

A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



**THE EASY WAY IS NOT
ALWAYS BEST**



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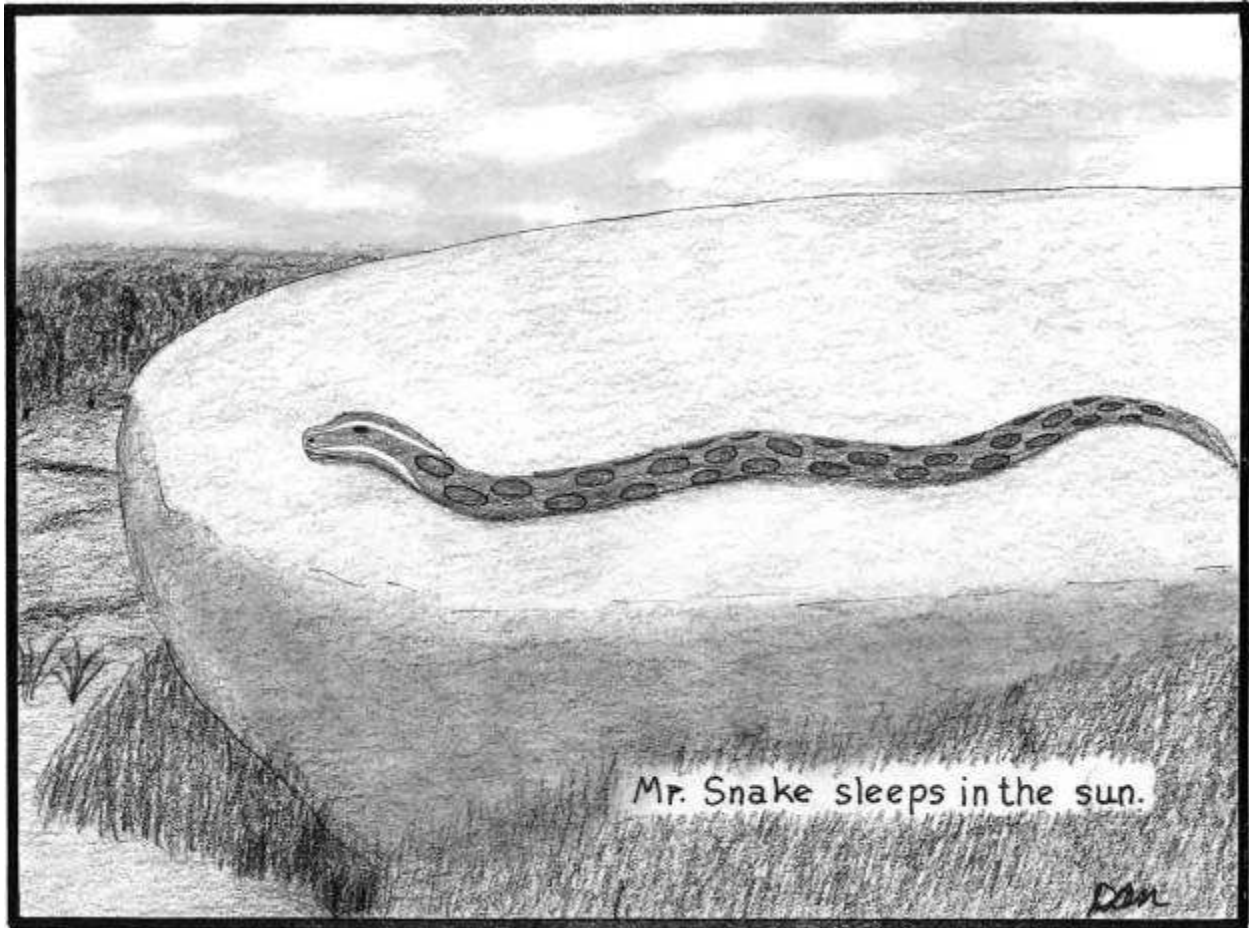
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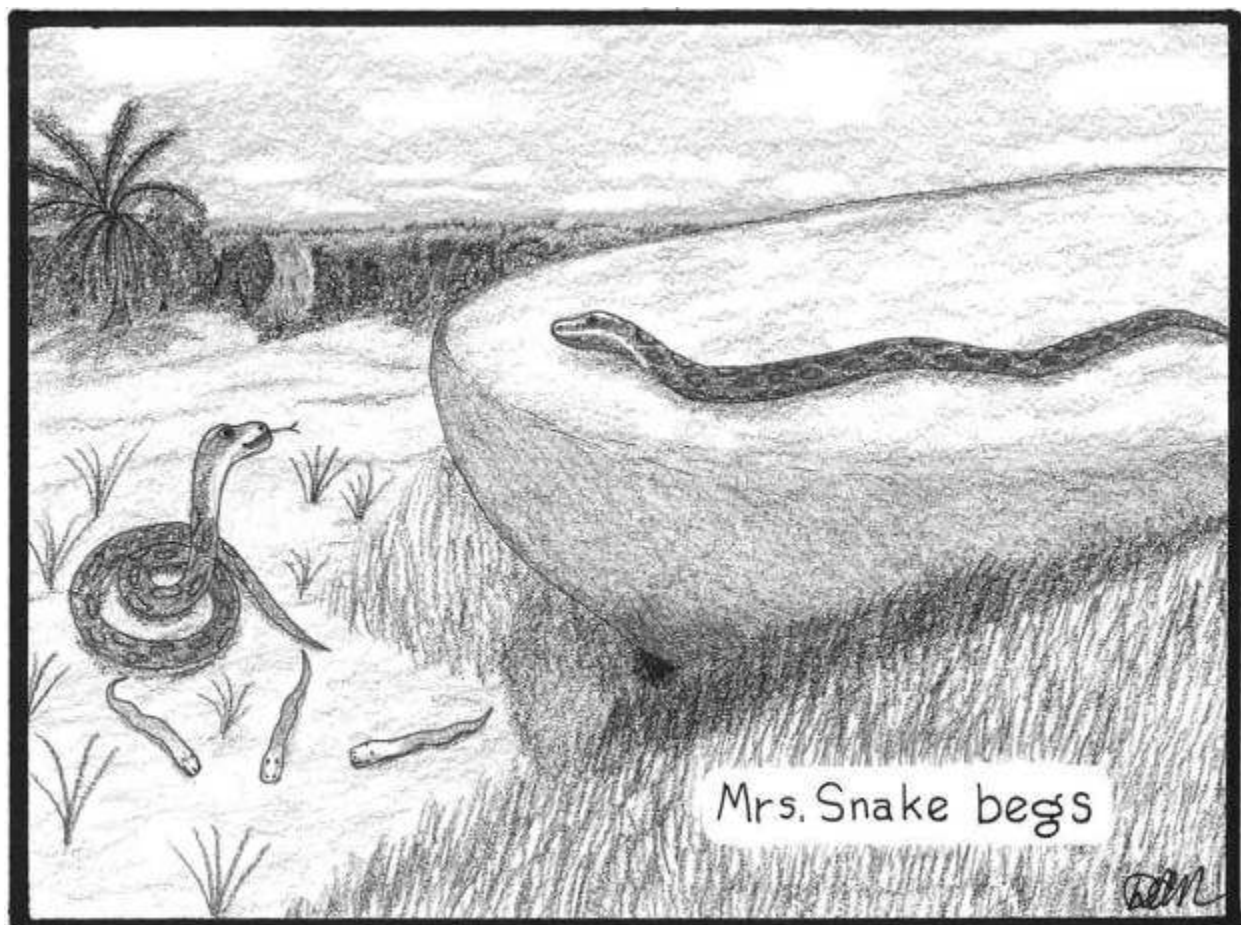
By Spark Team



THE EASY WAY IS NOT ALWAYS BEST

Mr. Snake didn't believe it mattered what you did as long as you got what you wanted. Besides this he was lazy. He didn't believe you should work if there was an easier way. Because Mr. Snake didn't believe these things he got himself into *heavy* trouble.

