
Stories from Ghana

The mouse goes everywhere - into rich people's homes and into the poorest people's homes. In the old days the mouse made stories from all that she saw. Stories were her children. Each story-child had its dress - white, blue, red, green, and black. The stories lived in her house and did everything for her. One day a sheep ran against the door of the house where the mouse lived. The door was old, it broke, and all the stories ran out. Now they run up and down over all the earth.

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Mother of Donkeys

Once there lived an old woman. She had two donkeys. Every morning she went with them down the street to the fields. One morning two young men saw the old woman with her donkeys and shouted:

"Good morning, mother of donkeys!"

"Good morning, my sons," the old woman answered and smiled at them.

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The Two Frogs

Once two frogs fell into a pot of cream. They could not get out of the pot. So they swam round and round in the cream. "Oh, this is the end of my life," said one of them. It stopped swimming and died.

But the second frog swam and swam and beat the cream with its little feet. The cream became a ball of butter. The frog jumped on the ball of butter and got out of the pot!

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A Sly Cat

When he was a strong young cat, he caught many mice. The mice were afraid of him then. But in time he grew old and could not catch mice anymore.

One day he decided to play a trick on the mice. He lay on his back and did not move at all. A mouse saw him and thought he was dead. She ran to her friends and said, "The cat is dead! Let us dance and play!"

And all the mice began to dance and play. They were very happy. They danced and danced round the cat, and the cat did not move. Then one of the mice jumped on the cat's head.

"Look at me! Come nearer, all of you! The bad cat is dead! Let us dance on his head!"

But suddenly the cat jumped up and caught the silly mouse. The other mice ran away as quickly as they could.

Mice! Don't forget!

Never believe a cat!

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A Story About the Tongue

Once a chief told one of his servants to bring him the best meat from the market. The servant brought him a tongue.

The next day the chief told the servant to bring him the worst piece of meat from the market. The servant brought a tongue again.

"What?" the chief said. "When I ask for the best piece of meat, you bring a tongue and then you bring the same thing for the worst piece of meat."

The servant said, "Sometimes a man is very unhappy because of his tongue; and sometimes his tongue makes him very happy."

"You are right," the chief said. "Let us be masters of our tongue!"

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A Cat and Her Strong Friends

Once there lived a cat. She thought: "The lion is the strongest of all the animals. It is good to have strong friends. I shall go to the lion and make friends with him."

She did so, and the lion and the cat were friends for many, many days. Once they went for a walk together and met an elephant. The lion began to fight with the elephant, and the elephant killed him. The cat was very sorry. "What shall I do?" she thought. "The elephant was stronger than the lion. I shall go to the elephant and make friends with him."

She did so, and they were friends for many, many days.

Once they went for a walk and met a hunter. The hunter shot at the elephant and killed him. The cat was sorry, but she thought: "The man is stronger than the elephant, I see."

So she went up to the hunter and asked, "May I go with you?" "All right, let us go home together," he said.

They came to the man's home. His wife met him and took his gun from him. The cat saw that and thought: "Oh, the woman is the strongest of all! She can take the hunter's gun from him, and he does not fight with her; he does not even say a word!"

The man sat down at the table, and the woman went to the kitchen. The cat went to the kitchen, too. She decided to stay with the woman forever.

That is why you always see a cat in the kitchen at a woman's feet.

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The Chicken at the Well

"Don't go near the well! Don't play round it! Mother Hen said to her children.

And they never came to the well. But once a little chicken ran to the well and stopped there.

"Why is the well so bad?" he thought. "I am here and everything is all right with me. Let me see what is in the well."

And he jumped up to look into it. And what did he see there? He saw another chicken! Our chicken turned his head; the other chicken in the well did the same. The chicken jumped; so did the chicken in the well. He became angry with the chicken in the well and decided to have a fight with him. He jumped down into the well. But there was no chicken to fight with, but only water and water.

He cried, "Help me, help me!" But nobody heard him. He went down under the cold water, and nobody saw him again.

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Why the Kite Eats Chickens

Once a Kite's child was very ill. The Kite's sister came to Mother Kite and said, "I know a good doctor for your child. The Spider is the best doctor here. I shall ask him to come to you."

Mother Kite asked her sister to go for the doctor. Her sister went to the Spider and said "The Kite has a child, and it is very ill. Will you go to the Kite and see her child?"

"All Right," the Spider said, "but I am afraid to go. There lives a Hen near the Kite's house, and she will eat me up."

"Oh, no," said the Kite's sister, "I am sure, she won't eat you up."

So the Spider took his medicine bottles, put them in a bag and went to the Kite. But he was afraid of the Hen. So he wrote a letter and put it into the bag with the medicine bottles. Very soon he saw the Hen! He hid himself behind a tree. But the Hen saw the Spider, picked him up and gave him to her chickens to eat.

Now the Kite waited and waited for the Spider. Then she went out to meet him and saw a bag with medicine bottles and a letter there. She read: "To the Kite. I was on my way to your home, when I met the Hen who ate me up."

The Kite flew back to her little son. The poor child soon died.

The Kite decided to take revenge and began to eat chickens.

And now the Kite always catches chickens and eats them.

And when you catch a hen, it cries out, "It was not I! It was not I!" She wants to say: "I did not eat the Spider! Not I! Not I!"

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The Frog and His Wives

Once there lived a Frog who had two wives. His first wife lived in Ndumbi and his second wife lived in Ndala. He himself lived a little place between Ndumbi and Ndala. He went sometimes to Ndumbi and sometimes to Ndala to see his wives.

Once a little frog came to him and said "Come to Ndumbi please! Your first wife has a nice pudding for you. Come at once while the pudding is hot!"

The Frog was very happy, because he liked puddings very much. He was ready to go when another little frog came up to him and said, "Please, come to Ndala! Your second wife has a nice pudding for you. Come at once while the pudding is hot!"

The Frog sat down and began to think:

"If I go to my first wife for the pudding, my second wife will be sorry and angry. If I go to my second wife for the pudding, my first wife will be sorry and angry, too. Where shall I go - to Ndumbi or to Ndala?"

He sat and thought for a long time. And he stayed at home and began to cry:

"Oh! Where shall I go, where shall I go?"

Now, when you hear frogs' *Gaou, gaou, gaou*, you will understand that it means: "Where shall I go? Where shall I go? Go, go, go?"

How bad it is to have two wives who make puddings at the same time!

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Why the Hare Has No Tail

Long, long ago the animals had no tails or very small ones. One day the Lion asked all the animals to come to him to get good fat tails. It was cold that day, and it was raining. The hare had only a short little tail, but he did not like to go out and said to the other animals, "Please, bring me a tail. I can't go anywhere when it rains."

"What tail do you want to have?" the animals asked him.

"Oh, any tail will be good for me. But it must not be too long or too short."

Some time later the animals came back, and each animal had a beautiful tail. But nobody brought a tail for the hare.

I think that some of them forgot about the hare, some had no time, some could not find a good tail for the hare.

But I do know this: if you must do something, don't ask others to do it for you. Don't forget about the hare with his short little tail!"

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The Wise Dog

One day nine dogs went out to hunt. They met a lion. He said: "I am hunting too. I am very, very hungry. Let us hunt together."

So the dogs and the lion hunted together all day.

They caught ten antelopes.

The the lion said: "Now we must divide this meat."

One of the dogs said: "Why, that is easy. We are ten, and we have ten antelopes; so each of us will have one antelope."

The lion became very angry. He hit the poor dog and blinded him.

The other dogs did not say a word. But then one of the dogs said: "Our brother was wrong. We must give nine antelopes to King Lion. Then they will be ten together. And we dogs shall take one antelope, and we shall also be ten together."

The lion liked his answer and asked the dog: "Who taught you to divide like this? You are a wise dog."

The dog answered:

"Oh, King Lion, you hit our brother and blinded him. That blind brother taught me, King Lion!"

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How the Dog and the Hen Became Domestic Animals

There was a time when some birds and some animals lived in the sky. The Dog and the Hen lived there, too.

One day it was very cold and rainy in the sky. The birds asked the Dog to go down to the earth and bring some fire to make the sky warm.

The Dog went down and came to a man's house. He saw many bones near the house. He began to eat the bones and forgot the birds and the fire...,

The birds waited and waited for the Dog, but he did not come back. He decided to live with the man.

As it was still cold, the birds sent the Hen down to bring some fire.

The Hen went to a man's house and saw some seeds near the house. She liked the seeds very much.

The Hen did not think about the fire, but ate up the seeds. And she decided to live with man, too.

That is why the birds and the animals do not like the dog and the hen: they left their friends in the cold for the sake of good food.

Now you know how the dog and the hen became domestic animals.

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Why the Chameleon Shakes His Head

Long, long ago the Chameleon and the Dog were friends. But sometimes the Dog walked with the Man.

One day the Chameleon asked the Dog, "Why do you sometimes go with the Man?"

"The Man and I are friends," answered the Dog. The Man is a hunter, and we go hunting together. I help him to hunt. We have meat when we come back. Then we eat it."

