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The Tale of Tales

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Tony Mitton

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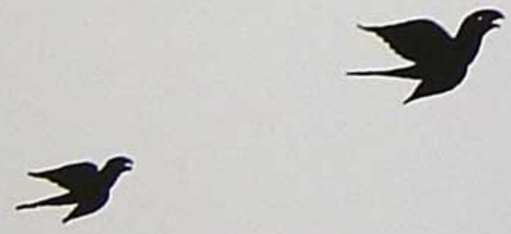
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The Tale of Tales







Tony Mitton

Illustrated by Peter Bailey

PICTURE CORGI



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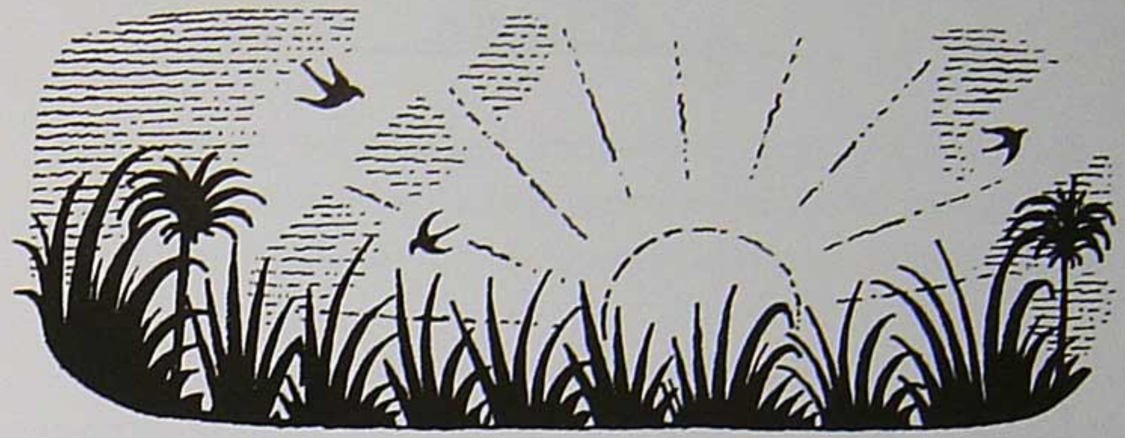
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To Holly & Daisy, who heard it first.
And to Maria, who read it to them.

T.M.

For Felix and Oscar with love.

P.B.



Once upon a time, in a jungle far, far away, a bright new day was just beginning. As the sun came up, steam rose in wisps from the treetops. The air was full of the shrieks and calls of the animals, and the cries of the birds. It was a morning like so many mornings in the jungle. But this morning was special. For it was the morning of The Tale of Tales, and of the Story Road that led to it. And it is just at this moment that our story begins, with one particular monkey.

Come. Come closer and listen.



Monkey stretched and yawned. He picked a flea or two out of his hairy belly, scratched himself all over and climbed



nimbly up the mango tree to get his breakfast. He was just reaching out for a plump, ripe fruit, when he heard the sound of voices floating down from above. Squawky voices.



"Hmm. Parrots," he thought to himself. "I wonder what the gossip's about."

So up he went to sneak a listen. The voice was speaking slowly and strongly, pausing for effect once the words were spoken,

"And they do say it's to be the greatest story ever, The Tale of Tales . . ."



"Well," replied the other. "It's only a short flight from here to Volcano Valley, for those of us with wings. Let's make a day of it. Let's preen our fine feathers and fly off to hear this Tale of Tales. I can hardly wait. I wonder what it'll be about?"

"Me too," said the first. "Tell you what

though. Let's keep this to ourselves. We don't want too many ground animals turning up. They're so noisy and they take up too much room. Let's keep this for the birds. We'll get to hear better that way."

That was as much as Monkey needed to hear. Curious and eager as ever, he was down that tree in no time, and working out the easiest and quickest route to Volcano Valley.



"Wow!" he chattered to himself. "I've just got to hear that. The Tale of Tales!" And he set off at once through the jungle.

Whack! At the first bend in the trail he walked slap into Elephant who was coming the other way.

"Steady," rumbled Elephant. "Steady, old friend. What's the rush so early in



the morning?" Gently, he used his trunk to lift Monkey to his feet and dust him off.

"It's the greatest story ever, The Tale of Tales!" gibbered Monkey.

"Where?" said Elephant, looking around as if he expected to see it hovering nearby in the jungle.



"Volcano Valley. Later today. I heard two parrots squawking about it up the mango tree just now. They weren't going to tell us. But I'm going to hear it anyway. I'm not missing that for anything. Are you coming? Go on. Think of it. The Tale of Tales."

"Well, I do like a good story," said Elephant thoughtfully. "And it is very tempting, if it really is the greatest ever. I suppose there's only one way to find out."

"Yes," said Monkey scrambling up to sit on Elephant's neck. "And if I sit up here we can chat as we go



"Well, I do like a good story," said Elephant thoughtfully.