



A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



LEOPARD PLAYS DEAD



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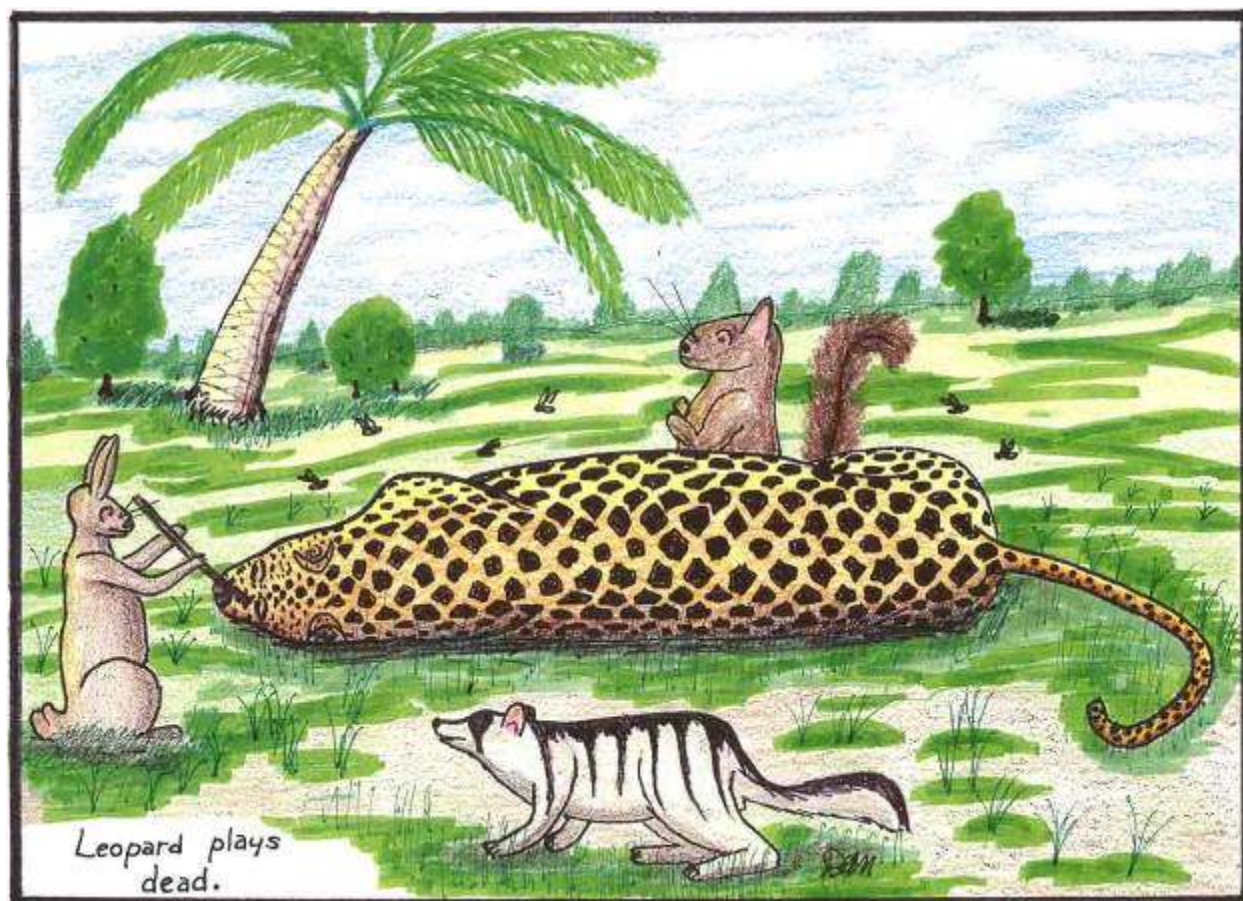
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By Spark Team



LEOPARD PLAYS DEAD

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

Leopard was very hungry. In fact, it seemed that he was always hungry, for Leopard was now very old. He could no longer hunt well for his food. What could he do to keep from starving to death? Then Leopard had an idea. He knew what he would do.

Leopard went and rubbed himself against the body of a dead animal so that the bad smell was on him. Then he went and lay down. He lay very still. Soon the flies swarmed around him. When the other animals saw him they rejoiced, for he had eaten many of their relatives and friends during his lifetime.

"*Ayah!* Leopard is dead," said Squirrel. "But it is good for us that Leopard is dead for he has eaten many of us. My pa and my sister, *all two*, went inside Leopard."

"Yes," answered Red Deer. "Leopard *catch* my ma and ate her and I myself *lack small to die*. Leopard, *he run after* myself and my brother. He *catch* my brother and so I *caught chance* to run. Huh! *For true* it is good for us that Leopard is dead."

Soon many animals stood around gazing at Leopard.

"Then Bush Goat spoke. "Leopard was *big man to we animals*. It is not proper to just let him *lie so*. We must have a funeral and bury him."

"*For true*," agreed the other animals.

"Yes, and we must have a funeral feast," said Goat.

So they planned who would bring food, who would cook, who would dig the grave, who would stay by the body. Some went to prepare the funeral feast. Others went to get shovels and diggers to make the grave. Raccoon stayed to sit up with the body.

