

A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
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THE WALL



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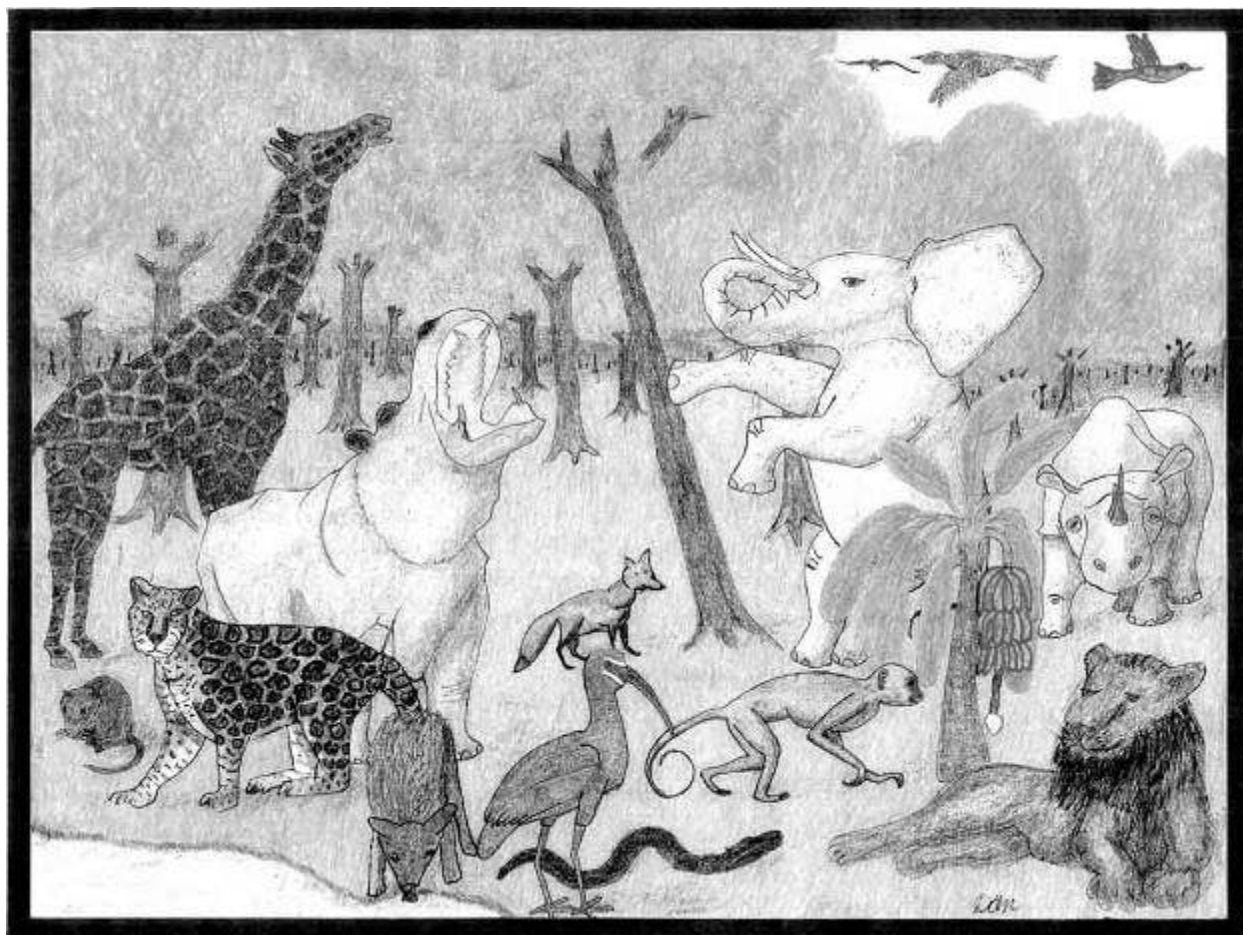
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By Spark Team



THE WALL

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

In a small up-country town somewhere in West Africa the town chief and the elders were going into the *palaver kitchen* to discuss various matters concerning the town and its people. The chief sat down in a tall chair. The elders, depending on their age and position in the town, sat in various chairs of different heights.

Also living in that town was a fine young man called Sunday Gaa. Now Sunday Gaa had a problem, but he did not recognize it as a problem. He was prone to be self-centered, boastful, proud and not very polite. He was always bragging about what he had done, or could do, or would do when he was older. Also he showed little respect for other people, even the elders.

