

A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



CLEVER DOG



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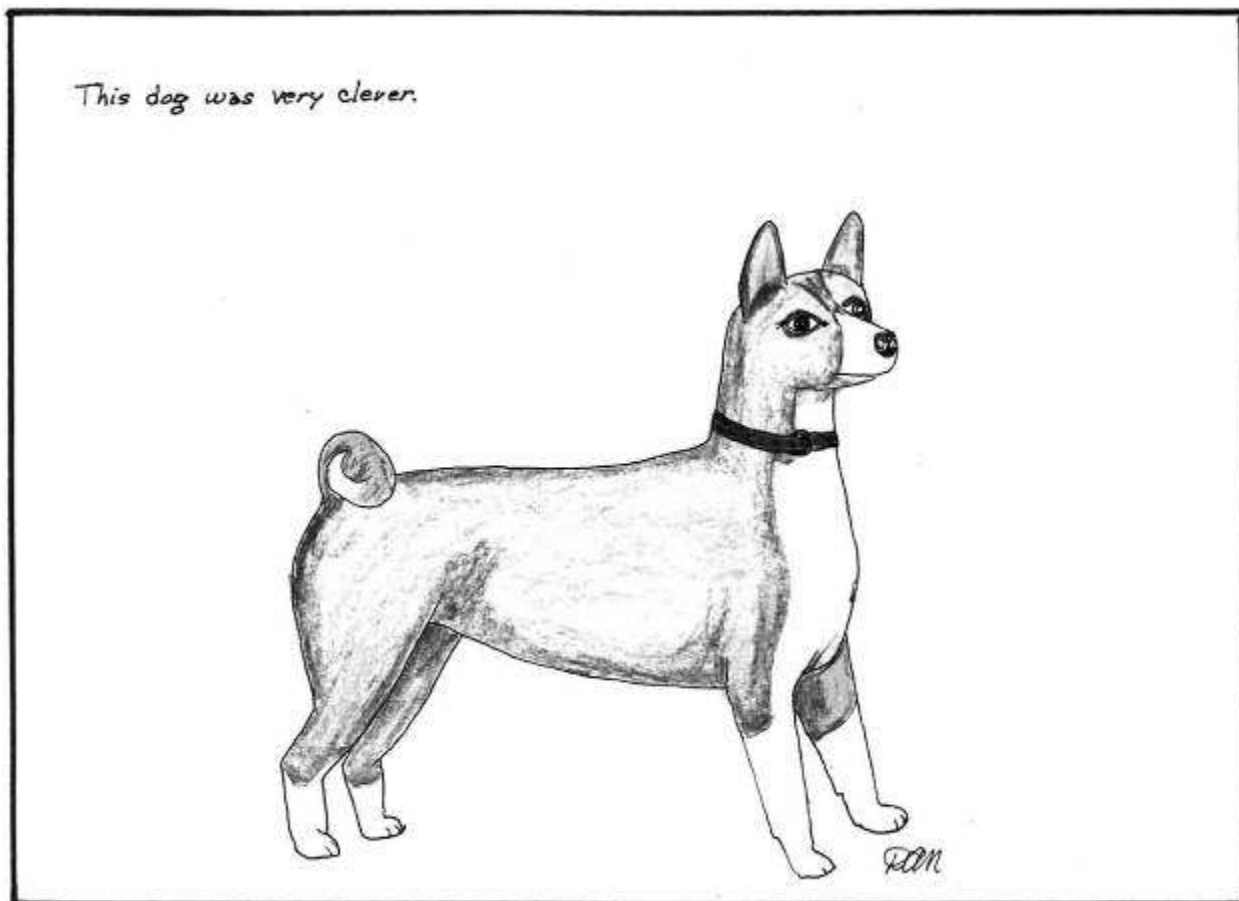
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By Spark Team



