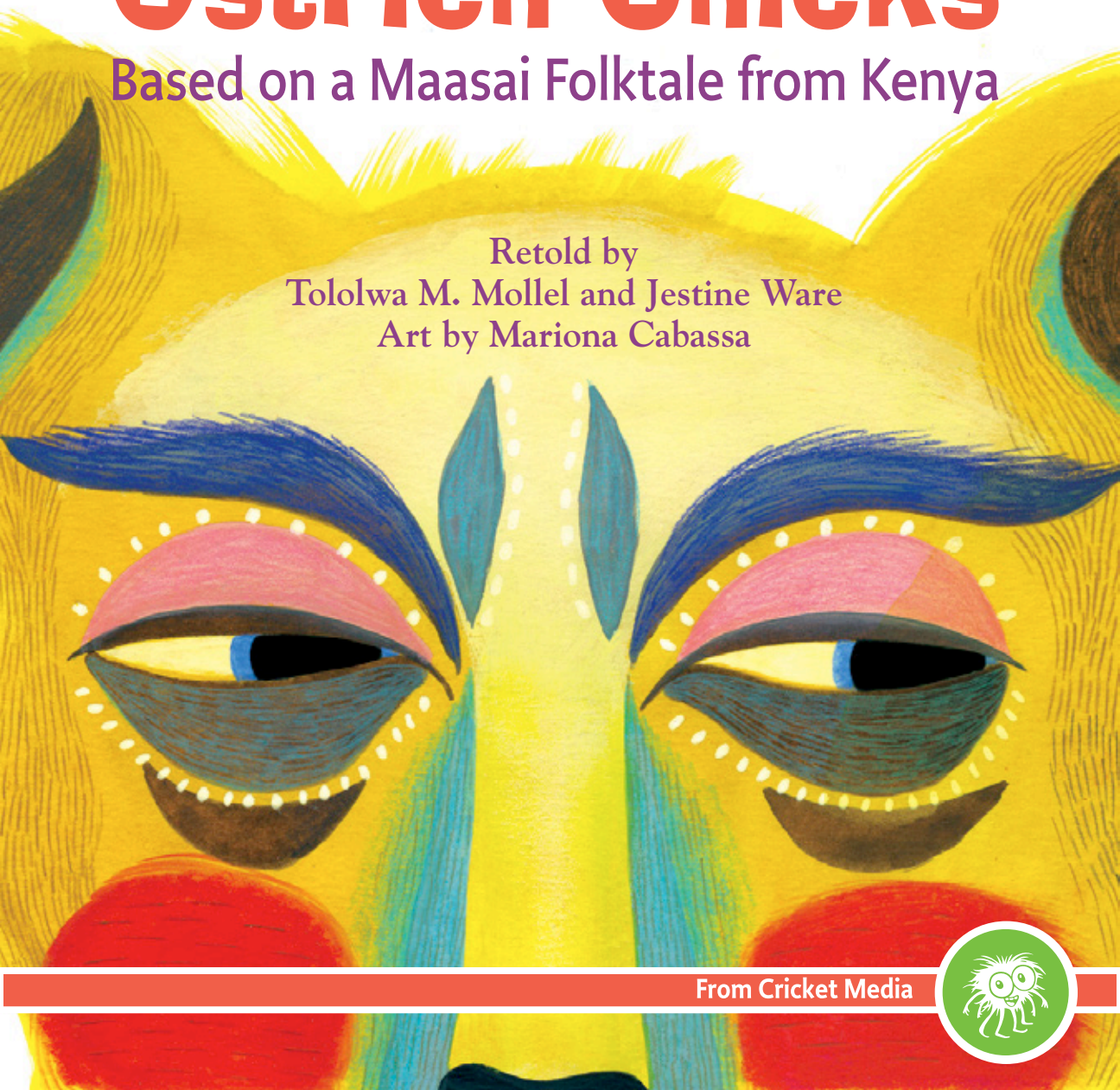


Fun stories from **Spider**[®]