Once Sunday Gaa had asked the man who was an expert basket weaver to teach him how to weave baskets. When the weaver agreed Sunday Gaa bragged, “When I have learned all that you can teach me, I will make baskets so beautiful and useful that people all over will want my baskets more than any others, even yours.”

“Well, I hope that you will try to do your best,” the man replied. “But you should not boast until you can prove your abilities.”

“You just watch. I’ll show you!” Sunday Gaa bragged.

Sometimes Sunday Gaa even hinted that one day he would be the chief. Rather bold for someone so young.

Now, in the *palaver kitchen* they were discussing a matter of concern for the whole town. Every elder must have a chance to say whatever he wished about the matter. Presently the chief turned to a messenger who was standing behind the chief just outside the *palaver kitchen*.

He told the messenger, “Go find Sunday Gaa and tell him to come to the *palaver kitchen*.”

The messenger found Sunday Gaa and told him, “The chief wants you to come to the *palaver kitchen*.”

Sunday Gaa came to the *palaver kitchen*. The chief could have just let him stand but he was greeted and motioned to a low chair. This was expected as he was neither an elder nor a chief. The discussion of the matter at hand went on until every elder had a chance to say all that he wanted to say. Then the chief *cut the palaver* (made the final decision).

There was silence and a little small talk for a few minutes. Sunday Gaa sat there wondering why they had called him to the *palaver kitchen*.

Then the town’s story teller, Fadi, began a story. This is the story Fadi told.

Long ago, when God created all the animals they were very happy in a large place. On one side was plenty of good food for all the animals; all the right trees, bushes, fruit, grass and vines to keep every animal supplied with all that was needed. And there was a cool refreshing river of water.

On the other side grew soft grass and some tall trees to shelter the animals. It was a good place for all the animals to lie down and rest or sleep. All the animals would spend the daylight hours where all the good food was growing. Then they would go to the other side to spend the night; to sleep and rest.

Things went on beautifully for a long time. Then one evening as the animals went to the resting place Lion spoke up. “Now all you animals must know that I am the king of the beasts. Some of you are being careless about giving me the honor and reverence that is due me. So be careful now that you do not make me angry. My teeth and claws are very sharp.”

Then Elephant spoke, “Your sharp teeth and claws may scare the smaller animals, but look at me. I am the strongest animal. Yes, no one is as strong as I am. And you, lion, also should be careful. Do not cross me. I just might happen to step on you!”

“You just think that you are the strongest animal,” exclaimed Hippo. “Actually, I am stronger than you are, though I may not be so tall.”

“Ssstrength isss not everything,” said Snake. “Now, clevernesss isss better than sstrength. I am the cleveresst animal. I have often tricked every one of you! Yesss”

“Well, strength and cleverness are all very good,” replied Giraffe, “but I find it a great advantage to be tall. I can easily reach up to get the most succulent leaves and fruit growing on the trees. I can even reach up into the tall trees.”

Elephant interrupts, “I don’t have to be tall to get the most succulent food. I just butt the whole tree down and take what I want. I am strong!”

“Tee-he-he-he,” giggled Monkey. “I can go higher than any of you. I can climb to the very top of the tallest tree. and I do not go around butting down and spoiling trees. I can go higher than any of you. I get whatever I want.”

Then Eagle spoke up. “You talk about climbing high. Hah! I can fly so high that you cannot even see me. Oh, the wonderful things I can see. I could tell you of wondrous things I see if you ever bothered to ask me.”

Then Cheetah boasted, “No one is noticing me. I can run faster than any of you. None of you can catch me. I am the fastest!”

Jaguar then put in, “I can go farther than any of you. Sometimes I go hundreds of miles.” (Jaguars have been traced over 500 miles.) “None of you go so far. I am a long distance traveler. Distance is nothing to me.”

So the murmuring and bragging went on and on. Far into the night they boasted; each one claiming in one way or another to be better than the others. Some even threatened others. Finally they all fell asleep.