The snake family always seemed to *catch a hard time* to find enough food to fill their stomachs. No matter how hard Mrs. Snake tried, the food just did not go far enough.



As for Mr. Snake he lay on the big rock on the hillside near the village of man. He was warm and comfortable in the sun and just a little bit hungry; just enough to enjoy a good dinner. And he knew that soon that dinner would be provided.

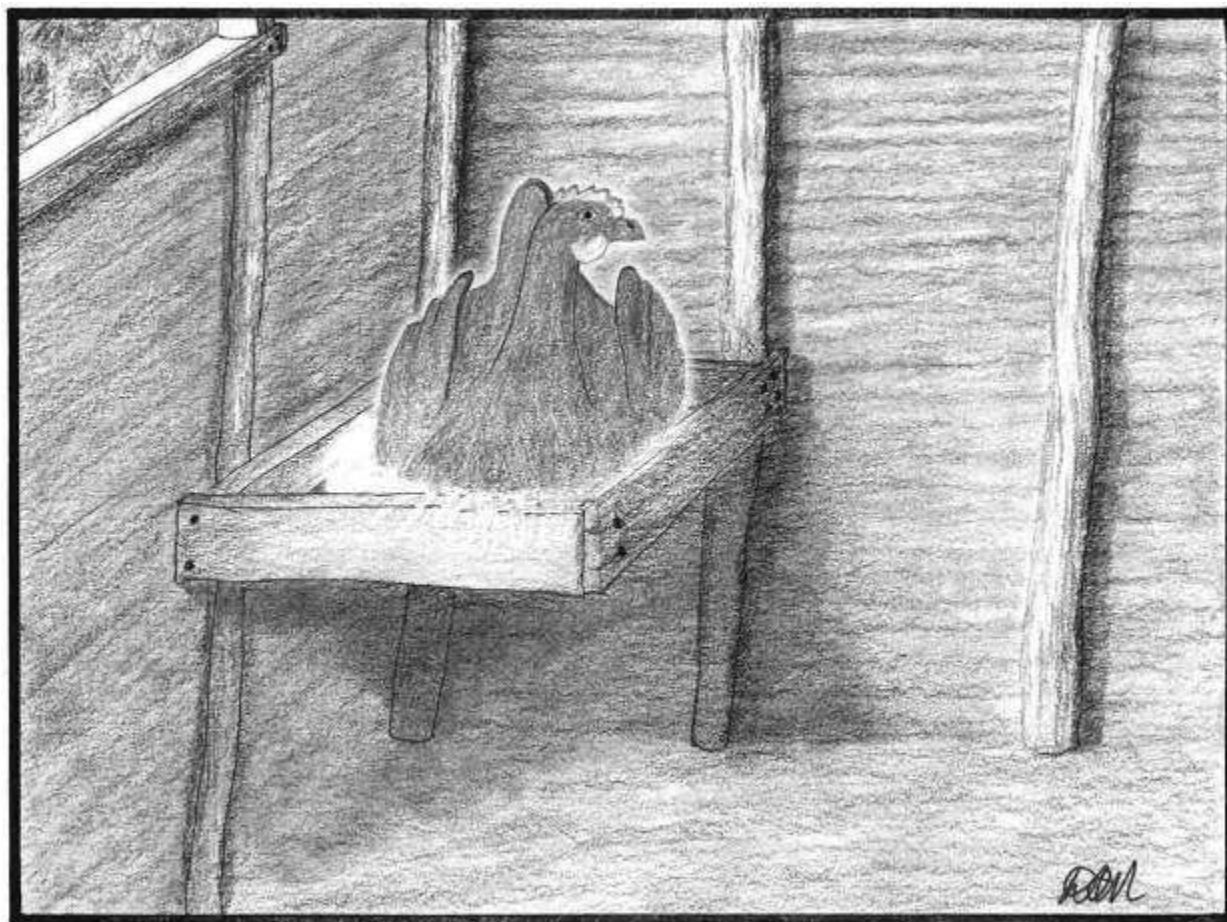
Mama Snake came out of the hole under the rock followed by several baby snakes.

"Come, Papa, let us go into the bush to find food," they called to Mr. Snake.

"Not now, I am too warm and comfortable here in the sun," Mr. Snake answered. "I'll soon find something to eat."

"You will not find any food by lying there in the sun and doing nothing," the children retorted.

Mr. Snake chuckled to himself, "Ha! That is what you think."

