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STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
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The Boy Who Yelled Snake



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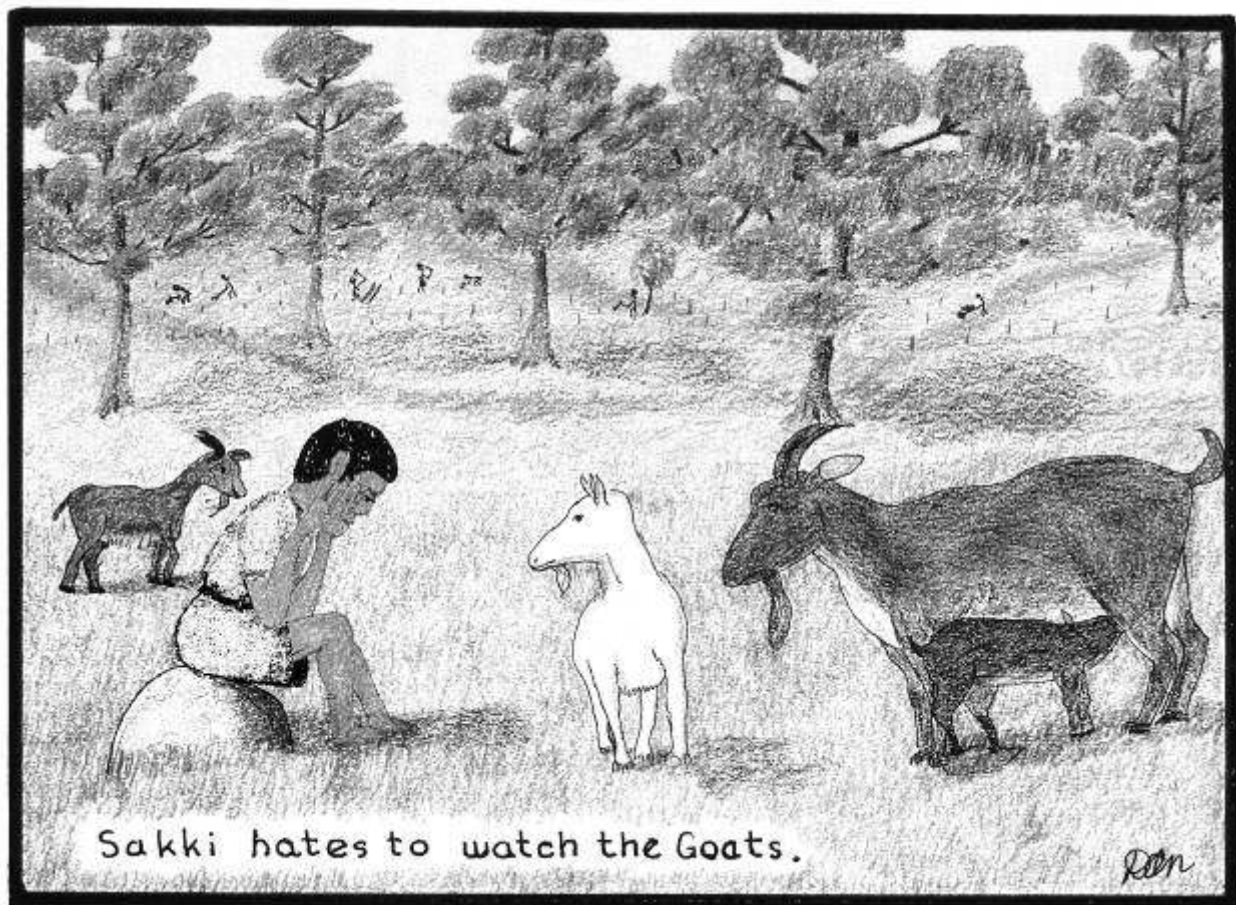
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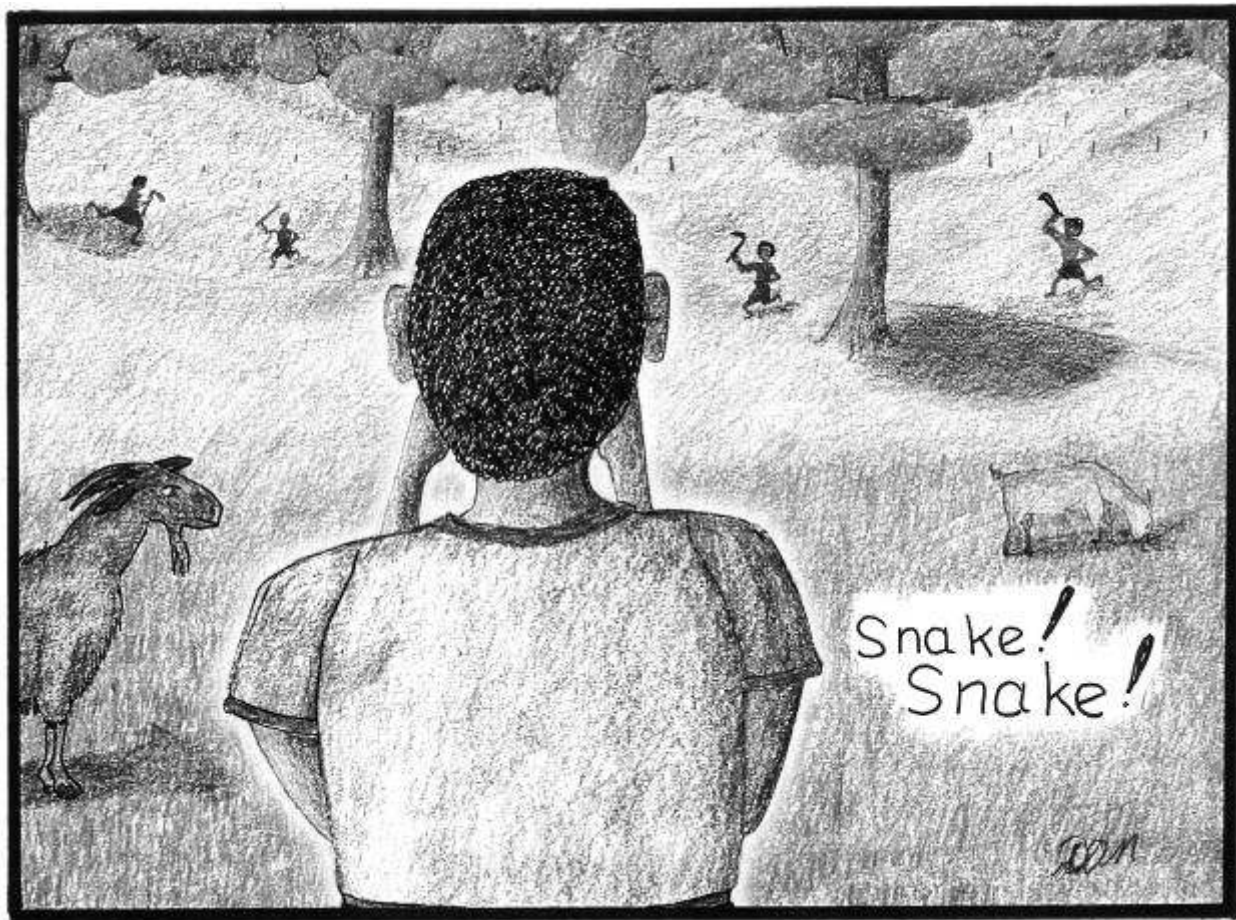
The Boy Who Yelled Snake*

