

Bizi, The Little Reindeer Calf

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Illustrations

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The reindeer calf Bizi was sniffing around a tuft of reindeer moss and came across a patch of particularly juicy crowberries. He was about to dig in when he heard a commotion coming from the trees. He didn't even have time to look up before he was lying on his back with all four legs up in the air. When he opened his eyes a few moments later, he saw a huge reindeer standing above him, panting so hard that its tongue was hanging out of its mouth.

– You okay, kiddo? it asked.

Bizi nodded, a little confused.

– Was it *you* who knocked me over? Bizi asked.

– Yeah, you were standing right in the middle of my running track, and now I'm five seconds behind! the reindeer replied.

– Five seconds behind? Bizi asked.

– Well, ten now, the reindeer panted.

– Come on, get up and we'll race. Now I have to start all over again.

– Race? Where? Bizi asked.



– Yes, race! All the way to the finish line. Come on, get up! the reindeer said, shaking his head as he stomped impatiently.

Bizi noticed that the reindeer didn't have any horns, which was strange since it was pretty big and strong. It had a watch with big, ticking clock hands hanging around its neck.

Bizi tottered out of the patch of reindeer moss.

– Why don't you have any horns? he asked.

The reindeer turned his head away. He was breathing a little less heavily now.

– Horns would just slow me down, and then I wouldn't be able to get such good times, he replied.

– What times are you talking about? Bizi asked. I guess right now is the best time for big, juicy crowberries!

– Crowberries, hah! the reindeer snorted. I'm obviously talking about racing times. But I do have to admit, it would be nice to have horns ... I was so sad and ashamed when mine were sawed off. I knew that all the pretty ladies wouldn't look at me anymore, he continued, gobbling down a few mouthfuls of crowberries.



– Why do you race? And what’s your name? Bizi asked.

– I race to *win*, of course! My name is Šuvon because I’m so fast. I suppose you’ve heard about me? I’m the best racing reindeer in the region, and now I’m training for world championships, Šuvon said.

He started getting restless again.

– Come on then, let’s race! I bet you can’t catch me! he shouted as he took off – but not so fast that Bizi couldn’t keep up at least a little bit.

– Where are we racing to? Bizi called out as he tried to pick the pace.

– To that big rock over there! Šuvon shouted back, speeding up so much that he kicked up a spray of reindeer moss behind him. Bizi squeezed his eyes shut and ran as fast as he could, so fast that he could feel every muscle in his body. When he got to the big rock, Šuvon was already lying there, completely out of breath.

– Thirty seconds. My time was fifteen seconds. Remember that whenever you get to the finish line, you should throw yourself on the ground and pant.