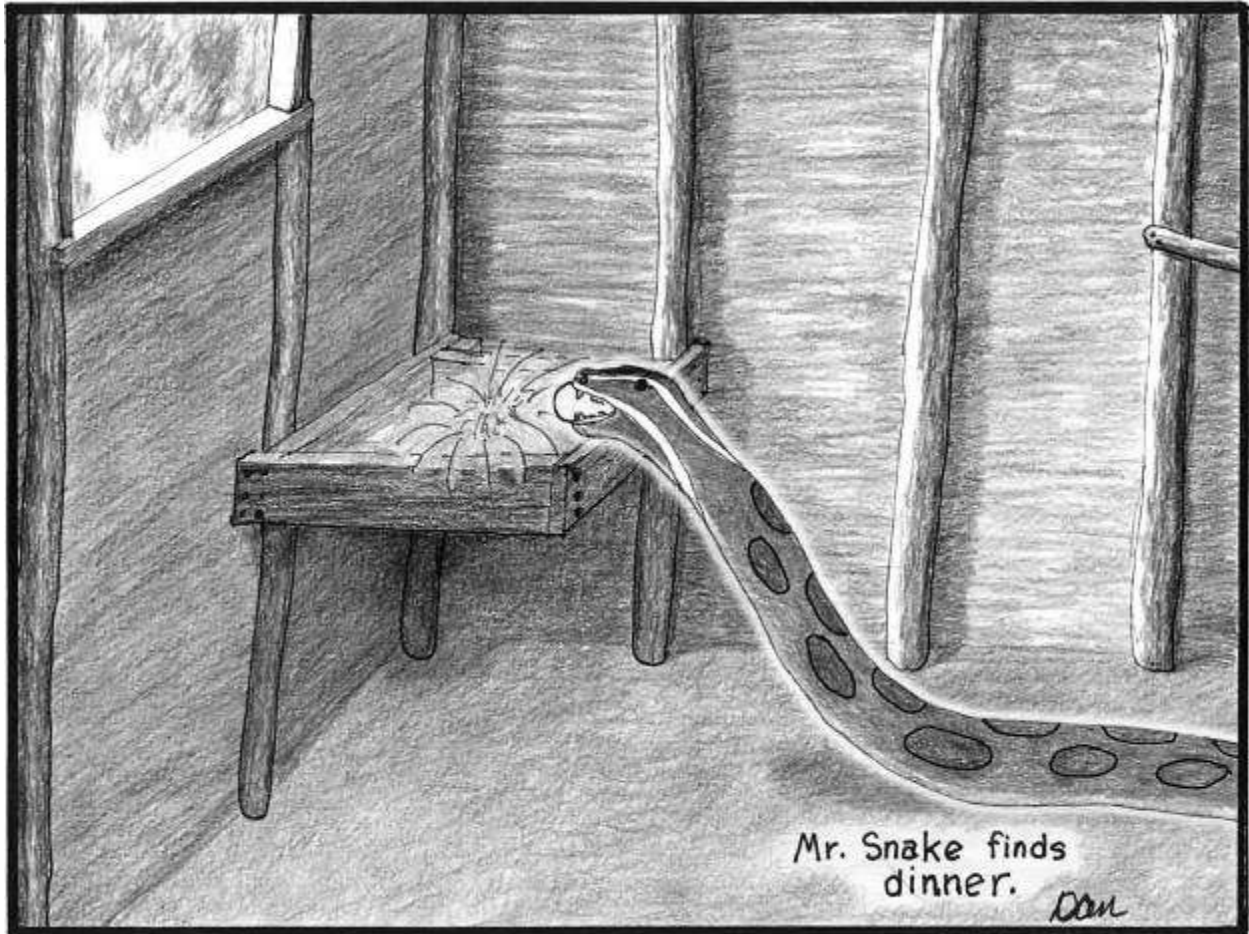


Mama Snake and the baby snakes went on out into the bush. Mr. Snake lay there in the sun. He was almost asleep.

In the village of Man, lived Mrs. Hen. She was sitting on her nest in the little house where she lived. Presently she stood up. There in the nest was a warm new white egg. She pushed at it with her beak. Yes, the egg seemed to be all right. She stepped to the edge of the nest and began to sing.

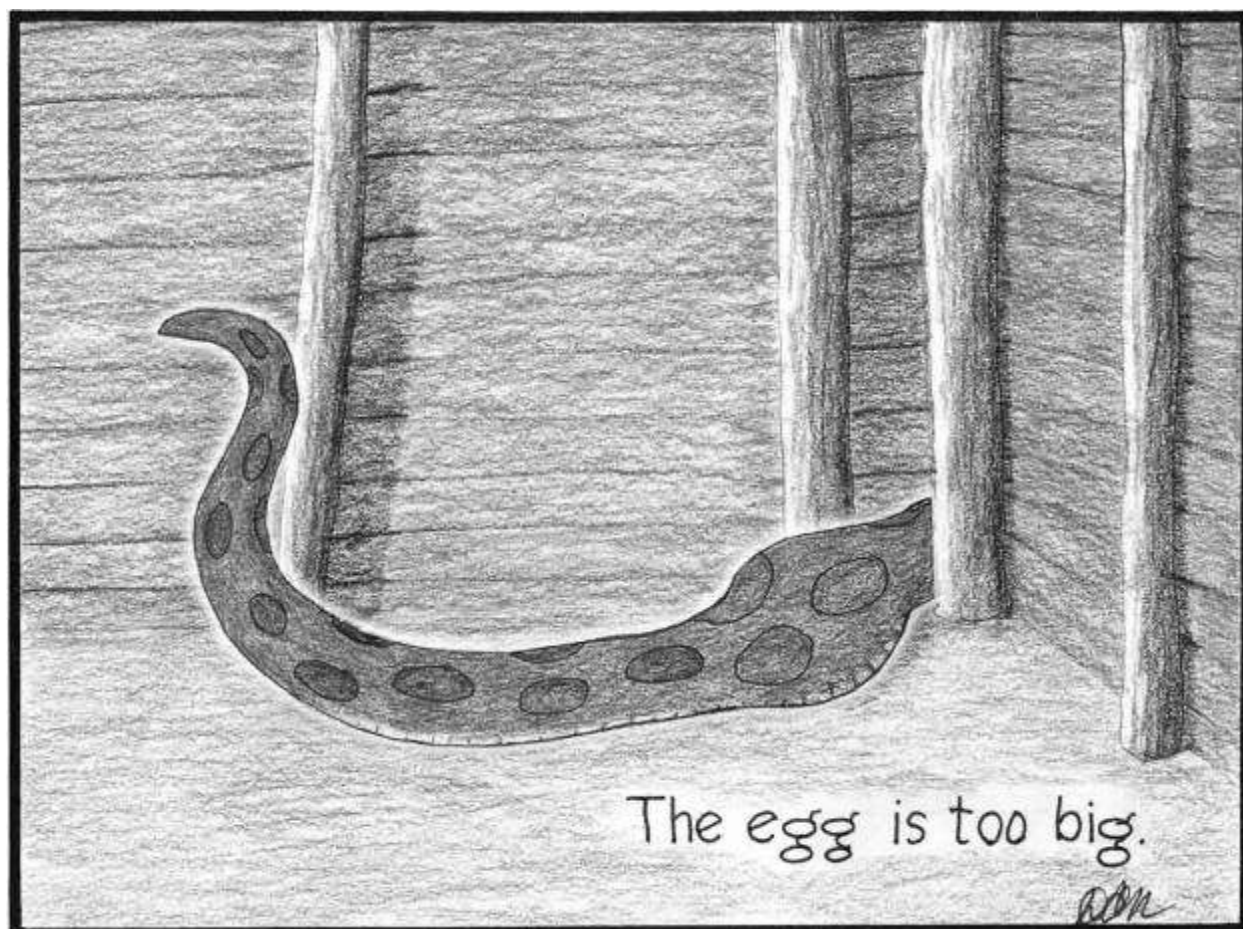
"Buck Buck Bekuuuk! I laid an egg! Buck Bekuuuk. Buck Buck Bekuuuk."

"Aha!" Mr. Snake said, suddenly wide awake. "Mrs. Hen has prepared my dinner."



Mr. Snake slid off the stone and quietly glided through the bushes until he was behind the house where Mrs. Hen lived. He slid between two sticks that were just wide enough apart to let him go through. He slithered right over to Mrs. Hen's nest.

