



A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



FOUR MONKEYS



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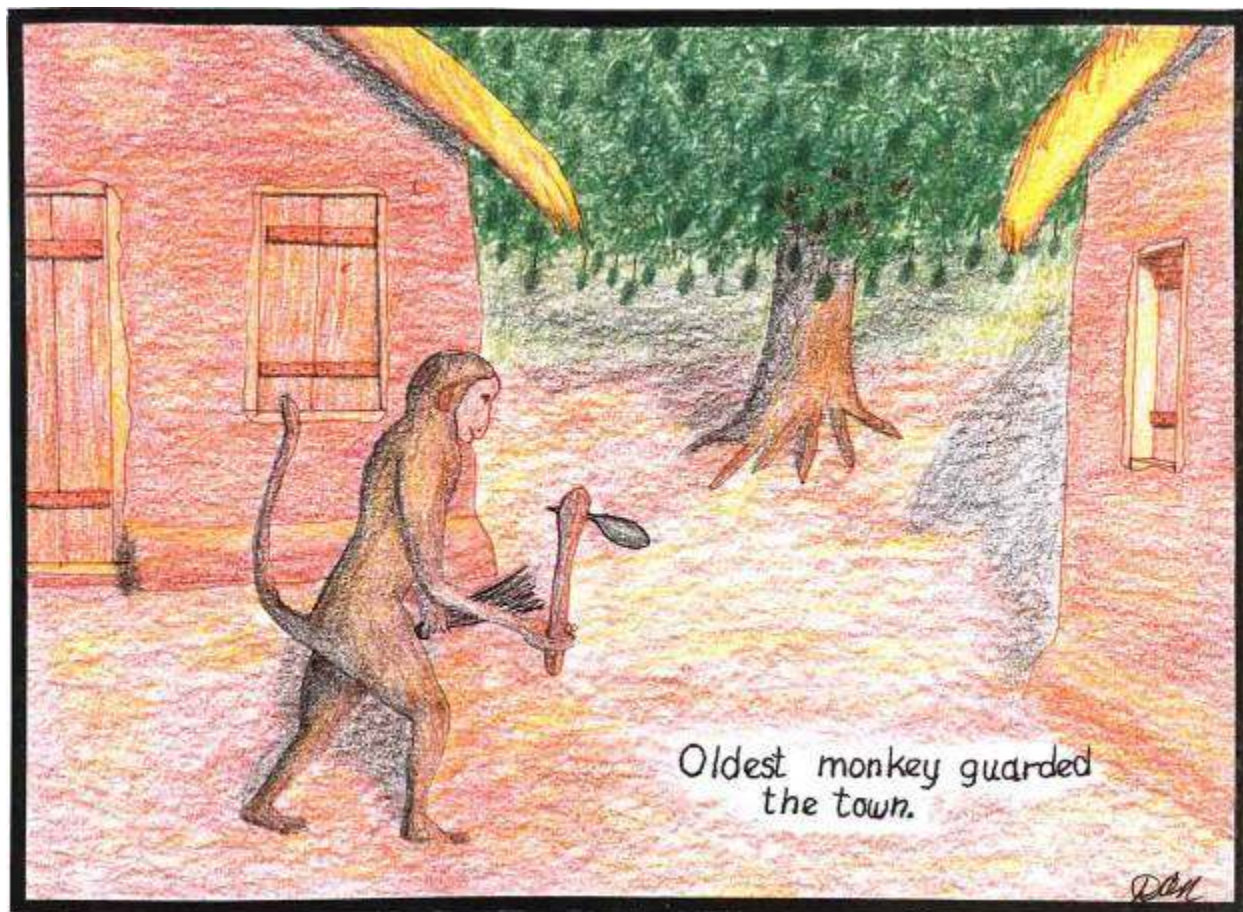
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By Spark Team



FOUR MONKEYS

(as told by Joseph Kolloh, Kpelle)

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

Four monkey brothers lived together in one small town. Every day they went to look for food; but that left the town without any guard, for their father was dead. After they *hang head and talk plenty* Oldest Brother Monkey agreed to stay in the town and guard it.