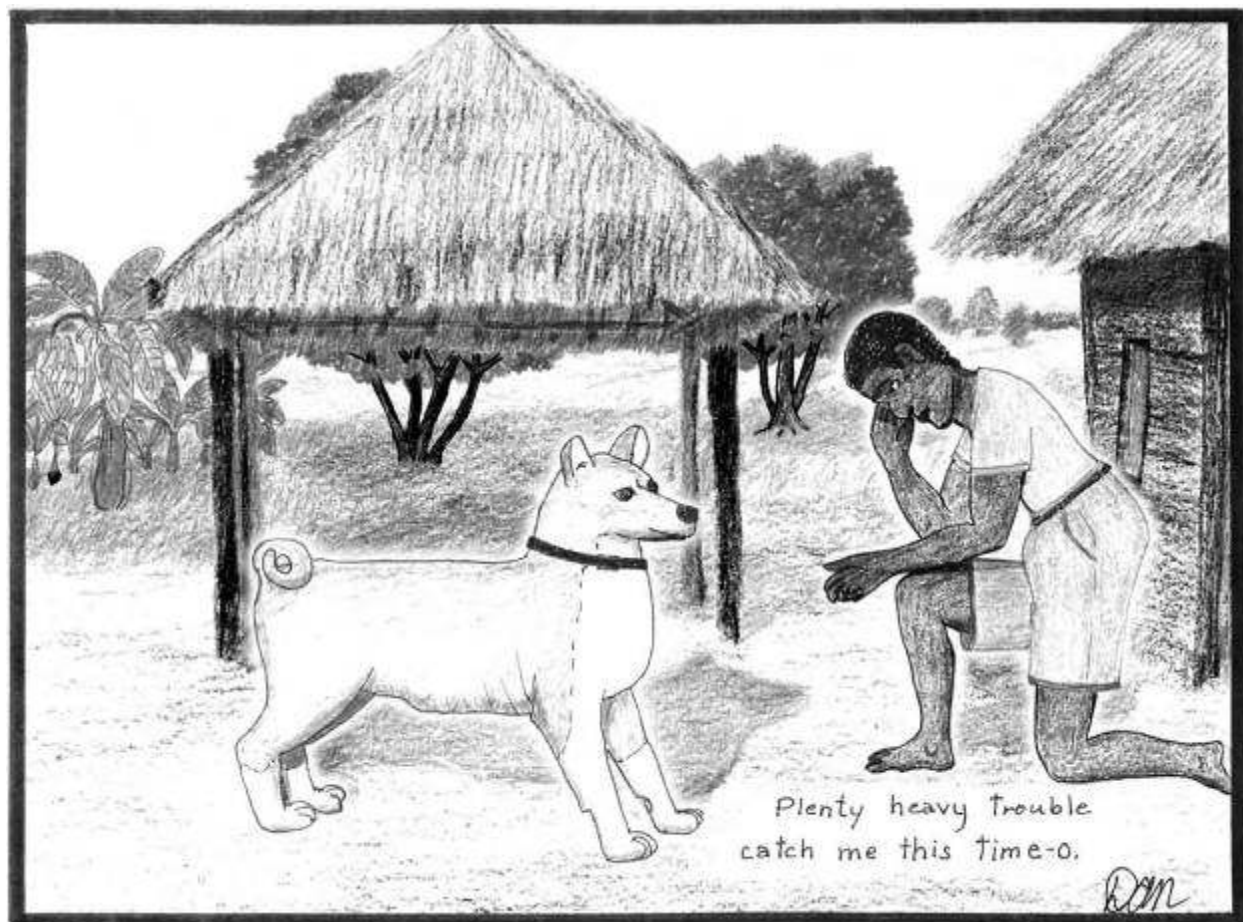
CLEVER DOG

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

“Don’t spoil yourself by acting before you know the true reason.” (Liberian proverb)

Man was in very *heavy* trouble. It would take *plenty money* to get out of this big *palaver*. Man did not have *plenty money*. But Man did know someone who did have *plenty money*. This man was his good friend and would lend some money to him if he gave a pawn.

But what would he give for a pawn? Man thought and thought. The only thing he thought he might be able to use for a pawn was his dog.



Now this dog was clever *too much*. He could watch the house and keep all the *rogues* (thieves) away. He could keep the goats and sheep out of the garden. He could go find a goat, a sheep or a cow that was lost. He could even find a person that was lost. There many things this dog could do.

