

A FABLE: HOW THE DOG BECAME A DOMESTIC ANIMAL



AND TWO BONUS FABLES

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Other Esther Lamnyam Titles

Love Under the Kola Nut. What City Moms Didn't Tell You About Creating Fulfilling Relationships, available on www.amazon.com

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This book is a work of fiction. The fables are from the Wimbum tribe in Cameroon. Places, events, and situations are from traditional fables or the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or historical events, is purely coincidental.

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INTRODUCTION

It is night time in my village Mbot; there is a clay pot on the tri-stone fireplace. The fire is crackling, around the fireplace my brothers and sisters are sitting, watching my mother cook the evening meal.

It is pitch-black outside. On such nights when there is no moon, it is said the only way you can know someone is coming from the other direction is to lie down on the road with your ear to the ground and listen or look at the road ahead at ground level.

My mother stirs the corn foofoo and the vegetables called “Njamshu”, while grandpa is busy telling us jokes, riddles, proverbs, fables and folktales. Before my grandpa TaTa died, he told us many folktales, especially in his ailing days. I now realized how children of today know little about their culture. In school, we studied European and Asian cultures and civilizations; but not our customs, as it was just part and parcel of our lives.

Story telling is common in Africa. Among the Wimbum people in the Northwest Province of Cameroon, a good conversation is often prefaced or interlaced with a good riddle, or proverb.

My Grandpa TaTa was a master storyteller. He was a man who took everything very easy and never moped, or worried. He used very few words in response to issues; and thus he was nicknamed “Ta Lor a tere”, meaning “The father who takes everything easy”. Because of the ease with which he took life, his story telling style made his stories so enticing and engrossing you could listen to him for hours.

Among the Wimbum, most of the fables and folktales are about animals. It is said that, there is a distinct animal world where animals live and rule their kingdom with laws and customs. One animal that is prevalent in our folklore is Takwe, the fox. Takwe is a trickster and enjoys playing pranks on other animals and is so good at his craft that he usually ends up outsmarting the other animals.

There is a tale for every natural phenomenon. Parents use folktales to teach children moral lessons. Listening to my grandparents and parents tell these stories, I realized this oral transfer of culture and history would be lost to the next generation growing up in the cities where little or no contact is made with village life. Just before Grandpa TaTa died, I decided with the help of my siblings to write down these fables. My hope is to keep alive for the future generation the stories that partially define the culture of the Wimbum people; descendents of the Tikares. As times have changed, so too our medium of cultural transfer.

In primary school, story telling was a very important part of the curriculum. When the teacher told you it was your turn to tell a story, you got up in front of the class and you said,

“Boys and girls, I am ready to tell you my story.” The class responded, “We are happy to hear your story; and what is your story about?” You would then give the title of your story,

“My story is about how the dog became a domestic animal.” You then proceeded to tell your story.

From telling stories, one learned proper English, diction, public speaking, and comprehension. We learned to look our classmates in the eye, and not to twist from side to side or look at our toes. While telling our story, we were corrected and encouraged.

Now years later as I write these folktales and fables in the United States, I am thrown back into time...

I see my childhood home; the roof is made of zinc, the ceiling made of raffia palm stems where the bark has been peeled off, trimmed, buffed and nicely interwoven into beautiful patterns. I can hear the tickle of the rain as it hits the roof. If it is bed time, this caressing sound of the rain would be my

lullaby as it coaxes me to sleep. I love the rain. Occasionally, the intensity of the rain would increase with a whishing sound, and the leaves of the branches of the kola nut trees hanging over the house would brush against the roof – that is how I know the wind is blowing.

As we are sitting around the fireplace, Grandpa begins telling his first story for the night...

HOW THE DOG BECAME A DOMESTIC ANIMAL

Once upon a time, all the animals gathered to select a king to rule over them. They all gathered in a plain near a huge river. They gathered by the river so that the animals that lived in the water could be present for this very important meeting. Since water animals could not go on land, the land animals came by the river.

At this meeting, they decided to crown a king. By unanimous vote lead by Nga'ah the tiger, Mburuk, the lion was chosen to be king. So they built for him a large palace and he got married to many lionesses. The entire lioness family lived in the big palace and had many cubs that played together.

Mburuk, the lion was thus the crowned king of the animals. He governed fairly; was strong and was feared and respected by all.

A law had been passed over the whole kingdom that no other animal should ever play with any of the Mburuk 's wives or children as they were royalty. The consequence of breaking that law was public humiliation, torture and subsequent death. This was a very strong law in the land and no animal could dare, else he would be punished in public.