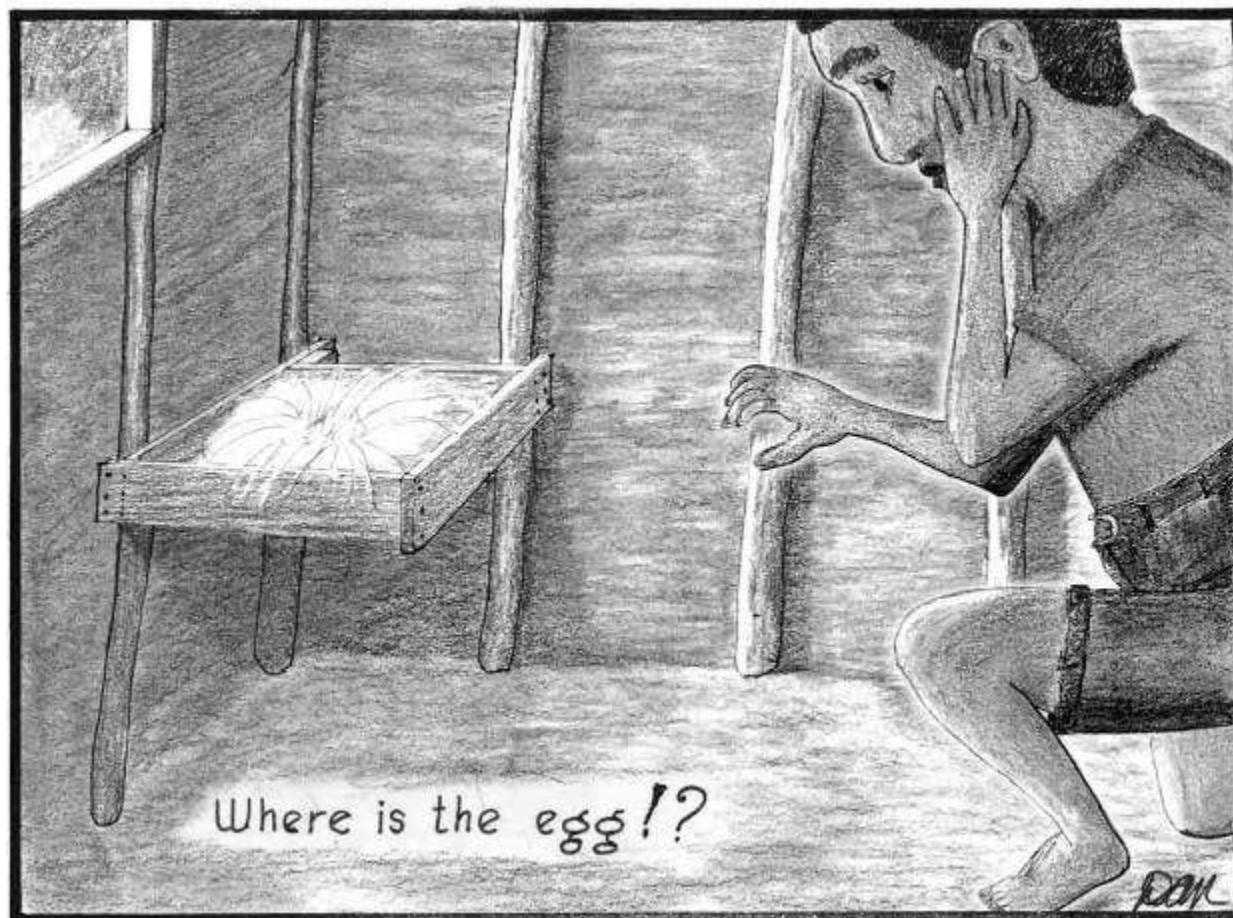
There lay a nice fresh warm egg that Mrs. Hen had just laid. Mr. Snake opened his mouth wide and swallowed the egg.



Down from the nest Mr. Snake came; over to the gap between the sticks in the wall. He tried to crawl through, but the space was too small for Mr. Snake and the egg. Mr. Snake twisted and turned and then the egg broke and he went on through.

"Ahhh!" said Mr. Snake as the warm sweet goodness of the egg flowed through his insides. "There is nothing better than a nice warm egg for dinner. Thank you, Mrs. Hen."

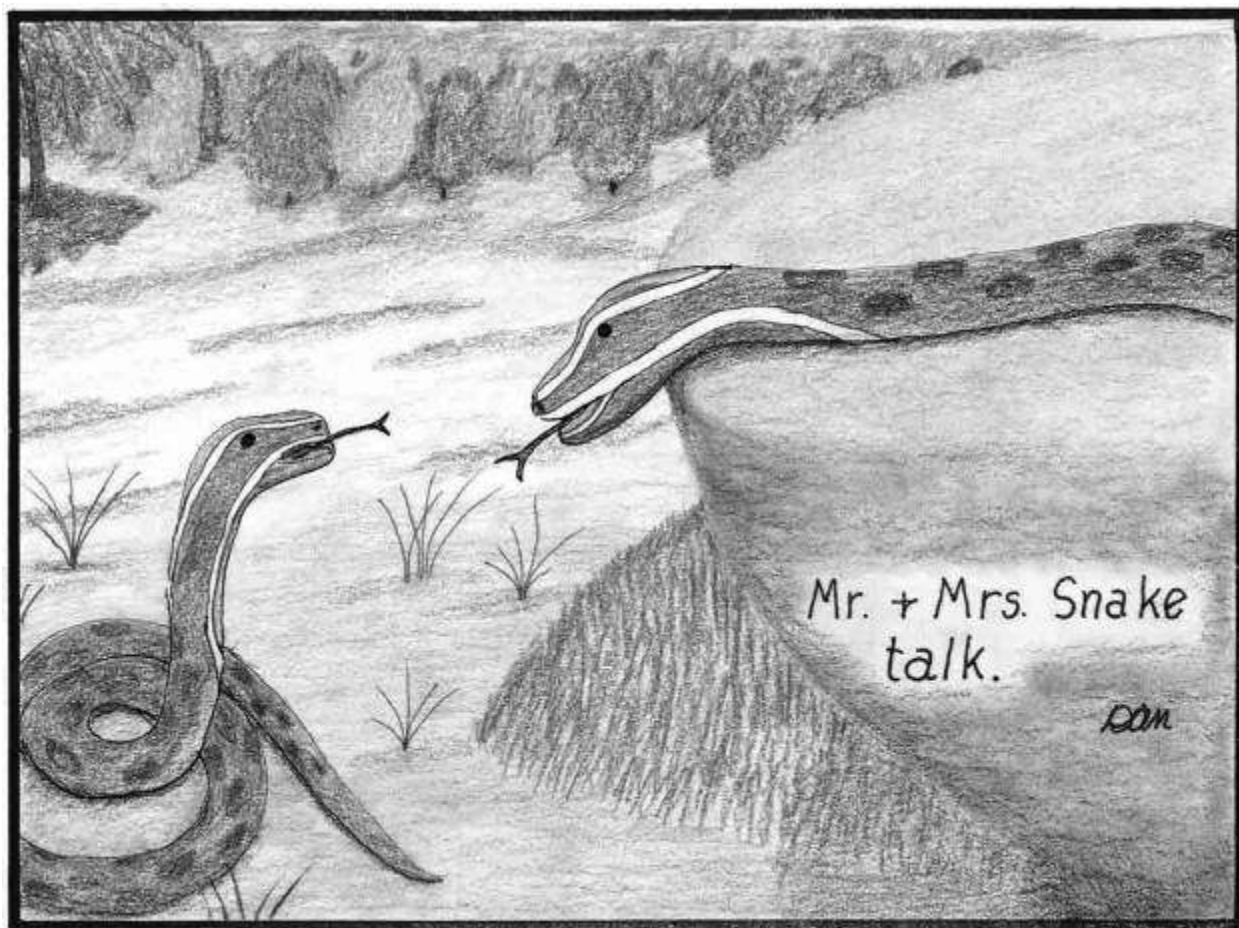
Mr. Snake had just left the hen house when Mr. Man came in to get the egg Mrs. Hen had laid. There was no egg!



"That is strange," he said. "Always when Mrs. Hen sings I come and find a nice warm egg, but the last few days there have been no eggs. Is Mrs. Hen lying? I wonder?"

When Mama Snake and the babies returned from hunting food, Mr. Snake was still lying contentedly in the sun.

Again the next day Mr. Snake did not go along with his family to find food. Day by day he refused to help them find food and yet he did not get any *drier* (thinner).



"I think that you are doing something dangerous," Mrs. Snake warned. "The easy way is not always the best way. I think that you are eating eggs over at Mrs. Hen's house. You had better stay away from there. Remember that man says, 'Never stop beating a snake as long as it still moves.' One of these days Mr. Man will catch you and you will never come home again."