Once the Man and the Dog were hunting. They killed an antelope and carried it to the hunter's house.

The Chameleon saw them and followed them. The hunter made dinner from the meat and began to eat it.

The Dog came up to the Man and wanted to have some meat, too.

Then the Hunter took a big stick and hit the Dog on the head! The poor Dog cried and ran away.

The Chameleon saw everything, and he ran away, too. He ran into the forest, stopped there and began to shake his head: "*Yangu, yangu, yangu*," he cried. "That is too bad! Why, the Dog says he is the Hunter's friend, he helps him to hunt and brings much meat. And the Hunter hits the poor Dog on the head with a stick! The Man is not good. I will not live near the Man. I will live in the forest!"

That is why the Chameleon lives in the forest far from the home of Man. When he thinks of the Man and his big stick, he shakes his head and says, "*Yangu, yangu, yangu!*" Too bad, too bad, too bad!

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Why the Hawk Carries Off Chickens

Once the Sun said to the Hawk, "I need some money. Please give me some. I shall give it back to you very soon."

The Hawk gave some money to the Sun. A week passed, a month passed, but the Sun did not give back the money. At last the Hawk decided to go to the Sun and ask for his money. He went to the Sun when he was high up in the sky.

"Do you remember that you must give me back my money?" he said to the Sun.

The Sun answered, "Yes, I do, but I am in the sky now, and the money is at home. Please come when I am at home, and I shall give the money back."

"All right," said the Hawk.

He decided to go the next morning. But the next morning he was too later: the Sun was already in the sky.

The Hawk went to the Sun's house another time, and again the Sun was not at home. He went many times, but he never found the Sun at home.

One day on his way to the Sun the Hawk met his friend, the Cock.

"Why do you go to the Sun every day?" the Cock asked.

"I gave him some money a long time ago, and I cannot get it back! The Sun says that when he is in the sky, he cannot go home to get the money. And I can never find him at home."

"I can help you," the Cock said. "You stay the night with me, I always get

up earlier than the Sun does. I shall wake you up very early. Then you can run quickly to the Sun and get your money."

So the Hawk stayed the night with the Cock. In the morning the Cock woke him: "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo! Get up, Hawk! Run to the Sun! He is at home now. He is not in the sky yet!"

The Hawk got up, thanked the Cock and went to the Sun. The Sun was at home. He was sleeping.

"Good morning, Sun!" the Hawk said. "It is time for you to get up. And I am here to get my money!"

"Good morning," the Sun said. "Who told you to come to me so early?"

The Hawk did not answer.

"If you want to get your money, you must tell me, who told you to come to me so early."

And then the Hawk said, "It was the Cock."

The Sun was very angry. He said: "Now the Cock will pay for it with his children! Now all the Cock's children will be yours!"

And from that day the Hawk began to carry off chickens.

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How the Hare Got the Sheep

A man bought a sheep and went home with it. A Hare saw him and thought: "What a good sheep that is! I must have it for myself."

The Hare ran quickly in front of them, took off his left shoe, put it on the road and hid himself in the bushes. The man saw the shoe and said to himself, "This is a good shoe, but I do not need one shoe, I shall not take it."

The Hare put on his left shoe, ran quickly on, took off his right shoe and put it on the road. The man came up to the second shoe, stopped there and said, "Oh, this is the right shoe and the other one was the left shoe. I shall go back and take the left shoe, then I shall have good new shoes."

He tied his sheep to a tree near the road, put the shoe near the sheep and walked back to find the first shoe. He looked and looked for the shoe, but could not find it.

While the man was looking for the left shoe, the Hare took the right shoe, untied the sheep and took it to his home.

When the man came back, he found no sheep and no shoe. He cried out, "What a fool I am!"

And he was right.

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Why the Crocodile Does Not Eat Hens

A hen came to the river every day. She drank water there.

One day the crocodile saw her and came up to her. He wanted to eat her up.

But she cried, "Oh, do not eat me, my dear brother!"

The crocodile let her go: he could not eat his sister!

The next day, when the hen came to the river again, the crocodile decided to eat her up.

But again the hen cried, "Oh, do not eat me, my dear brother!"

And again the crocodile did not eat her.

But he thought: "How can I be her brother? I live in the water, and she does not."

Then the crocodile went to his friend, a lizard.

"Oh, my friend! A big hen comes to the river every day and when I want to catch her, she says that I am her brother. How can that be?"

"Oh, my silly friend!" the lizard answered. "Don't you know that the hen, the turtle, and the lizard lay eggs as crocodiles do, my dear? So we all are brothers and sisters. Do you understand?"

"Oh, thank you very much," said the crocodile.

Now you know why crocodiles never eat hens!

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The Lion's Dinner

There was one place in the savannas which the animals liked very much. There was good water and green grass there. But a strong lion lived there. He killed two or three animals every day. One day the animals came to the Lion, and one of them began to speak: "Oh dear Lion, it is not good for you to run and hunt all day long in the savannas. We will send you one animal for your dinner every day."

"All right," the Lion said, "but you must begin to send me my dinner now: I am hungry, I must have my dinner every day! If you do not send an animal to me every day, I shall kill as many of you as I want!"

"Do not kill us, dear Lion. We shall send you an animal every day."

They cast lots, and that day it was an antelope who became the Lion's dinner. And every day they sent one animal to the Lion.

But the animals were not happy. Each of them thought: "Oh, tomorrow my turn will come!"

One day it was a Hare's turn to be the Lion's dinner. But the Hare was not unhappy. He smiled!

"That is good, very good!" the Hare said. "Do not be afraid! The Lion will not eat me up!"

The Hare ran to the river, jumped into the water and then began to roll in the mud. He came to the Lion very dirty.

The Lion saw him and became angry.

"But I do not want that dirty animal for my dinner," he cried.

"Oh, dear Lion, I am not your dinner. I had to bring you a hare. But on my way I met another lion, and he took the hare for himself."

"Is there another lion in the savannas?" asked the Lion.

"Yes, there is. He is big and strong. I think he is stronger than you are."

The Lion became angrier than before and said to the Hare, "Show me that lion!"

"All right!" said the Hare. "Let us go to him."

And they went to a big well. The Hare looked into the well and said, "Look, he is there, and the Hare is with him."

The Lion looked into the well. He saw himself and the Hare in the water. He jumped into the well to catch them - and never came back!

The animals were happy, they jumped and danced and thanked the clever Hare.

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Why The Dog is a Friend of Man

Long, long ago the Jackal and the Dog were friends and lived in the bush. They hunted together every day. In the evening they came home and ate food together.

One day they did not catch anything and came back very hungry. A cold wind was blowing in the bush.

"Oh," said the Dog, "it is so bad to be hungry and cold!"

"Go to sleep," the Jackal said. "When morning comes, we shall go hunting again and we shall catch a young antelope."

But the Dog could not sleep. Then he saw a red light far away.

"Jackal," he cried, "what is that red light over there?"

"There is a village there, and that red light is a man's fire," the Jackal answered.

"Fire is warm, and it is cold here," said the Dog. "I say, Jackal, will you go and bring some fire? You are so brave!"

"No, no, I will not. You can bring it, if you like."

The Dog did not want to go, because he was afraid of men. But he thought "I am sure there are some bones near the fire. I can eat them, and the fire is so warm!"

He was so hungry and cold! Hunger and cold made him forget his fear, and he said to the Jackal "I am going to the village to get some fire and some bones. If I do not come back soon, please cry *Bo-aa, bo-aa!* Then I shall know where you are and where I must go."

So the Dog ran to the village. He saw a hut near the fire. There were some bones near the hut. They were so good for the hungry Dog! He came nearer to the bones, but then a man came out of the hut and saw the Dog. The Dog was afraid of him and cried "Oh please do not kill me! I am a poor Dog, and I want to warm myself by the fire. Then I shall go back to the bush."

"Very well," the man said. "You may sit by the fire, but when you are warm you must go back to the bush."

The Dog thanked him and sat by the fire. He was quite happy; he was warm and there was a big bone under his nose. He began to eat it, and then the man came out of the hut and asked "Are you not warm yet?"

"Not yet," the Dog answered, he saw another bone not far away and wanted to eat it too.

Soon the man asked again, "Are you not warm yet?"

Please let me stay a little longer, I am not quite warm yet," was the Dog's answer.

Then the man came up to the Dog. The Dog looked into his eyes and said "Yes, I am warm now, but I do not want to go back to the bush. I am often cold and hungry there. Let me live with you in the village, please! I shall help you to hunt birds and animals in the bush and forest, and you will give me some bones to eat."

"All right," the man said. "You may stay with me."

From that day on, the Dog began to live with the man, and when you hear the Jackal cry at night *Bo-aa, bo-aa*, you know that he is asking the Dog to come back. The Dog never answers, so now the Jackal lives in the bush alone.

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Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky

Many, many years ago the Sun and the Moon lived together on the earth. Water was their best friend, and they often came to see him. But Water never went to see the Sun and the Moon in their house.

