

A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



GAWGAWLAYLAY



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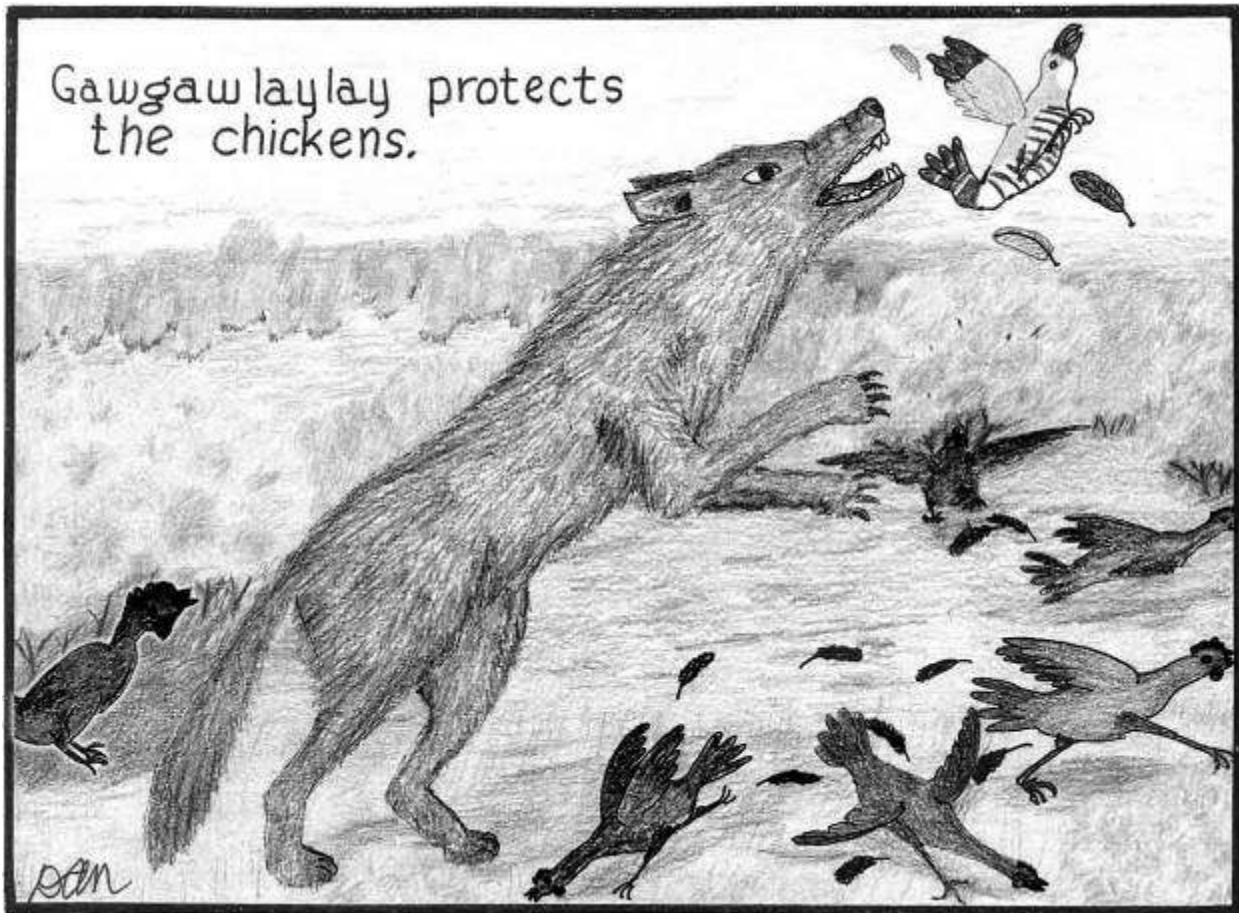
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By Spark Team



GAWGAWLAYLAY (G>g>lélé)

Joseph Kolleh - Kpelle

Note to the reader: Words and phrases typical of West Africa are retained and indicated by italics.