One beautiful afternoon, with the sun shining brightly and the leaves whispering to each other, Takwe, the fox took a walk. He watched the beautiful, colorful butterflies fly, the birds gracefully navigating the winds, and the sweet smell of the wild flowers and felt real good. It was that time of the year; it was spring time. Everything came to life, and so did he. He was in very good spirits as he came upon the most beautiful of the lion's wives.

Takwe had been very interested in playing with this lioness and her cubs for a long time. Unbeknownst to the other animals, he always followed her

around, helping her in every thing she did. He had asked her to play with him but she had refused knowing Takwe had a reputation for being a trickster.

“Oh, pretty lioness, let me watch your beautiful cubs so they don’t fall down a cliff” he offered. “I’ll also get food for them so you don’t have to work so hard and be tired.”

After Takwe was so nice to her, he coaxed her and convinced her to play with him and the lioness succumbed. They chased each other in the fields, tumbling and laughing together all day long. Unfortunately, for Takwe he was seen playing with the lion’s wife by Nkarh, the monkey who was the village gossip. Nkarh took the story to his troop. They laughed and made jokes that ridiculed not only Takwe but the King also.

“Look at little Takwe playing with the lioness. He must think he is royalty; hehehe.” The monkeys said and laughed.

Takwe had broken the law. News of this crime spread all over the animal kingdom like wild fire. Everyone received it with shock and could not believe Takwe had had the nerve to even be in the presence of the king’s wife. They wondered,

“How could Takwe be so daring knowing he will be killed if caught?”

“Finally,” they said, “Takwe has played his last trick and would not trick anybody any more for he has kissed his own life goodbye.”

So a meeting of the animal representatives was convened. At this meeting, this act was deplored and punishment was pronounced. For his punishment, Takwe the Fox had to be killed in public. A day was set for all the animals to gather at the meeting place by the river so Takwe would be punished. This meeting day was announced to the whole animal kingdom.

When this day arrived, Takwe stood at the door of his fox hole watching all animals passing by on their way to the meeting place. Soon he saw Ngwei, the dog passing by.

“Hey you Ngwei,” he called out, “where are you hurrying to?”

“I am going to the meeting place where all the animals had been summoned.” Ngwei the dog replied. He did not even wonder why Takwe acted like he did not know about this meeting; every animal knew about the summons by now.

“Come here, my friend, let us walk together to the meeting place,” said Takwe.

Let me tell you something about the Ngwei the dog; you see, Ngwei was very trusting, he was always ready to help and he liked companionship.

“Hm,” mused Ngwei, “why yes, I suppose we can walk together as friends do.”

Takwe coyly smiled to himself on hearing Ngwei refer to him as a ‘friend.’ He had Ngwei just where he wanted him.

“You cannot go to a meeting like this; you are very dirty and you smell. Why not take a bath?” Takwe the fox implored.

“I’ve already taken a bath,” Ngwei complained.

“You don’t look presentable,” Takwe argued. “Please, I urge you to take a bath. You cannot go the king’s palace on a big day like this looking so shabby and dirty. You need a good bath and a very good brushing.”

“Come on” Takwe insisted, “Let’s go have a good scrub so we can look presentable; you know there will be some admirers there. You could find your future mate today you know.”

The prospect of having a mate to play with was very enticing to Ngwei, as Ngwei the dog loved to be played with, bath, brushed, fed and pampered. He had already started daydreaming of his choices of mates at the palace today. His ears pecked up, his mouth started watering and his tongue hanged out at the thought of being fed. Takwe knew that Ngwei was very gullible. A few kind words, coaxing, petting and a treat would do it. Ngwei was convinced.

So together they went to a nearby stream. Upon reaching it, the dog did not want to get into water anymore. However, Takwe urged Ngwei until Ngwei gave in and jumped into the stream to bathe himself. Takwe helped bathe Ngwei thoroughly, though Ngwei was already clean. Takwe took his time making sure Ngwei would be in the cold water for a while.

“Takwe is such a good friend,” Ngwei thought to himself.

This was the raining season; so it was a very cold morning. When Takwe the Fox finished giving him a bathe, Ngwei was very cold, he was shivering and cool vapor was coming out of his mouth.

“Just like I wanted,” Takwe smiled to himself.

When they finally arrived the palace, all the other animals were there and waiting for the meeting to begin. The importance of this meeting could be noted by the solemn silence. Even the monkeys were not giggling and teasing as usual. This was a matter of life and death. As Takwe and Ngwei arrived, all eyes

focused on Takwe because rumor had it that Takwe was the suspect. Then, Nga'ah, the Tiger stood up to address the animals of the animal kingdom.

"All of you citizens of this kingdom sitting here today know what has happened." Nga'ah roared out.

"This is the first crime in this kingdom since our King, Mburuk was enthroned." He called out the lion's wife, and the pretty lioness came forward.

