



A COLLECTION OF  
**STORIES**  
FROM  
**WEST AFRICA**

Compiled and Illustrated by  
David A. Naff



**CLEVER RABBIT**  
**AND LION**



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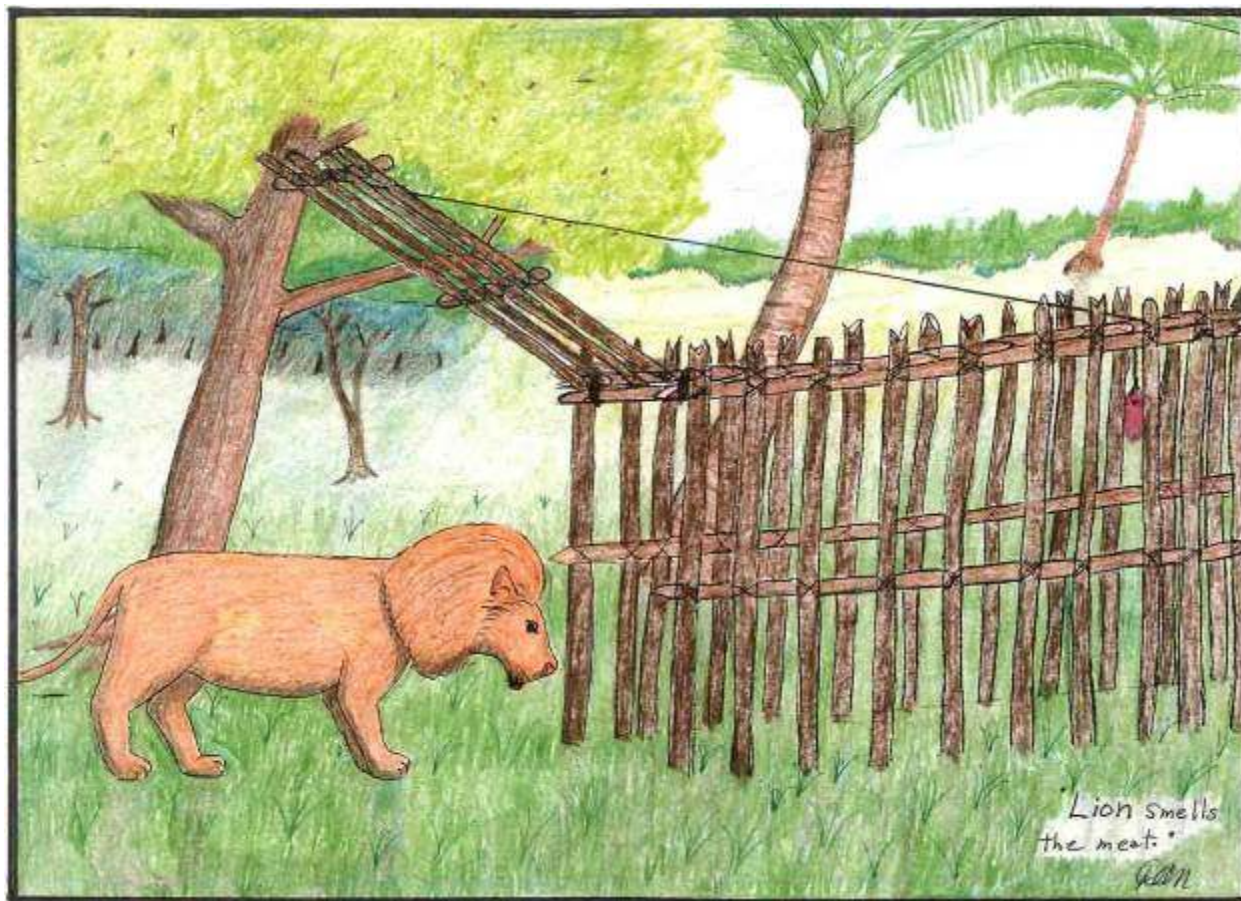
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**By Spark Team**



## CLEVER RABBIT AND LION

Notes to the reader: Words and phrases typical of West Africa are retained and indicated by italics. Clever Rabbit is probably a hare living in many parts of West Africa. They are generally considered to be more clever than rabbits.