"Why don't you come to see us?" the Sun once asked him.

"I have too many friends," Water answered, "they will come with me. I am afraid there will be no place for them in your house."

But I shall build a new big house," the Sun said.

And the Sun built a very big house and then asked Water to come to him. Water came with all the fish and water animals.

"May I come in with all my people?" Water asked.

"Yes, come in," the Sun said.

Very soon Water in the house was knee-deep for the Sun.

Then in a minute Water was up to the Sun's head, and came higher and higher with all the fish and water animals. At last Water was so high in the house that the Sun and the Moon went on to the roof and sat there. But soon Water came up on to the roof. What could the Sun and the Moon do? Where could they sit? And they went up to the sky. They liked the place and began to live there.

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Why Fire and Rain are Enemies

Once upon a time there was a chief who had a beautiful daughter. Many young men wanted to marry her, but the chief thought: "They are not very good for my daughter."

Fire and Rain wanted to marry her, too. Rain came to the chief's daughter and said, "Will you marry me, oh daughter of the Chief?"

"Yes, I will," said the girl.

At the same time Fire came to the chief and said, "I want to marry your daughter. Will you give her to me for my wife?"

The chief said, "Yes, I will."

The the chief sent for his daughter and said to her, "My dear daughter, you will marry Fire. I gave him my promise."

"Oh, Father," said the girl, "I cannot marry Fire, I must marry Rain. I gave my promise to him."

"What shall we do?" cried the chief. "You cannot marry both Fire and Rain."

The Fire and Rain came to the chief and his daughter. The chief said to them: "Tomorrow will be the day of my daughter's marriage."

"To me?" asked Fire.

"To me?" asked Rain.

"To the winner of a race. To him I will give my daughter."

On the day of the race many people came to the town. They all wanted to see the race. Some of them said, "Fire will win." Others said, "Rain will win."

But the chief's daughter thought: "I want to marry Rain."

The day of the race came. When it was time to begin, the drummers beat the drums. The race began. The wind helped Fire to run very quickly. But where was Rain? Nobody saw him. The people cried: "Look, Fire is quite near the finish!"

But the Rain began to fall from the sky and put out Fire. So Fire could not finish the race. The people cried: "Rain, Rain is the first!"

So the Chief gave his daughter to Rain, and they were very happy.

And from that day on, Fire and Rain are enemies.

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The Two Friends

Once there lived two girls who were friends. They loved each other dearly. They bought the same dresses, they ate the same food, they went together to bring water from the river. People always saw them together and said, "What good friends they are!"

But one day a young man said, "You say those two girls are good friends. I am not sure about that, I shall try to find it out."

The next day the young man stopped the two girls in the street.

"Good morning," he said. "I want to speak to one of you."

"No, you cannot do that, we are friends, and you must speak to the two of us together."

"I do not want to speak to the two of you. I shall speak to only one of you. Then the one to whom I speak can tell what I say to the other."

And he whispered to one of the girls: "*You, you, you, you*. Do you hear me?"

The girl answered, "Yes."

The young man went away.

"What did he say to you, my dear?" the second girl asked.

"Oh he whispered nothing to me," said the first girl. He whispered *you, you, you, you*...

"What about *me, me, me, me*...?" the second girl asked.

"But it was not about you. It was only *you*."

"But you said yes to him! You do not want to tell me everything!"

"I tell you that it was only *you*!"

"Well, and what about *me*?"

"Oh you silly girl! I tell you he said only *you*!"

"So you do not want to tell me everything, and I am your friend! No, I was your friend, but I am not any more!"

"Well, I do not want to have such a silly friend!"

"You are a liar!"

"I am not. But you are very, very silly!"

Then one girl went to the right and the other went to the left. They did not even say good-bye to each other.

That was the unhappy end of their long friendship.

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The Fire Festival

Long, long ago the chief of the Dagomba people had a son. He loved the boy so much that he could not sleep if the boy was not near him at night. One evening the chief sat under a big tree near his house. Some Dagombas sat around him. That night was warm and there was no rain. One could hear the *tom-tom* of the drums. Children sang and danced near them.

"Life is good," the chief said. And the people clapped their hands. The Dagomba people always clap their hands when they agree with somebody or something.

Then the chief's wife came up to the chief and said, "Oh, Chief, it is time for our boy to sleep."

"But he is with you, in the house," the chief said.

Isn't he here, with you?" the woman asked.

"Woman, I tell you, he is not with me. Go and look for him."

"Oh, my dear Chief," the wife said sadly. "He is not in our house."

The chief stood up quickly and cried, "Stop the dance! Let the drummers go and drum asking for my son."

In a minute the drums began their talk. "The Chief's child is lost," they said. "Who finds the child must bring him to the Chief."

All the people ran from place to place and looked for the boy. But they did not find him. The Chief was very angry. He said, "All my people must help to find the boy."

And the people looked and looked for the boy. They were looking for the boy for many hours. Then a man cried out: "Here he is!"

The Chief came up to the man. There, under a tree on the grass, the boy was sleeping.

"Get up, my dear," the Chief said to his little son. But the boy did not hear him. "Get up," said his father again. Then the boy opened his eyes.

"Father," he said and got up. And they walked off together. The Chief was very happy.

The drums began their talk again. "The Chief's son is here! The Chief's son is here!" they said.

Then the chief looked back angrily at the tree: "Burn that tree! It hid my son from me!"

And the Chief's servants put their torches to its trunk and branches. The tree began to burn and soon fell on the grass.

At the same time the happy father went home with his son. The people ran after them with songs and dances.

From that day on every year in July, the Dagomba people have their Fire Festival. The chief goes out of his house and the people light their torches. They begin to dance and put their torches to tree trunks. But today they burn only two or three branches, and not the whole tree.

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Sacred Pythons

One day, a very long time ago, some Naayire people went hunting. They walked and walked in the bush but found nothing. When night came, they were very far from home.

"We must sleep in the bush," the chief said, "we must find a good place to sleep."

The hunters were not afraid to sleep in the bush, but they knew: elephants, lions, and other animals sometimes killed sleeping hunters. And there were some bad people, too, in the bush.

The hunters came to a place with big trees round it. They decided to rest and sleep on the grass. They did not make a fire and ate only some nuts which they carried in their bags; that was their supper. Then they went to sleep. All of them were tired. They slept soundly and did not hear anything. They did not hear that their enemies were coming nearer and nearer to them.

But in one of the trees above the sleeping men something moved and fell down on the head of a young hunter. He jumped up and cried; a big python was on his head!

The Naayire hunters got up quickly and saw the enemies round them. A fight began. Soon the enemies ran away and that was the end of the fight.

The Naayire hunters came up to their chief to talk about the fight.

"What made you jump up?" the chief asked the young hunter.

"It was a python," he said. "It fell on my head, but it did not kill me."

The the chief said, "From this day on our people will never kill a python.

That python saved our lives. Pythons will be sacred animals in our country."

Even today the Naayire people love pythons. If you go into their houses in the rainy season, you will find a python there. The pythons never harm anyone, they do not eat even the chickens.

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The Small Red Feather

There once lived a man with his wife. They were very poor and always hungry. The man often went to the forest, but he was a bad hunter and sometimes brought home only a small bird.

One day he went to the forest again. But it was a very bad day for him, he did not find even a small bird. He was tired and sad. He sat down to rest under a tree. Then he heard a sweet song of a bird.

He looked up and saw a very small bird whose feathers were red. The bird said, "I see that you are poor and hungry. I want to help you. I will give you one of my feathers. Take it home and cook it. You will have a good dinner. Come back tomorrow, and I will give you another feather."

He thanked the bird and went home. He put the feather in a pot and told everything to his wife.

"Silly, how can the feather become food? You must catch the bird and kill it. Then we can cook the bird and eat it."

He did not answer, but looked into the pot and saw there a good dinner.

Every day he went to the forest, and every day the small bird gave him a red feather that made a dinner for the man and his wife.

But his wife was very greedy. Every day she said to the man, "We must not have only the little red feather. We must have the bird. Then we can cook two, three, or four feathers every day and we shall have as much food as we like."

"But the little bird is my friend. I shall not kill it."

One day the woman followed her husband into the forest, but he did not

see her. The woman heard the sweet song of the little red bird. She took a stone and killed it. The bird fell down off the tree.

The man was very sad, but the wife said, "Now we shall have much food every day."

They went home. At home the woman pulled one red feather off the bird and put it into the hot water. She cooked it, but the feather was just a feather.

And from that day on they were always hungry.

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The Feast

Once a chief decided to give a feast for his people. He sent his men to every village. They told the people to come to the chief's house and said, "The Chief asks each of the men to bring one bottle of palm wine and pour it into a pot at the door."

The day of the feast came. People put on their best clothes and walked to the chief's house with their families. They stopped at the door of the chief's house and poured their bottles into a very big pot at the door.

There was a man who wanted to go to the feast very much, but he had no palm wine at home. His wife said to him, "You must buy some palm wine."

