

Title: Tona and Tuni

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Genre: Fiction. Folk story. Bangladeshi birds and animals.

Level: Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate

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এক যে ছিল টোনা আর এক যে ছিল টুনি
গাছের ডালে বসে তারা করত কানাকানি
Once there was a Tona and there was a Tuni
Who lived in a village, on top of a tree.



Tuntuni is the name of a bird in Bangladesh, which is called '**tailor** bird' in English. There are many stories in Bangladesh about this **clever** little bird. Here is a story about the tailor bird of Bangladesh.

A Tuntuna bird and her **partner** Tuntuni, whom we shall call Tona and Tuni, lived in their **nest** in the branches of a tree. The tree was near a farmer's house in a village. Early every morning they left their nest and flew to the farmer's house, and to his fields to eat the farmer's **crops** and **grains**.

One day Tona told Tuni, "Every day I see the farmer's wife making very lovely *pithas** in their **kitchen** and I can eat only their little pieces thrown here and there in their **yard**. They are really very very good. Can you make some **cakes** like those for us to eat? If you make them, we can eat as much as we like."

Tuni replied, "Yes, I have also **tasted** them. They are really very good to eat. But how can I make them? We'll need a lot of things to make those cakes."



Tona was very **eager** to eat those cakes, so he said, “If you tell me what you need, I’ll try to bring them from somewhere.”

Tuni thought about things which she would need for the cakes. The first thing they would need was **rice flour**. Then they needed some **brown sugar** and water. After that, they would need a **clay pot** in which to cook the cakes, and some dry wooden **sticks**. Last of all, they would need some **matches** to light a fire.

Tuni told Tona about the things they needed to make the cakes. Although he knew it would not be easy to get everything, he was very eager to have the cakes, so he told Tuni, “Don’t **worry**, I shall try my best to get those things one by one and then you can make the cakes.”

Tona knew they would first have to fly very early in the morning to **collect** all those things before the people **woke** up from their sleep, so the two birds woke up very early and went in **search** of all the things that they needed.

First, they went to collect a small pot from the *potter's** house. They did this while the potter was still **asleep**. Then Tuna and Tuni started to gather rice flour and brown sugar from the farmer's store house. They had to do that **slowly** over a few days, as they could only carry small amounts each time.



Next, they had to get some small pieces of wood from the forest. They flew to the forest and started **picking up** small fallen dried branches of trees. A *tiger** lived in that part of the forest, and he was searching for animals to eat. When the tiger, the King of the forest, heard the **noises** made by Tona and Tuni in the forest near him, he **roared loudly**, “Who are you, and why are you entering my forest kingdom?”

Tona and Tuni were very very **frightened** when they heard the tiger's voice. They did not reply to the tiger's question, but remained very very **quiet**. The tiger roared again and repeated his question, “Who are you, and why are you **disturbing** my forest?” Tona was very **afraid**, but at last he replied in a very soft voice, “My Lord, O King of the forest, it is me, Tona, I’m a little bird.”

The tiger now became even more **hungry**, and began to think about eating this little bird, so in a loud voice, he ordered, “Come out in front of me and tell me what you are doing in my forest kingdom.”

Tona replied very quietly, “I want to have some rice cakes. We needed some wood to light a fire to make the cakes, so I came here to pick up some fallen dry tree branches.”

The tiger was hungry, but he also wanted to eat their cakes, so he roared again, “Ohhh, how can you take wood from my forest without my permission? Come and stand in front of me. I’m going to eat you up.”

Tona replied in a very weak voice, “Please, My Lord, O King of the forest, do not eat me. I promise you we will share our cakes with you. Please come and sit under our nest in our tree. Then you can have the cakes with us after they are made”

The tiger was happy to hear Tona's suggestion. He really wanted to eat the cakes, so he said, “How can I trust your word? I don't know where you live.” So Tona gave the King of the forest the directions to their tree, and also **invited** him to come on Monday to eat the cakes.

Then the tiger said happily, “Huuuum! Ok then, take the wood that you need, but don’t forget your promise to give me your cakes, or there will be trouble.”



“Certainly not,” replied Tona, and so he was able to take the wood and carry it to their place. The pieces of wood were big and heavy, so this took several **trips**.

The next Monday, when the farmer left his house to work in the fields, Tuni went and collected some water from the can above the well. This too, took several trips. Then she **mixed** the rice **powder** and water together into a *dough** and shaped it into small balls. Tona lit a fire and Tuni cooked the cakes in the pot over the fire. Tona sat in front of the fire while Tuni cooked the cakes. As soon as one cake was finished they both ate it all. They both liked it so much that they went on eating the cakes themselves without remembering their promise to the tiger. In fact, they forgot all about their tiger **guest**. When all the cakes were finished, they suddenly heard the roaring voice and the *footsteps** of the tiger. They suddenly remembered their promise to the tiger and started shaking with fear. They did not know what to do. Tona said, “My dear Tuni, now we will be eaten by the tiger. What shall we do?”