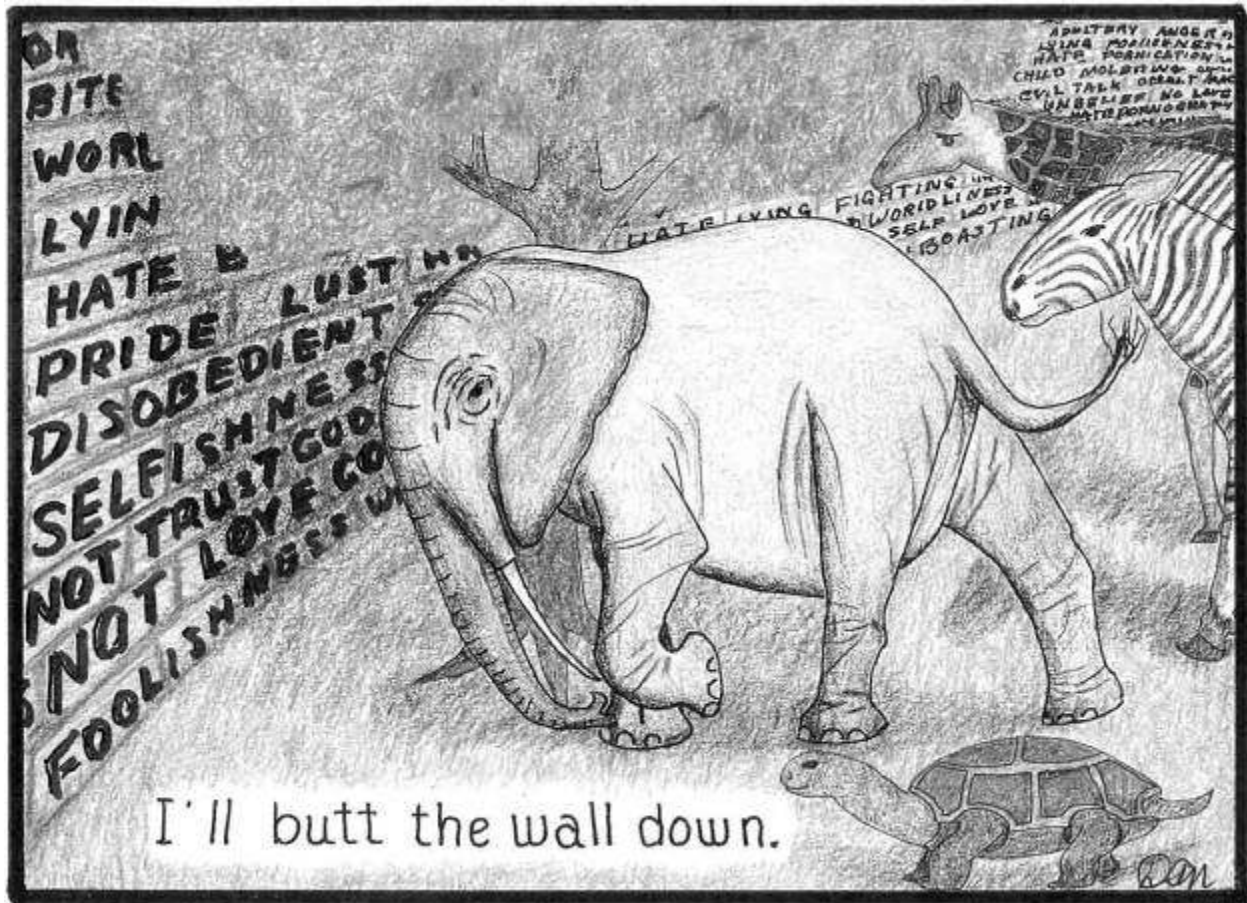
The next day began to break. All the animals began to wake up. They were hungry, but when they started to go to the other side where all the food was, there was a huge wall. It had not been there the night before, but there it was now. The wall was so tall they could not see the top. It went so far to the left and right they could not see the end of it.

“What shall we do?” they began to ask each other.

“How can we get some food?”

“I am thirsty. I need water.”

“Why is this wall here?”



“How did the wall get here?”

“How could such a wall get here over one night?”

There were many questions, but no answers.

Lion spoke up. “I am king of the beasts. I have power. I have authority. I will command the wall to move. Wall, I command you to go away! This is Lion, the kind of the beasts. Wall, I command you to go away. WALL, GO AWAY!! WALL, GO AWAY!!!”

Nothing happened.

Elephant then said, “Lion, *close your teeth*. Your talk will do nothing. This wall needs force. Stand back! I will butt the wall down. Everybody stand back! You do not want pieces of the wall falling on you when I butt it down.”

Elephant stepped back a few steps then ran and butted the wall. The wall did not budge, but Elephant sat down and shook his head groggily.

