



## What to trade for star fruit?

There was a star fruit tree in Tho's home yard. The tree was loaded with fruit all year round.

Dad said it was a four-season tree. At any season purple flowers were blooming on some branches of the tree and small green young star fruit were hidden among the foliage. The ripe star fruits were easy to find: they turned into a shining honey-yellow color and exerted a delicate essence that made your mouth water.

Tho and her friends, Chi and Phuc, played the trading game in the cool shade of the old star fruit tree almost every day. Sometimes the wind blew through the tree, and ripe star fruit dropped here and there, Tho and her friends ran around to pick up the fruit, to eat, and to throw at each other for fun.

Once there was a television show, *Gold Traded for Star Fruit*. After watching the drama, Tho wondered: "Why have we never seen a phoenix come to eat our star fruit, Mom?"

Mom laughed: "What's left for phoenix after you kids have eaten and thrown away them all?"

Tho thought in silence for a while. On the following day, Tho and her friends stopped throwing star fruit at one another. The old tree, left alone by the kids, started to recover. Green fruits that were not picked young had a chance to grow big and get ripe. The tree when loaded with ripe fruit looked gorgeous again. But yet phoenix was not to visit!

Tho and other kids waited and waited, but nothing happened. They got bored and forgot about phoenix. Starfruit lay everywhere on the ground but no one cared.

Then Tho got up and ran to the yard one morning, realizing something strange had happened: There was not a single star fruit on the empty ground! Ah, phoenix must have come to eat all the star fruit, then left. Tho stood in the middle of the yard feeling so excited.







“Oh phoenix, please come back and eat more if you like our star fruit. The tree is still loaded with fruit and we can’t eat all of them.” She prayed aloud.

Other kids were delighted, too.

“Would phoenix give us gold for star fruit?” They asked.

“No, I don’t like gold.” Chi said. “I wish phoenix would give us chocolate in exchange for star fruit.”

“We should stay up tonight to see phoenix come for the star fruit.”

“Right. I’ve never seen a phoenix.”

So the kids skipped the cartoon show that night to sit around watching the old tree.

The cool breeze gently blew Chi’s ponytail as if lulling her; as a result, Chi nodded her head a few times and fell asleep. Next was Phuc, who rolled out on the deck taking her nap. Her father had to come to take her home. Tho tried to keep her eyes wide open and waited and waited...

Oh, who had put her on her bed? Tho woke up, rubbed her eyes, pulled up the mosquito net, and looked at the clock on the wall: Six o’clock. Was it morning again? Tho ran to the window looking out at the garden. There!

Tho stood still and startled with her mouth and her eyes wide open. The star fruit tree had been shaken, the fruit dropped all over the ground, and a boy was hurriedly putting the fruit into a sedge bag.





Then he hastily pushed the bag through the rail and quickly climbed over the fence to jump out. Now Tho was quite awake and yelled: “Thief! Thief!”

That woke her elder brother Hai who was sleeping in the bed nearby. He jumped up asking: “Where? Where?”

He aimed himself in the direction Tho pointed, jumped out of the window, ran across the garden, and because the gate was locked, he did what “the thief” had done, jumped over the fence, and ran after “the thief”.

Everyone in Tho’s house was already up and ran out to the yard. “The thief” was caught with a bag full of star fruit as evidence. He was scared.

“I took only star fruit. I didn’t take anything else.” He said.

Dad said: “You could just ask me if you want. What if you fell and broke your leg while climbing over the fence?”

The boy bit his lips for a moment then said: “Please give me this bag of star fruit to treat my grandma’s cough. Granny heard that star fruit could clean the lungs, and soothe the cough... But I don’t have money to buy star fruit for her.”

“Poor boy! Let me pick the ripe ones on the tree, still clean and fresh, to make a gift for your granny.” Dad said.

Dad also told Tho and Hai to help the boy bring the star fruit to his granny. Granny was so moved. She said: “I am not phoenix, how can I pay you for the star fruit?”

Both Tho and Hai shook their heads smiling. They didn’t expect the boy’s grandma to pay them anything. They would be happy to see her recover quickly.

## Three ants

Once upon a time, Golden Ant, Fire Ant and Black Ant were living together in a roundhouse made of bamboo leaves. It was a time when the ants only ate sesame and sesame seeds were too abundant to count. Every time they stepped out the door, they would encounter sesame. They did nothing but take sesame seeds into the house to eat.

One afternoon, Golden Ant looked at the sky, made a long yawn, and said indifferently: “It’s cloudy as if it’s going to rain. Sesame seeds might be washed away in the rain.”

Black Ant put his arms around his knees, looked out at the alley, and didn’t bother to move a single whisker.

“Sesame seeds must be taken into the house.” Said he.

The Fire Ant was lying in the hammock, keeping silent, pretending to be asleep, and assuming that Golden Ant and Black Ant would bring the sesame into the house.

In the afternoon, Fire Ant woke up and realized that sesame seeds were still in the yard, and Black Ant and Golden Ant were still where they had been, apparently asleep.

Fire Ant stretched out and spoke loudly: “The rain is coming. Sesame seeds must be brought into the house immediately.”

Even though Fire Ant deliberately spoke so loudly that the bamboo-leaf wall shook, the other two ants did not move. Fire Ant stood up looking at the sesame seeds. He then looked at Yellow Ant and Black Ant in dismay. Finally, Fire Ant lay down in the hammock and went back to sleep.

