



A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



PRESIDENT STOMACH



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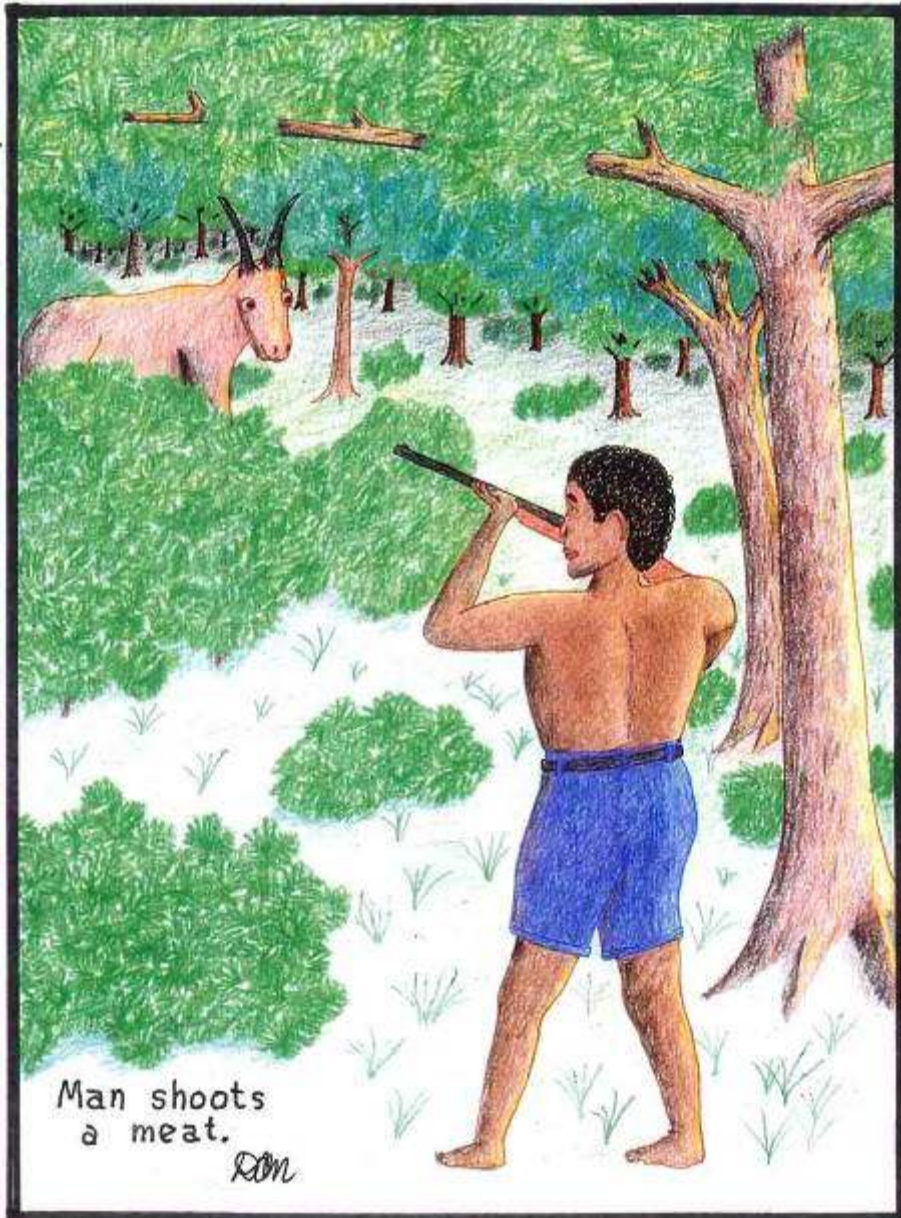
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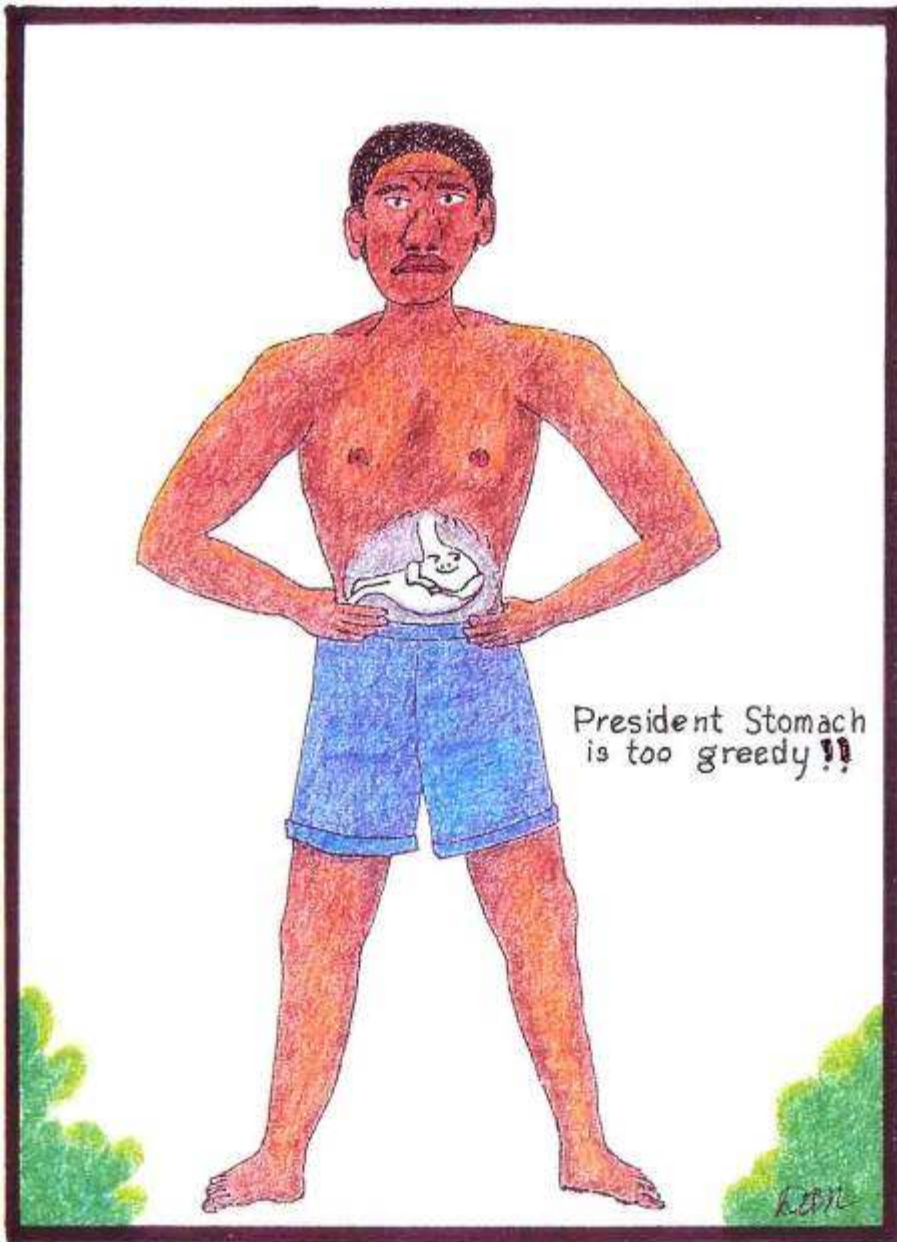