When God created all things, among all the animals He made the chickens. He saw that the chickens needed protection, so he gave them a four-footed animal to care for them. Gawgawlaylay, the four footed animal, was to protect them. When Hawk came looking for chicken to eat, Gawgawlaylay would fight the hawk, then the chickens could run and hide under the bushes so Hawk could not get them. Sometimes he would even catch Hawk and kill him.

Gawgawlaylay would also protect the chickens from all sorts of dangers. He would chase away Raccoon and other

animals that liked to eat chicken. At night he would sleep under the tree where the chickens were roosting.

Things went on very well for some time; then Hen began to talk, "Why has God put someone over us who is so different. Why he cannot even fly."

"That is true," another said. "Gawgawlaylay even has to stand on four legs, and we only need two. Why should he be over us?"

Another said, "He even has hair instead of feathers, and never lays an egg."

"Besides," said Hen, "We have good leaders among ourselves. Look at big Rooster there. Now he would make a good leader for us. I think God should let us have an election to choose our own leader."

So they went to God. "God, Gawgawlaylay is not at all like the rest of us. We want a leader who is like us. We want Rooster to be our leader."

God said, "Are you sure that you do not need Gawgawlaylay? Do you think that Rooster can take care of you and lead you?"

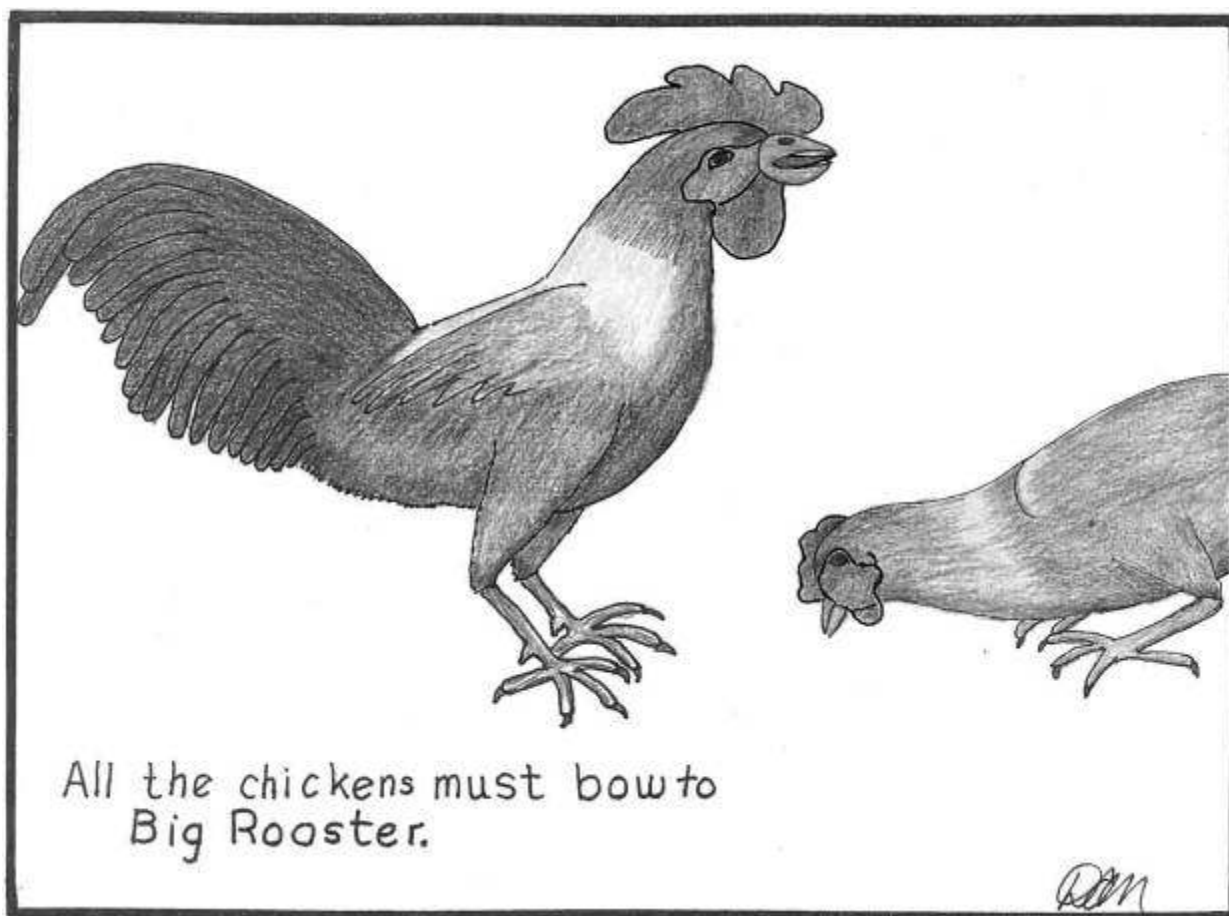
"Oh, yes, yes," they cried. "Rooster is just like us. We will follow him."