So, while the younger monkeys went to hunt, Oldest Monkey took the hoe and dug out all the grass. He swept the whole town and kept it clean. He also had food ready for them when they returned. That is, he had food ready if he had anything to cook for them.

Things went along very well for some time, but then the younger monkeys became jealous.

"We work hard all day to get food while Oldest Monkey lies around in the town all day and sleeps," Second Monkey whined.

"Yes," said Third Monkey, "He thinks he is a *big man for true*. He is trying to make himself our Pa."

"And just because he is the oldest," grumbled Youngest Monkey.

"Hey! I know what we can do," said Second Monkey. "We will not share the food we find with him anymore."

"That is a good idea. Maybe it will teach him not to be so proud and lazy," said Youngest Monkey.

"Good, no more food for Oldest Monkey," agreed Third Monkey.

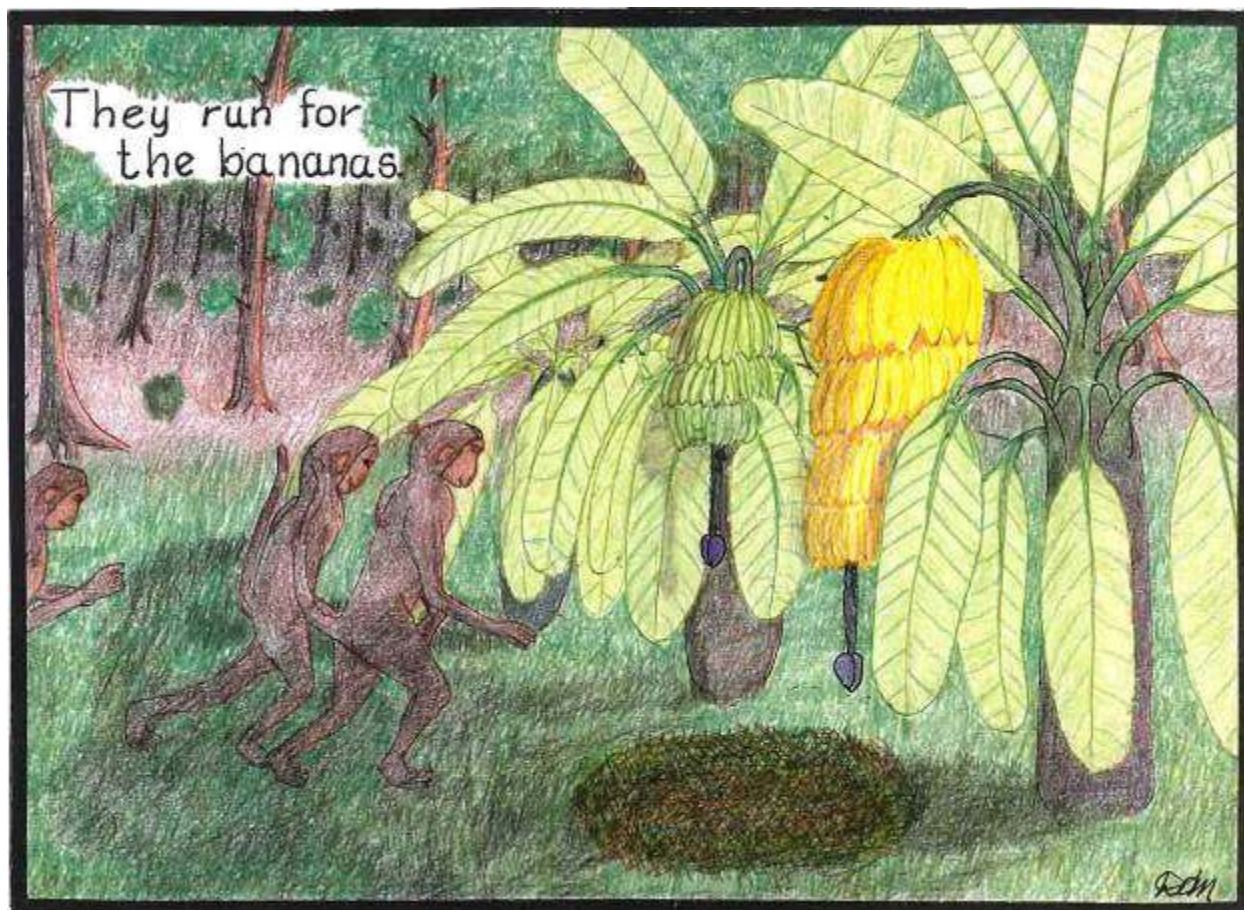
Oldest Monkey said nothing. He just went on working hard all day keep-ing the town clean. Then he went to find what food he could around close to the town. He knew from experience *his own would come back to him* one day.