“Well, I guess I will have to hit it harder,” Elephant grunted.

Elephant backed off a good ways farther and came running as fast as he could -- BAM! Elephant hit the wall. The wall did not budge.

Elephant sat back and then fell over unconscious. It took Elephant quite a while to *come to himself* again.

Now Hippo spoke. “Battering the wall is not good. What is needed is a hard push. Stand back! Watch me!”

Hippo put his shoulder against the wall and pushed. Hippo pushed so hard his feet dug into the ground, but the wall did not move.

“What iss really needed here iss clevernesssss,” said Snake. “Now I will jussst go under the wall.”

So Snake disappeared into a hole in the ground. He was gone for a long time. When Snake finally reappeared he was so tired he just lay flat on the ground.

“It iss sssso deep I cannot get deep enough to go under the wall,” Snake sighed.

“I am tall,” said Giraffe, “but there is no way I can even see the top.”

“Tee hee hee” laughed Monkey. “What is needed here is someone to climb over the wall.” Now, I will do just that. Tee-he-he-he. Just watch me.”

Monkey began scrambling up the wall. Higher and higher he went. Monkey went so high that the other animals could not see him. Finally they saw Monkey coming back down slowly. Monkey

was almost down when he slipped and fell to the ground - Plop! He was so tired that he just lay there, gasping for air.

“Did you find the top?” the animals all asked.

Monkey was so tired that all he could say was a whispered, “No.”

“It is too bad that none of you animals have wings,” put in Eagle. “Now, I, Eagle, will fly up to the top of the wall. I will fly over it.”

So Eagle began to fly up, up, up, higher and higher; so high that he was just a speck; then he could not be seen at all.

After a long time the animals saw him gliding back to earth slowly, slowly. Finally Eagle landed, so tired he could barely speak. “I could not reach the top. It is too high; even for me.”

Cheetah spoke next. “Nobody is noticing me. I am fast, so I will just run on to the end of the wall. I will be back soon when I have found the end.”

And off Cheetah ran to the left.

Jaguar put in, “Distance may be needed so I will just run the other way to find the end of the wall.”

Off Jaguar ran to the right.

After a long wait the animals saw Cheetah limping back. “Did you find the end of the wall?” they asked.

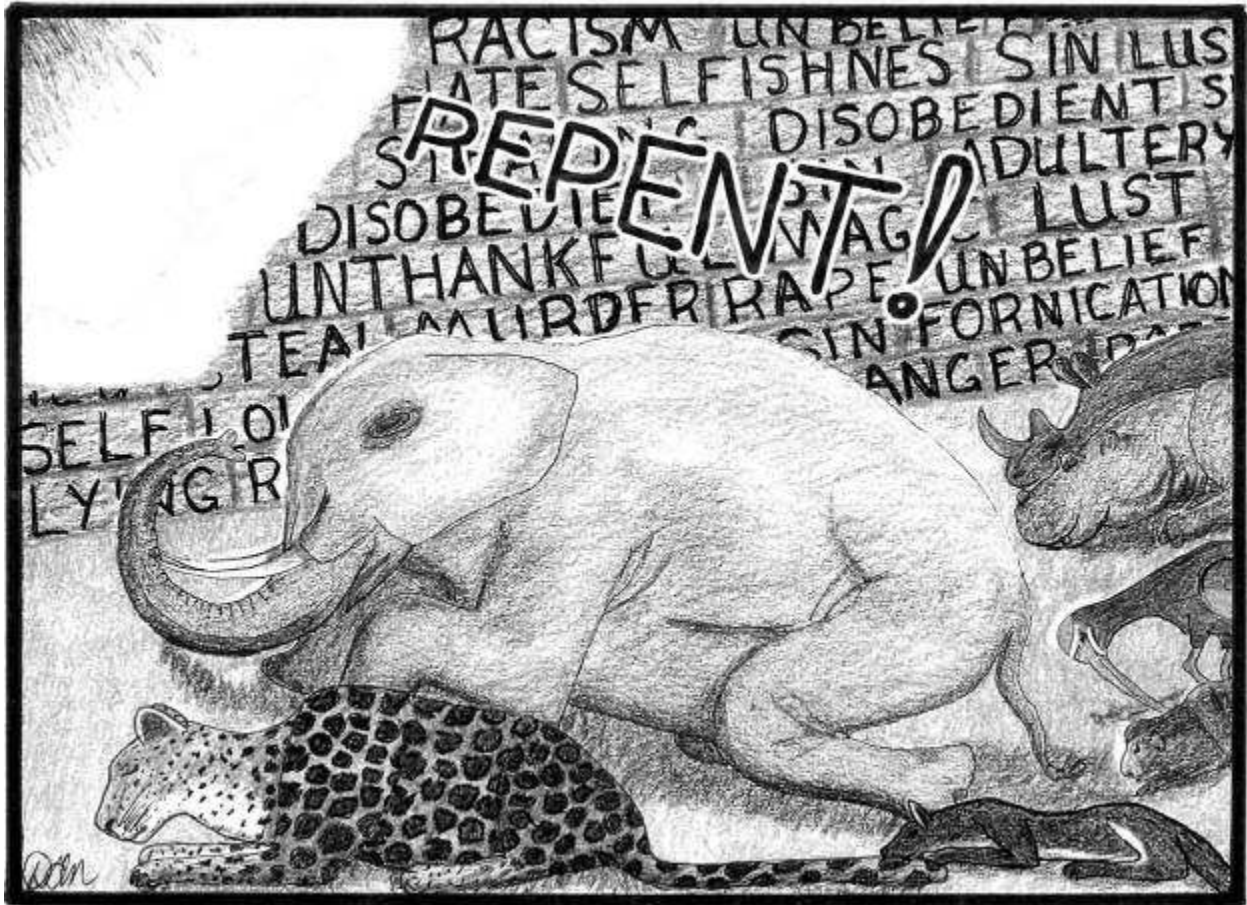
“The wall goes right down into the ocean and far far out into the water. The waves were so high and the rocks so rough that I did not dare to try to swim around it,” Cheetah panted.