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

There was once a small boy named Sakki. It was his job to take the goats out every day to a place where they could eat good grass and stay out of people's gardens. However many people had farms or gardens on the other side of a little stream, so his father always told him, "Do not let the goats get into the farms over there. Do not let them cross the creek. And, if a big dangerous snake comes, yell 'snake' very loud and the people on the farms will come and kill it. Now *take time-o*. The work, *do it good-o*."

And Sakki always said, "Yeess, father," in a very bored tone of voice.

Have you ever answered your parents like that? "Yeess, Mother."

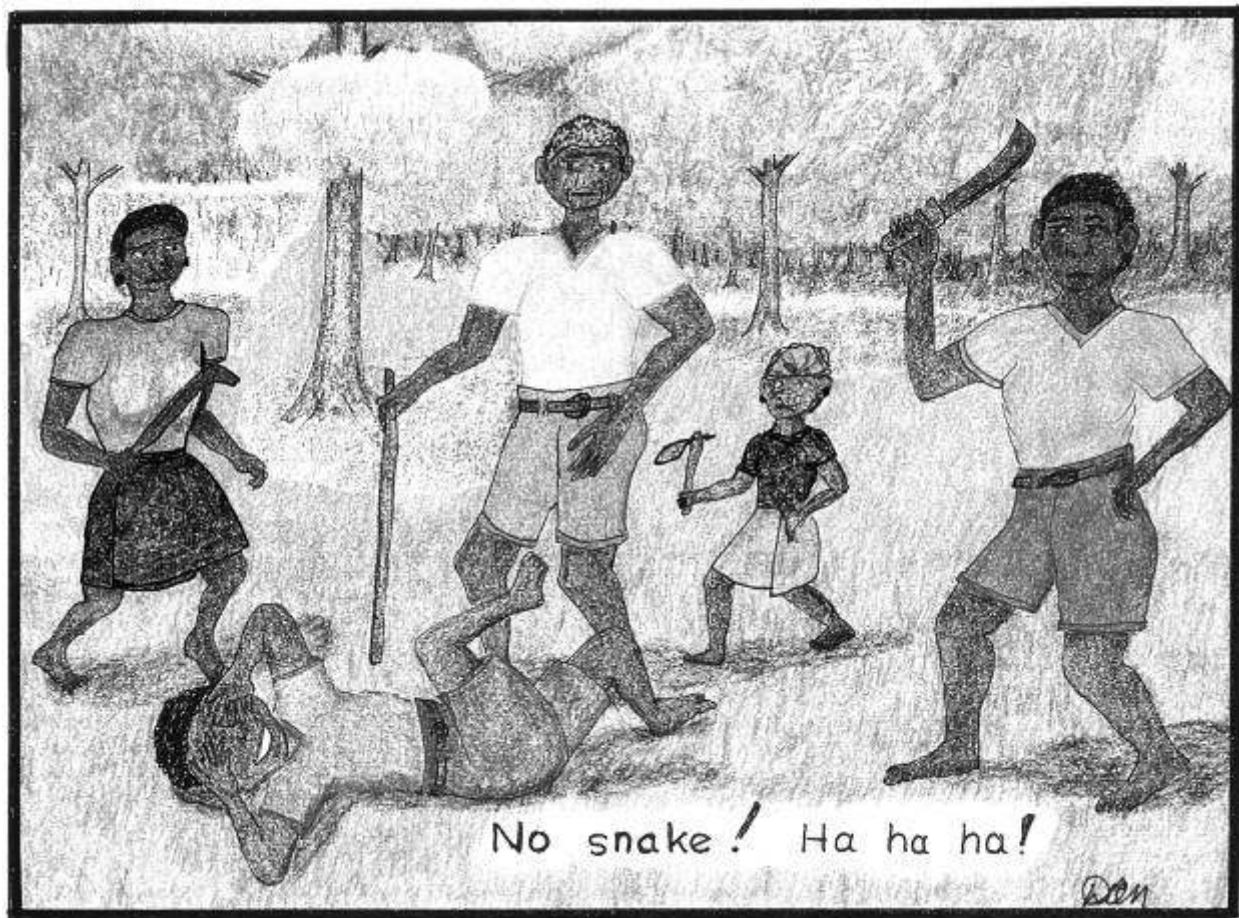


Day by day Sakki became more and more tired of just watching the goats and chasing them back from the creek and the farms whenever they happened to get too close to them. He wanted some excitement. He wished a big dangerous snake would come so he could yell, "Snake," and see the people all come running and kill the snake. He could see the people way over there on their farms with their hoes and cutlasses.