One of the monkeys favorite places to find food was a large banana farm. Often they went there to get sweet ripe bananas to eat. However, the farmer was becoming vexed because the monkeys were taking so many of his bananas.

"Those monkeys are always stealing my bananas," he mumbled. "I must do something to stop them."

The farmer chose a place where there was a nice big stalk of bananas, almost ready to eat. He dug a very deep hole right under that stalk of bananas. Carefully he put small sticks and leaves over the hole to hide it.

The next day the three younger monkeys came looking for bananas. When they saw that beautiful stalk of bananas, Second Monkey and Third Monkey ran to get it. Plump! Plump! Both fell down into the hole.



Youngest Monkey came and looked down into the hole. How could they ever get out?

Second Monkey said to Youngest Monkey, "Go, run quickly to our town and tell Oldest Monkey to come and help us get out."

"Tell Oldest Monkey *we beg him. We hold his foot,*" said Third Monkey.

Second Monkey added, "Tell him that if he comes to help us we will not *do bad* to him again. He can even be the Pa and we will respect him."

Youngest Monkey ran quickly to their town and told Oldest Monkey about the big trouble that *catch* them. "Please hurry, *Old Pa* before the farmer comes and kills our brothers."

"But I cannot leave the town without a guard," Oldest Monkey said. "Let me think a bit." Hmmm Uhhuh. I know how they can

get out. Tell your two brothers to listen carefully for the farmer to come. He is always whistling so they can hear him before he gets there. Then they must lie down as though dead. Whatever happens they must play dead."

Youngest Monkey quickly ran back to his brothers in the hole. "When you hear the farmer coming, *play dead business*. Do not move. Just lie very still *like you can be dead*."

Youngest Monkey hid nearby. Soon the farmer came along whistling as usual. Second and Third Monkeys lay down as though dead.

"Ah hah," said the farmer when he saw the twigs covering the hole all broken. "Something has fallen into my trap. He pulled the leaves and twigs away. There lay the two monkeys. They appeared to be dead.