So, Man sat down, called Dog and explained it all. "Dog, I am in *plenty heavy* trouble. Only big money can settle this big *palaver*. Flumo is a *money man*. He will lend me the money if I leave pawn with him. You are the only pawn I have. I must carry you to Flumo. You must do good for Flumo and his family. Myself, I will try hard to get the money soon so I can pay my debt to Flumo. Then I can bring you back soon. But you must *stay to Flumo* until I come."

Then Man took Dog and went to Flumo. He explained all about the *heavy trouble that had caught him*. He needed *plenty money quick*.

"I am *sorry too much* to hear that *trouble catch* you," said Flumo. "I know that I can trust you, but just so we can stay friends; what pawn will you give me?"

"*I be poor man*," Man said. "I got nothing but Dog here."

"What good is Dog for pawn?" Flumo scoffed.

"So-so dog is not good for pawn," replied Man. "But this dog is *clever too much*. *Rogue* (thief) never comes near my house. My goat is never lost. I always shoot meat when I hunt because Dog leads me to it. There are *plenty clever* things this dog can do." And Man continued to tell all the clever things Dog had done.

After hearing all, Flumo agreed to keep Dog as pawn and lend Man the money.

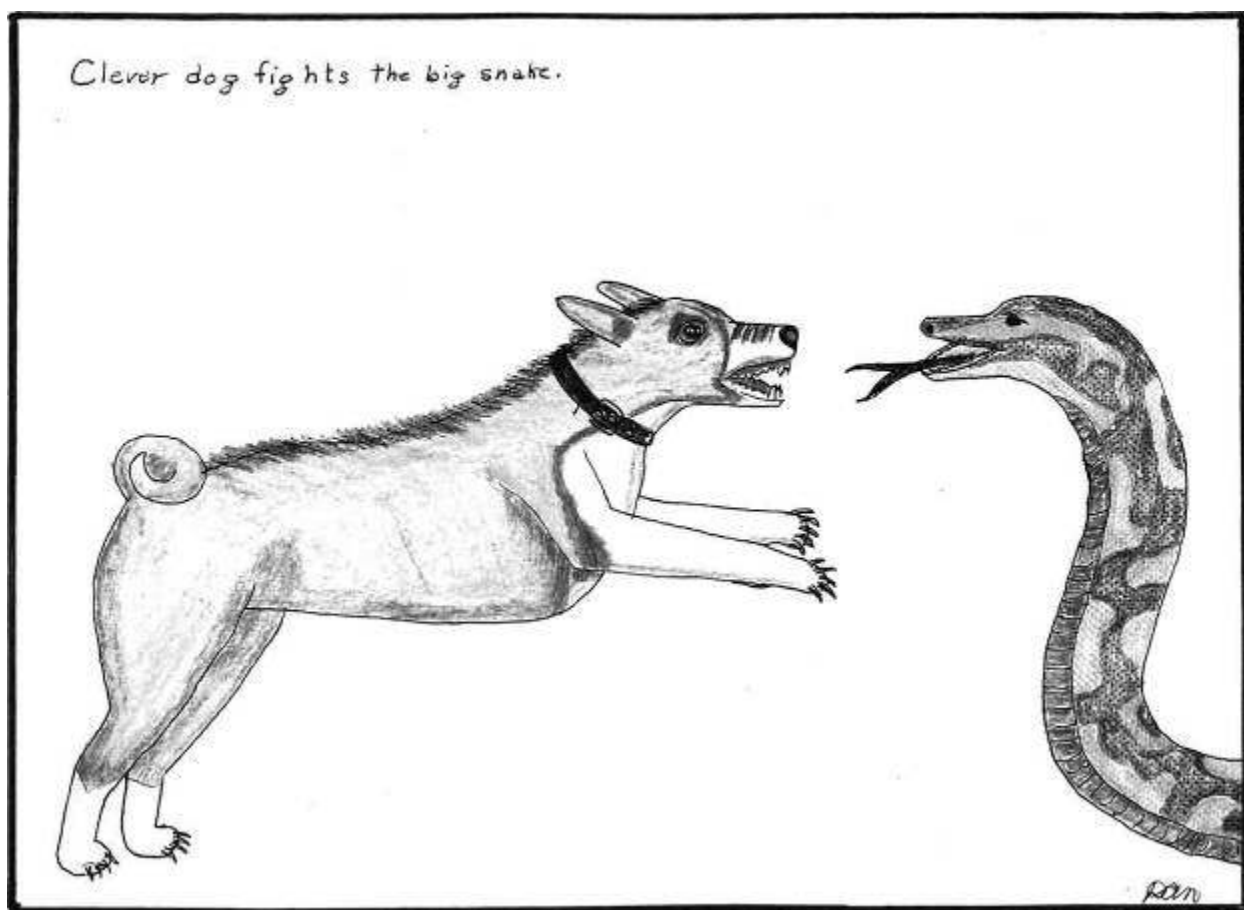
Man sat down, called Dog to him and explained it all again. "You must *stay to Flumo* until I can find the money. You must work for Flumo. You must do everything good that you can for Flumo. Do not *shame me*. You must stay here until I return. *You hear me good-o!* You must stay here until I come."