“If an animal does not go into the trap, he will not die there.” (West African saying)

Lion was walking through the bush. He was very hungry. He had not caught any meat for several days. Lion was ravenously hungry when he caught the scent of fresh but dead meat. It was in sort of a large box made of poles. In the end was a door. It was open. Lion could see some meat way inside. He was afraid but thought, "I'll just run inside, grab the meat and run outside again real quick."

Lion rushed inside, but had hardly put his mouth on the meat when - BANG - the door was shut. Lion swallowed the little piece of meat and turned and threw himself against the door. It did not open. Lion hit the sides of the trap. They did not break. Lion gnawed the poles with his great teeth, but he could not get out. Then he knew that he was in Hunter's trap.

Soon Hunter would come and kill him or would tie him and carry him to the village and abuse him. "Oh, there comes a man now. But he does not have a gun. He must not be the hunter," Lion thinks to himself.

Man stopped. He looked at lion in the trap. He had neither spear nor gun.

Lion cried piteously, "Oh, Man, please let me out."

"Oh, no," Man replied, "for as soon as I let you out you will kill me and eat me. It is the nature of lions to kill and eat any meat they find."

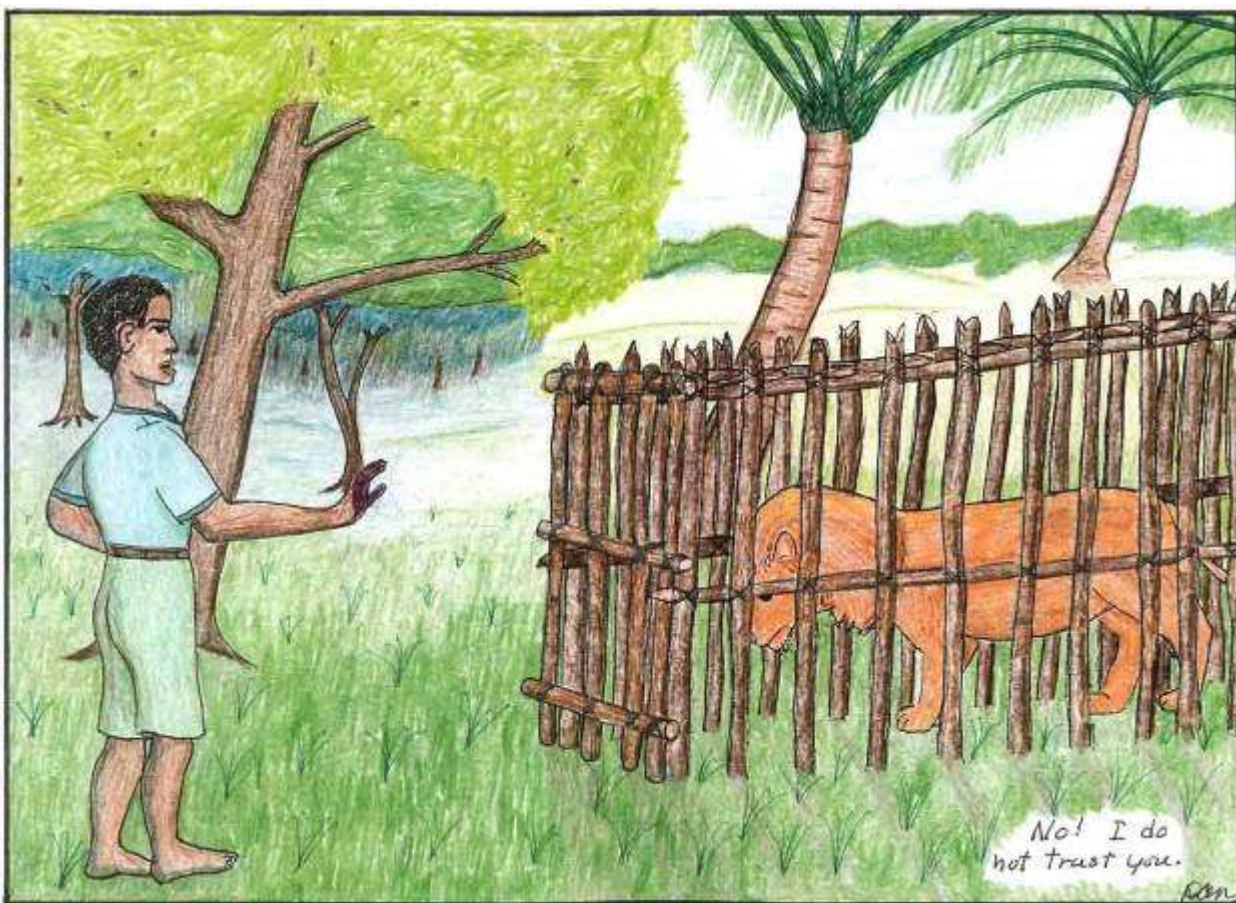
"No, No," Lion pled. "I promise by my father's mane (hair) that I will not kill you, because you will have saved my life. Is it not logical that if you save my life, I will save yours?"

