

The man who never lied

An African folktale

Once upon a time there lived a wise man by the name of Mamad. He never lied. All the people in the land, even the ones who lived twenty days away, knew about him.

The king heard about Mamad and ordered his subjects to bring him to the palace. He looked at the wise man and asked:

"Mamad, is it true, that you have never lied?"

"It's true."

"And you will never lie in your life?"

"I'm sure in that."

"Okay, tell the truth, but be careful! The lie is cunning and it gets on your tongue easily."

Several days passed and the king called Mamad once again. There was a big crowd: the king was about to go hunting. The king held his horse by the mane, his left foot was already on the stirrup. He ordered Mamad:

"Go to my summer palace and tell the queen I will be with her for lunch. Tell her to prepare a big feast. You will have lunch with me then."

Mamad bowed down and went to the queen. Then the king laughed and said:

"We won't go hunting and now Mamad will lie to the queen. Tomorrow we will laugh on his behalf."

But the wise Mamad went to the palace and said:

"Maybe you should prepare a big feast for lunch tomorrow, and maybe you shouldn't. Maybe the king will come by noon, and maybe he won't."

"Tell me will he come, or won't he?" - asked the queen.

"I don't know whether he put his right foot on the stirrup, or he put his left foot on the ground after I left."

Everybody waited for the king. He came the next day and said to the queen:

"The wise Mamad, who never lies, lied to you yesterday."

But the queen told him about the words of Mamad. And the king realized that the wise man never lies, and says only that, which he saw with his own eyes.

Why the Sun and the Moon live in the Sky

Nigerian Folktale

Many years ago the sun and water were great friends, and both lived on the earth together. The sun very often used to visit the water, but the water never returned his visits. At last the sun asked the water why it was that he never came to see him in his house, the water replied that the sun's house was not big enough, and that if he came with his people he would drive the sun out.

He then said, "If you wish me to visit you, you must build a very large compound; but I warn you that it will have to be a tremendous place, as my people are very numerous, and take up a lot of room."

The sun promised to build a very big compound, and soon afterwards he returned home to his wife, the moon, who greeted him with a broad smile when he opened the door. The sun told the moon what he had promised the water, and the next day commenced building a huge compound in which to entertain his friend.

When it was completed, he asked the water to come and visit him the next day.

When the water arrived, he called out to the sun, and asked him whether it would be safe for him to enter, and the sun answered, "Yes, come in, my friend."

The water then began to flow in, accompanied by the fish and all the water animals.

Very soon the water was knee-deep, so he asked the sun if it was still safe, and the sun again said, "Yes," so more water came in.

When the water was level with the top of a man's head, the water said to the sun, "Do you want more of my people to come?" and the sun and moon both answered, "Yes," not knowing any better, so the water flowed on, until the sun and moon had to perch themselves on the top of the roof.

Again the water addressed the sun, but receiving the same answer, and more of his people rushing in, the water very soon overflowed the top of the roof, and the sun and moon were forced to go up into the sky, where they have remained ever since.