But the man answered, "What? No, I do not want to buy wine for a feast that is free. No, no!"

He thought a little and then said, "Hundreds of people will bring their wine and pour it into the pot. A bottle of water cannot be bad for so much wine."

And so he went to the feast with a bottle of water. He poured his bottle into the pot as other people did. Then he sat down at the table with all the other people and waited for the glass of palm wine which he liked so much.

The chief said, "Let us drink wine, dear guests!"

All the guests took their glasses. But what they drank was not palm wine, but - water! So our man was not the only one who thought: "A bottle of water cannot be bad for so much wine."

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The Fire on the Hill

Long, long ago there was a lake of cold water in Kenya. Many animals came at night to the lake to drink some water. But people never came to the lake at night; the animals could kill and eat them.

Now a rich man who had a beautiful daughter once said, "The young man who will go to the lake in the evening and stay in the cold water till morning will have my daughter for his wife."

There lived a poor young man who loved the rich man's daughter very much. He said to his mother, "I shall try to stall all night in the lake and then marry the dear girl."

"No, no," the mother said, "you are my only son! The water in the lake is very cold, and the animals will eat you up. Do not go there!"

She cried and cried, but her son said, "Mother, do not cry. I must try. I love her so much!"

So the young man went to the girl's father. He told him that he wanted to go the lake and stay in the cold water all night. The rich man sent his servants to a place where they could watch the young man.

When night came, the young man went to the lake and his mother followed him, but he did not see her. There was a hill forty paces away from the place where the young man went into the water. The woman climbed up the hill and made a fire there. The wild animals saw the fire and were afraid to go near that place.

The young man saw the fire, too. He understood that his mother was there. He thought of his mother's love, and it was easier for him to stay all night in the very cold water.

Morning came. The young man went to the rich man's house. The rich man saw him and said, "My servants say that there was a fire on a hill forty paces from the lake. It warmed you, and that is why you could stay all night in the water. So you cannot marry my daughter. Good-bye."

The young man was very angry. He went to the judge.

"Well," the judge said, "this is a very simple case."

The next morning the young man with his mother and the rich man with his servants came before the judge. There were many people there who wanted to hear the case.

The judge asked for a pot of cold water. Then he walked forty paces from the pot and made a fire.

"Now," he said, "we shall wait a little until the water is warm."

The people cried, "But the fire is so far away, it cannot warm the water in the pot."

Then the judge said, "And how could that young man warm himself at a fire forty paces away?"

So the case was over, and the young man married the rich man's daughter. They lived happily for many years.

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A House in the Sky

Once upon a time there lived a poor man, Abunuvas by name. He was clever and often made jokes at rich people and even at the chief. So they did not like him and wanted to kill him.

Once the chief sent for Abunuvas, and he came to the chief's house.

:I hear that you are very clever, Abunuvas! Can you build me a house in the sky in three days? You may have as many men as you need. If you cannot do that, my soldiers will kill you."

"I shall build it, my chief," said Abunuvas and went home. He began to think. Then he made a kite and tied a bell and a long string to it. When the wind blew, the kite rose high in the air. But it did not fly far, because Abunuvas tied the string to a tree.

The next day all the people of the town heard the bell and saw a dark spot in the sky. The chief saw the spot, too. Abunuvas came up to the chief and said: "Oh, my chief, the house in the sky will soon be ready. Do you hear the bell? The workers are ringing the bell from the sky. They need some boards for the roof of the house. Please tell your soldiers to climb up to the sky with the boards."

"But how will my soldiers climb up to the sky?" asked the chief.

"Oh, there is a way up," said Abunuvas.

So the chief ordered his soldiers to get some boards and to follow Abunuvas. They came back to the tree and saw the string there.

"This is the way to the sky," Abunuvas said. "Climb up the string and you will come to the sky."

The soldiers tried to climb up the string, but could not do that.

"Try again, try again! Our chief will be very angry if you do not carry the boards up to his house in the sky!" said Abunuvas.

Then the soldiers went to the chief and said, "Oh, chief, no man can climb up to the sky!"

The chief thought a little and said: "That is right. Nobody can do that."

Then Abunuvas said to the chief: "Oh, my chief, if you know that, why do you ask me to build you a house in the sky?"

And the chief could give no answer to that. Abunuvas went to the tree, cut the string and took away the kite.

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Which is Better?

There was once a man who had three sons, and all of them loved the same girl. Each of them asked the girl the same question, "Will you marry me?" All of them were clever, handsome, and strong. The girl liked each of the three young men very much and could not decide which of them was the best.

One day the father of the three brothers said, "Here is some money for you. You will go on a long travel. While you are traveling, you must look for a very, very useful thing. When you find it, you must buy it and bring it home."

The three brothers traveled for a long time, and they bought three very useful things.

The first young man bought a magic carpet. On it he could fly to any place in no time. The second brother bought a magic looking-glass. When he looked into it, he could see anyone and everything that he wanted to see. The third bought a magic lemon. The juice of that lemon could make a dying man or woman well again.

The three brothers came together and showed their things to one another. Then one of them said, "We are far from our home and from our dear girl. Let us look into the looking-glass and see her."

The second brother took out his looking-glass, and they all looked into it. They saw that the girl was very ill. Then the first brother asked the other brothers to sit down on his carpet, and all of them were at the girl's house in no time. The third brother cut his lemon and gave the juice to the girl. The girl drank it, and she was well again.

The young men were very happy.

"Now which of us will you marry?" they asked the girl.

"I thank you all, my dear friends," answered the girl. "One of the brothers saw me in his looking-glass, and that helped to save my life. His looking-glass is a very useful thing, and he will have it forever. Another brother brought all three of you here on his carpet, and that helped to save me, too. It is also a very useful thing, and he will have it forever. And one of you gave me the lemon juice, and now I am well again. But he has no lemon now. He gave all he had to save me. I will be his wife."

And the other two brothers said, "Yes, the girl is right."

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The Magic Pot

Long, long ago there lived an old woman who sold the best soup in the market. It was chicken soup. Nobody knew the old woman's name. Nobody knew where she lived. Nobody knew why her soup was always the best in the market and why it was so hot. But people did not think about that. They bought the soup and ate it.

Every morning the old woman came to the market square. She carried a big black pot of hot chicken soup on her head. Then she sat down under a tree, and it did not take her long to sell her soup.

There lived a small boy not far from the market square. His name was Kalari. He liked the soup very much. He wanted to know where the old woman came from.

One day when the old woman put her empty pot on her head and left the market square, Kalari followed her, but she did not see him. They went a long, long way, they climbed up a high hill. Evening came. Kalari was afraid, but he went on.

At last the woman came to a little hut on that high hill. There stood a very large pot. "How big the pot is," thought Kalari. The woman went into the hut. Kalari went up to the pot and looked into it. It was empty. Then the woman came out of the hut. Kalari quickly hid himself. The woman came up to the large pot. Then she began to sing:

*Magic pot, magic pot, make hot soup for me, make hot soup for me,
Make soup with chicken, make soup with chicken,
Make this soup for me to sell, make this soup for me to sell,
And for people to buy, and for people to buy.
Magic pot, magic pot!*

Very soon the soup was ready. Steam came out of the pot. The smell of

the soup was very good and Kalari was very hungry. The old woman went back into her hut. Kalari came up to the pot. He looked under it. There was not fire there, but the pot was full of hot chicken soup!

"I must have some of it, I am so hungry!" Kalari said to himself and put his hand into the pot to take a piece of chicken. But suddenly the old woman came out of her hut. She saw Kalari with his hand in the pot.

"Oh, oh, oh!" she cried. "Oh, oh, oh!"

Kalari ran down the hill as quickly as he could. The old woman ran after him, but she could not catch him. Kalari ran and ran and at last came home. He told his parents about the old woman on the hill and her magic pot. They looked at the hill and saw steam there.

"Yes, we see the steam of the magic pot," they said.

From that day on the old woman stopped coming to the market with her soup. Nobody went up that high hill to see her. They were afraid of the old woman. But now, when people see clouds round the hill, they saw, "Look! There is the steam of the magic pot."

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The Longest Story in the World

Do you know the story about the longest story in the world?

Once upon a time there lived a chief who liked to listen to stories. And he knew so many stories that sometimes he stopped the storyteller and finished the story himself.

One day the chief sent his servants everywhere to find a good storyteller.

"Our Chief will give many presents to the man who will tell him the longest story in the world and make him laugh," the servants shouted in the streets.

Many people came to the chief and told him very long stories. They tried to make him laugh, but nobody could do that. The chief always said, "That is not the longest story and there is nothing to laugh at."

Once a boy came to the chief and said, "Oh, my Chief, let me try to tell you the longest story in the world and make you laugh."

The chief said, "Well, sit down and begin your story!"