PRESIDENT STOMACH

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

When God made man, he gave him many parts. He had eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a mouth to talk, hands to handle, legs to walk. He had a tongue to taste, teeth to chew and a throat to swallow. But God made Stomach the president. Stomach was over all the other parts.

All went well for some time. Hand would pick up the gun and put it against Shoulder. Feet would head for the bush. Eyes would watch for a *meat* to shoot. Hands would hold the gun to Shoulder. Eye would look down the sights at *Meat*. Finger would pull the trigger. **Ka-ta-wee!** *Meat* fell down. Hand would pick up *Meat* and put it on Shoulder. Feet would carry it home. Hands would take the knife and skin *Meat* while Eyes made sure it was done



right. Hands would cut *Meat* into pieces and put it into a big pot. Hands and Feet would bring wood and water. Hands would start the fire then put salt, pepper, onion, tomato and *bitterball* into the pot. Nose would begin to smell the fine soup. Hand would pick up a spoon and put the soup in Mouth. Tongue would taste the fine soup. Teeth would chew up the food. Throat would swallow all. Then Stomach would do his part. But ...

Then one day Tongue said, "It is not fair. President Stomach gets all the food. I only get to taste it but can never keep any of it for myself. It is not fair."

Throat answered, "None of the food stops here. It all goes by me."

"That is nothing," said Teeth. "I work hard chewing it all up but never get to keep any either."

"I am the worst off," said Nose, "I only get to smell it. None ever touches me."

"I only get to see it," said Eye, "though Man could never shoot it without me."