"I wonder, can they hear me *for true*? Will they come running *for true* if I yell, 'snake'? Maybe *they no hear*. Maybe *they no come*. I think I better test them."

He thought about it for awhile. Then he began to yell, "Snake! snake! snake!"

Immediately the people came running. They brought their hoes, rakes and cutlasses; waving them in the air.



Sakki laughed to see them come. He fell to the ground laughing and kicking the ground. He just laughed harder and harder.

"Where is the snake?" they asked.

"Oh, *no snake here*. I just want to be sure you can hear me *for true* and you come *for true* if I need you," Sakki replied laughing.

"Well, now you know the thing *for true* and that we will come," the people assured him as they went back to their work.

Sakki sat there watching the goats and remembering how funny the people looked as they all came running, waving their tools over their heads. He laughed aloud, "Ha! Ha! Ha!" He laughed a big belly laugh.

After a while he thought to himself, "It sure is boring just sitting here and watching those old goats. Those people sure did look funny running with their hoes and rakes and cutlasses waving in the air. Ha ha. Ha ha ha! "

Sakki sat there for some time remembering how they looked and laughing to himself. He was bored and wanted it to happen all over again.

"I think that I'll yell, 'snake' again. It was such fun," he thought. "Snake! Snake! Snake!" Sakki yelled again.

Again the people all came running waving their hoes and rakes and cutlasses in the air. Sakki laughed so hard he almost fell over.

"*Where the snake!*" the people called as they came close.

"Ha ha ha. *no snake here-o,*" Sakki laughed, "I just wanted to see you run. You can look *too funny.* Ha ha ha ha."

Sakki was laughing so hard he dropped down and rolled on the ground.

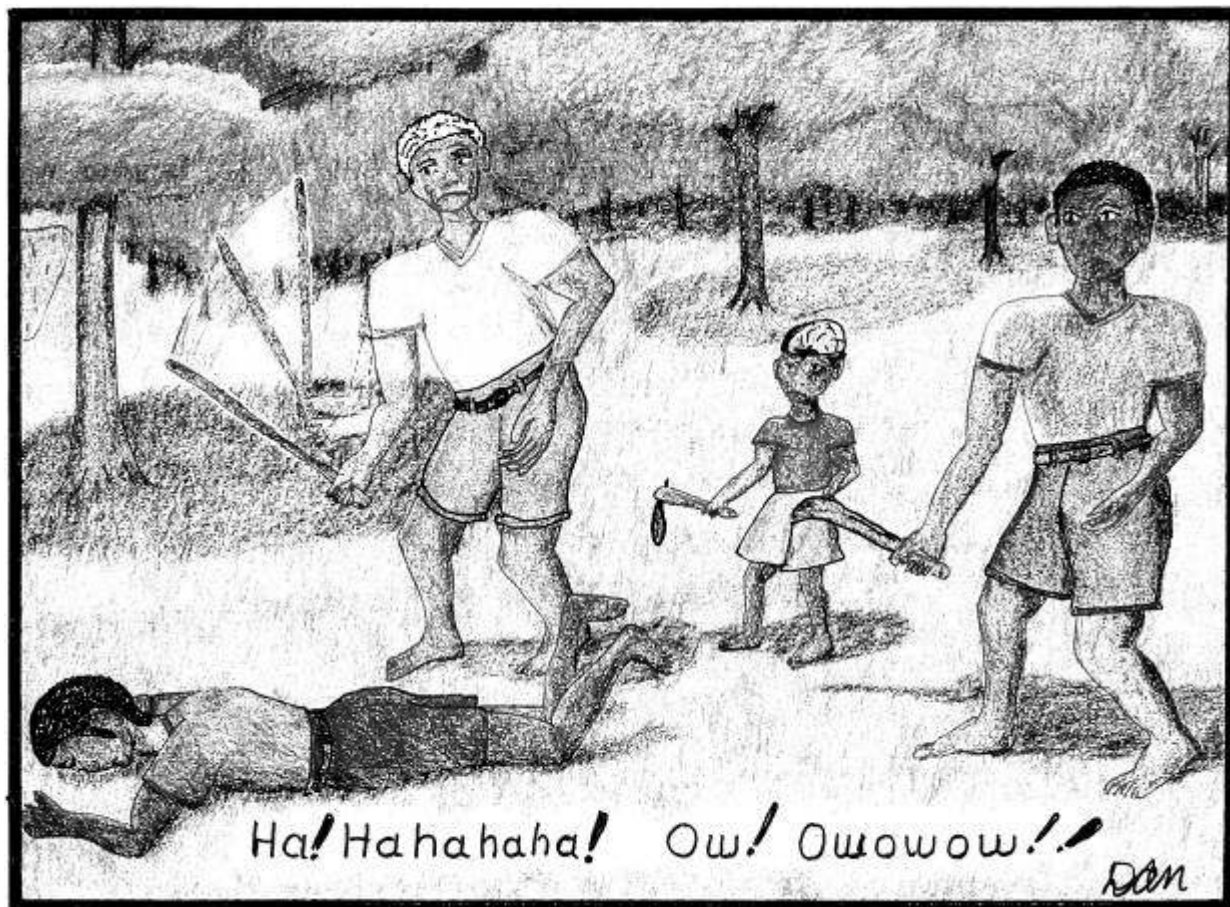
"I'll show you something that can be plenty funny," said one old man as he brought his walking stick down hard on Sakki's back many times. Whop! Whop! Whop!