The boy began: "Long, long ago there lived a man, Ubanbau by name. He ate so much that no man could feed him full. The chief of that country heard about Ubanbau and said, "Bring him to me, I shall feed him full." And he ordered his people to bring hundreds of thousands of pots of soup, meat, and fruit. Hundreds of camels carried the pots on their backs. The camels stopped in front of the chief's house. Many people came to see Ubanbau's dinner. Then Ubanbau came. The drummers began to drum, the musicians began to play, and the people sang songs. Ubanbau made a bow to the chief and said to the people, "Now look at me! Look at me! Look at me! With these words Ubanbau began to eat soup. And he ate, and he ate,..."

"Well, what then?" asked the chief. "He ate, and he ate, and what then?"

"Oh, my Chief," answered the boy, "this is only the first pot and there were many thousands of pots! Wait a little. And he ate, and he ate, and he ate,..."

Evening came. The boy went on with his story; "...and he ate, and he ate, and he ate,..." At last the chief ordered him to stop until the next morning.

In the morning the chief asked the boy to go on with his story. "Now what can you tell us about your Ubanbau?" he asked.

"Oh, my Chief, he not only ate, but drank too, so he drank and then he ate, and he ate, and he ate,..."

The storyteller said louder and louder "And he ate, and he ate, and he ate,..."

The chief looked at the boy and began to laugh. "Well, my boy, your story is the longest in the world! Have a rest now! Stop!"

And the young storyteller stopped his story, got many presents from the chief, climbed up on a camel, and rode away with these words: "And he ate, and he ate, and he ate,..."

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The Two Strangers

The strangers came to a village in the evening. They came to the chief of that village and said: "May we stay for the night in your village?"

"Oh, yes, strangers," said the chief. "There is a house for strangers in our village. You may sleep there, and there is supper for you to eat. But know this: there is an old custom in our village - strangers may sleep in our house for strangers, but they must not snore. We kill the man who snores."

The strangers went to the house, they had a good supper there, and then went to sleep. They slept well. One hour passed, two hours passed, and one of them began to snore:

"Vo, vo, vo."

The other stranger heard the snoring. He thought: "The people will hear the snoring and kill him."

The stranger wanted to save the man. He thought a little and then began to sing. So one stranger snored and the other sang:

Vo, vo, lio, vo!

Vo, vo, lio, vo!

We walked on the road,

We came to this village,

They were good to us here.

Vo, vo, lio, vo!

He sang very well. The people did not hear the snoring, they listened to the song. Then they began to dance. Some of them sang the song together with the stranger and danced to the music. Men, women, and even the chief sang and danced. All that night one stranger snored, one stranger sang, and all the people sang and danced.

In the morning the strangers came to the chief to say goodbye and to thank him for everything. The chief said goodbye to them and gave them a small bag of money.

"I give this money to both of you. We had a good time with you: we danced and sang well. Thank you very much."

The strangers left the village, but on the road they began to quarrel.

"How shall we divide the money?" said one of them. "I must have the bigger part. Why did you sing that song last night? Because I snored. So I must have the bigger part of the money."

And the other man said, "Yes, that is so. But the people could have killed you, because you snored. My song saved your life. You must only thank me and give me the bigger part of the money."

They quarreled and quarreled and could not decide anything.

Can you?

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Three Hairs of a Lion

Segab's mother died when he was eleven years old. His father married another woman, Bizunesh by name. Segab did not like Bizunesh. But Bizunesh began to love the boy very much and tried to be a good mother to him. She always made good breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, but he did not eat them. She bought him many good clothes, but he did not look at them. She gave him new shoes, but he went to the river and threw the shoes into the water. When she spoke to him, he always ran away.

One day the poor woman said to Segab, "I always wanted to have a son, and now I have you, Segab. I love you very much, my dear boy!"

But Segab said angrily, "I am not your son, and you are not my mother. My mother is dead. I do not love you. I will never love you."

Bizunesh was very sorry and cried all night. In the morning she decided to go to a wise old man. She told him about Segab who did not love her.

The old man said, "I can help you. But first you must bring me three hairs of a lion."

"But how can I do this? The lion will kill me," Bizunesh said.

"I cannot answer your question. I need three hairs of a lion. Try to get them."

So Bizunesh went out to try to get the hairs. She went far, far away from her house and came to a place where a lion lived. The lion was very big and roared angrily. He was hungry. Bizunesh was afraid of him and ran away quickly. But the next day she came back with some meat for the lion. She put the meat not far from him and ran away.

The lion saw the meat and went to it. He ate it all very quickly.

The next day she again brought some meat for the lion and put it a little nearer. And again the lion ate it all up.

Every day Bizunesh brought some meat for the lion, and he soon understood that the woman was his friend. He was not angry, and he did not roar. He was happy to see her.

And one day Bizunesh came very near to the lion and gave him the meat from her hand. At the same time she tore three hairs off his back. The lion was not angry. Bizunesh ran to the old man and showed him the hairs.

"What must I do with them now?" she asked.

"Nothing," he answered. "But you know how to get near a lion, little by little, step by step. Do the same with Segab, and I am sure he will love you."

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The Happy Man

Many, many years ago in north Africa there lived a chief. He was very rich and had many wives and children, but he was not very happy. He thought: "I have everything, but that does not make me happy. What must I do to be happy? I do not know."

Once he shouted angrily to his servants: "Why can't I be happy? What must I do to be happy?"

One of his servants said: "Oh, my Chief! Look at the sky! How beautiful the moon and the stars are! Look at them, and you will see how good life is. That will make you happier."

"Oh, no, no, no!" the chief answered angrily. "When I look at the moon and the stars I become angry, because I know I cannot have them."

Then another servant said: "Oh, my Chief! What about music? Music makes a man happy. We shall play to you from morning till night, and music will make you happy."

The chief's face became red with anger.

"Oh, no, no, no, no!" he cried. "What a silly idea. Music is fine, but to listen to music from morning till night, day after day? Never! No, never!"

So the servants went away, and the chief sat angrily in his rich room. Then one of the servants came back into the room and made a bow.

"Oh, my Chief," he said, "but I think I can tell you something that will make you very happy."

"What is it?" asked the chief.

"It is very easy to do," said the servant. "You must find a happy man, take off his shirt and put it on. Then his happiness will go into your body and you will be as happy as he!"

"I like your idea," said the chief. He sent his soldiers all over the country to look for a happy man. They went on and on, but it was not easy to find a happy man in the chief's country.

But one day the soldiers found a man in a small village who said, "I am the happiest man in the world." He was poor, but he always smiled and sang. The soldiers brought him to the chief.

"At last I shall be a happy man!" said the chief and took off his shirt at once. "Bring the man in!"

The door to the chief's room opened. A small, dark man with a happy smile walked in.

"Come here, my friend!" said the chief. "Please take off your shirt!"

The little smiling man came up to the chief. The chief looked at him and saw - what did he see? The happy man, the happiest man in the world, had no shirt!

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The Money in the Pot of Butter

A man had to go on a long travel. He hid his money in a pot and put butter over it. So nobody could see what was under the butter in the pot.

Then he took the pot to his neighbor and said: "Please keep this pot of butter for me until I come back." He did not say anything about the money in the pot.

A month passed, two months passed, but the traveler did not come back. His neighbor thought: "I am afraid the butter in that pot is bad."

And he took all the butter out of the pot and saw the money there. He took the money for himself and put many small stones into the pot in place of the money.

When the traveler came back, he asked his neighbor for the pot. He carried it home and took out all the butter. He wanted to take the money, but he found only many small stones under the butter.

He was very angry. Then one of his friends came to see him.

"You look angry, my friend! Why are you angry?" asked his friend.

"Oh, I am a silly man!" And he told his friend the story about the pot of butter, the money and the small stones.

"Well, I can show you how to get your money back. Let us go to the forest."

And the two friends went to the forest, caught a monkey there and brought it home.

"Now you go to your neighbor and say, "Please let your son come with me

to the market. He can help me carry food from the market."

The man did so. The neighbor sent his son to the man. But they did not go to the market. The man went home with the neighbor's son and locked the boy in his house.

The friend said: "Now go to your neighbor with the monkey and say: 'Here is your son.'"

The man did so. The neighbor was very angry. "Take that monkey away and bring back my son!" he said.

"Why, this is your son! If money can turn into small stones, then a boy can turn into a monkey."

The neighbor understood everything. He brought the money, and the man let the boy go back to his father.

The man thanked his clever friend very much. He wanted to give him part of the money, but the friend did not take it.

"We are friends, are we not?" he said. "And friends always help each other, but never take money for that. Never, never.!"

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The Story of the Twins

A long time ago at the village of Serki a woman gave birth to twins - both boys. They were very nice children.

One of the twins, Eiba by name, had a white spot on his right hand. The other one - they called him Saiba - had two white spots on his left hand. Father and mother were very happy and very sad at the same time. You will ask - why? Because there was a very bad custom in Serki - to kill twins. And the chief of Serki said: "Those twins must die too." But their father and mother did not want to kill the twins.

"What?" said the chief angrily. "You do not want to kill them? Go away from the village and never come back or I shall kill you together with your children."

So the poor family went away from the village.

For many years the family lived in a forest. Life was not easy there, but the children grew up strong. When they grew up, they helped their father and mother with their work. They were good and handsome young men.