So Man left Dog with Flumo and took the money to settle the *palaver*. He missed Dog *too much!* He worked very hard to get the money *quick quick*.

Dog - he worked *too hard* for Flumo. He watched the house, helped care for the children, helped the man to hunt, and did all sorts of clever things.

"*Ayah!*" said Flumo. "That dog is *clever too much!*"

Now, every day the small children would spread some mats out under one big coconut palm tree. They would take the baby



out there and play while the mother and older children worked around the house. Dog was always close by to protect them.

But one day a big, big snake came out of the bush wanting to swallow the baby. All the children ran away when they saw the huge snake; but Dog began to fight the snake. He bit the snake with his sharp teeth, slashing its skin. He scratched with his sharp claws. The snake tried to bite Dog. The snake tried to wrap himself around Dog so he could crush Dog to death. Dog and snake rolled over and over as they fought. Finally Dog got a good hold on the throat of the snake. He held on and chewed. After a hard fight, the snake rolled over dead.

Every one was praising Dog as he lay panting on the ground. The baby's mother even kissed the dog. "Fine Dog! Clever Dog! Brave Dog!" they said.

When Flumo came home from the farm, everybody had to tell him how brave and clever Dog was. They showed him the body of the huge snake.

"That snake is *fini big*. *Ayah!* It's *big past all* I see for my whole life. That dog is some dog!" exclaimed Flumo.

That night Flumo talked with his wife about Dog. "Dog has done *plenty good things* for us. Now he has saved the life of our baby. *For true!* Dog has paid the debt. The man must not pay us back the money for Dog has paid it all. Dog can go back home now. I wish I could find another dog like this one."

