

Rogério Andrade Barbosa  
Illustrations by Cica Fittipaldi

# AFRICAN ANIMAL TALES





The author, **Rogério Andrade Barbosa**, worked as a volunteer for the United Nations, teaching children's classes in Guinea-Bissau. Based on this experience, he selected and wrote these stories which can help bring us closer to African culture.



Ciça Fittipaldi created the illustrations, exploring the fantastic and exuberant African universe. They are based on Yoruba art, which in turn influenced cubism in Europe.

Feliz Guthrie, foreign-language instructor and published author of poetry, fiction and non-fiction for children and adults, lives and works in the Mother Lode of California. She took great delight in adapting these fables for English-language readers.

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Rogério Andrade Barbosa

Illustrations by Cica Fittipaldi

English language adaptation by Feliz Guthrie



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Illustrated by Cica Fittipaldi

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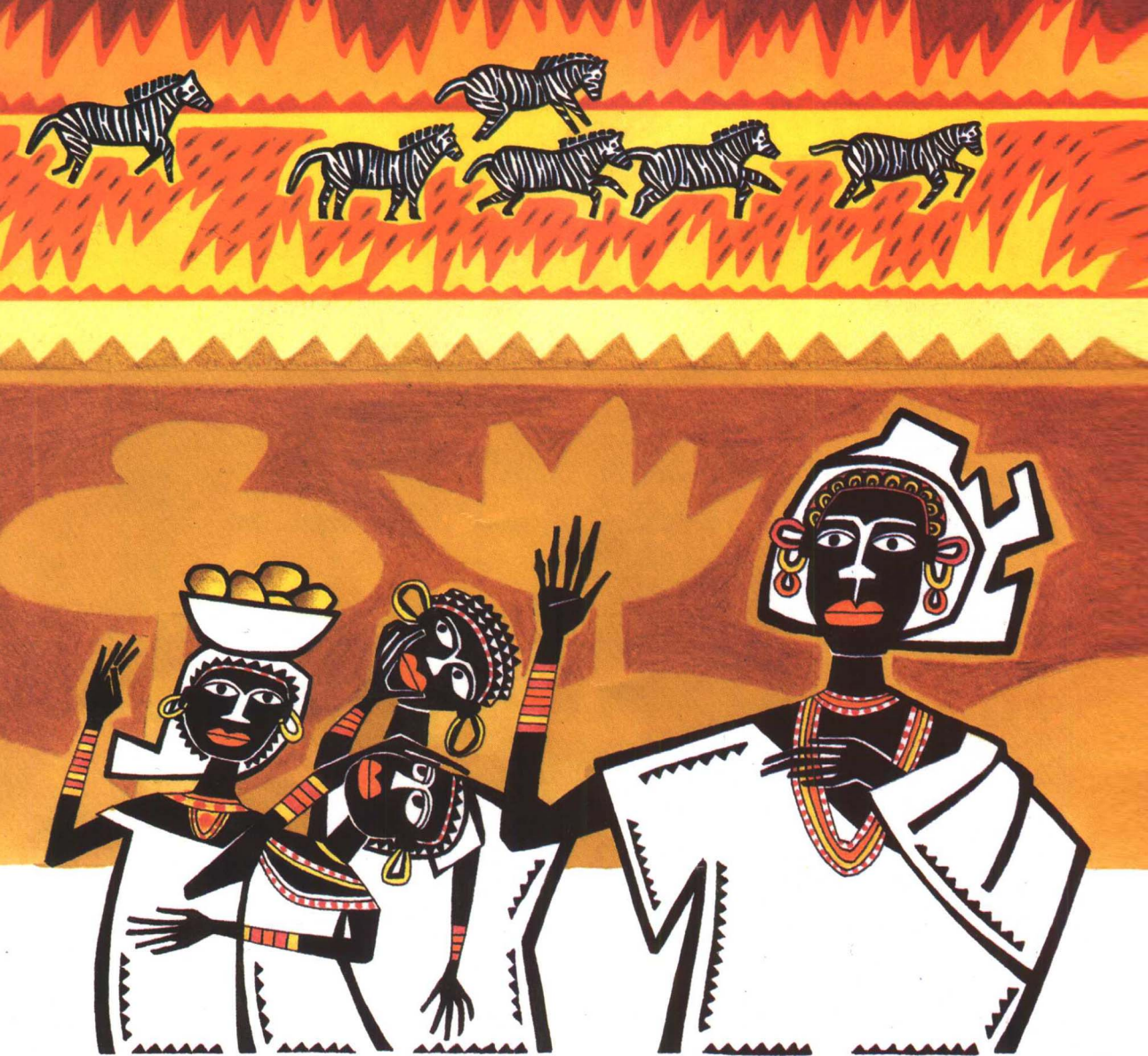
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ONE: <i>The Considerate Fly</i> .....	Page 7
TWO: <i>The Tortoise and the Leopard</i> .....	Page 15
THREE: <i>The Serpent's Bride</i> .....	Page 21
FOUR: <i>The Rain God's Vengeance</i> .....	Page 27
FIVE: <i>The Cassolo Bird and the Bee</i> .....	Page 31
SIX: <i>Why Dogs Sniff Each Other</i> .....	Page 35
SEVEN: <i>The Cunning of the Tortoise</i> .....	Page 41
EIGHT: <i>The Tortoise and the Jackal</i> .....	Page 49
NINE: <i>The Hawk and the Eagle</i> .....	Page 53
TEN: <i>The Cat and the Rat</i> .....	Page 59
<i>AFTERWORD</i>	





