



*more jāṭaka tales*  
**The Stolen Plow**



At one time there were two traders who were great friends. One of them lived in a small village, and one lived in a large town near-by. One day the village trader took his plow to the large town to have it mended. Then he left it with the trader who lived there. After some time the town trader sold the plow, and kept the money. When the trader from the village came to get his plow the town trader said, "The mice have eaten your plow." "That is strange! How could mice eat such a thing?" said the village trader.

That afternoon when all the children went down to the river to go swimming, the village trader took the town trader's little son to the house of a friend saying, "Please keep this little boy here until I come back for him."

By and by the villager went back to the town trader's house. "Where is my son? He went away with you. Why didn't you bring him back?" asked the town trader.

"I took him with me and left him on the bank of the river while I went down into the water," said the villager. "While I was swimming about a big bird seized your son, and flew up into the air with him. I shouted, but I could not make the bird let go," he said.

"That cannot be true," cried the town trader. "No bird could carry off a boy. I will go to the court, and you will have to go there, and tell the judge."

The villager said, "As you please"; and they both went to the court. The town trader said to the judge:

"This fellow took my son with him to the river, and when I asked where the boy was, he said that a bird had carried him off." "What have you to say?" said the judge to the village trader. "I told the father that I took the boy with me, and that a bird had carried him off," said the village trader. "But where in the world are there birds strong enough to carry off boys?" said the judge.

"I have a question to ask you," answered the village trader. "If birds cannot carry off boys, can mice eat plows?" "What do you mean by that?" asked the judge. "I left my good plow with this man. When I came for it he told me that the mice had eaten it. If mice eat plows, then birds carry off boys; but if mice cannot do this, neither can birds carry off boys. This man says the mice ate my plow."

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The judge said to the town trader, “Give back the plow to this man, and he will give your son back to you.” And the two traders went out of the court, and by night-time one had his son back again, and the other had his plow.