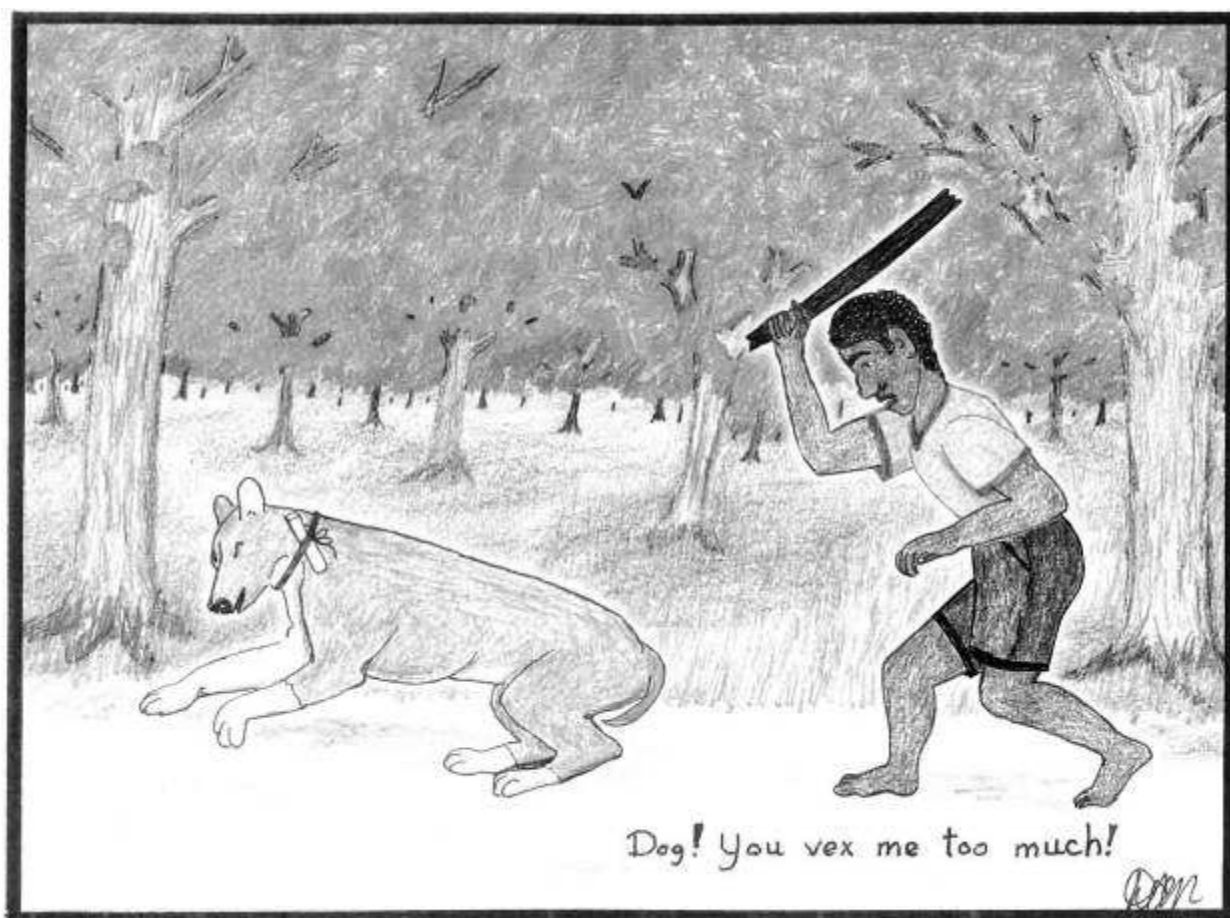
So Flumo wrote a long letter telling all about the good that Dog had done. "You are free from your debt," he wrote, "because Dog has paid your debt." They put the letter into an envelope and tied it to the dog's collar. They thanked the dog *plenty-o* and sent him down the path toward home.

Now Man had been working hard. He had all the money to pay Flumo. He was coming to pay the debt to Flumo when he saw Dog coming down the path toward him.

"Dog," he cried, "How can you be coming back when the debt is not paid? You shame me *too much*." He started *chunking* stones at Dog.

"I *vex too much*," he hollered. And he began to beat Dog with a big stick. "You *make me shame too much!*"