"No. I do not trust you."

"But I beg you. *I hold your foot.*" And Lion put his head and paws down as close to Man's foot as he could. Big tears rolled down over his nose as he begged for his life. Lion told how his wife and cubs might die if he did not return. "And I will be your slave for the rest of my life," promised Lion.

Man began to feel sorry for Lion and finally opened the door.

Lion came out. He *held Man's foot.* "Oh, I thank you. I thank you. I thank you. I thank you one thousand times. You



have set me free. You saved my life. You saved the life of my wife. You saved the lives of my children. Oh, I thank you one million times." Lion went on and on with his speech.

"I am your servant. Oh Man, just command me and I will serve you. Any time you need me, just call on me. I am your servant for life."

Then Lion got very quiet. He began to think about how hungry he was. As he thought, he backed slowly away from Man.

Then he said, "I am so hungry! I have been shut up in that trap so long that I am starved. So, Man, you must excuse me if I eat you, for, of course, that is what all lions do. They kill and eat meat. It is their nature."

Lion crouched to jump on Man.

"But, Lion, you made strong promises that if I let you out you would not eat me. I saved your life; now you must spare mine. That is only logical."

"Yes, I promised," the lion said. "But you yourself said that a lion cannot be trusted, and I just must have some meat. I am so hungry that I *lack small* to die."

"Lion! *For true*, you are a *so so* liar. But I also have a wife and children who will die if I do not return. I beg you!"

"All right," said the lion reluctantly. "We will ask four people for their opinions. If they all agree that I should eat you, then I most certainly will eat you."

Just then Red Deer came along the path. When he saw Lion he trembled; and he was even more scared when he saw Man.

