

A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
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BIG BIRD



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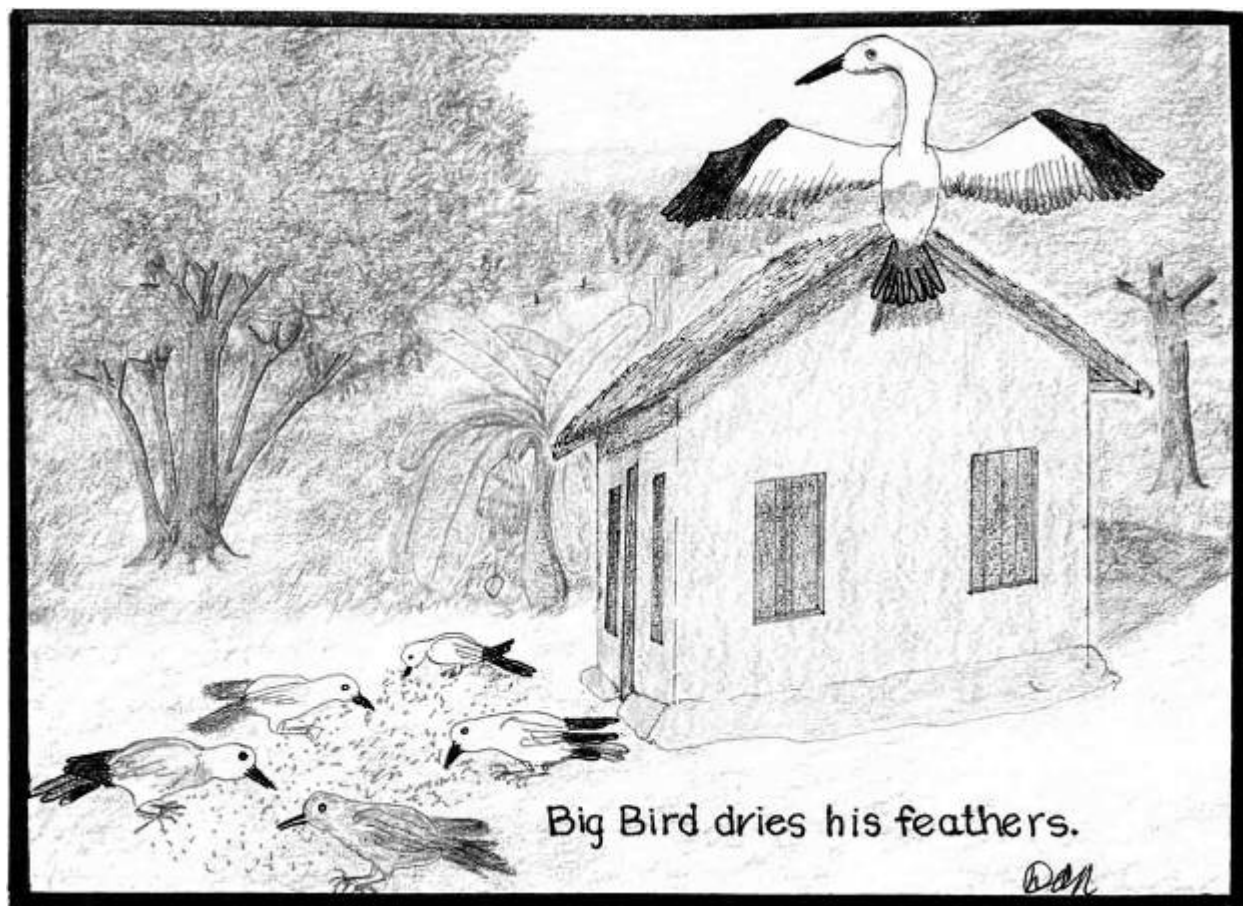
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By Spark Team



BIG BIRD

(Nigeria)

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

Big Bird (the Great Cormorant) is a fish eater. He sat up on the roof of a house with his great wings spread out to dry. He had just caught and eaten a fish. He caught the fish by diving deep into the river near by. Now he had to dry his feathers. God had not provided him with an abundance of oil for his feathers like He had for the ducks, geese and other water birds. So after each dive he would sit in a tree or on the roof of a house to dry his feathers.