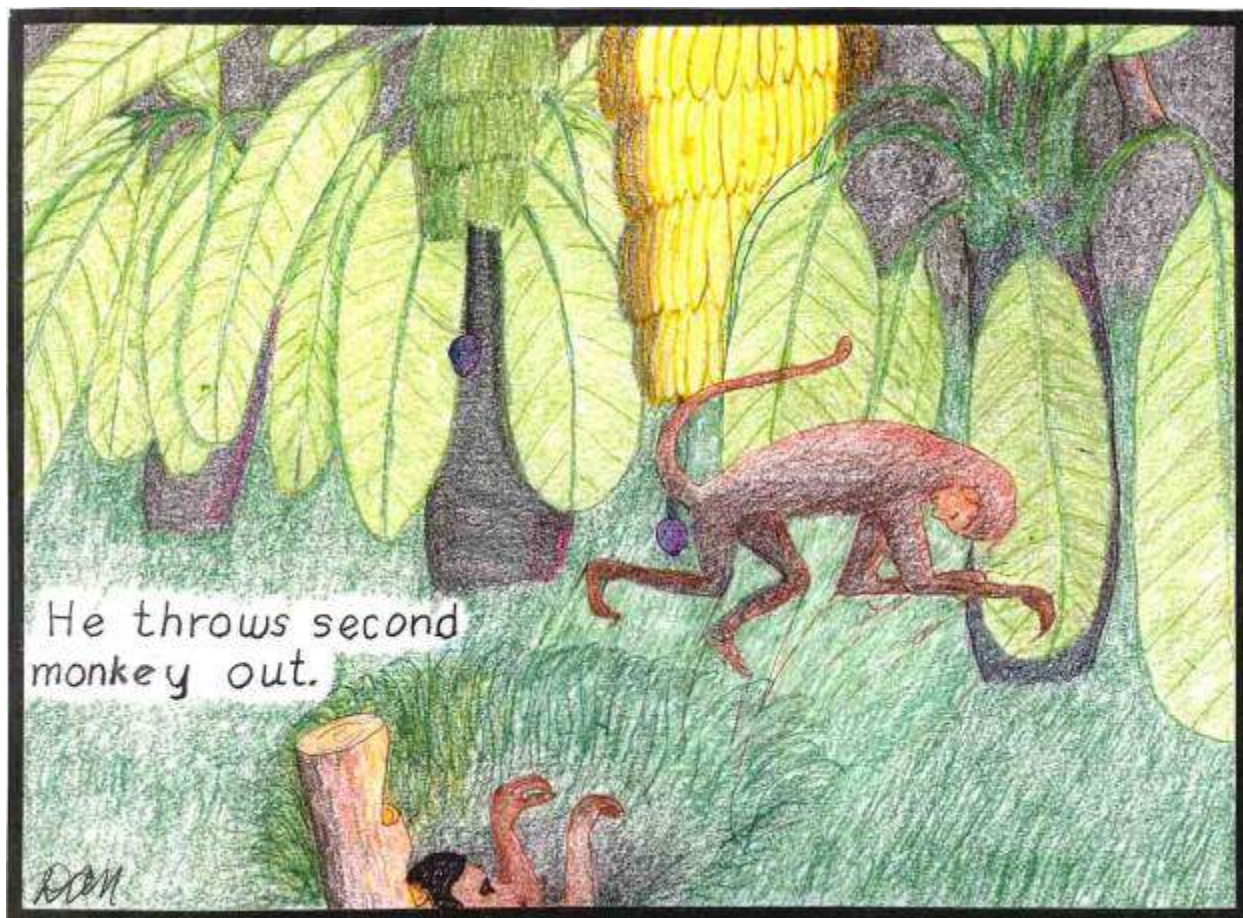
The farmer went and got his long pole ladder. He climbed down into the hole. He picked up Second Monkey, looked at him, said, "Dead," and threw him up out of the hole onto the ground. Then he picked up Third Monkey, looked at him, said, "Dead," and threw him up out of the hole onto the ground.

As soon as Third Monkey hit the ground, all three monkeys ran quickly into the bush.

When the farmer climbed up out of the hole, he looked around for the two dead monkeys. There were no monkeys in sight!

"Wha-a-a-t!" said the farmer in surprise. "Those two rascals must have been playing dead. They have run away in the bush."

Never again did the three younger monkeys *make palaver* with Oldest Monkey, who continued to guard the town and kept it very neat and clean. They always gave him a good share of whatever food they found so he could cook *sweet chop* for them every day.



Sometimes we do not realize how much someone is helping us. We need to be thankful for what our friends do for us. Here are some verses from Proverbs that tell us what God says about friends.

Prov. 17:17 "A friend loves at all times. A brother is born to share troubles."

Prov. 18:24 "A man who has friends must be a friend., but there is a friend who stays nearer than a brother." Do you know who that friend is? It is Jesus.

Prov. 27:9,10 "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so are a man's words sweet to his friend. Do not leave your own friend or your father's friend alone."

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