"I hear about it, but none ever comes to me," Ear complains.

"But I am treated the worst of all," said Hand. "I carry the gun and shoot the gun to kill it. I use the knife to skin it and cut it up. Then I gather the wood and get the water and put it on the fire to cook. I put it into Mouth even, but never get any for myself."

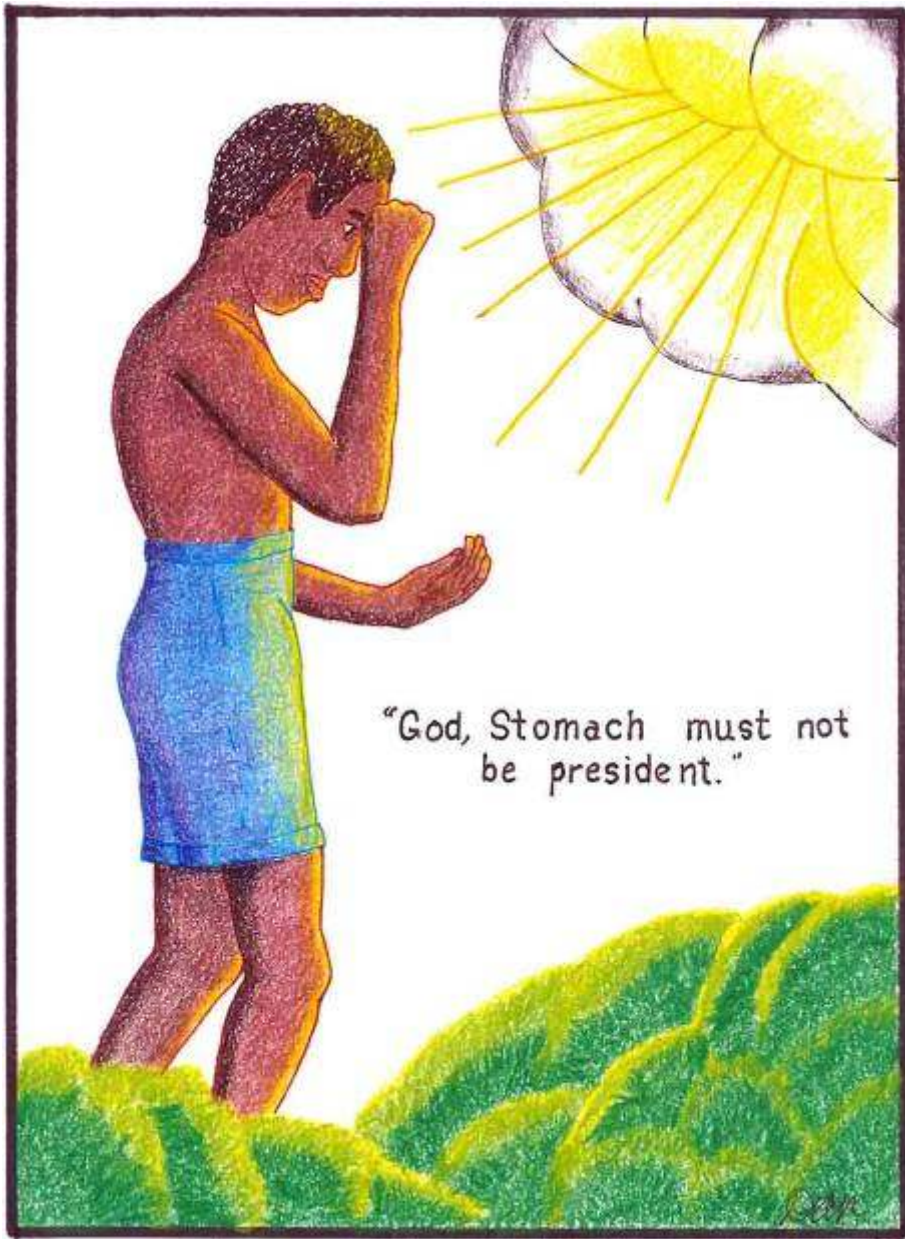
"*Hush all that talk,*" said Foot. "You do not even consider me. Here I am down in all the dirt. I carry you all about. If I did not carry you; Hand could never shoot the meat, or fetch water or anything. But I never get anything for myself for all my hard work."

The squabble went on and on. Finally Foot said, "Let us all go to God and make complaint against President Stomach. We will tell him that someone else should be president."

So, Man went back to God. Mouth began to tell God all about the complaint each part had against President Stomach. "So, we want You to make someone else president," Mouth concluded.