One day they found a man in the forest. He was dying. They tried to help him, but he said: "Do not help me. I shall die soon. I came from Serki. There is a war on there now. We fought bravely, but the enemy is stronger than we are. Go and help my people if you can." With these words he died.

Eiba and Saiba wanted to go to Serki and help to fight, but their father and mother were against it and said: "The Chief does not want you there. He wanted to kill you when you were small children. That is why we went away from Serki and came to live in the forest."

But the twins wanted to go and help Serki. They said: "This is our country.

We must help the people of our country."

So the boys went to Serki and fought against the enemies. They fought bravely. The people of that country won the fight and made the enemy run. So the war was over.

Then a feast at the chief's house began. Saiba and Eiba were at the feast too. Then one of the men stood up and said: "There are two young men here, two brothers. I think they are very brave soldiers. But we do not know who they are."

The twin's uncle was at the feast too. He said to the chief: "Do you remember two little twins - one with a spot on his right hand and the other with two spots on his left hand? Eighteen years ago you told their father and mother to go away from our village as they did not want to kill the twins. These are the same twins."

The chief stood up and asked the twins to forgive him. Then he sent the two young men back to their father and mother with many presents and a letter in which he asked them to come back.

From that day on, they stopped killing twins in Serki.

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The Rubber Man

Spider was very lazy. Every morning he got up at twelve o'clock, ate his breakfast and said to his wife: "I am going to our farm."

But he did not go to the farm. He had no farm at all. He went to the forest and sat there under a big tree all day long.

His wife sometimes said to him: "Tell me when you want my help on the farm."

She said nothing more, she did not want to make him angry.

Spider answered then: "Oh, there is plenty of time yet. Do not be afraid, I shall tell you, when I need you."

The people often asked him: "When will you begin to work on your farm?"

And he answered: "There is plenty of time yet."

Then one day he said to his wife: "Tomorrow I want to plant some nuts on our farm. Go to the market and buy a bag of nuts. I must have them for tomorrow."

His wife was happy to hear that and ran to the market to buy the nuts. The next day Spider went with the nuts to the forest, ate as many nuts as he wanted and then had a good sleep under a big tree. In the evening he came home and said to his wife: "Oh how tired and hungry I am! I was working on our farm all day long. Is supper ready? Life is hard for us men. We work from morning til night and you, women, you have only to cook dinners and suppers."

Every day Spider went away, but he did not work on the farm, he only ate nuts and then rested in the forest.

Time passed, and people began to bring home their nuts, but Spider brought nothing. Then his wife said: "When will you bring our nuts home? Shall I help you?"

"No, no, I do not want your help," Spider answered. "I shall bring the nuts home in a few days."

But how could he bring the nuts home? He had no nuts now! He had not even a farm!

"Where can I get the nuts?" he asked himself. "Ah, I know. I shall steal some," he thought.

At night he went out of his house and soon came to the chief's farm. It was a big farm, and there were many nuts in the nut trees. So he filled his bag with nuts, hid the bag under a tree in the forest and went back home. The next morning he said to his wife: "Today I shall bring the nuts from our farm. Please make a good supper! I shall be very hungry and tired."

"Yes, my dear," said his wife.

Spider went to the forest. The bag of nuts was there under the tree. Spider ate some nuts and had a good sleep. In the evening he carried the bag to his wife. She was so happy! She opened the bag, took one nut, ate it, then took another and then another. How good they were.!

The next night Spider again went to the chief's farm and again stole a bag of nuts. When the next evening came, he carried it to his wife. He did the same thing again and again. But one night the chief's servant saw a thief was stealing the nuts.

"I must catch the thief. But how can I do that?" thought the servant. Then an idea came to him. He took two big pots and went to the forest to find some gutta-percha trees. He made brown rubber out of gutta-percha sap, and then he made a rubber man. He placed the the sticky rubber man

near the nut trees.

"Now I shall know who the thief is," he said to himself.

When night came and all the people were asleep, Spider went to the chief's farm. He came to the place where the nuts were and suddenly saw a man there.

"Oh," he asked the man, "what do you want here?"

There was no answer.

"Who are you?" Spider asked him again. "What are you doing here at night?"

The rubber man did not speak.

Then Spider hit the rubber man on the head and cried: "Why do you not answer me?"

The rubber man was so sticky that Spider could not pull his hand away from the man's head.

"Let me go! Let me go!" cried Spider and hit the rubber man with the other hand. And the other hand stuck to the man's head too. Now Spider understood that it was not a man. Still he tried to push it away with his foot, but his foot stuck to the rubber man too. Now Spider could not move any more."

"How silly I was," he said to himself. "People will come in the morning, and everybody will know that I am a thief."

Poor Spider! In the morning the chief's servant tore him away from the rubber man and brought him before the chief... .

And from that day on Spider hid in a dark place and did not speak to

anybody because he was so ashamed. And now his children and his children's children and his children's children's children always hide in dark places.

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Greedy Anansi

This is a story about a boy. His name is Anansi.

There was a great famine in the country where Anansi lived. Anansi and his little brothers and sisters were very hungry. The boy could not think of anything but food.

"This hunger will kill me!" he often said.

One day he went out of the house and walked to the seashore.

"I shall try to catch a little fish," he thought.

He sat on the seashore watching, watching, watching, but nothing came. Then suddenly he saw a green island in the sea. Anansi climbed into a little red boat, and soon he came to the green island.

He got out of the boat, stood under the tree and looked up at big nuts high above him. He tried to climb up the tree and get the nuts, but that was not easy. He tried again and again, but he could not get the nuts. The nuts were laughing at him!

"I will get you, my dear nuts!" he said. And he tried again and again to get the nuts. At last he got one nut.

"Now I have you!" he cried. He tried to throw it into his little boat, but the nut fell into the sea.

Well, there are many more nuts in the tree," said Anansi, but the second nut fell into the sea too. Seven times that happened, seven good, big nuts were in the sea! The wind carried them far, far away. The boy cried and cried, but nuts have no ears! They did not come back.

Then Anansi went to the forest. He saw a little house there. An old man came out of the house.

"What do you want here, my boy?" asked the old man. "Do not be afraid of me. Tell me everything."

So Anansi told him about the famine and about his hungry people. Then he told the old man about the nuts and cried again. The old man took Anansi's hand and said: "Do not cry, my boy! I have something to tell you. It is better than nuts." He went into his house and brought a little pot.

"Take this home and give it to your mother. Now you and your people will never be hungry. When your mother wants to make dinner for her family, she must only say: *'Pot, pot, what you did for the old man, please do for me!'*"

Anansi thanked him and went quickly away. He came to the little boat, got in, and said at once: "Pot, pot, what you did for the old man, please do for me!"

And the pot gave him a good dinner. Anansi ate it all and was strong again. He soon came home. But he did not want to give the pot to his mother. "It is my pot. I shall have it and eat when I want to."

So Anansi put the pot in some dark place of the house and spoke to it when nobody was at home.

Every day his mother and his brothers and sisters went out to look for food. Anansi did not go with them. He said: "Oh, I am ill, I cannot go."

When he was at home alone, he ran to his pot, and the pot gave him a good dinner.

Anansi's brothers and sisters grew thinner and thinner every day, but Anansi grew fatter and fatter.

"Why is he so fat?" one of his brothers asked one day. "I think he has a secret. I shall find it out."

And the next day he did not go out to look for food with his mother. He stayed at home. Anansi thought that nobody was at home, took his pot and said: "Pot, pot, what you did for the old man, please do for me!"

And the pot gave him a good dinner.

His brother listened to the words. Now he knew about the pot, and he told his mother about it. The poor woman began to cry.

"I have a bad son!" she cried.

That day she told Anansi to go out of the house together with the other children. She stayed at home and asked the pot to give her dinner.

"How happy my children will be when they come home!" she thought.

Anansi came home with the other children. Their mother gave them dinner, but Anansi said: "I am very ill, I cannot eat it. I shall go to bed."

But he did not go to bed. He went to the place where the pot was. But the pot was not there!

The next day his mother went to the village square with the pot in her hands. She stopped there and began to beat the pot with a little stick. Many people came to the place. The she said: "Pot, pot, what you did for the old man, please do for me."

And the pot gave her food! The woman spoke to the pot many times, and the pot gave the food to the hungry people. But when she spoke to the pot for the fiftieth time, the pot melted away. There was nothing on the ground in front of the poor woman.

Anansi was very angry. He decided to go to the old man again and tell

him everything. "He will give me another pot," he thought.

When Anansi came to the seashore, the little red boat was there. He got into it, and soon he came to the old man's house. The old man listened to Anansi's story.

"I have no pot to give you, my boy, but I will give you this stick. You say the same words to it, only instead of '*pot, pot*' say '*stick, stick...*'"

Anansi took the stick and ran to the boat. He could not wait a minute. He said quickly: "Stick, stick, what you did for the old man, please do for me!"