"All right," God said to the chickens, "Go hold your election. Then come tell me whom you have chosen."

So the chickens went off to hold their election. There was much cackling, crowing and flapping of wings.

Big Rooster boasted, "I am the biggest rooster, so I should be the leader."

Skinny Rooster said, "But I am a better fighter than any of you. I should be the leader."



“You want to fight me?” Big Rooster demanded.

But Skinny Rooster suddenly saw something on the ground to pick at. Big Rooster flapped his wings, crowed and turned his back on Skinny Rooster.

Then Pretty Rooster suggested, “I should be leader. I am so pretty that it would look good if I were leader.”

Big Rooster crowed loudly and pushed Pretty Rooster with his shoulder. “Are you saying I am ugly?”

Pretty Rooster looked at the ground and Big Rooster gave him a hard peck on the head.

Well, you guessed it. All the chickens said Big Rooster should be leader.

When they went back to God with the election results, God told Gawgawlaylay that he did not need to guard and lead the

chickens anymore. He was free. So, Gawgawlaylay went off to care for his own business.

Then God said to Big Rooster, "Now Big Rooster, you take good care of all these chickens. You must protect them and lead them to good food. Be careful to do your job well. And especially watch out for Hawk!"

Big Rooster was very proud to be head over all the chickens. He went strutting around. He proudly led the chickens to where he thought they could find good food. He pecked on the heads of any who would not bow to him. He walked around flapping his wings and crowing loudly so everyone would look at him. He was proud to be head over all the chickens.

Then one day Hawk came flying over. He was hungry for chicken. He saw some young chickens on the ground that looked like good meat. He swooped down and grabbed one young chicken in his sharp claws. There was no one there to fight with Hawk for Big Rooster was the first one to get under the bushes to hide from Hawk. Most of the chickens were safely under the bushes but Hawk carried off that one poor little chicken.

Now the chickens realized Big Rooster could not protect them. He was as fearful of Hawk as any of them. So, when Hawk flies over, they all run for the low bushes screaming, "Gawgawlaylay! Gawgawlaylay! Gawgawlaylay!" But Gawgawlaylay never comes. He is far away caring for his own business.



And the chickens? They are too ashamed to go back to God and admit they were wrong and really do need Gawgawlaylay.

How often do we feel that God is not doing the right thing for us, when actually what He has done is the best thing for us.

We can read in Genesis, chapters 17 to 50, about Jacob who felt that everything was against him. In Genesis 42:36 Jacob says, “... Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.”

A number of things made Jacob feel discouraged.

1. Jacob’s sons did not get along with each other and did bad things (37:2).

2. Jacob thought Joseph was killed and eaten by a wild beast (37:34).

3. Then there came a great famine. There was very little food (41:56).

4. Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. Simeon was put in prison. They could not come again for any more food unless they brought Benjamin back with them (42:18-20).

But God in His wisdom used all these things to save all of Jacob's family. You see, Joseph was actually head over all of Egypt next to Pharaoh. Joseph could and would care for all of them until the famine was over (50:17, 20).

Perhaps you can think of a time when it seemed something bad was about to happen but God took care of you.

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