Lipong and the Ostrich Chicks

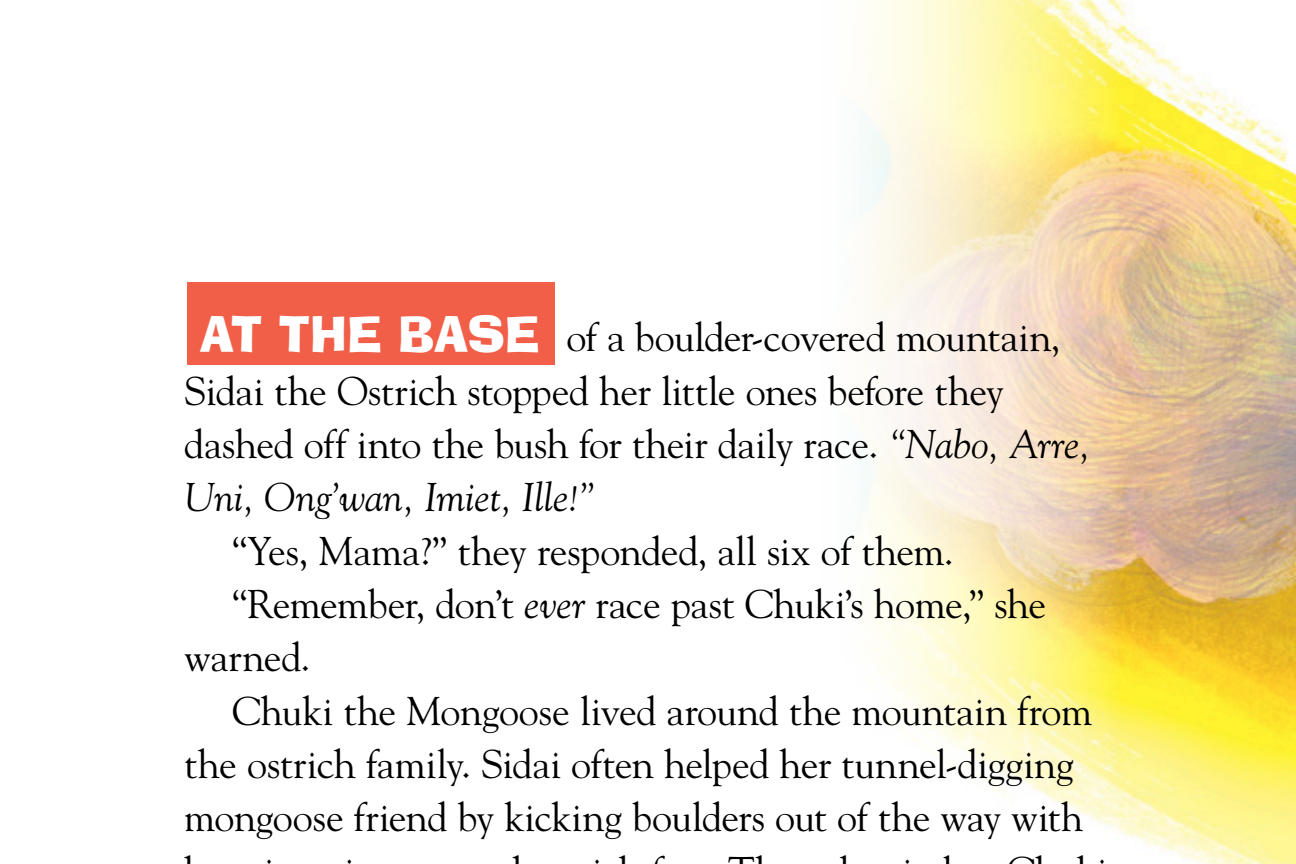
Based on a Maasai Folktale from Kenya

Retold by
Tololwa M. Mollel and Jestine Ware
Art by Mariona Cabassa



From Cricket Media





AT THE BASE of a boulder-covered mountain, Sidai the Ostrich stopped her little ones before they dashed off into the bush for their daily race. “*Nabo, Arre, Uni, Ong’wan, Imiet, Ille!*”

“Yes, Mama!” they responded, all six of them.

“Remember, don’t *ever* race past Chuki’s home,” she warned.

Chuki the Mongoose lived around the mountain from the ostrich family. Sidai often helped her tunnel-digging mongoose friend by kicking boulders out of the way with her gigantic two-toed ostrich feet. Then the tireless Chuki could dig yet another tunnel.

“And you know *why* not to go there?” Sidai asked her children.

“Yes, Mama!” they said and sped off, proud of their powerful legs that grew longer and faster by the day. Their race soon brought them to Chuki’s home.