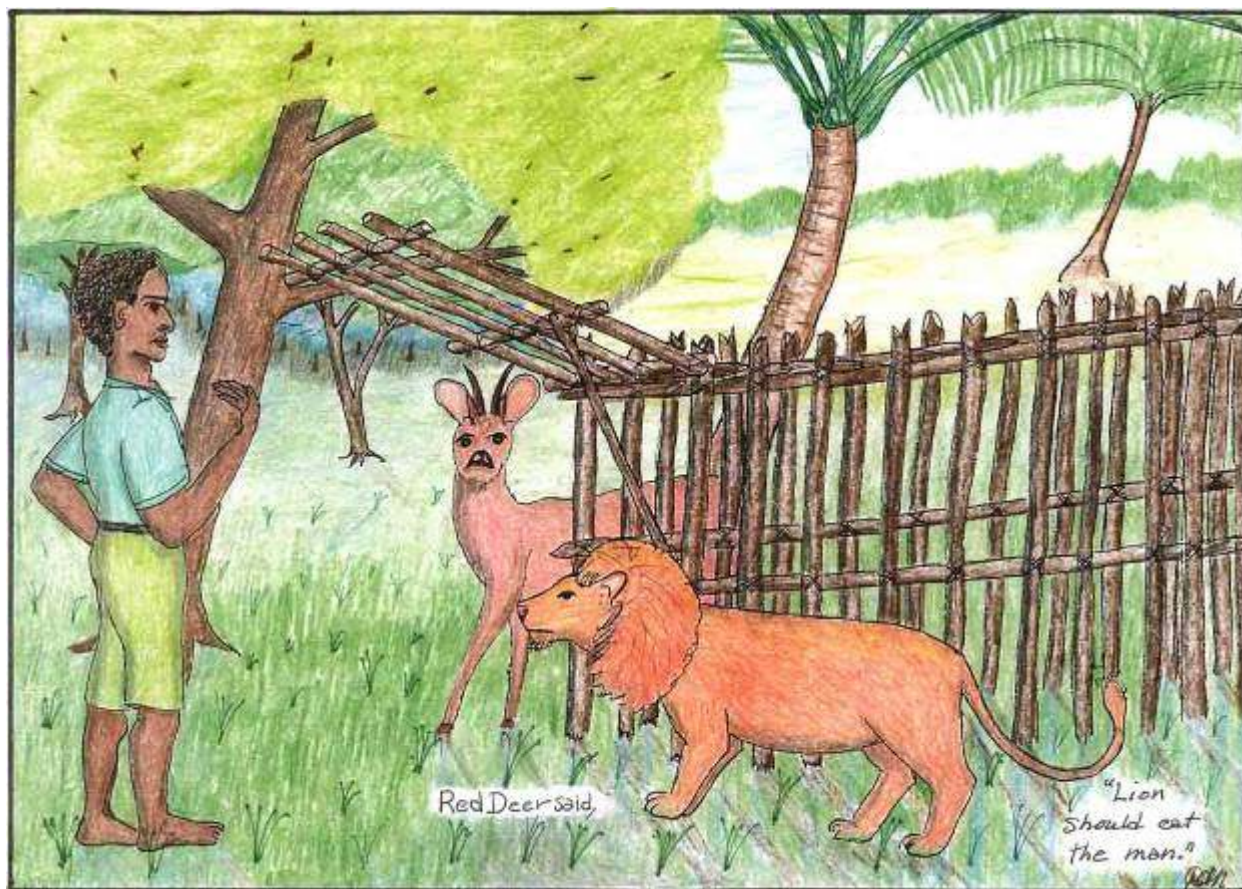
But Lion only called to Red Deer and asked him to hear the palaver and give his opinion. Lion explained the palaver to Red Deer.

"Now, shall I eat the man, Red Deer, or must I let him go."

Red Deer was about to tell Lion that if he had promised the man that he would let him go, that he must not eat him; but then he thought, "If Lion does not eat Man he most certainly will eat me."

So Red Deer answered quickly, "Of course, Lion, you must eat Man. That is what any lion would do." And off ran Red Deer as fast as he could go.

"There! You see!" Lion said to Man. "So I'll eat you right now."