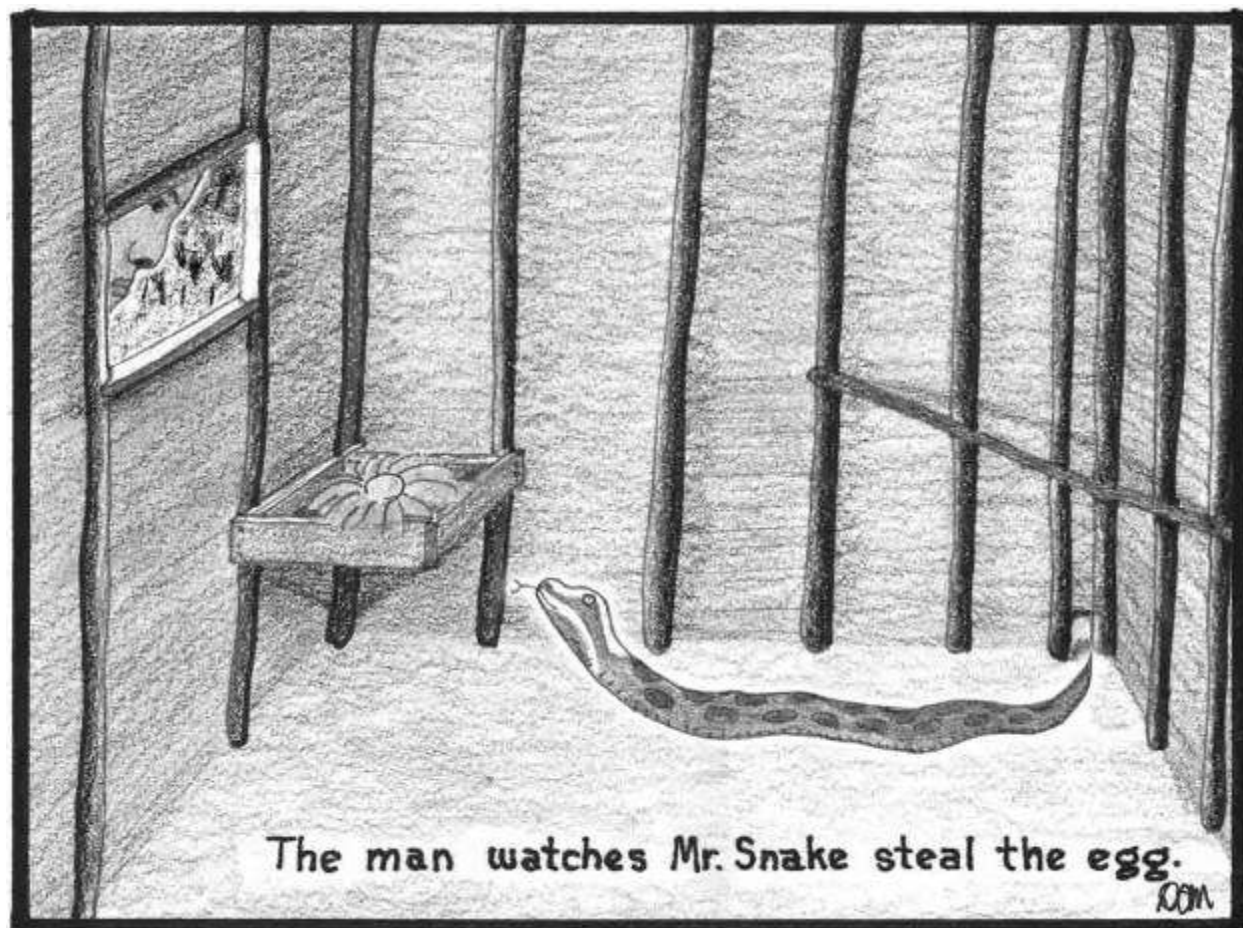
"Oh now, Woman, be quiet," Mr. Snake answered. "I've been eating the eggs Mrs. Hen lays for me for more than a week now and nothing bad has happened."

"Oh please *move from* this egg business," begged Mrs. Snake. *I fear for you.* Come help us find food."



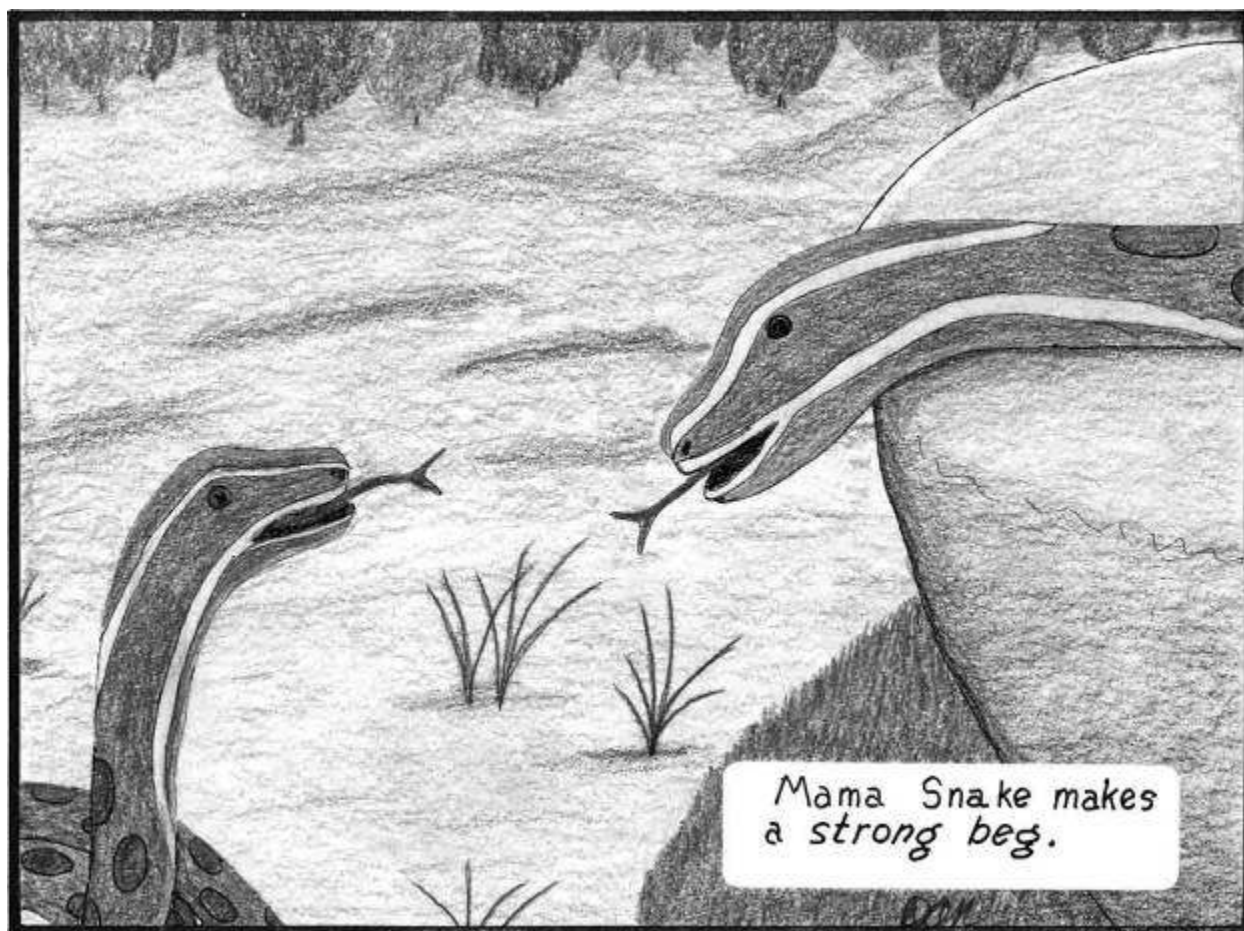
The next day Mr. Man was up early. When he saw Mrs. Hen go into the hen house, he went near so he could watch. Mrs. Hen sat on the nest for a while. When she stood up there was a nice fresh egg in the nest.

