



A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
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MR. HARD TIME



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By Spark Team



MR. HARD TIME

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

There was a certain man and his wife who lived very happily together in a small town near a big city. He took pay at the end of each month. Often he would give her \$5.00 or \$10.00 or sometimes even \$20.00 to put aside for Mr. Hard Time.

"Now do not spend this money," he would tell her. "Keep it for Mr. Hard Time. One of these days Mr. Hard Time will come, and we will need this money for him."

Hearing this, she put the money into a cup and hid it behind some other dishes. Soon there were several hundred dollars in the cup reserved for Mr. Hard Time.

Then the woman began to say to her friends, "I do not understand why this man of mine is always putting money away for Mr. Hard Time. There is plenty of money there for Mr. Hard Time, but he never comes for it. Who is this Mr. Hard Time?"

Some *gronna* boys* heard the woman talking so. They said to each other, "Eh-heh. We can help Mr. Hard Time get his money."

"Yes, I think that he has waited too long to get his money. We can help him. Hah hah hah."

They went to another town and got one of their friends who had never been to the town where this man and his woman lived. They dressed him up in *fine-fine* clothes. They sent him to the town where this man and woman lived. He came to their house when the man was away at his working place.

"Hello," he greeted the woman. "I have come from a far-far place. I have come to get my money."

"Who are you?" She asked.

"Oh, I am Mr. Hard Time," he answered.

"So, you are Mr. Hard Time."

"Yes, of course, I am Mr. Hard Time. Didn't your husband tell you about me? Didn't he give you some money for me?"

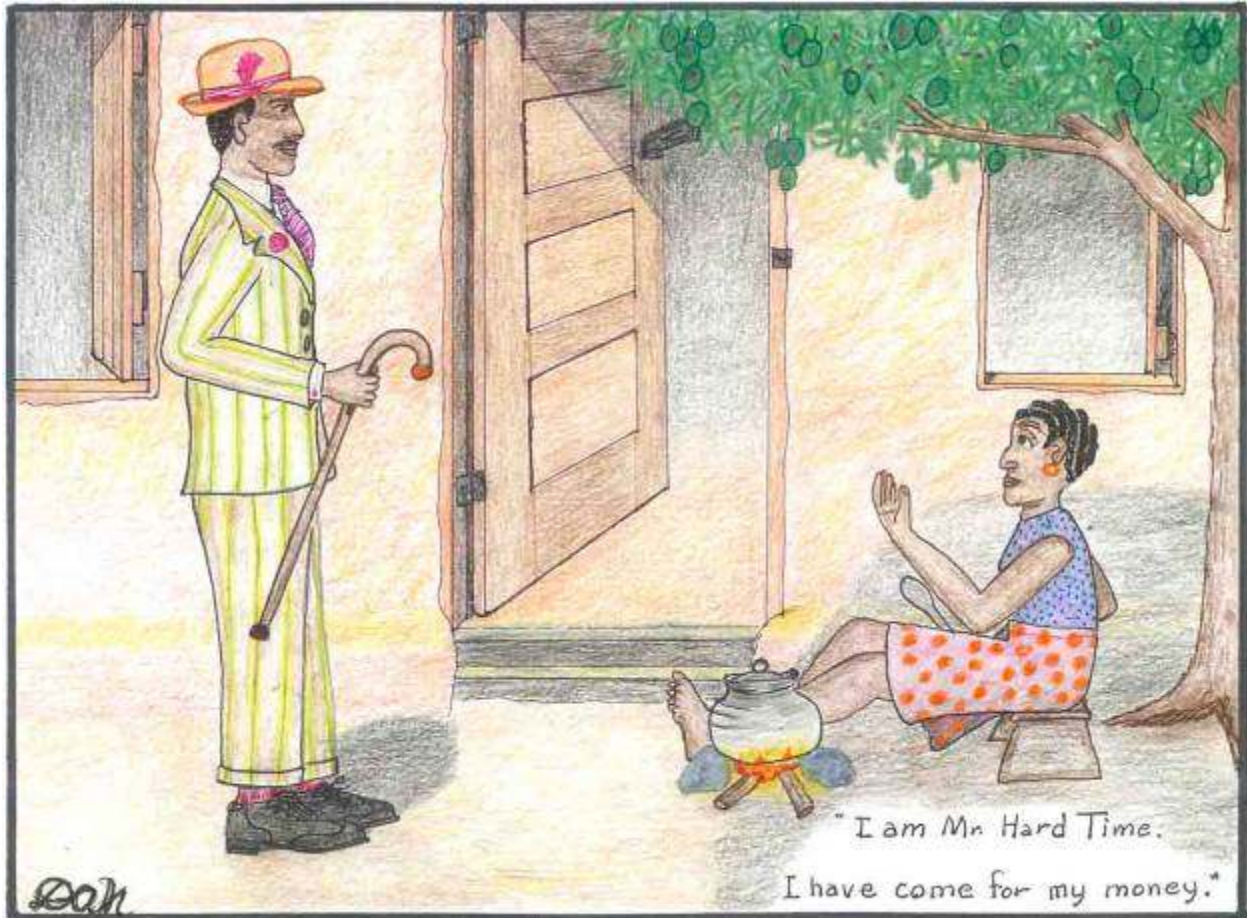
"Well, yes, *for true*, My husband did give me some money for you, but he did not say when you would come."