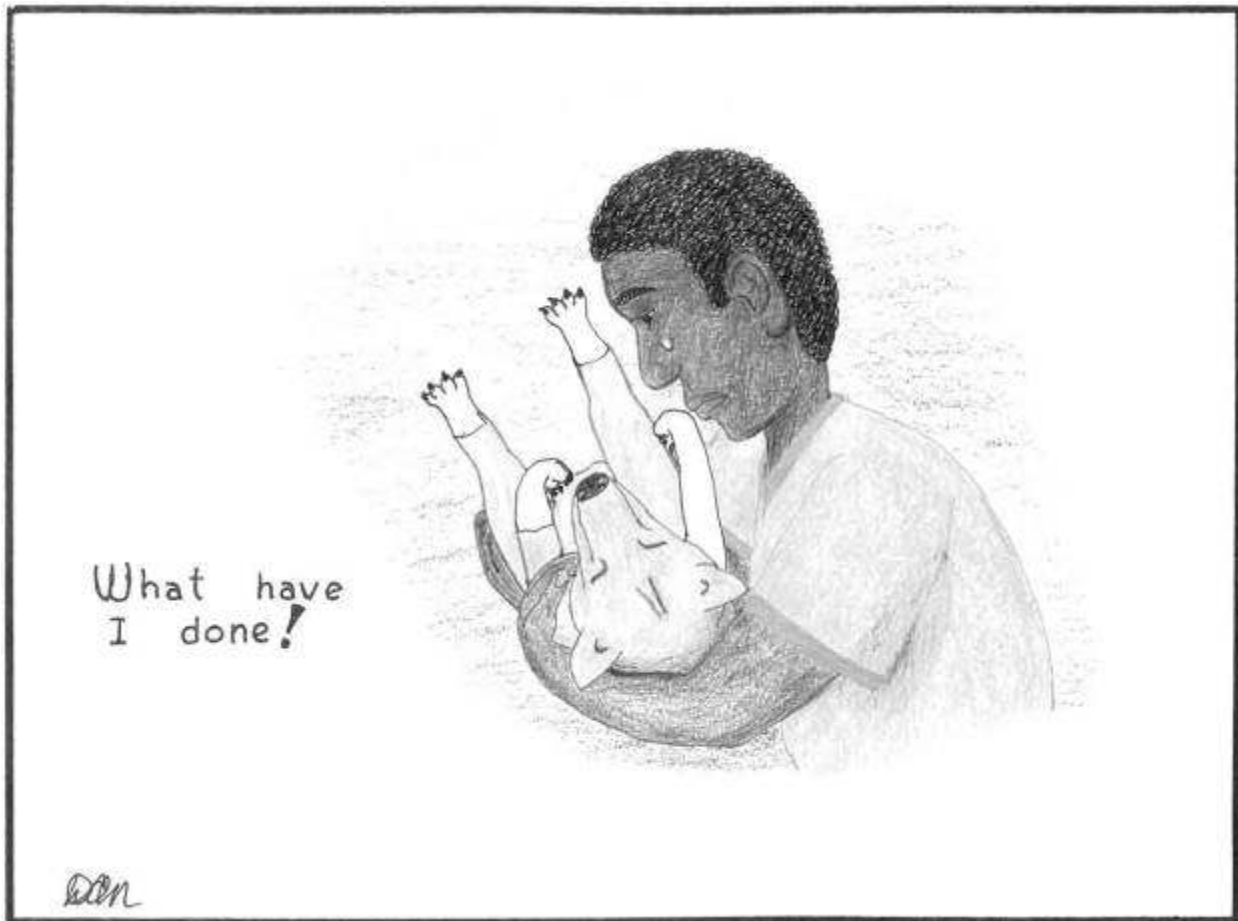
Dog tried to make Man see the letter, but he was too angry. At first he did not see it. But then when he grabbed Dog by the fur on his neck so he could beat him better, he saw the letter fastened to Dog's collar. As he reached for it Dog fell down by the path. Man loosened the letter and read it. He read in the letter all that Dog had done. He read about how his debt was paid by Dog killing the big snake.



As tears ran down his cheeks, he turned to Dog. "Oh what have I done? What have I done? You paid my debt and I have beaten you to death."

But, Dog was not quite dead. Still crying, he gently picked Dog up and cradled him in his arms. Carefully he carried him back to his home.

Dog was sick for many days. Man did everything he could to make Dog comfortable and to heal him of his wounds. Slowly Dog recovered. This made Man very happy, but every time he saw Dog shame and sorrow would *pinch his heart*. He felt bad *too much* that he had been so quick to beat Dog, when Dog had done so well for Flumo and had actually paid his debt for him.



Dog was faithful to his master to the very end. He was almost killed for his faithfulness. God is pleased when we are faithful to Him and to His Word. I Corinthians 4:2 says, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” Luke 16:10a says, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much...” We need to ask God to keep us faithful even to death. (See Revelation 2:10)

Jesus is the best example of faithfulness. He came from heaven and did many good things for us. He even overcame that big old snake the devil. He died for us so that we can live. But He came back to life from the dead, for the debt of sin is paid. He lives forever and we also can live forever if we accept His salvation. Can you imagine! It is too wonderful! "God made

Him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus also promises us that He will be faithful to us forever. We can read it in Hebrews 13:5b. "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

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