"Buk Buk Bekuuuk. I laid an egg," Mrs. Hen sang. She jumped down from the nest, and ran out the door singing happily.



As Mr. Man watched closely, in through the small hole came Mr. Snake. Up to the nest he slithered, mouth open wide. In went the egg. Mr. Snake closed his mouth and down went the egg into his stomach. Mr. Snake went to the hole. The egg was too big to go through but he turned and twisted and the egg broke. Away went Mr. Snake to sleep in the sun on the rock up on the hillside.

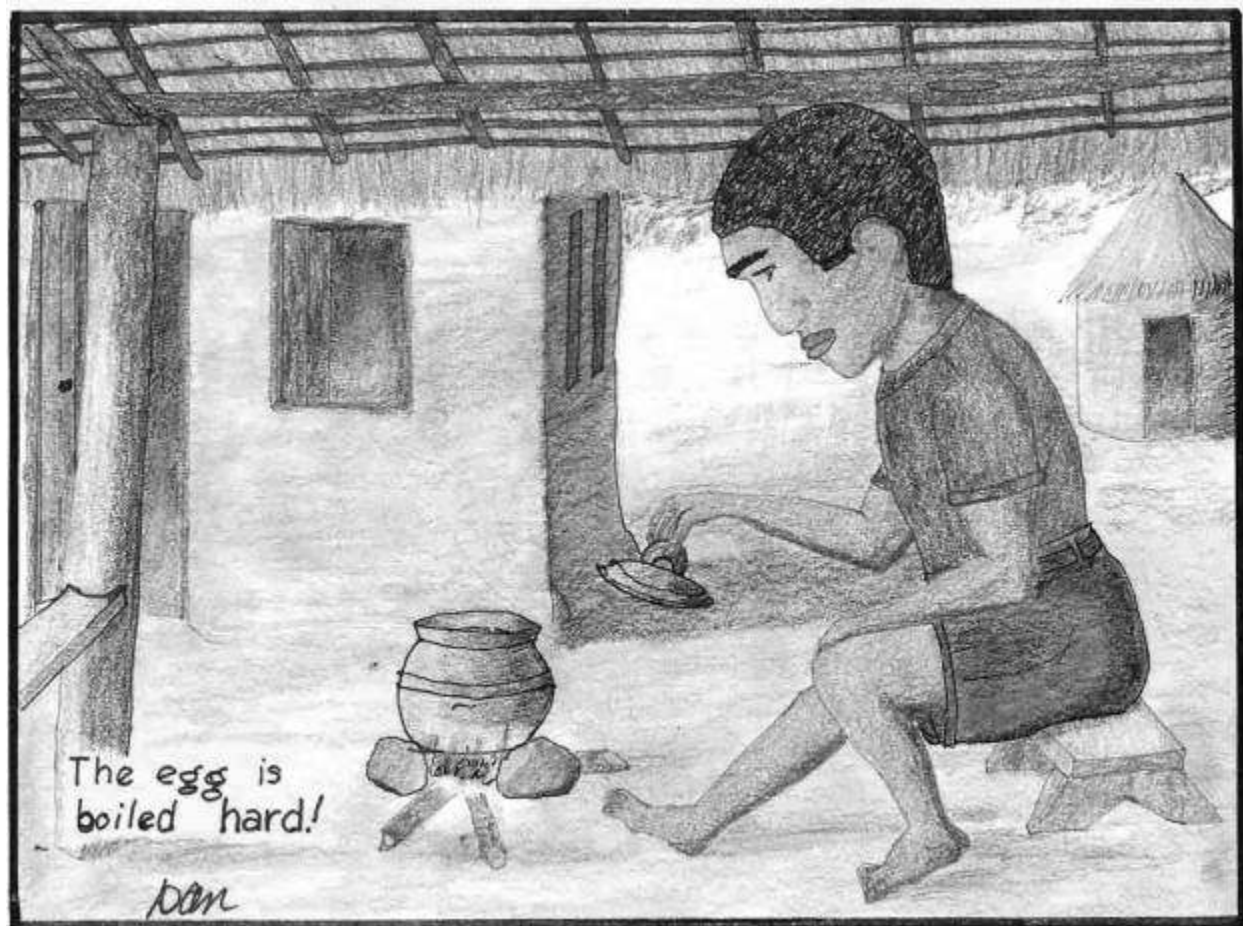
"Aha," thought Mr. Man. "So, Mr. Snake is eating my eggs. Well I'll get him."



Next morning Mrs. Snake pled with Mr. Snake to go with her to find food for the family.

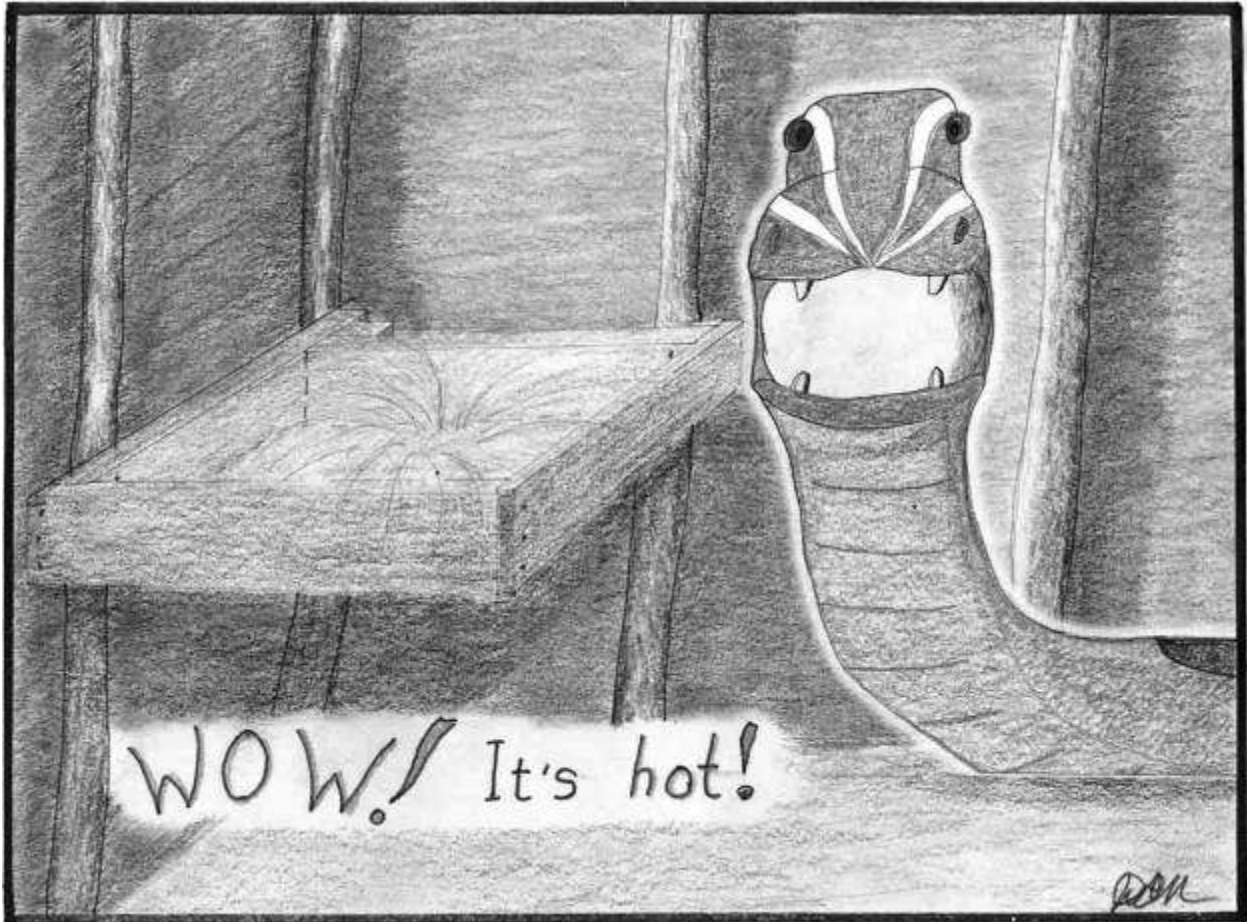
"*I beg you.* Come help us to find food and leave Mrs. Hen's eggs alone. You can hunt so much better than I can. I'm sure we can *catch plenty food* for the whole family if you will help us."