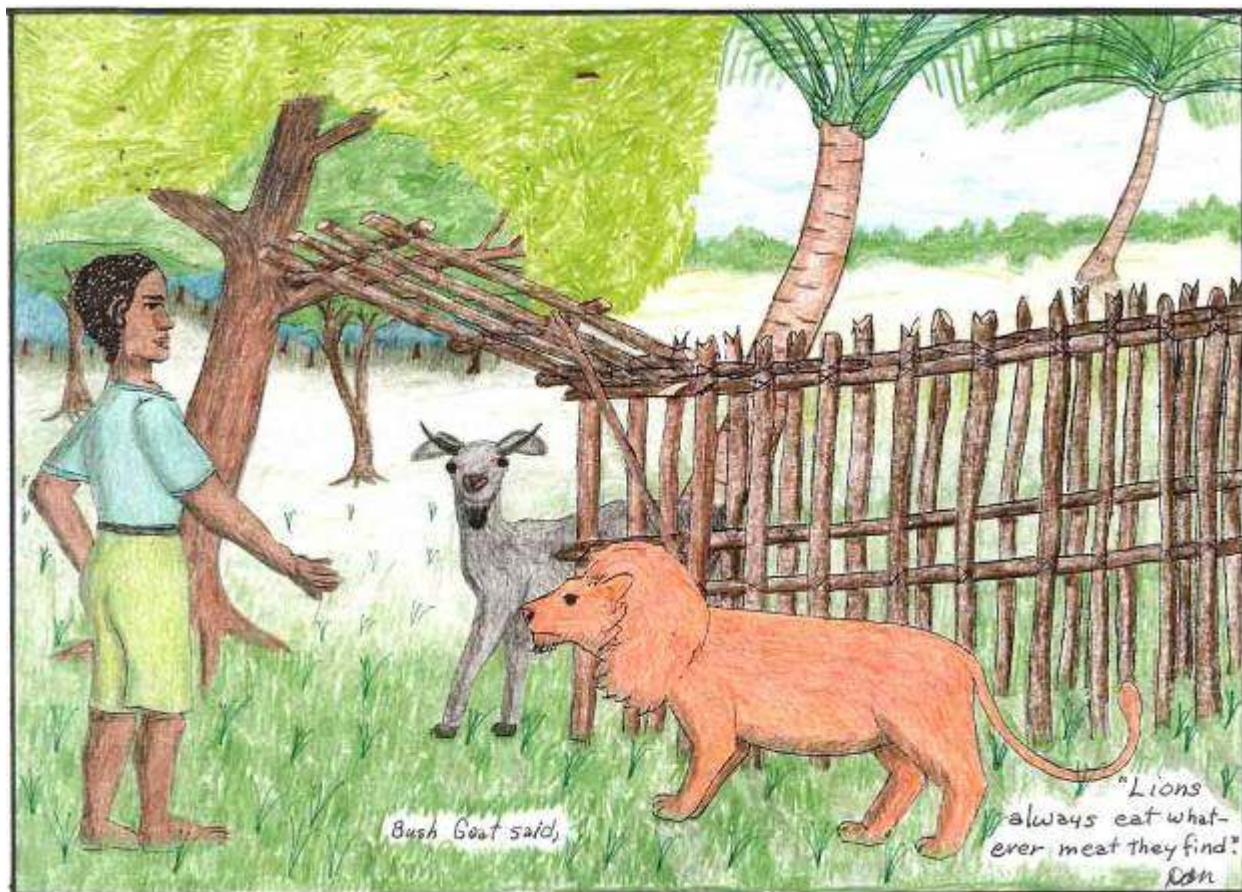


"Wait!! Wait!" yelled Man as Lion crouched to spring on him. "You said that we would ask four people. You must wait until we ask three more."

Just then Bush Goat came along. Bush Goat trembled and shook as he saw Lion and Man; but they only asked his opinion in a palaver.

Lion said, "I promised Man that I would spare him if he would let me out of the trap. But you know that lions always eat whatever meat they can find when they are hungry. So, should I eat Man or must I let him go? I am very hungry."

Bush Goat trembled still more as he looked at Lion's big mouth and sharp teeth. "But of course, Lion, you must eat Man.



Lions always eat whatever meat they can find when they are hungry." And off Bush Goat ran into the bush as fast as he could go.