"Here you find one of our king's subjects playing with his wife. She or any other lionesses are not a playmate to any of you. They are royalty thus should be treated with the utmost respect. If Takwe is here, will he please stand up?" the tiger commanded.

Takwe the fox rose up and did not look scared at all as he came forward and stood near the lioness. He even wagged his tail in greeting in her direction, and all the animals gasped at his courage.

"It has been alleged that you Takwe has been involved in playing with the King's wife, the lioness," accused Nga'ah the speaker.

"You all know one of our laws is not to play with any of the lion's wives, this law if broken, is punishable by death."

Takwe turned around and looked at every animal in the crowd and showed no sign of fear.

Nga'ah, the Tiger continued,

"Takwe, what do you have to say in your own defense after all these charges?"

Takwe confidently stood and said with proudly,

"All of you of this kingdom; the king, nobles, and the king's subjects, don't know how to detect a criminal. All you listen to is rumor, gossip, and tales. Here I stand looking very free because I am not guilty of any crime. Look among you, you will see that who ever is guilty will be one who is shivering and looks scared and frightened."

He paused for a minute giving the animals time to look around; then he continued,

"Such an animal is afraid because of the crime he has committed."

Ngwei, the dog shivers when cold or frightened; something Takwe knew very well and now used it against Ngwei. Thus, at this time he had been shivering in the cold weather from the cold water that Takwe had forced him to take a bath in. Ngwei tried to control himself but could not control the shivering. All eyes turned round and saw Ngwei shivering. On seeing every

animal looking at him, Ngwei got very frightened and shivered even more and could not control himself.

Pointing to Ngwei, Takwe said, "There is the one who has committed this crime. Besides, he and some of his relatives look like the lion and the lioness, so it was easy for him to disguise himself as one of them. How could I do that, little me who can be easily crushed by the lioness?"

Too cold, too frightened, too shocked and too confused by Takwe's accusation and betrayal, Ngwei could even not talk in his own self-defense. Seeing Ngwei's reaction, the animals were convinced of his guilt.

"Are Takwe's allegations true?" Nga'ah asked Ngwei. Ngwei opened his mouth to talk but no sound came out. Instead he looked like he was going to cry, as he was shaking so hard.

Now convinced of his guilt, all the animals shouted,
"Hold him up, catch him, catch him, kill him."

They all started running towards the dog's direction. Afraid, Ngwei started running away. They all chased after Ngwei. He continued running and they continued to chase him. They chased him for miles and he kept running, tired and panting, over hills and valleys; across plains and rivers.

When they were about to catch up with him, he crossed over into the Human Kingdom. He was too afraid to stop when he saw the opened door to a house and dashed through that door.

The owner of the house was a farmer and he was surprised to see a dog run into his house. He and his wife took up their weapons and were about to attack Ngwei with spears and clubs when he saw other animals on the road and many more animals running from different directions towards the dog.

Panting, the dog explained his plight, "Help me please, I did not do anything wrong, they are trying to kill me" he panted. "Help me please, kind farmer. I was set up by the Takwe who committed the crime."

News of Takwe's pranks had already traveled to the Human Kingdom. So the farmer and his family took up sticks and clubs and defended the dog. They caught a number of animals and stopped them and the animals did not succeed in killing the dog.

Takwe walked away laughing all the way to his fox hole home; he was free. He had tricked all the animals again. He laughed so hard his sides hurt.

Ngwei told the farmers the whole story. The farmer's family treated Ngwei nicely and he played with the kids and protected them. Ngwei learned not to quickly trust others as he had done with Takwe. He learned not to let others convince him to do things he felt strongly against. From that time on the dog stayed with the farmer and his family and was loyal to them. And as time passed both man and dog learned to trust and respect each other and they became close friends.

And that is how Ngwei, the dog became a domestic animal.

YOUR BONUS

Here are your bonus fables:

The two fables below are excerpts from my book "*Love Under the Kola Nut. What City Moms Didn't Tell You About Creating Fulfilling Relationships,*" available on www.amazon.com . Buy it today and learn laws of nature that you can start using right away to create fulfilling relationships with any person. Read excerpts at www.estherlamnyam.com

The Original Niet: Mr. Anus Refuses to do his Job

Once upon a time the organs of the body were having a jolly good time carrying on a conversation. They discussed all the different things they had gone through to make their master's body work efficiently. They loved their master very much but were distressed by what their master ate. Their discussion turned into an argument of how much more important each of them was in keeping the master's body functioning properly. Each organ thought it was more important than the other because it had been performing the same function for thousands of years efficiently; besides, without it the master would be dead.