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" Sakki cried, "Ow-w-w."

Sakki tried to get away from the old man's blows but many hard ones fell on poor Sakki. He hit Sakki on his back, shoulders, legs and arms. He thought the old man would never stop hitting him.

"*You make fool to us and then laugh so will you? Now maybe you can show some respect,*" growled the old man as he gave Sakki a few more whacks.

The people all went back to their farms grumbling about foolish boys.

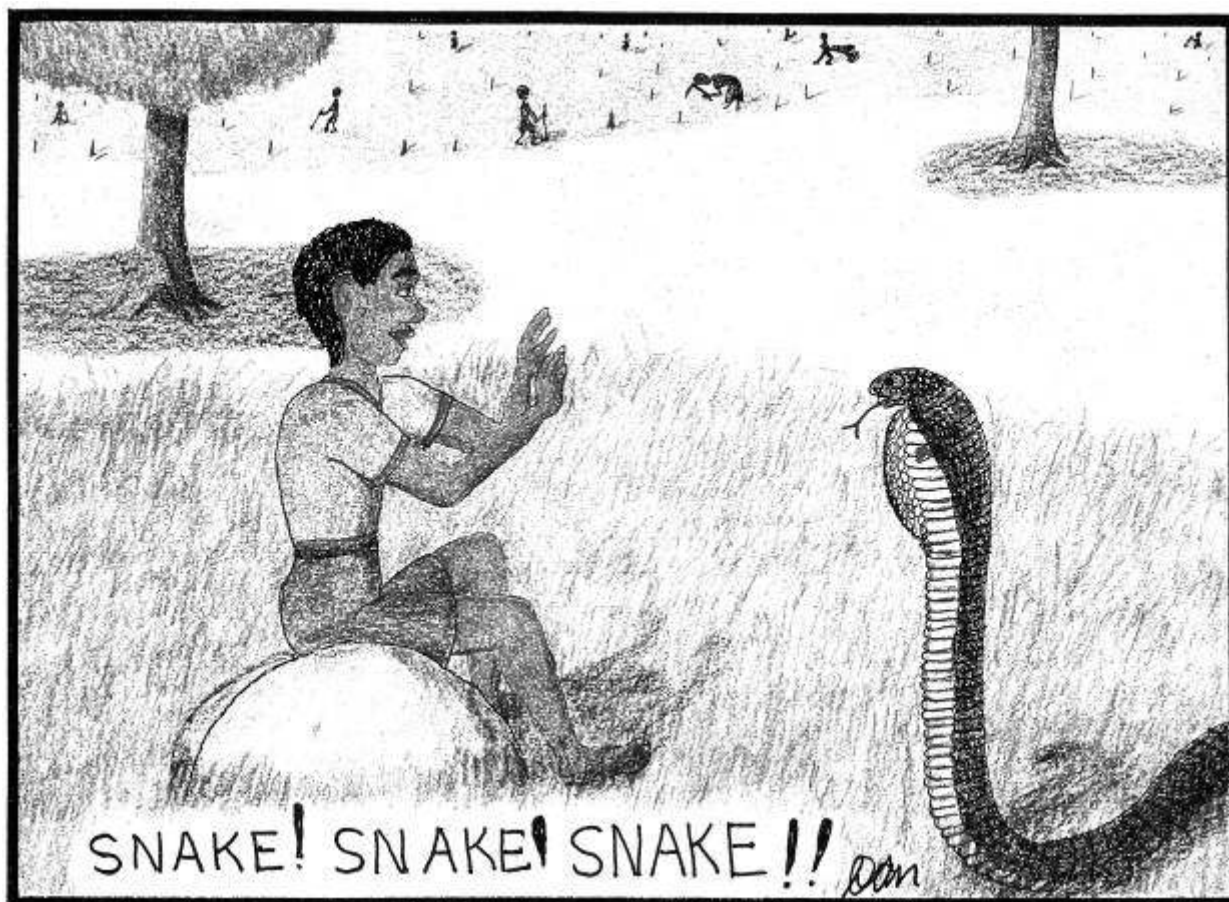


Sakki lay on the ground for a long time. Then slowly, painfully he got up.

"Ow, my back," he groaned, "That old man surely can hit hard. Ow-w-w."

Sakki's back and legs were sore for more than a week. Sakki did not yell "Snake," all that time. He watched the goats and complained to himself about how his body hurt. Nobody told him *no myah*.

Then, late in the afternoon, several weeks later, Sakki heard a goat scream. He looked up and saw a goat run a bit and then fall down. He saw the grass moving just a few feet away from where the goat had been. He picked up a small stone and threw it at the movement in the grass. A big long black cobra lifted its head above the grass. It spread its neck and licked out its long tongue at Sakki.