## *1. The Considerate Fly*

It was a hot, sunny day, toward the end of the dry season. Dust and flies and shimmering heat made the children complain. “My feet are burning!” grumbled one.

“Do you remember what happened this time last year?” asked her older brother. “The men went to the fields that weren’t cleared for planting yet, and set fire to the brush before the coming rains made it too wet to burn. But then, a terrible wind arose, sweeping the flames through the stubble, into the jungle and driving all the animals across the plains.”

“Did it drive away the flies?” demanded another child, swiping an



impatient blow at one that buzzed around her head.

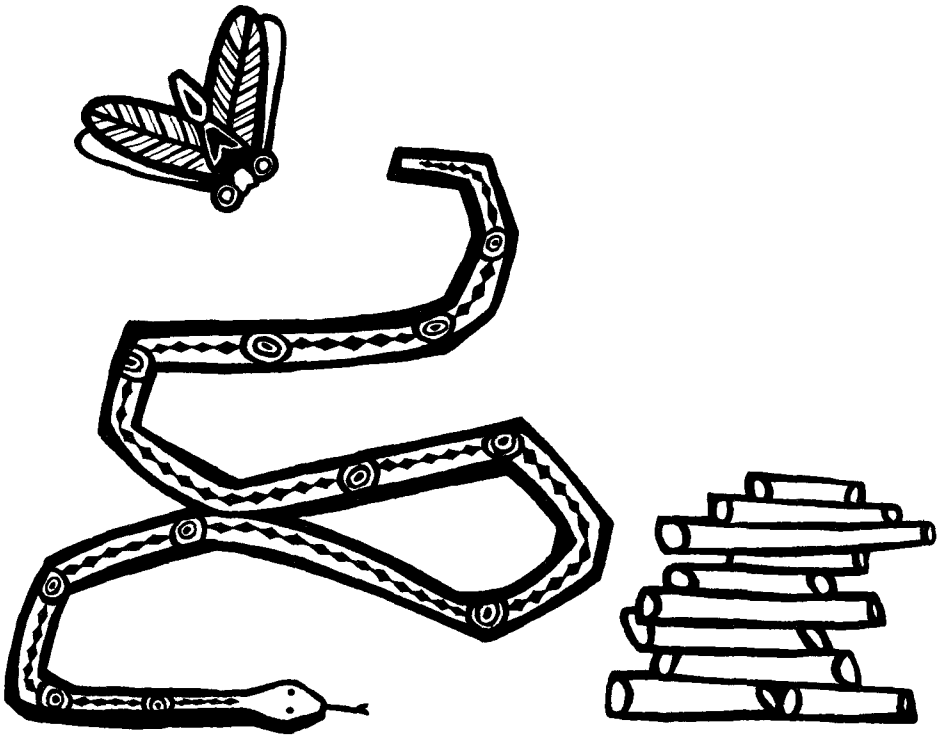
The older brother laughed. "Don't you know the story of the considerate fly?"

"The considerate fly!" all the children exclaimed. "How could a fly be considerate?"

"I will tell you," said the older brother.

