



The Greedy Calculator

This book Belongs To: _____

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Today we go round the world to India, a very spiritual country, a place where even the cows are sacred.

Kutaka is a boy who lives in India in a city on the banks of the River Ganges. He is a disciple of a monk called Luntika, a wise man who is his teacher.



One day, a great feast was held and a rich merchant decided to give Luntika some cakes. Wonderful! But the problem was that the cakes had to be fetched from the other side of the city.

So the monk called Kutaka to run the errand.

“Take this tray,” he told the boy, “and fetch the cakes the merchant has for

me. Hurry up and no dallying,” he added. **“**Make haste and don’t stop for anything. I’m very hungry and I want those cakes for my snack. Oh! and don’t eat them - I know you!” he warned.

Kutaka obeyed him. He took the tray and wended his way through the city.

It took Kutaka some time to cross the city and reach the merchant’s house. The boy knocked on the door and a servant, wearing a cook’s hat, answered straight away. He was carrying eight cream tarts, each one with a glacé cherry on top.



“Just a moment,” said the servant, “I want to count them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Yes, eight, that’s the right number. There you are. Now run along home. Oh, and give the monk my best regards.”



Kutaka thanked him and started out for home.

As he made his way through the city’s narrow streets, Kutaka walked as in a trance. The poor boy simply couldn’t take his eyes off the eight cakes in the tray.

“They look delicious,” thought Kutaka. “And so tempting, filled with cream

and each one is topped off with a sweet cherry. Mmmmm! I’m famished! I don’t know if I can resist eating them!”

In fact, the temptation was so great that Kutaka made a quick mental calculation.

“When I get home, the monk will surely give me my share of the cakes. There are eight cakes and half are mine. Let’s see, that makes four. So, why wait? I’ll eat four and keep the rest for my master.”

He didn’t think twice. Kutaka gobbled up four tarts in next to no time.



Three streets further on, Kutaka felt hungry again.

“Mmmmm! They really tasty!” he said to himself.

He started calculating in his head again:

"Now there are just four tarts left. But if I don't say anything, my master will think the merchant only gave me four. That means that if half are mine, I can still eat another two tarts. You know what? I'll eat them now and we'll sort it out later."

And without another thought, he ate two more tarts.

A few yards further on, Kutaka looked at the tarts and started calculating once again:

"There are now two tarts left. I'll tell the master that I was given just two tarts and that I ate one on the way," he thought.

So Kutaka ate the tart slowly, savouring every mouthful.

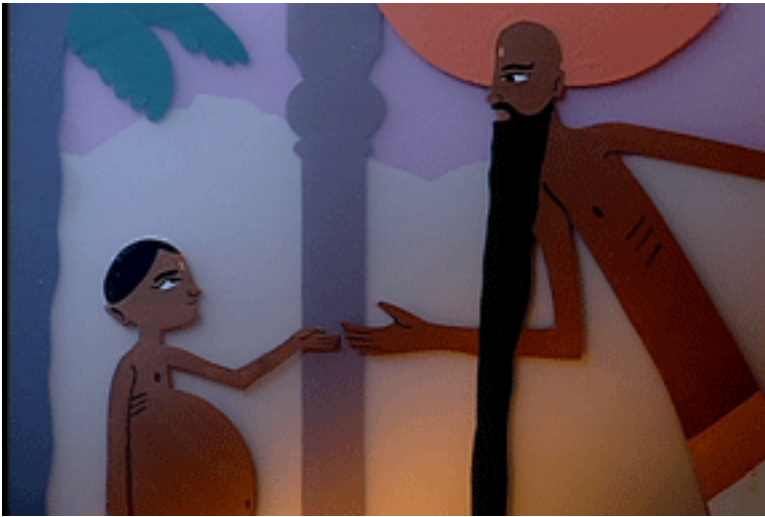


By now, the boy was stuffed with cream and cherries and there was only one tart left on the tray. But he still hadn't had his fill and he started calculating again:

"There's only one left! But I'm still hungry. I know! I'll tell the master that I was given just one tart and that I ate my half on the way back."

And without hesitating, Kutaka ate half of the last tart faster than you can say "Jack Robinson".

When the boy got back and the monk saw that there was just half a tart on the tray, he lost his temper.



“What’s going on?” he asked, furiously. “Where are the tarts for my snack?” he shouted.

“I’m very sorry, master,” said Kutaka. “The merchant’s servant gave me eight tarts and I thought half of them were for me, so I ate them. The same thought kept haunting me and so I ate half of the remaining half. Then I ate half,

of half, of half of the tarts. And this is all that’s left. Half a tart. You will forgive me, my master, but for such a morsel, it’s hardly worth even tasting it!”

And without further ado, Kutaka gobbled up the last piece of tart before Luntika’s very eyes.

The greedy calculator had eaten the eight tarts all by himself!

From that day on, monk Luntika went personally to fetch his own tarts. Needless to say, he never sent Kutaka on such an errand ever again.



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