“Look here,” the blood stream cut in, “I carry all the nutrients from what the master eats all over the body so you all can be nourished.”

The pancreas spoke of how it had to regulate the insulin, especially when the master eats all the junk food.

The liver spoke of how it had to manufacture bile to digest fat and also absorb cholesterol from the blood stream.

The eyes exclaimed, “I see where he goes and what he does.”

“Then you should stop him from eating the junk food he sometimes eats as it messes us up,” the digestive organs retorted. The anus jumped in to say if not because of him they would be more messed up as he takes all the junk out of the master’s body. All the organs laughed at him and said, “Shut up, stinker.”

“When real organs are talking, you shut up or just listen and learn,” the heart pulsated. “I have to pump blood over our master’s body; can you pump anything, Mr. Anus?”

They laughed so hard that Mr. Anus got upset. He farted and made strange noises, but he was still ignored. They kept on arguing about which one of them was the most important and the mouth and brain talked so loud they could not hear the noises made by the anus. The anus was now furious and he fumed,

“I’ll show you all who is most important.” No one paid any attention to him still. So he closed up and stopped doing his job.

For a while things went on as usual. Then, as the days went by, the master became sluggish and irritable. When he tried to defecate he could not.

The anus smiled and said to himself, “well, loud-talking mouth, brain, stomach, colon, heart, ears and the other boasters—where are you now? Do your thing like you boasted and save him.”

The liver and pancreas and so too the other organs were beginning to suffer, but they could not figure out what or who was the problem. They called each and asked if they were okay and doing their job. They all had the same complaint.

Now the master went to his farm as usual but was so sick and fatigued he could only lie down and do nothing. The organs finally said,

“This beats us. Let’s ask our Creator to help because we have been performing these functions from time immemorial and nothing like this has ever happened.”

Just then a little bird called Sinji that lived on the master's farm and had eavesdropped on the organs arguing day in and day out decided to do something about it. He knew the master was in serious trouble if something was not done fast enough. So he started singing:

Soh soh soh wut soh (whistle)

Soh soh soh wut soh (whistle)

soh wut soh (whistle)

Soh wut soh (whistle)

Twee twee; feh ni ku ntombu. (Twee twee; look up his anus)

Twee twee; feh ni ku ntombu. (Twee twee; look up his anus)

Soh soh soh wut soh (whistle)

Soh soh soh wut soh (whistle)

soh wut soh (whistle)

soh wut soh (whistle)

The ear heard this and told the eye, who said he knew the bird to be a friend of the master. They told the brain and the other organs. At first they said it meant nothing, but Sinji continued singing its little heart out as the master groaned in pain. He could not even fart. Desperate, the organs decide to check with the anus as some of them were all ready getting sick and withering.

Now, Mr. Anus was not even willing to talk to them after having been snubbed so disgracefully. The other body organs that still had strength begged him and apologized to him, asking him to forgive them for being so conceited to not even listen to him. They promised the anus that they would include him in all they did in the future and said they had a lot of respect for him.

The anus felt better and started doing his thing. The master felt so good during and after the anus did its job that he fell into a deep peaceful relaxing asleep. Sinji rejoiced and flew away to harvest birdseed for its dinner.

From then on, the organs of the body worked in harmony and never underestimated the importance of each other. They realized that they all played an essential role in keeping their master's body working properly. Anus could fart at will and make noises that were sometimes musical and no organ would be upset with him or call him names. This niet had been forced to prove his point.

The advice of Mama Bed Bug

The old woman in a desperate attempt to kill the bed bugs that had infested her bamboo bed poured scalding hot water over the bed. The baby bugs cried out to Mama Bug,

“Mama, we are going to die, we are going to die.”

Mama Bug coached her kids, “Hang in tight, hang in tight; everything that is hot eventually becomes cold.”

(Cameroonian fable)

I hoped you enjoyed these fables. More fables, folktales and poems will soon be published.

Visit my website www.estherlamnyam.com and read excerpts of my book “*Love Under the Kola Nut. What City Moms Didn’t Tell You About Creating Fulfilling Relationships,*” available on www.amazon.com Your feedback is very much appreciated.

Thank you!

With Joy, Love and Gratitude.

- Esther

Glossary of Wimbum animal names and other words used:

Mba’ah: Tiger/cheetah

Mburuk: Lion

Takwe: Fox

Ngwei: Dog

Fofoo: cooked dough made of corn flour

Njamshu: Vegetables (similar to watercress vegetables)

Nkarh: Monkey

Ntombu: The anus

Sinji: A bird that lives on farms.

Niet: Nickname used by Mariyah and Rose in my book “*Love Under the Kola Nut. What City Moms Didn't Tell You About Creating Fulfilling Relationships,*” available on www.amazon.com