One day, a big black Fly was buzzing around, and she happened to land on the top log of a pile of firewood. This particular log was smooth and slick, so the Fly skidded along it and skated right up to... a snake, coiled among the logs to sleep. With a loud buzz, the Fly woke the snake. "Madame Serpent!" she cried. "You must not sleep here! Men will come to fetch this firewood, and if they see you, I wouldn't give much for your chances!"

Quickly, the snake slithered down over the logs and into a dark, round hole in the ground just the right size for her. But she was met by a loud squeal of fear... there was a mouse in the hole. When he saw the snake, he froze with









terror. The next moment, he was streaking for his burrow's back door. He ran in such a panic that he dashed out right between the legs of a pheasant who was strutting by. The pheasant started shrieking, too. The noise woke up a monkey who had just dozed off on a tree branch overhead.

Confused by the shrill cries, the monkey was even more startled when the pheasant came whirring up at him from the ground below. The monkey jumped so that the branch broke, and he fell... right onto the head of a passing elephant!

Well, of course, the elephant was surprised. She shambled off at a great rate, smashing brush and trampling grass. Unfortunately, the elephant also squashed the nest of a *ntietie* bird, and this bird doesn't put up with much nonsense.









Rocketing out of the grass, she darted this way and that, furious at having her nest destroyed. The *ntietie* has flaming red feathers, and in her blind anger, the bird began to set fire to the grass. The poor elephant didn't know what to do or where to go. She lowered her huge ears as if to beg the bird's forgiveness.

But the chain of misfortunes didn't end there. A passing buck burned his feet in the flaming grass, and he ran to the river to quench the pain. He was in such a hurry, he forgot he was supposed to call out a warning so that the maidens from the village who were bathing in the water could jump out and put







their clothes on. The result was that several of the maidens scarcely had time to cover themselves. Shocked and angry, they bustled off to complain to the chief of their village.

The chief got so mad when he heard what the buck had done, he sent for the unfortunate animal and demanded an explanation. The buck instantly blamed the *ntietie* bird for setting fire to the grass. So the chief sent for the bird.

The *ntietie* blamed the elephant for smashing her nest. The elephant blamed the monkey for falling on her head. The monkey blamed the pheasant; the pheasant blamed the mouse; the mouse blamed the snake. And the snake blamed the Fly.

The Fly felt very small before the angry chief. She looked around for someone else to blame. But there was no one else. Heaving a sigh, she admitted her guilt: "It is true I have been the cause of a large number of mishaps and misfortunes. All I can say is that I was trying to help Madame Serpent. Surely my intentions must count for something!"

Well, the old men of the village put their heads together over the problem. They weighed the good against the bad and decided that the Fly was indeed innocent. And so, they pardoned her.

And yet, there she still is--the ungrateful little nuisance--buzzing around our ears and making us lose our patience with her as much as ever!







## *2. The Tortoise and the Leopard*

The children were excited about the great hunter who had passed through their village that morning. What impressed them most was the number of amulets that decorated his body and his spear shaft.

“When I grow up, I’m going to be a great hunter like that!” one of them declared.

His uncle overheard him. “If you are,” his uncle said, “you will have to learn a lot. A great hunter has to know how to build traps that will fool the animals he wants to catch. Animals are clever. It isn’t so easy to hunt them as you may suppose.”

“Oh, tell us a story about making traps!” the boy cried. The rest of the children joined in. “Yes, tell us a story! Tell us a story!”

This is what their uncle told them:

Old Dame Tortoise, preoccupied as usual by her own thoughts, was rollicking home one day. That is, she was lumbering along under her shell at a sprightlier pace than usual. But she wasn't getting anywhere fast because she kept turning from the path to sniff a wild flower here, or nip off a tender bud there. She should have been paying closer attention to other, more important things. For instance, on the trail in front of her was a large mat of palm leaves. A grass snake wound its slim body across the mat making the dry fronds rustle. Without a second thought, the tortoise followed, when all of a sudden the trail fell away beneath her in a shower of palm leaves and dry sticks. Whump! She landed at the bottom of a deep hole that the hunters of the nearby village had dug in the middle of the path.

Thanks to her tough shell, the tortoise wasn't hurt. But how was she going to get out of the hole? She knew she had to find a way to escape before morning, or she would end up in some villager's soup pot.

Old Dame Tortoise rested her chin on the collar of her shell and thought