Mr. Snake only laughed, "Go ahead. Work hard for those few crumbs of food. I will have another egg. Ha Ha Ha."



Early that day Mr. Man went to his friend and got an egg. He boiled the egg for several minutes. As soon as it was good and hard he took it out of the hot water, carefully dried it, wrapped it up in a piece of banana leaf to keep it warm and so it would not burn his fingers. Then he went to watch Mrs. Hen. When Mrs. Hen had laid her egg, the man quickly replaced it with the freshly boiled egg.

Then he stepped back out of sight and watched. Mrs. Hen was singing out in the yard. In came Mr. Snake. He went right up to the nest and swallowed the egg.

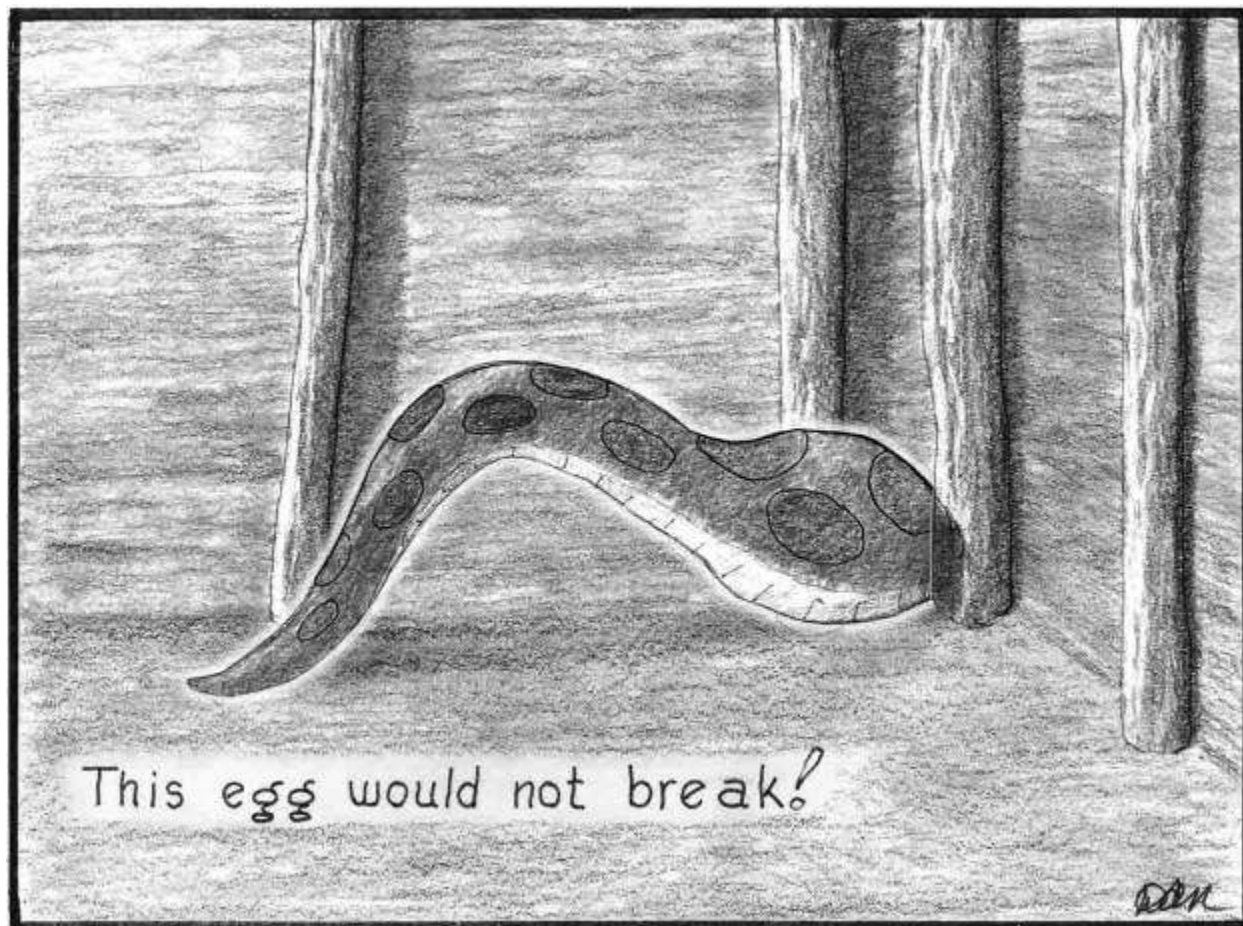


"Oh! That is hot! Mrs. Hen must have a fever. Whew!"

Then away went Mr. Snake to the little hole in the wall. He started through the hole in the wall, but just like always it was too small to let both him and the egg go through.

He turned and he twisted. He twisted and he turned. He wiggled this way and that.

"Wow!" he remarked to himself, "Mrs. Hen sure laid a thick shelled egg this time."