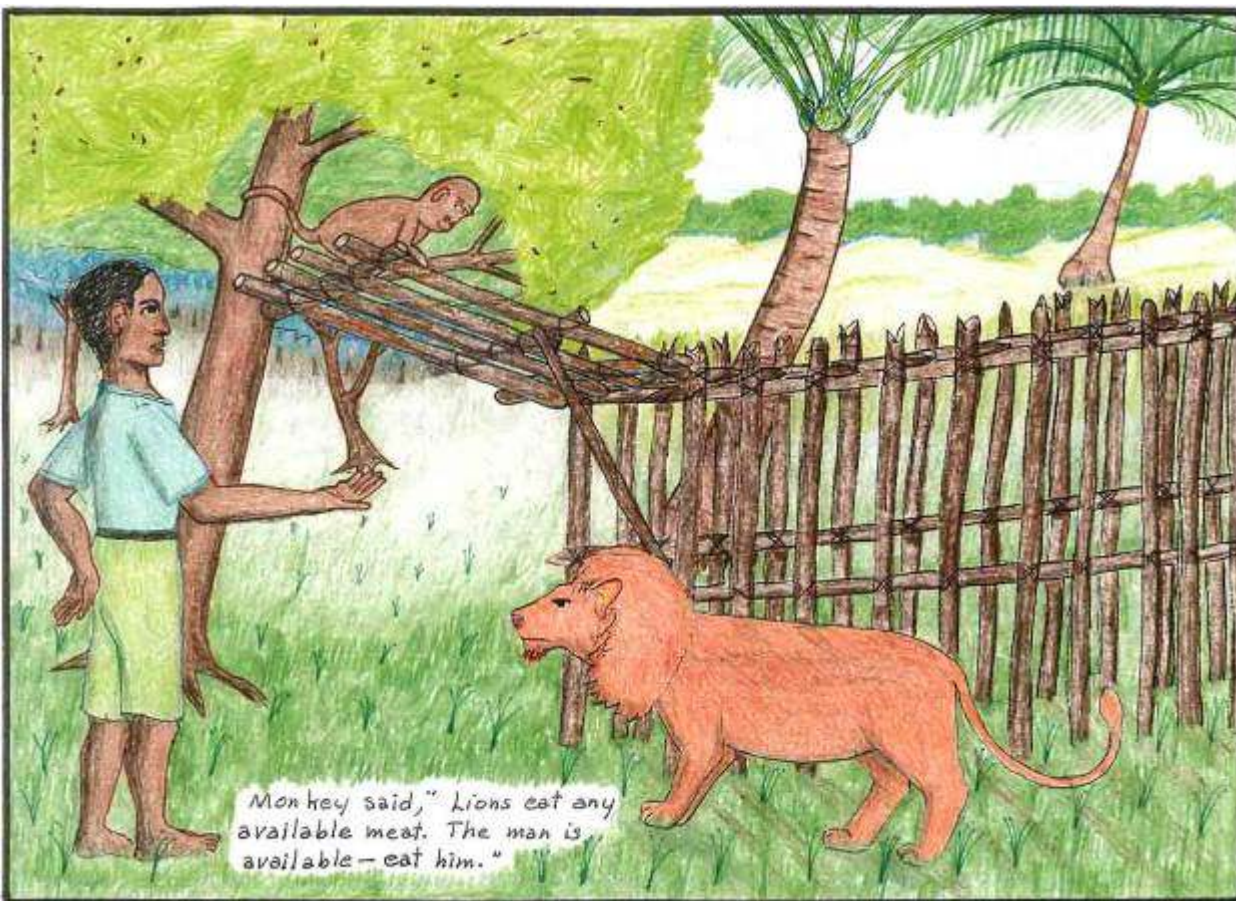
"There! You see! Two people say that I must eat you."

"Wait! Wait! We must have two more opinions."

Monkey came swinging along through the trees. So they asked Monkey's opinion on whether or not Lion should eat Man.

Now Monkey was safely up in a tree. He was not afraid of Lion or Man for Man did not have a gun, but Monkey did not like Man. Monkey says to himself, "Man is always shooting us for meat, so it would be good if Lion would eat him."

Out loud Monkey says, "All lions eat any available meat. Man is available. Eat him."



"Now I am certainly going to eat you. I am hungry and you are available." cried Lion.