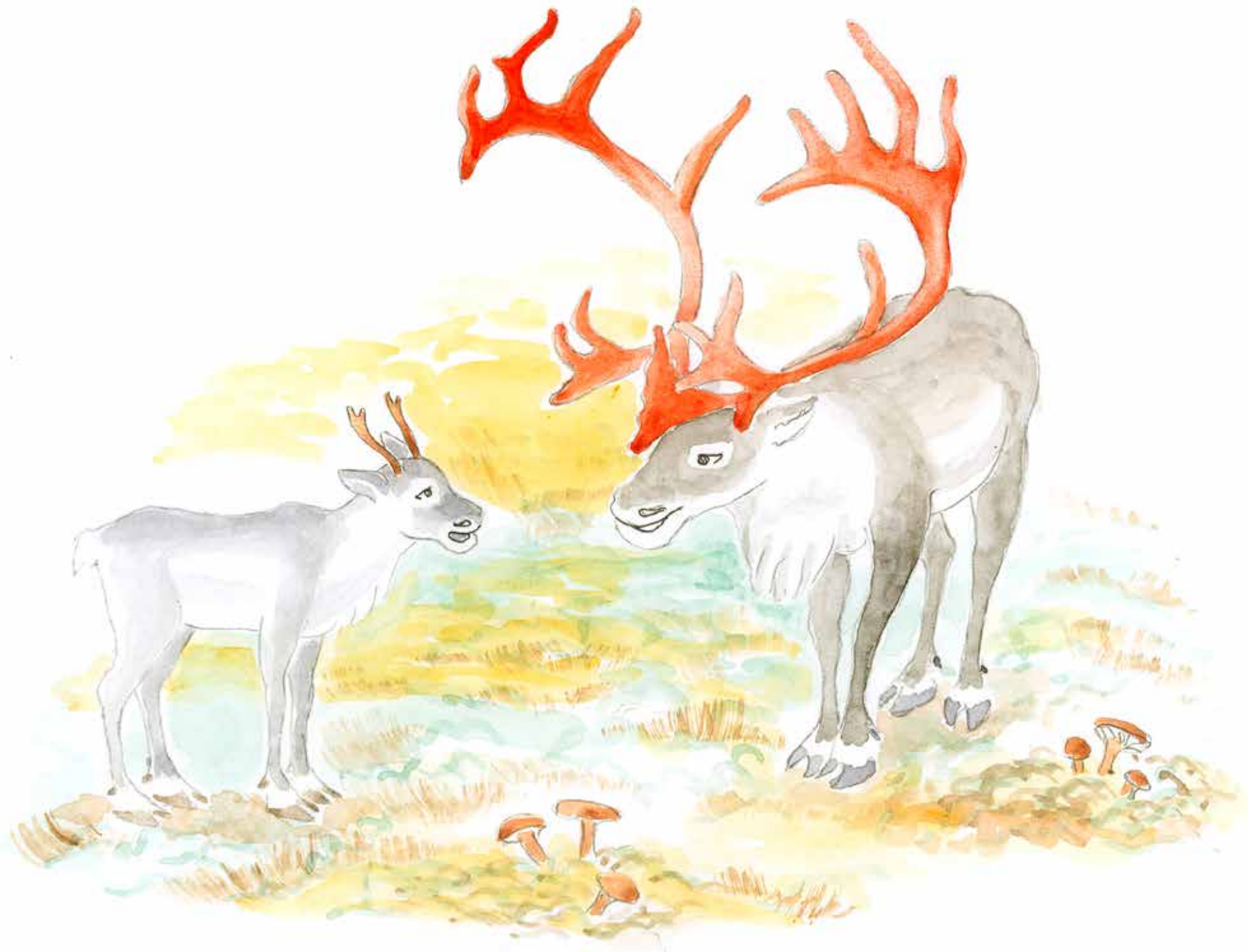
Bizi lay down heavily, huffing and puffing just as much as Šuvon.

- Not like *that*, Šuvon said. Like *this*! You have to pant so your tongue hangs out of your mouth. Come on, let's race again!
- Already? Bizi panted. We just raced, and you won!
- You have to train if you want to win! Šuvon said, still out of breath. He hopped back up.
- What do you get if you win? Bizi wondered.
- A big gold medal around my neck and a green leaf crown.
- Can you eat it? Bizi asked.
- Well, I guess you can eat the leaf crown, but not the gold medal. And you also get the honor of having the best time in the whole world, Šuvon said, grinning.
- What do they do with the time? Bizi asked.
- They write it down in the computers and books, Šuvon explained.
- And then what? Bizi wanted to know.
- Then I can be proud of the fact that I ran so fast that I have the best time in the world, Šuvon said triumphantly.
- But what do you use the time for? Bizi asked.

- To run even faster! Šuvon replied.
- Do you time yourself again, then?
- Ahh, I don't think you really understand, Šuvon sighed. You have to try to be a racing reindeer yourself. Come here and I'll check out your muscles. Hmm, you have pretty well-developed muscles and strong legs. I'll start the stopwatch again and we can race to the top of that mountain over there. Come on!

Bizi was starting to get a bit overwhelmed by Šuvon's talk about seconds and times and a little tired of the reindeer constantly pestering him to race. And then there was all of this about horns. Bizi was still a pretty small reindeer, but he dreamed about having big, powerful horns someday. He'd wanted them ever since he was a little calf.

- Come on, let's race! Šuvon whined. We've only run once!
 - Is it really that much fun? Bizi asked.
 - Training to be a racing reindeer is the best thing in the whole world, kiddo! But I have to get going if you don't want to race. I don't have a single training second to waste!
- Šuvon started his stopwatch again and sprinted away.



– See you on the racetrack! Remember to throw yourself on the ground with your tongue hanging out when you cross the finish line, he shouted before disappearing over a hill.

The next day, Bizi was standing next to a vast cloudberry marsh covered in juicy orange and red berries, but he was looking for mushrooms. He'd heard that mushrooms were a real reindeer delicacy and wanted to try some.

– But what if they aren't as good as everyone says? he thought, sniffing around. Then he spotted a tasty-looking yellowish mushroom a bit further off.

All of a sudden, the biggest reindeer Bizi had ever seen in his life appeared. It ate the very mushroom Bizi had had his eye on.

– Yum, yum, yum! Chanterelles! he heard the reindeer mumble, his enormous horns shaking. Are there any more around here?

– Do they taste good? Bizi asked tentatively. This reindeer didn't look particularly tame.