Quickly, they flew up to the top of the tree and **hid** themselves in the clay pot in which they had made the cake. The pot was hidden right behind the leaves.

“Halumm, hulumm, where are you mister Tona? I have come at your **invitation** to eat the cakes you made.” said the tiger. He was very hungry, and his stomach was making loud noises.

The tiger entered the farmer's yard and continued to roar as he could not find either Tona or Tuni anywhere. He went on roaring, louder and louder.

As we all know, rice cakes are made and enjoyed **during** the winter season in Bangladesh. These events all took place in the month of December. In other words, in the middle of winter. Sitting on the top branch of the tree under the open sky, Tuni was feeling very cold and shaking with cold and fear. Tuni **whispered** to Tona, “Dear Tona, I’m feeling very cold. I’m going to *sneeze**.” Before Tona could reply, Tuni **burst** out with a loud sneeze, “Hachhoo! Hachhoo! Haaachooooo!!!”

With the sudden burst of Tona's loud sneezing, the old clay pot in which they were hiding broke with a loud burst of sound, “Dharaash! Dharaash! Dhaam!” The tiger was so *startled** by the sudden sound, he jumped up in fear. The sound of the bursting pot sounded like the noise that the humans made when they fired **guns** at him. Without thinking, his tail stood up on end, and he **rushed** out of the farmer's yard as fast as he could, to save himself.

When Tona and Tuni saw the tiger running away, their fear was gone and they started laughing. The tiger was so afraid, he never returned to that place again. Tona and Tuni lived happily ever after in their tree, and from time to time made more cakes, with no hungry tiger to trouble them.

Did you know that birds and animals have their own languages and they can understand one another's speech. Next time you are outdoors, try to listen to their sounds. Can you understand what they are saying? Good luck with your trial!

Glossary

dough = a thick mixture of flour and water used to make bread.

footsteps = the sound that you hear when someone is walking.

pithas = cakes.

potter = a person who makes pots from clay.

startled = showing sudden fear or shock.

sneeze = when a sudden rush of air leaves the nose. A sneeze is not easily controlled.

tiger = a large wild animal from the cat family, usually with orange and black stripes.

Learning Activities

Vocabulary

1. **Words from the second 1000 high frequency General Service List**

afraid	clever	eager	guns	loud	noise	repeated	sticks	tasted
asleep	collect	female	hid/hidden/ hiding	luck	pick	rice	stomach	trips
brown	cook	flour	invitation/ invited	male	pot	roared	sudden / suddenly	weak
burst	crops	frightened	jumped	matches	powder	rushed	sugar	whispered
cake	disturbing	grains	kitchen	mixed	quickly	search	tail	woke
clay	during	guest	lot	nest	quiet	slowly	tailor	worry yard

2. **Words from the Academic Word List** partner

Comprehension Questions

1. **Remembering:** Why did Tuni ask Tona to make *pitha* cakes?
2. **Remembering:** What four things did the two little birds need in order to make the *pitha* cakes? (Try not to look back at the reading when you answer this question.)
3. **Understanding:** Why did the two little birds eat all the *pitha* cakes themselves?
4. **Understanding:** The tiger says that when the two birds took wood from the forest, they did so “*without my permission.*” What does this mean?
5. **Understanding:** What does “*stand up on end*” mean?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. **Analysing:** What is a promise? What is a threat? What is the difference between a promise and a threat? Put the sentences below into the correct box.
 - “Don’t worry, I shall try my best...”
 - “I’m going to eat you up!”

- “If you tell me what you need, I’ll try to bring them from somewhere.”
- “Don’t forget your promise to give me your cakes, or there will be trouble.”

A promise	A threat

2. **Applying:** The two birds were very clever. They suggested that the angry tiger should come and sit under their tree and eat the cakes they made. The tiger forgot about being angry and eating the two birds. Instead, he thought about eating *pitha* cakes.

Work in small groups. Imagine you are caring for a young child who has become very angry about something. How can you get the child to think about something else and stop being angry? What would you do? Discuss your ideas in English and write them down. Report your ideas to another group.

3. **Applying:** The story shows us that the tiger was a bully. He made others afraid because he was big and powerful. Work with a partner and discuss (in English) - What can you do if someone bigger and stronger than you makes you feel afraid, or is trying to make you do something you don’t want to do? Make some notes, then make a poster to show your ideas. Explain your poster to others.

4. **Evaluating:** The two birds had to steal the things they needed to make the *pitha* cakes. The rice flour and the brown sugar came from the farmer’s store house, the pot came from the potter, and the wood came from the tiger’s forest. What do you think of this? Was it OK? Can you think of another way two birds could have gotten the things they needed without stealing? Should the tiger have punished the two birds for stealing? Give reasons for your answer.

5. **Creating:** Work in a group of four or five people. Turn this story into a play. Write a script in English, and give everyone in your group something to say and do in your play. What things would you need to make or collect to make your play more interesting? Perform your play for others. Make it fun!