"All right, I hear you," God answered. "I will let you choose a new president. Go and think about who should be president and come back in three days with your answer. But, during the three days do not give President Stomach any food."

So, Man went away. All of the parts were excited. They were discussing who should be president. There was *plenty talk*, but no food for President Stomach.



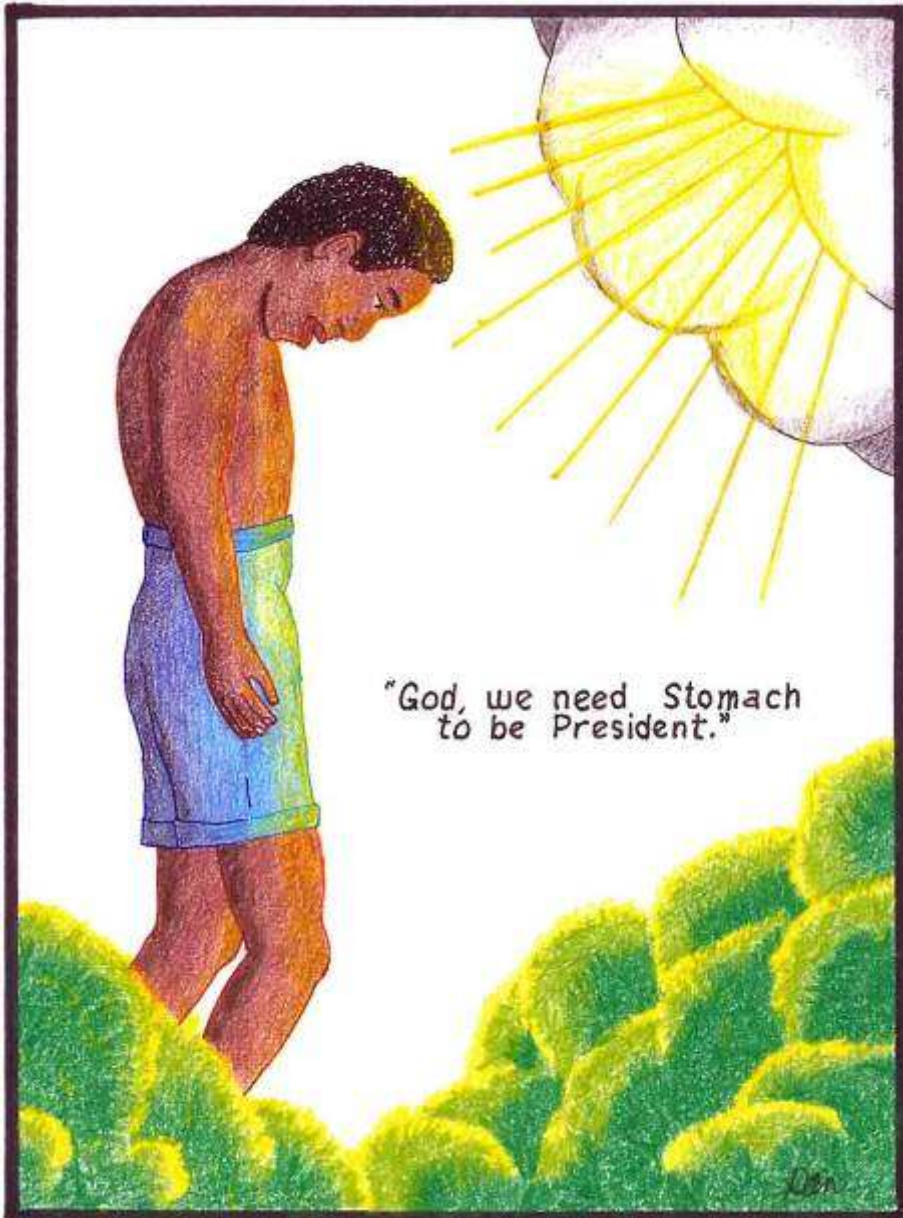
As the three days passed the discussion became less and less. On the third day as Man returned to God all was quiet. There had been no food for President Stomach for three whole days.

Mouth could hardly talk, Eyes could hardly see, Ears could hardly hear, Hands could only hang down, and Feet could barely carry Man. Slowly Man stumbled along the path back to God. Head could hardly hold itself up.

"Well," God asked, "What have you decided? Whom do you want I should make president?"

Mouth could barely talk, but managed to whisper, "Mr. Stomach must still be president for now we know that he is quietly giving each of us what is best for us."