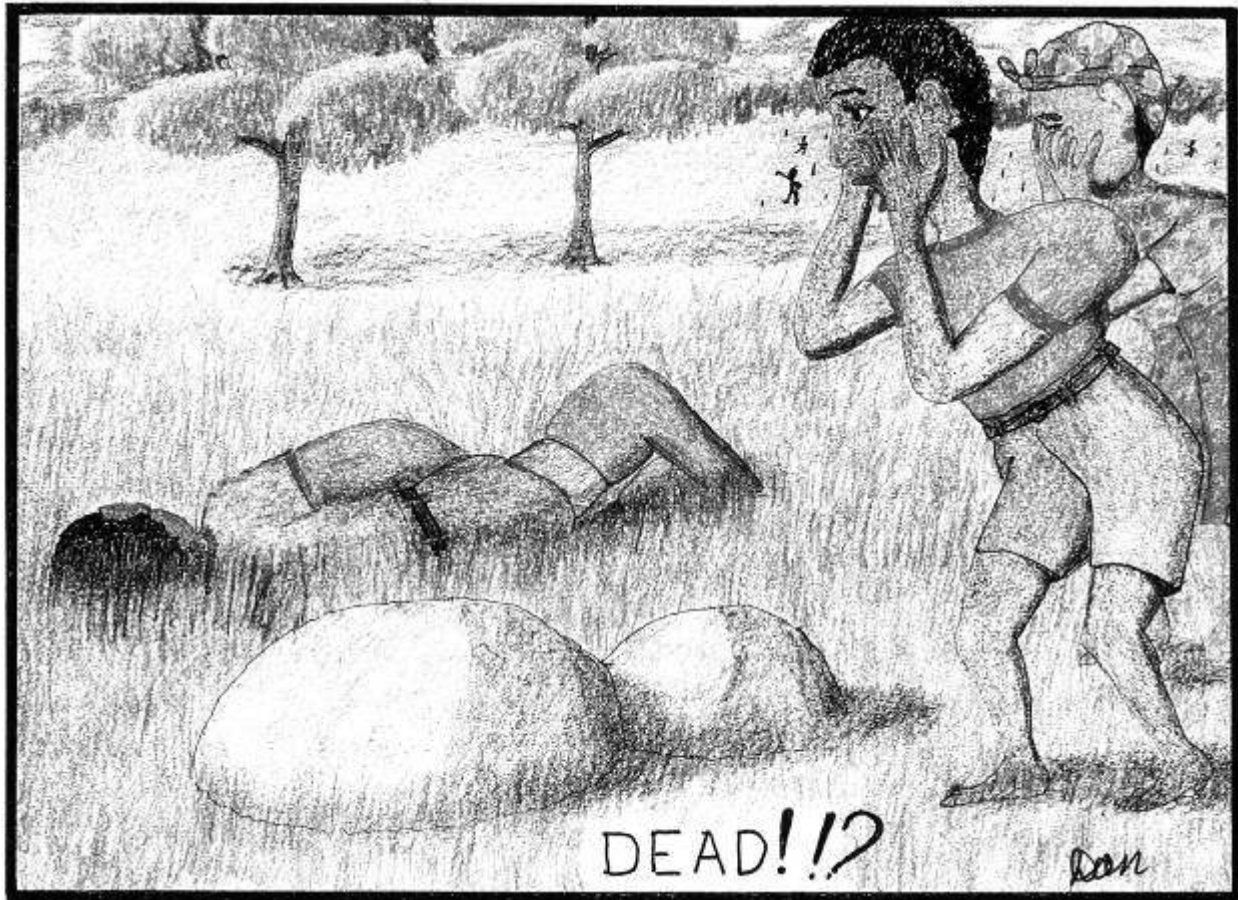


Sakki was so scared that at first he could not yell for help, but then began to yell, "Snake! Snake! SNAKE!"

The people heard Sakki calling, but only laughed. "That is foolish Sakki calling. If we go there he will only laugh at us. Well let him yell. We will not go there to be laughed at again. I think we had better report him to his father. Maybe another beating will teach him something."

"SNAKE! SNAKE! SNAKE!" yelled Sakki as loud as he could, but no one came. The snake waved back and forth. Suddenly it struck, biting Sakki on his left hand.

"Ow-w-w-w," cried Sakki. "Snake, snake, snake." He kept on yelling but his voice grew weaker and weaker. "Snake! Snake! Snake! Snake! Snake. Snake...."



Not too much later, as the people returned home after a full day of work, some of them stopped by to see Sakki.

