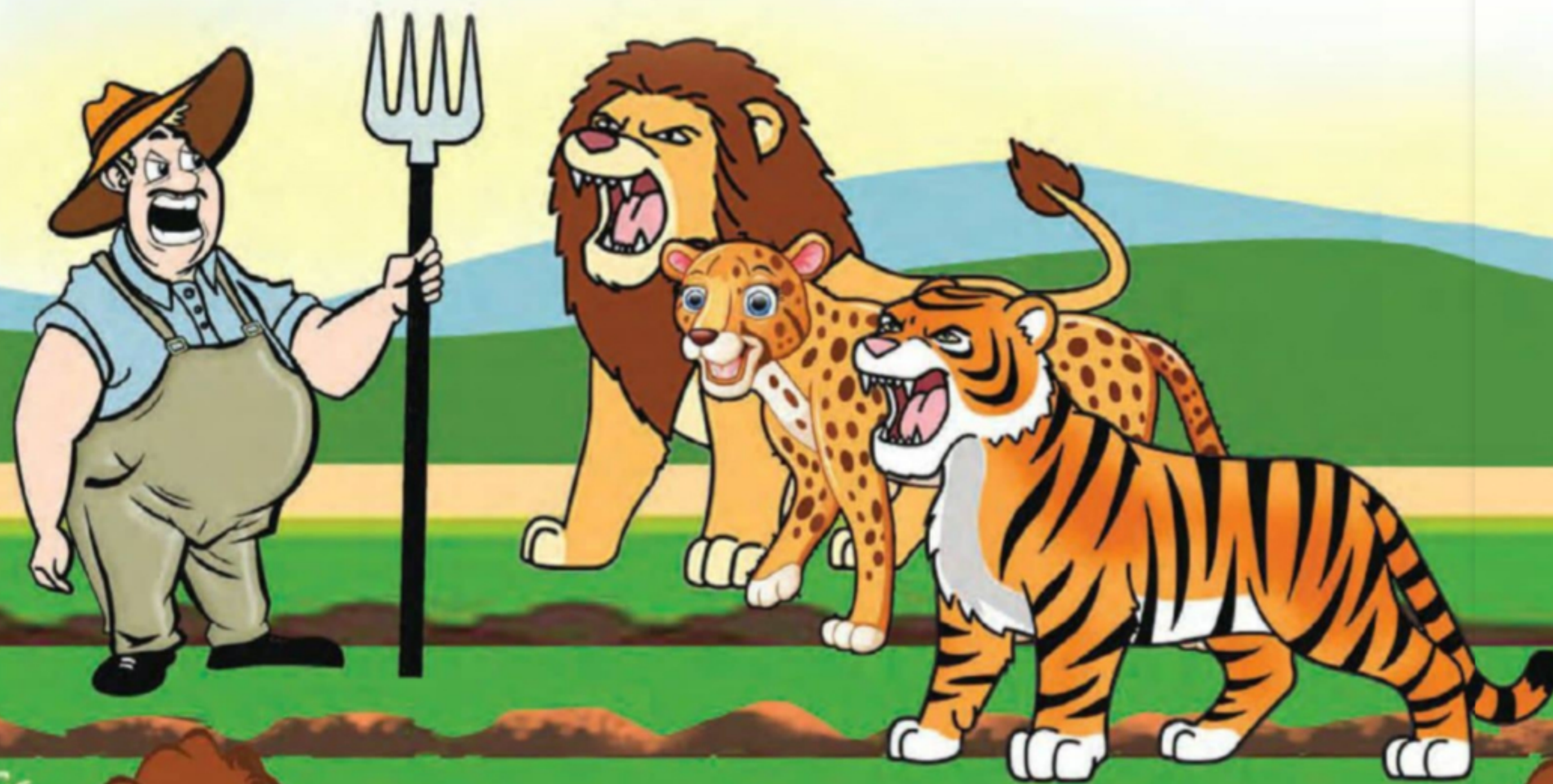
Ludo: Why?

Dodo: Yesterday she said that $4+1$ is five. Today she says that $3+2$ is five!

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course, the King of the Jungle as he has the most powerful roar!"

The big cats were very happy indeed. Each had been declared the best. They rewarded the farmer with a gold coin each and left.

The farmer let out a sigh of relief and patted himself on the back for his cleverness. He then built a strong fence around his field and lived safely ever after.

— **Rohini Chintha**