Arre, the second-hatched ostrich, said, “Let’s have another race.”

Ille, the sixth-hatched ostrich, agreed. “Good idea. I want to be first this time. Let’s go!”

Uni, the third-hatched ostrich, cried, “No, we shouldn’t!”



But the others had already started to race again, past Chuki's home. Uni reluctantly followed the other chicks, thinking, "Someone needs to keep them out of trouble."

Halfway around the mountain, Lipong the Lioness with her big, sharp teeth suddenly stood in their path. "Well, well, well." She padded forward. She circled the frightened ostrich chicks and purred, "I've been hoping to meet you. Are you hungry from racing? Would you like something to eat?"

"Perhaps another time," Uni said anxiously.

But the other ostrich chicks, who could never say no to a meal, especially with their stomachs grumbling, followed Lipong into her den. Nabo and Imiet were first in line.

"Someone needs to look out for them," thought Uni with a sigh. She ran after her siblings.





When all the ostriches had run inside, Lipong left the cave and stopped up its mouth with a big rock. Confident the chicks couldn't escape, she went into the bush. She returned with lots of locusts and delicious seeds from fallen baobab fruit. Most of the chicks pecked greedily at the food, but Uni, worried, didn't eat very much.



When her children didn't return, Sidai suspected the worst. Frantic with worry, she followed the tiny two-toed footprints. She soon reached the outside of Lipong's cave and angrily demanded, "Give me back my little ones!"

From inside the cave, Lipong replied, "They are mine now!"

Sidai called out: "*Nabo, Arre, Uni, Ong'wan, Imiet, Ille!* Come out, come out, my children. Come out to Mama!"

Lipong hissed fiercely at the little ostriches, "Don't move! I'm a far better Mama to you than *she* could ever be." She smiled sweetly. "See how well I've been feeding you?"

The terrified chicks kept quiet and still.

Hearing nothing, Sidai thought, "I'll find someone to help me." First, she came across Baboon on a tree branch and told him what had happened.

"Sorry, can't help you," replied the Baboon. "No one messes with Lipong."

Down a creek, Sidai approached Jackal, who replied, "My advice? Kiss your little ones goodbye."

Sidai met Hyena next. After listening to her, he smacked his lips. "Lucky Lipong! I wouldn't mind having one of your chicks myself."



The mother ostrich, nearly at her wit's end, saw Chuki dragging himself out of a tunnel.

"Where have you been?" Sidai cried.

"Tell me everything," said Chuki.



Inside the den, Lipong had given the chicks even more food. “Eat, eat, my young ones, and grow big and round for your dear Mama.” She went out to scavenge for more treats to fatten them up, again trapping the chicks inside.

While Lipong was out, Uni noticed movement at the back of the den. A moment later, out of a carefully hidden mouth of a tunnel, poked the snout of Chuki the Mongoose. Uni gasped, unsure of her eyes. The other ostrich siblings, who were busy eating, didn’t notice.

“Look! It’s Mongoose,” Uni told the others. “He can help us escape!” But her siblings were eager to eat just a little longer. “Quickly, let’s go before it’s too late!” she urged.

When they didn’t move, an idea came to her. “Forget about *this* food,” she told them. “Mama will celebrate our return with a massive feast!”

Her siblings finally raised their heads. “A feast?” Imiet asked.

“Let’s go!” said Ong’wan.

The ostrich chicks followed Chuki through the tunnel. It led them to a familiar place.

“Home!” the chicks exclaimed, emerging from Chuki’s tunnel.

“My little ones! Are you all here?” she said, counting them to make sure: “Nabo, Arre, Uni, Ong’wan, Imiet, Ille!”

“Yes, Mama!” they responded, all six of them.



Uni told the whole story, and Sidai the Ostrich praised her daughter. “How clever you are!” Then Sidai thanked Chuki and laughed. “I can’t believe you dug a tunnel all the way here. And one right inside the den of Lipong the Lioness herself!”

Chuki looked back at the opening they had just come from. “Someone has to keep an eye on that cat!”

Uni grinned at Chuki. “I wish I could see her face when she finds out we’re gone.” Her stomach grumbled, and she turned to Sidai. “But a celebration feast would be even better! Right, Mama?” 🕷️





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