Then Cheetah just sat down and licked his sore feet.

A whole day and night passed before Jaguar came staggering back to say, “The wall goes on forever. There is no way around it.”

Jaguar too just lay down. He was completely worn out.

The animals did not know what to do. They just stood there looking at each other. What were they to do for food. The grass



and trees and bushes where they slept were not good for food and the water was not plentiful.

SUDDENLY a bright angel appeared above them. They looked up in fear and awe. He spoke deliberately and forcefully.

“All you animals listen to me. You have been proud and boasting; even threatening each other. You have been bragging about the abilities God gave you. God gave you these abilities to help each other and to serve God. Each one of you is trying to be better than the other instead of thanking God for your gifts and helping each other with your gifts. That is pride! That is sin!! So God put this wall here and only God can take it away. You must all repent. So, down on your knees, all of you. Close your eyes. Tell God you are sorry. Ask God to forgive you for your pride and selfishness and bragging.”



Immediately, all of the animals went down on their knees, closed their eyes and begged God’s forgiveness. Each one called the name of his own sin to God. Each said he was sorry for being proud and bragging instead of thanking God and helping each other. Those who had threatened others asked forgiveness from God and each other. They were all praying out loud at once.

After a while the angel said, “You may open your eyes now.”

When they did **the angel was gone.**

THE WALL WAS GONE TOO!

The animals all stood there blinking their eyes for a moment. Then they all talked at once.

You could hear them saying, **“Praise God! Thank you God! Thank you Jesus. Amen. Hallelujah.”**

“Hey! We can eat!” someone shouted. And away they all went to the other side where all the good food was growing.

The story was finished. There was a short silence and then the chief said, “Thank you Fadi for that fine story. Now we need to discuss where each of our people will make their farms this year. It will soon be time to brush the farms for next year’s rice.”

Sunday Gaa sat there thinking. He knew that they had had the story teller tell that story for him. Sunday Gaa looked up at the chief who smiled and nodded to him. He was dismissed so he got up and quietly left the palaver kitchen. Sunday Gaa walked a little way down a path leading to some of the farms. He sat on a log to think.

“What all was that story supposed to tell me?” he said to himself.

What does that story tell Sunday Gaa? What does it tell me? What does it tell you?

I can think of three Bible verses that would help Sunday Gaa understand what the chief and the town elders were trying to tell him.

James 4:6 says “...God works against the proud, but gives loving favor to those who have no pride.”

Then I Peter 5:5 says, “...you younger men must obey the church leaders... God works against those who have pride. He gives His loving favor to those who do not try to honor themselves.”

And Romans 12:3 says, “...I ask each one of you not to think more of himself than he should think. Instead, think in the right way toward yourself...”

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