"Aha, so now you are wiser than you were," God answered.



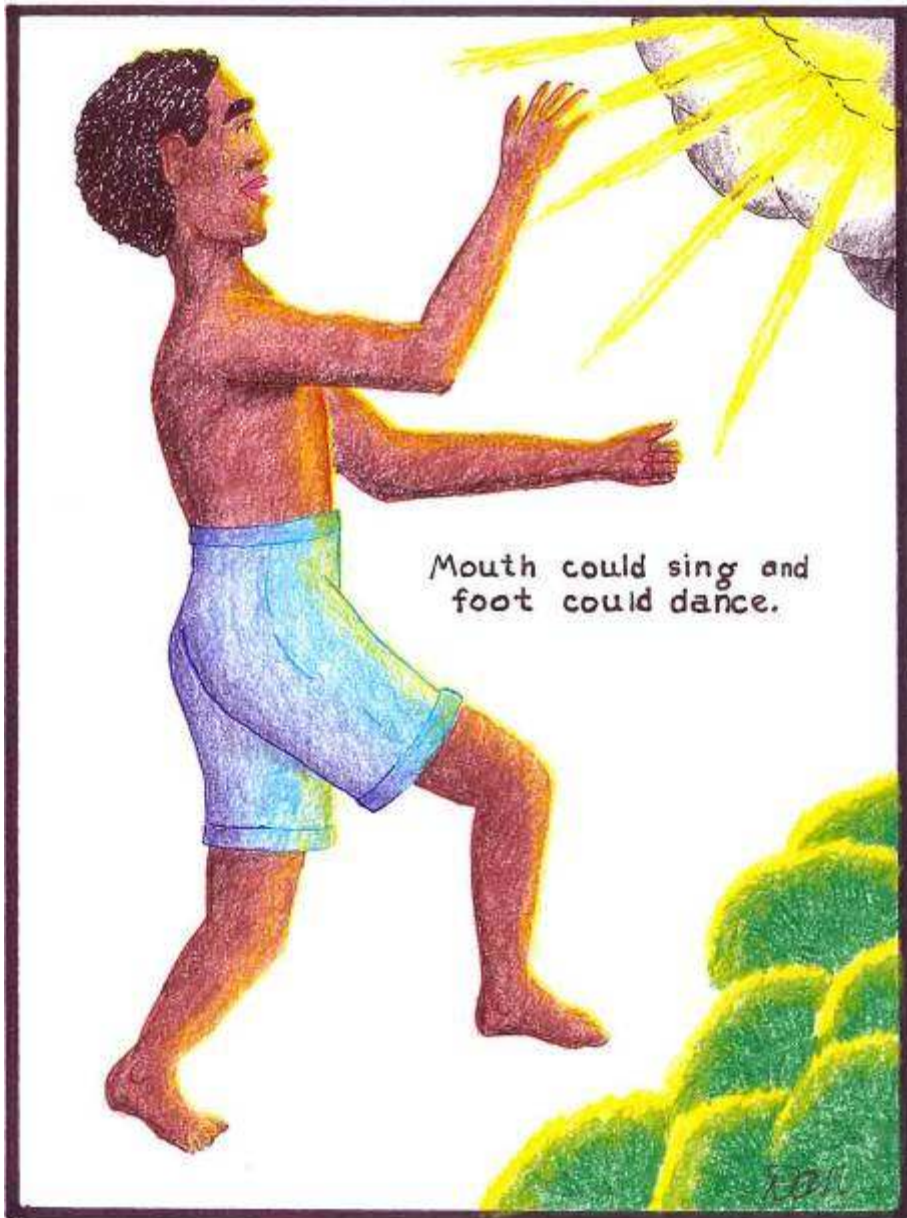
Now God had prepared a big feast. There was rice and palm butter soup with fish and *bitterball*. God set the food before Man. "Eat," God said, "since you are wise again."

Man began to eat. Mouth opened wide. Hand put food into Mouth. Teeth chewed the food. Throat swallowed the food. Then Stomach did his part.

Soon Eye began to see, Ear began to hear; Mouth began to talk and sing, Hands began to clap, and Feet began to dance.

"Thank you, God," they all said together. "You did right to make Stomach the president."

God has wonderfully made our bodies so that the many parts work together beautifully to take care of ourselves and others.



In I Corinthians 12:25 we read that God did this so that ". . . the body will not be divided into parts. All the parts care for each other."

We must all work together just as our body parts work together, so God's work can be done in the right way. Our whole souls and spirits and bodies should glorify and serve God.

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