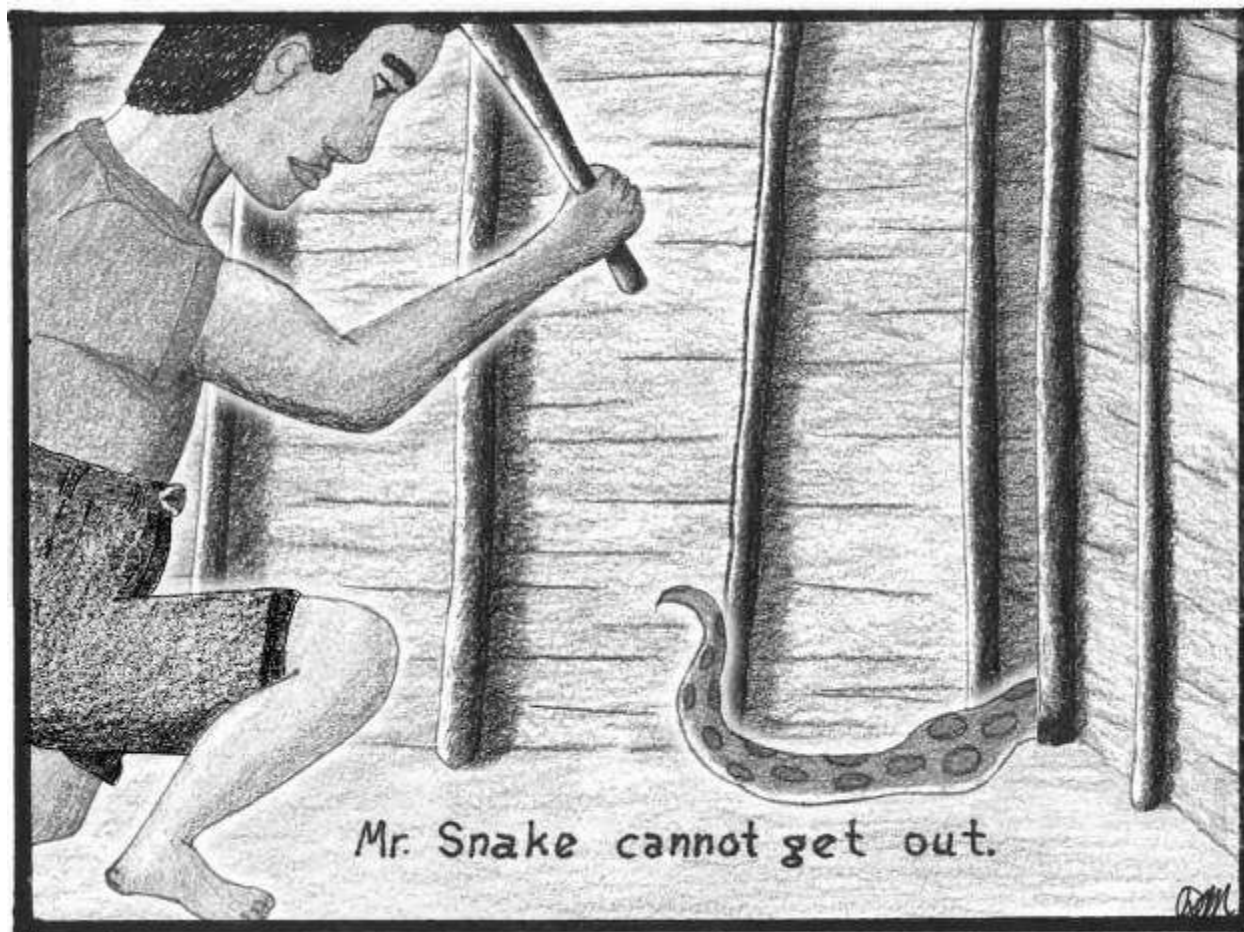


He pushed and he wriggled, he turned and he twisted, but the hard boiled egg would not break. Mr. Snake was stuck.

Then suddenly, "Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!" Mr. Man was beating Mr. Snake with a big stick.

"Now I have you, you thief!"

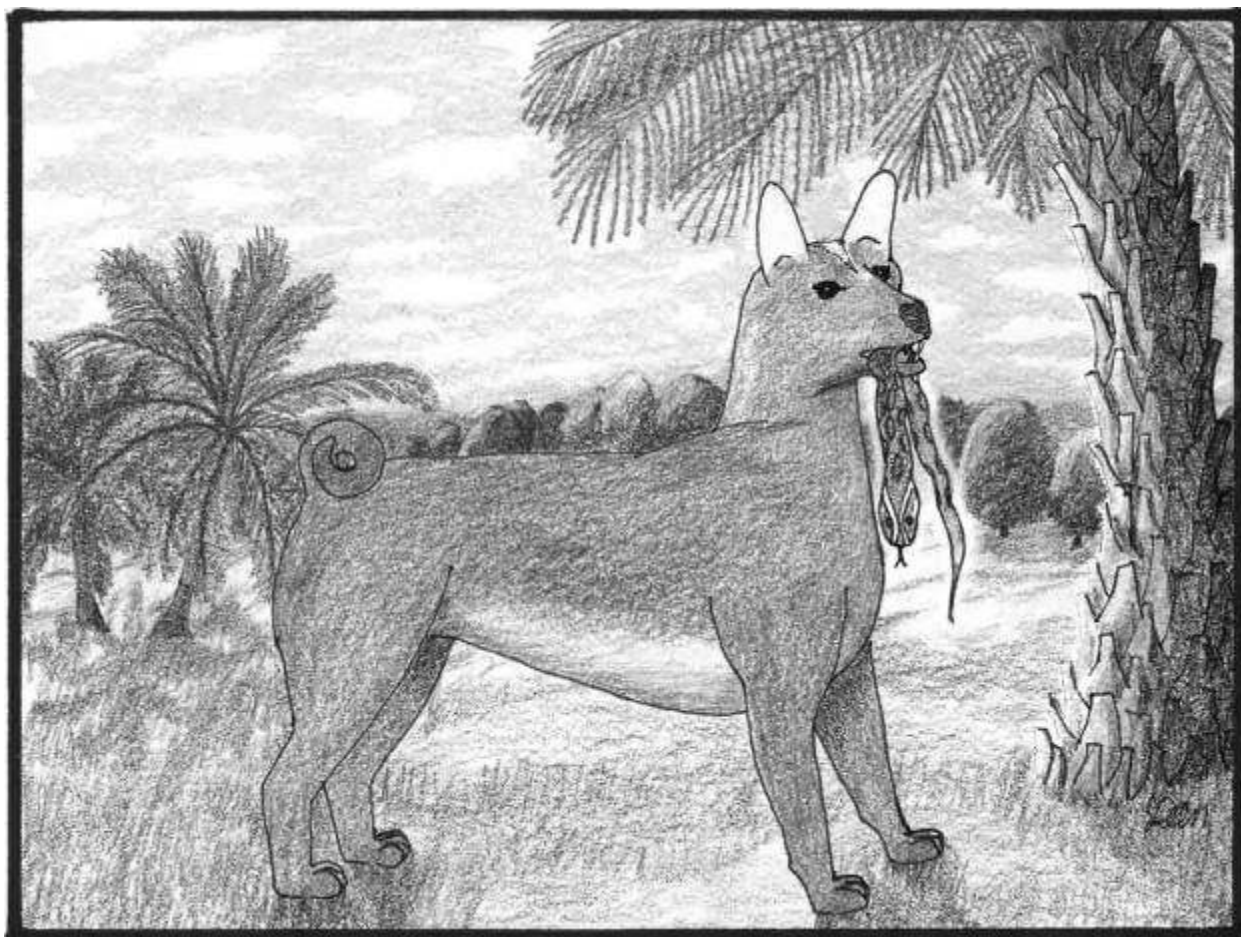
He beat Mr. Snake again and again; for the people say, "You never stop beating a snake as long as it can move."



He grabbed Mr. Snake's tail and pulled him out of the hole in the wall. He beat Mr. Snake's head. He beat him all over until no part of Mr. Snake could move. Mr. Snake was dead *for true*.

Later that evening when Mama Snake and her babies came in from hunting food they saw Dog carrying Mr. Snake in his mouth. She sadly shook her head and said to the children, "Remember my dears, the easy way is not always the best."

You know, Mr. Snake thought he was being wise and clever. He made himself think it was alright to steal eggs. The Bible tells us in Romans 1:22, "They said that they were wise,



but they showed how foolish they were.” It also says, "There is a way which looks right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12).

That’s what happened to Mr. Snake. He thought he was wise, but showed how foolish he was and he ended up dead.

We should always go God's way even though it seems to be the hard way, for God knows how everything will end. Don’t be like Mr. Snake.

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