Suddenly, Leopard jumped up, grabbed Raccoon and gobbled him up.

When the others returned and found nothing, they assumed that someone had already buried Leopard and so they just went home again. Leopard did this several times.

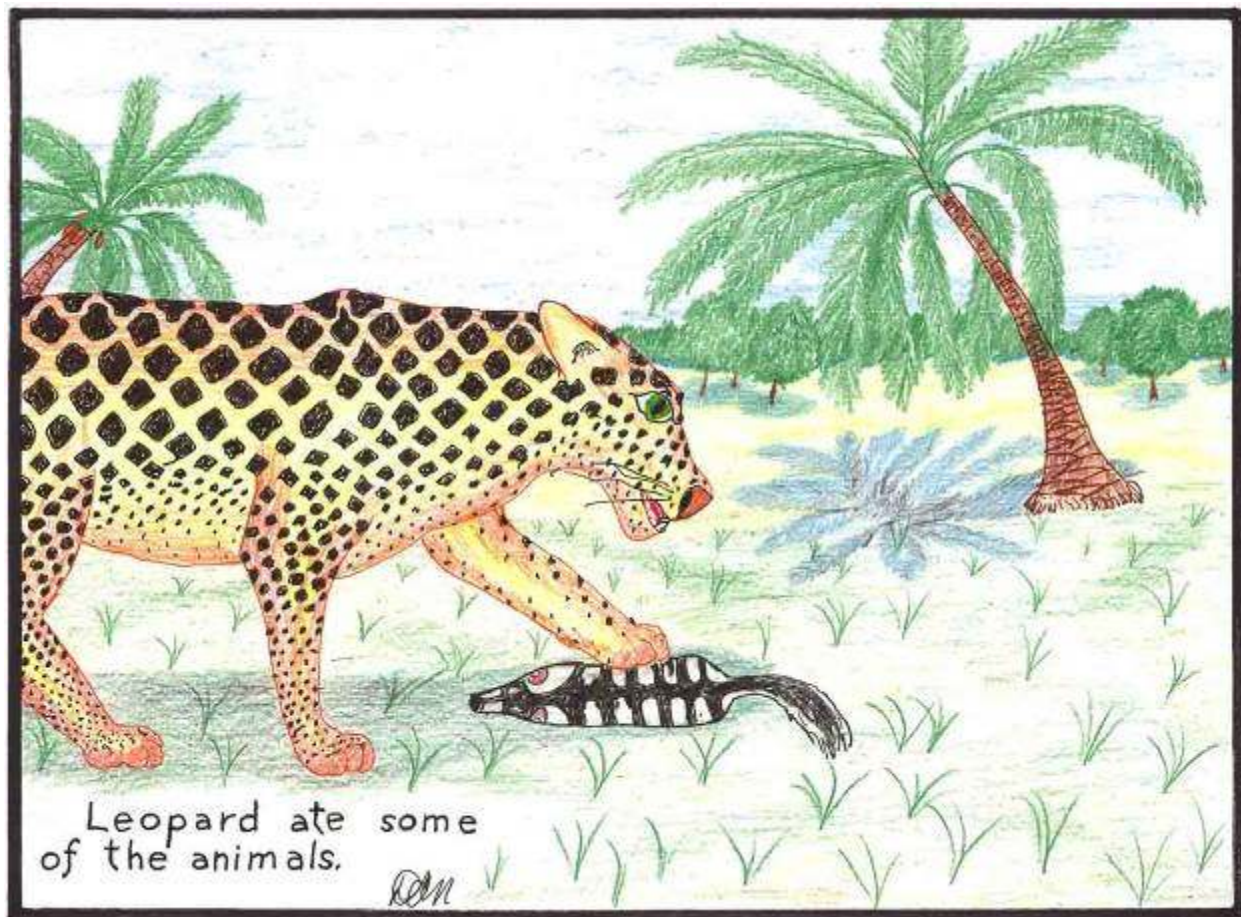
One day Clever Rabbit was among the animals who found Leopard. They began to discuss who would prepare the feast, who would get the diggers, who would dig the grave, and who would stay by the body.

"Look!" exclaimed Rabbit. "The end of Leopard's tail just twitched. Dead leopard's tails do not twitch."

Now, leopards never can keep the very end of their tails still. It has been that way since one time when the monkeys tied Leopard by his tail up in a tree. But that is another story.

So, Rabbit took a sharp stick. He gave Leopard a hard jab with the sharp stick. The tip of Leopard's tail moved again.

"Look!" cried Rabbit. "Dead leopards do not move their tails. Leopard is fooling us. Get away quick!!"



Rabbit and some of the animals ran away. Others said, "It is only the twitch of death. So they went to plan the funeral feast while one animal stayed with the body.

Again, when all had gone, Leopard suddenly jumped up and ate him.

The moral of this story is, "Those who make light of good warnings must suffer the consequences." The animals were warned by Clever Rabbit, but did not listen. God has given us many good warnings in the Bible. We need to listen to His warnings and do what He tells us. 2 Peter 2:5 tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness and warned the people of the coming flood, but they did not listen. These verses in 2 Peter 2:4-9 and 3:3-10 warn us about the coming judgment on the world. We must listen and be ready.

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