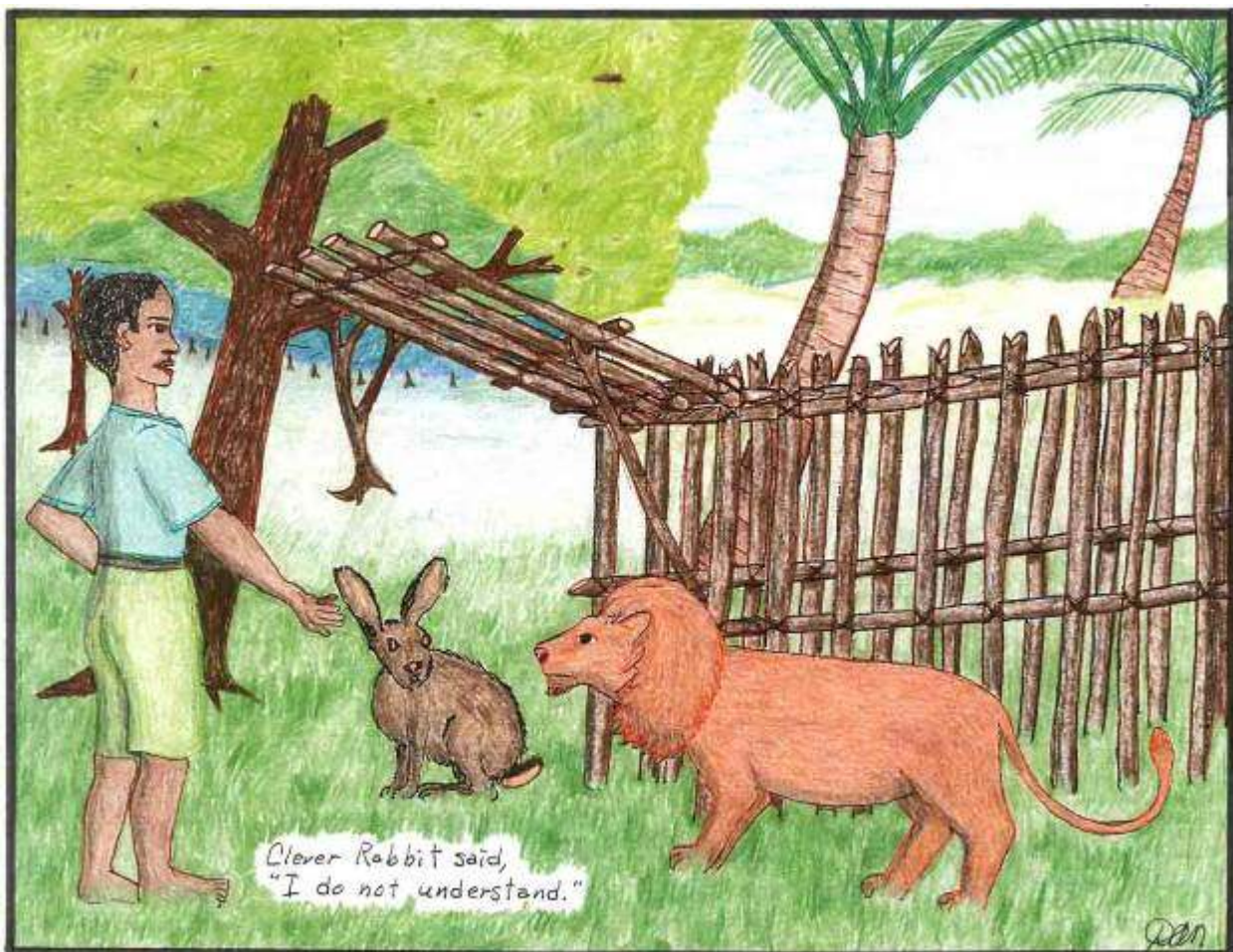
"No! No! No!" demanded Man. "We must have one more opinion."

Just then along the path came Clever Rabbit.

Man says, "Let us *carry the palaver* to Clever Rabbit and find out what he will say."

When Clever Rabbit reached them and heard of the *palaver* he agreed to *cut it*. Lion began to explain how he had begged Man to let him out of the trap and he had promised Man that he would not hurt him if only he would let him out. But, of course, lions always eat any available meat and Man was available.

"It is lion's nature," he said, "So shall I eat Man?"



All the time Lion was explaining this, Clever Rabbit kept scratching his head.

"Well, Rabbit, What is your opinion?" questioned Lion. Rabbit kept scratching his head.

"There is something I do not understand," says Rabbit.

"What don't you understand?" asked Lion.