And the stick did! It beat him on the back, on his fat face, on his fat hands and legs, it beat all his fat body! He did not know what to do. He jumped into the water and swam away as quickly as he could. He left the boat with the stick in it.

He came home crying like a small child, but he did not tell anybody about the stick. But that was a good lesson to him. People say that now everything he gets he shares with his brothers and sisters and with other people too.

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The Monkey's Heart

There grew a big tree on the seashore. Half of its branches were over the land and the other half over the water. A little monkey lived in the tree. He played in the branches all day, and when he was hungry he ate the sweet fruit that grew in the tree.

Now, in the sea there lived a shark. One day the monkey threw some of the fruit into the sea. The shark ate it up. From that day on the shark and the monkey were friends and the shark asked the monkey to throw some fruit down to him every day.

"Thank you, friend Monkey," said the shark, "I have only fish to eat in the sea, and I like your fruit very much."

The monkey was happy to be a friend of the shark and threw fruit into the sea every morning. Once the shark said to the monkey: "You are so good to me that I want to do something good for you."

The monkey looked down at the shark and listened. The shark said: "I want to show you my home. You will meet my brothers and sisters. You are so good to me that I think they will like you."

The monkey thought a minute and said: "No, I do not want to go, thank you. I am afraid of cold water, and I cannot swim. I shall be happier if I stay in my tree."

"Oh, no, no!" said the shark. "Do not be afraid! Come with me, I shall carry you to my home on my back. I shall not swim very quickly."

The monkey thought: "The day is very hot. It will be nice on the water. I think I will go."

So the monkey sat down on the shark's back, and off they went.

At first the monkey did not like going on the shark's back because he swam very quickly. But soon he liked it and looked at the new places and at the fish in the water. It was so interesting!

"Do you like the sea?" asked the shark. "Is the sea better than your forest?"

"Yes, it is. How far must we go?" asked the monkey.

"It is not very far," the shark answered. "And now I must tell you something. Our chief, the biggest shark in the sea is very ill. Our doctor said to him: "You must eat a monkey's heart. Then you will be well again. So I am taking you to him, and I am telling it to you because you are my friend.

The poor monkey was ready to cry, but he did not cry. The monkey thought of a plan to save himself. Then he said: "How silly you are! Why did you not tell me that before? I have no heart with me. It is at home in the branches of a big tree. We monkeys always hide our hearts in the branches of big trees in the daytime. We take our hearts only at night. What will you do if your chief finds that I have no heart? How angry he will be! I am ready to give my heart to your chief because I am your friend. But how can I do that when I have no heart with me?"

The shark asked the monkey: "If I take you back to your tree, will you go and get your heart?"

"Of course I will, and let us go quickly. Your dear chief must not wait!"

The shark with the monkey swam back very quickly. They came again to the big tree. The monkey climbed up the tree saying: "Wait for me! Wait for me! I will take my heart!"

But the monkey did not come back. The shark was swimming and swimming in the water under the tree. Then he shouted: "Friend Monkey,

where are you?"

There was no answer.

The shark thought: "I am afraid he cannot find the heart in the branches!"

The shark waited and waited for the monkey. Then he shouted again: "Monkey! Monkey! When will you come back to me?"

Again there was no answer. Then the monkey began to laugh.

"Do you think I am a fool?" asked the little monkey. "Do you think I want to give my heart to your big bad chief and then die?"

"But you said your heart was in the branches of the tree," said the silly shark.

"My heart is in its place in my body. It is always there!" shouted the monkey. "And you go away! We are not friends anymore!"

And with those words the clever monkey threw a big rotten fruit on the shark's nose.

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The King's Fool

Long ago there lived a king. Writers, poets, and musicians came from many places to see him. The king liked to hear their stories, poems, and music. But there was one man whom the king liked better than the others. His name was Mahboul. He knew many tricks, sang funny songs, and danced well. He could make the king laugh, and the people called Mahboul *the King's Fool*.

There was one thing that the king did not like in Mahboul: he ate too much. This little man ate from morning til night.

The king thought: "My poor Mahboul will die soon if he eats so much." Then he called together all his ministers and servants and said: "Listen to me. For one day you must not give Mahboul anything to eat. Do not give him wine, nor fruit, nor meat. Do not give him even a piece of bread! He must not sit at my table. He must not have anything to eat the whole day."

"Oh, yes my King, that is right. He is too fat," said one of the ministers.

So the next day there was no place for Mahboul at the king's table. He went to the wall and stood there. He thought: "I shall wait. Soon the servants will bring me food and drink."

But the servants did not bring him anything. He did not ask for food because he was afraid of the king.

"If a man makes the king angry, that man will die," he thought.

Poor Mahboul was very hungry. Then one of the servants dropped a little piece of bread. Mahboul quickly picked it up.

"Now I have something to eat," he thought. "I shall eat it when the king is not looking at me."

When dinner was over, the poets read their poems, the musicians played, and the dancing girls began their beautiful dances.

"Now the king is watching the dancing girls," thought Mahboul. "I shall eat my piece of bread."

But the king was watching Mahboul all the time. He asked the musicians to stop, called Mahboul to come to him and asked: "I hear the you have a donkey. Where did you get it?"

"I bought it in Tipoli, my King!" answered Mahboul.

"Oh, I see," said the king.

So the musicians were playing and the girls were dancing. Then Mahboul wanted to eat his piece of bread. But the king asked him to come nearer and said: "How much did you pay for your donkey in Tripoli?"

Mahboul put the bread in his pocket quickly and answered: "Sixteen gold coins, my King."

The king went on like this all the afternoon. When Mahboul tried to eat his piece of bread, the king always asked him a question.

At last evening came. Mahboul could not stand, he was so hungry and tired. When the feast was over, Mahboul ran to the kitchen, but the kitchen was locked, and Mahboul had only his small piece of bread to eat. He ate it up and went to his room, but he could not sleep. He was very hungry.

Then he went to the king's room. He knocked at the door.

The king asked angrily: "Who is knocking at my door so late?"

"Oh, my King," said Mahboul. "I am sorry, but I must tell you that I did not

buy my donkey in Tripoli, but in Benghazi."

The king thanked him and told him to go away.

A few minutes later Mahboul knocked at the door again.

"Oh, my King, but I told you a lie this afternoon. I did not pay sixteen gold coins for the donkey, I paid twenty gold coins for it."

"Oh, you dog," cried the angry king. "I shall cut off your head for your silly tales about donkeys and give your body to the jackals!"

Mahboul listened to the king and smiled: "Oh, yes, I know that. But before I die may I say my last wish? Only one wish!"

"What is your last wish?" asked the king.

"My last wish is to have a good supper,"

The king understood everything. He laughed and told his servants to bring the best food to his room. He sat down at the table with Mahboul. They ate and laughed until morning came.

After that Mahboul was never without food. And he was always happy.

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The Handkerchief

Zakia was a beautiful and clever girl. She lived with her father. She was so clever that her father always asked her advice. But once he did not ask her advice, and Zakia was very angry! This was when the king asked the girl's father to let him marry her. Zakia's father did not tell his daughter about that and said to the king: "Oh, my King, my daughter will be very glad to marry you!"

But Zakia was not glad. "No, Father," she said, "no, no! I will not marry and love a man whom I do not know."

"Oh, my dear daughter," said her father. "If you do not marry him, he may be very angry! But he is very good and clever. Oh, please, do as I say!"

At last Zakia said: "All right, I will marry him. But the King must learn a trade. I will marry him only if he does so. One day he may lose his throne, and what shall we do then? We shall be poor, we shall die of hunger. Go to the King and tell him my wish."

Zakia's father went to the king and told him his daughter's wish. And the king smiled and said: "Your daughter is not only beautiful, but very clever too. I will be glad to do as she asks. I am sure that we shall be happy together."

So the king began to learn the trade of a weaver. Soon he could weave a beautiful handkerchief, and he sent it to Zakia as a present.

"If she likes my present, she will marry me, I am sure," he thought.

Zakia liked the handkerchief and said: "Now, I see that he loves me."

In a month they married and began to live happily. Zakia often helped the king with her clever advice.

One day the king came to his wife. "I want to know my people," he said. "How can I learn what they think? How can I learn what they want?"

Zakia thought for a minute and then said: "My King, if a man wishes to know another man well, he must live with him, or meet him often. I think you must put on the same clothes as our people have and meet them in the streets of our city."

"I like your advice," the king said, and the next day he was walking along the streets with two of his ministers. Then dinner time came.

"We shall not go home for dinner," the king said. "Let us go to a cafe where people eat."

So they went to a small cafe in a little street. But when they came into the room, the floor slipped away beneath their feet, and they found themselves under the floor. They began to shout, but nobody came to help them.

"A nice welcome for the King! Where are we? And why are we here?" said the king angrily.

Suddenly they heard a laugh, and they saw the ugly face of an old man above them.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! In three days I shall kill you, and your meat will make a nice dish for our cafe. Everybody likes our cafe for its very good dishes! Ha, ha, ha!" With these words the man went away.