"Well, you see, I have come for my money."

So, she cooked fine chop for Mr. Hard Time, which he enjoyed very much.

"Now, give me my money," he demanded, "for I must hurry on."

"No, you must wait for my husband to come home from work."



"But I cannot wait. I must be going. I have much to do. Didn't your husband tell you about me, Mr. Hard Time?"

"Yes, yes, he told me that you would come."

So, reluctantly, she gave him all the money her husband had given her to keep for Mr. Hard Time. There was more than \$300 in the cup.

Mr. Hard Time left immediately. He found his friends. They didn't waste any time. They *fini all quick quick! Kpai!* They *ate* all the money.

Some months passed. Then the man lost his job. Soon there was little food in the house.

"What shall we do?" the woman asked her husband.



"Bring the money that I gave you for Mr. Hard Time. Mr. Hard Time is here now and so we will use the hard time money to help us until I can get another job."

"What do you mean, bring the money for Mr. Hard Time? Mr. Hard Time came ever since and carried all his money. He did not even leave one cent."

"*Wha thing you be talking?* You say Mr. Hard Time has been here and carried all the money? *Wha thing you be talking woman?*"

"It's like I tell you" she replied. "Mr. Hard Time came here all dressed *too fine*. He asked me to give him all the money that you had been keeping for him. So, I gave him all the money. He carried it all. He left nothing. *Kpai.*"

"Who is this that carried all the money?" he shouted.

"*I not know!*" she screeched. "This *one fine man* came here called Mr. Hard Time. He carried all the money." She was weeping now

"Look, woman! Mr. Hard Time is not a man. It is when we *catch hard time*; like when accident happens; like when the job is *fini*; like when someone is sick. That is Mr. Hard Time."

"Oh-h-h-h-h, I never knew."

"Well, now you will know who Mr. Hard Time is *for true*. Now we will really *catch hard time*. Mr. Hard Time will *suffer you too much*. You may have to beg for food and look for *careless greens* to eat while I try to find another job!"

The Bible warns us that there is a real hard time coming. It is a time when God will judge and punish all the people on the earth who do not belong to him. You can read about this in 2 Peter 3:10 to 13.

In the same 2 Peter in chapter 2 verses 9 and 10 it says, "But the Lord knows how to help men who are right with God when they are tempted. He also knows how to keep the sinners suffering for their wrong doing until the day they stand before God Who will say they are guilty."

And John 3:36 tell us, "He who puts his trust in the Son has life that lasts forever. He who does not put his trust in the Son will not have life, but the anger of God is on him."

*gronna - Pidgin English for 'grown up.' These kids grew up in the street. If they have parents there is little or no communication or supervision. Often they are thieves and pickpockets. The girls may be prostitutes.

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