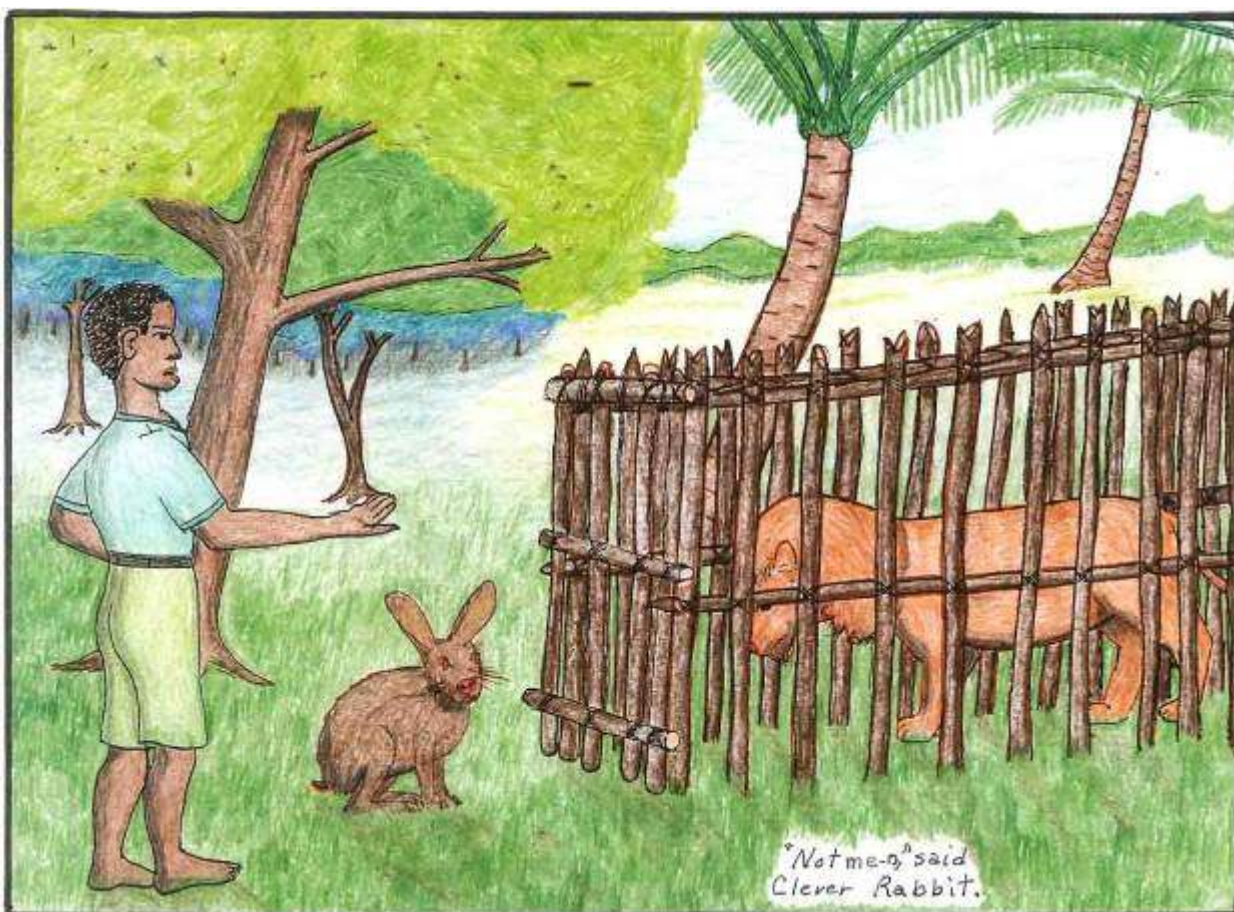
"How did you get into the trap?" Rabbit asked.

"In the usual way," answered Lion.

"We---lll, I just don't see how you got inside," said Rabbit.

"I cannot waste time on you," roared Lion. "Here is how I got in." And Lion jumped back into the trap. "Now do you understand?"

"No," said Rabbit, still scratching his head. "You could just walk out again."



"Oh, you stupid Rabbit!" Lion roared as he slammed the door shut. "Now do you understand, stupid?"

"Oh yes, yes," said Rabbit. "Now I understand perfectly."

"I must say you are the stupid one," said Lion. "Now let me out quick. Open the door so I can eat Man. I am really hungry with all this nonsense."

"Not me," replied Clever Rabbit. "Now you are so hungry that you will eat both Man and me. We cannot trust your word. You will just have to stay there for whatever Hunter will do to you. It is your nature to eat any available meat, and we do not want to be available."

Lion began to cry and beg, but Rabbit said to Man, "You and I must go take care of our families."

"Yes," answered Man, "We have been away much too long. Let us go. Thank you *too much*, Clever Rabbit."

Man and Clever Rabbit turned away to their own homes. In the trap Lion roared, then begged, then promised, then cried - all to no avail. Man and Rabbit were soon far away. Lion was left alone to face his fate.

What God says:

Psa 43:1 "Save me from the lying and sinful man."

Jer. 17:9 "The heart is fooled more than anything else and is very sinful. Who can know how bad it is."

What God says about His Word:

Matt 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

cf: I Kings 8:56; I Peter 1:4; II Tim 1:1; Heb 6:18, 19; I John 2:25.

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