"Let us tell him who we are when he comes back," said one of the ministers.

"Oh, no," said the king. "If he knows that, he will kill us today. Give me some time to think."

And he sat down by the wall and thought.

Some hours later the ugly man came back to them.

"Here is some water for you to drink. But I shall not give you any food. You are fate enough."

Then the king said: "If we must die, we must. But I want to tell you something. You may get much money for it."

"I like money very much," said the ugly man. "Go on!"

"I am a weaver and the King's wife likes my work very much. I shall weave a handkerchief, and you will take it to her. You will get more money for it than for the good dishes in your cafe, I am sure."

The ugly old man brought down a loom and thread, and the king began to work. He made a beautiful handkerchief for Zakia. The old man took the handkerchief and went to the king's wife with it. It was not easy to get to her, but at last the servants let him in.

"I have a very beautiful handkerchief," said the old man to the king's wife. "Look at it, please. A good weaver made it. Will you buy it?"

Zakia understood at once that the king was in trouble.

"Yes, it is a very beautiful handkerchief," she said. "I like it, and I will buy it."

Zakia bought the handkerchief, but she told her servants to follow the old man, and she followed the servants on horseback.

They came to the cafe and went in. Zakia waited in the street. Very soon a fight began in the cafe. At last the king and his two ministers were free. They came out of the cafe.

"My dear Zakia," said the king when he saw her. "You have saved my life. I love you more than anyone in the world!"

Zakia was happy to hear these words, and the king and his wife went home.

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A Whip Out of a Cow's Tail

Long, long ago there lived a hunter. His name was Ogalussa. Once he went to the forest to hunt, and his wife with their five sons went to the field to work. The family came home in the evening, but Ogalussa was not yet back. The family waited and waited for him, but he did not come. They had their supper without him. Night came, then morning came, then again night came, but Ogalussa did not come home. A week passed, a month passed, a sixth son was born to Ogalussa's wife. Puli was his name. Ogalussa did not come back.

Every day Ogalussa's wife worked in the field. Sometimes their sons helped her, sometimes they went to the forest to hunt. Some time later the family forgot about Ogalussa. The youngest son, Puli, could already walk, but he could not talk. One day he opened his little mouth and began to talk. His first words were: "Where is my father?"

"Where is our father?" asked the eldest brother too.

"We must go to the forest and look for him," said the second brother.

"There is the path he walked along," said the third brother.

"Let us go along that path, and I am sure that we shall find him," said the fourth brother.

"Let us go at once!" those were the fifth brother's words.

And the five sons took their guns and went along the path. The path was long, very long. At last they came to a place where they saw Ogalussa's bones and his old gun on the ground.

The eldest son said: "I can put the bones together."

And he put the bones together as they are in a man's body. Then the second brother said: "I can cover the bones with skin."

And he covered Ogalussa's bones with skin.

The third brother said: "I can fill his body with blood."

And he did his work well.

Then the fourth brother said: "I shall make him breathe."

In a few minutes Ogalussa began to breathe. And the fifth brother made him stand up. Ogalussa stood up, opened his eyes and asked: "Where is my gun?"

The sons gave him his old gun, and they went home together. At home he washed himself, cut his hair (the people who come back from the Land of the Dead must cut their hair), had his dinner and then rested for some days. All the family was very happy. And so were his neighbours. Ogalussa called his neighbours to a feast and killed a cow. His wife cooked the meat for the feast, and Ogalussa made a whip out of the cow's tail. He put some bright beads on it, and the whip was very nice.

The feast began. All the people came dressed in their best clothes. Musicians played, the people danced and sang. All were very happy.

Ogalussa showed his new whip to the guests.

"This is the nicest of all the whips," they said.

Many of the guests asked Ogalussa to give them the whip. But Ogalussa did not give it to the guests. Then he began to speak: "Long, long ago I went to the forest to hunt. A strong lion killed me. I was dead for a long time. Then my sons found my bones and brought me back to life. Now I am here among you. I am very thankful to my sons! Look here, my dear guests! I have a whip, and you say it is the nicest of all the whips. But I have only one whip! I shall give it to the son who helped me most of all to come back from the Land of the Dead."

Then all the people began to think.

Who helped most of all?

It was not so easy to tell! At last Ogalussa said: "I shall give the whip to little Puli. His first words were: 'Where is my father?' Thanks to him my sons went to the forest to look for me. Thanks to Puli I am here with you and my family."

And he kissed the little boy. All the people said: "Ogalussa, you are right!"

And even today people say: "A man is alive as long as you remember him."

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A Tale About a Jackal

A jackal once got a thorn in his paw. "Oh, oh!" he cried as he walked along the path in the forest. "What shall I do, what shall I do?" Then he met an old woman: "Please, dear grannie," he said, "pull the thorn out of my paw." The old woman pulled it out, the jackal thanked her and went away. But in a minute he came back and asked: "Where is my thorn, grannie?"

"I do not know," answered the old woman. "Who needs a thorn?"

Then the jackal began to cry: "Oh, where is my thorn?" he cried. "I need it, I need it very much!"

The old woman was sorry for the jackal and said: "Do not cry. Here is an egg for you."

The jackal took the egg and ran away with it. He came to a village and knocked at the door of the first house. A man opened it.

"Please, my good man," said the jackal, "may I stay the night with you? It is late and cold."

"Please come in," answered the man.

The jackal came in. "May I put my egg on this plate?" he asked.

"Yes, of course you may."

In the night the jackal got up, ate the egg and put the shell back on the plate.

In the morning the jackal asked the man: "Where is my egg?"

"I do not know," was the answer. Then the jackal began to cry: "Oh, my big, big egg!" he said, "Your cat ate it in the night. I am sure!"

The man was sorry for the jackal and gave him a hen instead of the egg. The jackal took the hen and ran away with it.

He ran and ran and came to the next village in the evening. There he knocked at the first door and asked the woman who opened the door: "May I stay the night with you, please? It is so cold outside!"

"Please, come in little jackal," said the woman.

"And where can I put my hen?" the jackal asked.

"Let the hen stay with our goat," the woman said.

In the night the jackal got up, went to the place where the goat was and ate up the hen. In the morning he said to the woman he said to the woman: "Let us go and get my hen."

But there was no hen, of course, there were only feathers and bones on the ground. The jackal began to cry: "Oh, my hen, my beautiful gray hen! Your goat ate it in the night!"

The woman was sorry for the jackal and gave him one of the goat's kids instead of the hen. The jackal thanked the woman and ran away. He ran and ran and he came to another village. It was almost evening and he knocked at the first house. "May I stay the night in your house?" he asked the man who opened the door. "I am very, very tired."

"Please, come in," the man said.

"Where may I put my little kid?" the jackal asked.

"Tie it to the end of my son's bed," the man said.

At night the jackal ate the kid and put its bones on the boy's bed.

In the morning he asked the man: "Where is my little kid?" They went up to the boy's bed, but there were only horns and bones there instead of the kid.

"Oh, my little kid, my dear little kid!" Your son ate it in the night, I am sure," said the jackal and began to cry. The man said do not cry. I shall give you a big goat instead of your little kid."

"No, no, I do not want the goat! Give me your son!"

"Alright, go out and wait a little at the door," said the man.

Then the man brought him a big bag and said: "Here is the boy. He is in the bag. Goodbye!"

The jackal took the bag and went away quickly. He tried to run, but he could not, the bag was very heavy.

"This is a very big boy," the jackal thought. "Or perhaps it is not a boy. Perhaps the man put stones into the bag! I shall open it and see."

He opened the bag and two big dogs jumped out of it! In a minute they tore the jackal to pieces.

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The Magic Crocodile

There was once a big cave. The top part of the cave was dry and there was water in the bottom part of it. Many animals lived in the dry part and a crocodile lived in the bottom part of it. He liked to lie in the water and sleep. Sometimes he came out of the cave for a short time.

One day a hunter with his bow and arrow came near the cave. He saw the crocodile, and decided to kill him. He aimed at the crocodile, but - he became blind at once. The hunter dropped his arrow and began to see again! He saw he smiling crocodile: of course, the crocodile was happy! The hunter aimed at the crocodile a second time and again he became blind.

Then the hunter ran back to the village where he lived and told the people about the crocodile.

"As I aimed at him I became blind. The arrow fell out of my bow and then I could see again," he said.

The people of the village did not believe him. Many of them took their bows and arrows and went off to the cave.

They saw the crocodile. He was lying in the sun near the cave. They aimed at him and - became blind.

"Take your arrows from your bows," the hunter cried. They did so and - could see again! It was clear that the crocodile was a magic crocodile.

"No man can kill me," thought the happy crocodile and went back to the cave. The other animals in the cave were happy, too. The magic crocodile did not let the hunters kill them and of course they said "thank you" to the crocodile.

Many young men came to the cave and tried to kill the crocodile, but nobody could do it with bows and arrows. In those days hunters knew nothing about guns. The first hunter with a gun in his hands killed our crocodile. The crocodile's magic worked only against bows and arrows. It did not work against guns!

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