As he sat there with his wings spread out (4-6 ft.) he saw the pigeons eating some rice and corn. It had been scattered on the ground near the house.

Big Bird began to think, “Wouldn’t it be nice if I could eat with the pigeons? They seem so satisfied and content. I am sure I would like corn and rice and things the pigeons eat.

“If I could eat with them then I would not have to fly around over the river looking for fish. I would not have to dive into the cold water and swim down deep to catch a fish. When my feathers are so wet it is hard to fly and I have to sit here so long with my wings and feathers all spread out until they are dry. I can’t fly well until they get dry and by the time they are dry I am hungry again. Then I must go and look for another fish, dive for it and get wet all over again. This is very tiresome.

“If I could just eat with the pigeons, life would be so much easier. But I am afraid to join the pigeons for I am so big and do not look at all like a pigeon.

“If I could just be a pigeon,” he pondered. “Or even if I could just look like a pigeon.”

Finally, after much deep thought, he went to a painter. “Please paint me,” he said. “I want to look just like a pigeon.”

The painter was shocked. “But that will be a *long hard work*,” he replied.

“But I want to look like a pigeon.”

“I will charge *plenty-o*. The money will be *heavy!*”

“Never mind. I will find the money.”

“Not only that,” said the painter, “even if I do my best, you will not look like a real pigeon.”

“*Wha’ kinda talk. I not look like real pigeon,*” shouted Big Bird. “*Ain’t you big painter to this place?*”

“*Aye, I be fini best painter to this place,*” patiently replied the painter. “*But you be big too much! No pigeon got long neck like so.*”

“Just paint me, man.” said Big Bird. “I pay you for *painting business*, not for *talking business*.”

“But,” the painter responded, “I be wasting all my paint for nothing.”

“*It no be for nothing man. I can buy you plenty paint,*” Big Bird shot back.

“How can you? Poor man like you,” the painter said. “You must buy me plenty new paint. *There be plenty money inside this one.*”

“How you can think *I be poor man* like yourself. *I be big man for true-o!*” Big Bird shouted.

“Never mind,” the painter said. “But when I *fini* you must *put your money where your mouth be* just now.”

To himself the painter said, “This bird can *talk too much. He be big rich man? Ha!*”

So, the painter bought new paint and worked on painting Big Bird. He worked carefully. He worked for a long long time. Each feather had to be carefully painted if Big Bird were to really look like a pigeon.

When the painter was finished Big Bird went up on the top of the house to let the paint dry. As soon as the paint was dry Big Bird flew down to the ground to eat with the pigeons.

He pulled his long neck in as much as he could. And he did his best to look and eat just like the pigeons.

"Who are you?" they asked, "Why are you so big?"

"It is the body that God gave me." Big Bird answered, and he ate with the pigeons for many days.

Then the rainy season came and there were many heavy rains. Also, every once in a while, Big Bird would get hungry *too much* for fish. When that happened he would go off to the river and take a dive for a nice succulent fish.

The paint began to wash off. Big Bird no longer looked like a pigeon.

I think you know what happened next. The pigeons put Big Bird out and would no longer let him eat with them. Whenever Big Bird came near they would all begin to peck at him until he flew away.

God has made us just the way we are. We each are unique, just the way God wants us to be so we can do the work He has for us. We should not try to look like someone else. We should not try to be like someone else. That can make *big trouble* for us.

Now to become truly one of Christ's own, we will need more than a change of outward appearance, like Big Bird's paint job. We will need a change of heart. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23) Neither can we change our hearts.

God is the one who changes our hearts. God works more on the inside than the outside but His inside changes will show on the outside. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "For if a man belongs to Christ, he is a new person. The old life is gone. New life has begun."

Are you like Big Bird? Or has Jesus changed you from the inside?

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