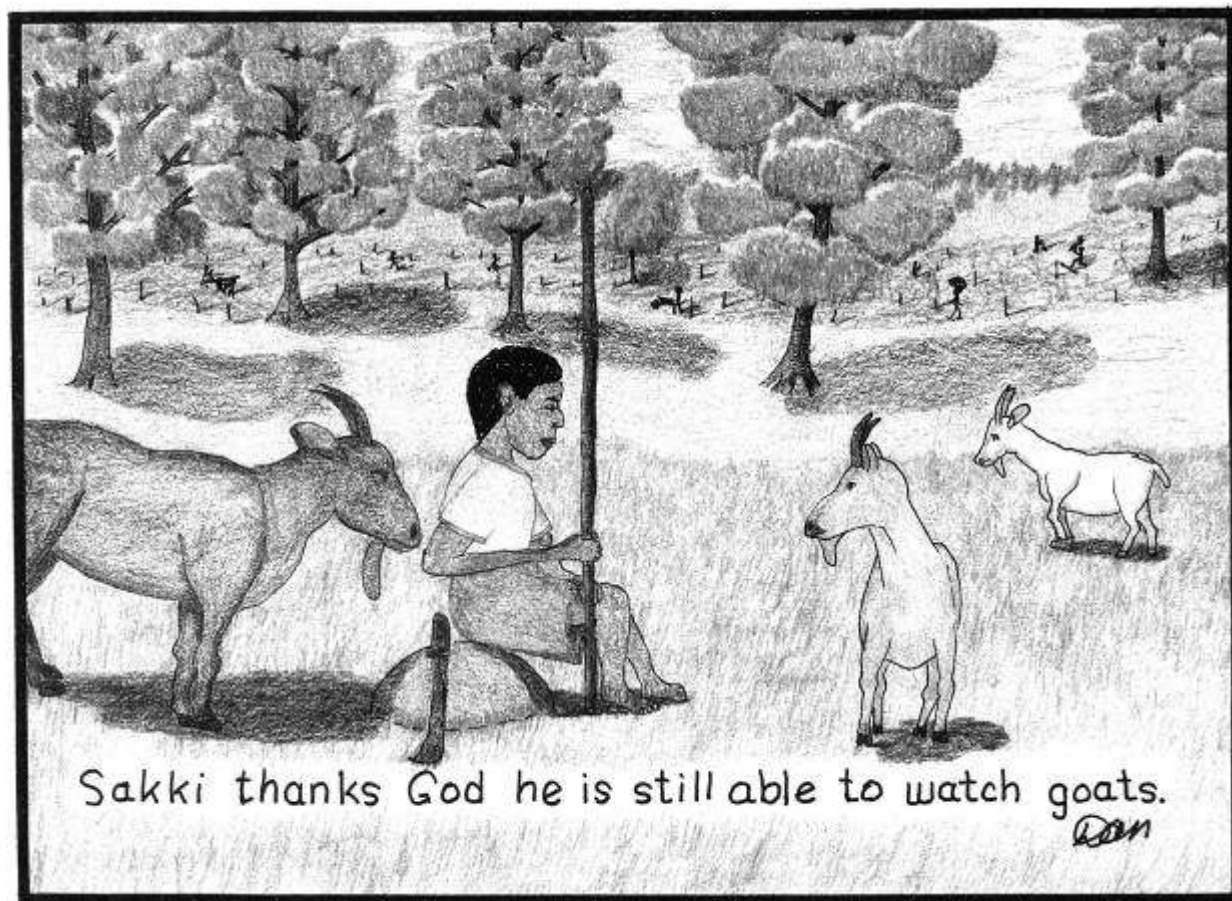
They joked with each other, “When we see Sakki we will just laugh and laugh and laugh.”

At first they did not see him. But then, there he was on the ground. His body was stiff and swollen. He was dead.

Or was he dead? They looked closer. Almost, but not quite. The people quickly carried him to a nearby mission hospital. There they had good medicine for snake bite.

Sakki was very sick for a long time but he did get better.

Why did Sakki not die? Because the snake had first bitten the goat which died very quickly. The snake had only a little venom left for Sakki.



Always after that he could not use his left arm very well. He was always reminded that it was not good to fool people and then laugh at them.

Well, yes, Sakki did at last return to keep the goats. In fact he was happy that there was something he could do, even if it was just watching the goats. But now he kept a cutlass and a good long stick nearby. And he knew for *true-o* that never never again would he yell ‘Snake’ unless he really saw one.

Do you remember why Sakki did not die? The goat took most all the poison the snake had. The Bible tells us that Jesus took **all** the poison of sin in Himself to save us. Hebrews 10:10 says, “Our sins are washed away and we are made clean because Christ gave His own body as a gift to God. He did this once for all time.”

And what does God say about the thing Sakki did?

"Doing wrong is like play to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom" (Proverbs 10:23).

"Like a crazy man who throws pieces of burning wood and arrows of death, so is the man who fools his neighbor with a lie, and says, "I was only joking"" (Proverbs 26:18,19).

*Similar to an Aesop fable "The Shepherd Boy and the Wolf." A Water Mill Classics p 116

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