

FULL PERFORMANCE TRANSCRIPT

THE ELEPHANT, THE HARE AND THE LEOPARD

Told by Elizabeth Mudiywa

An oral storytelling archive transcript

06:45

ENGLISH + SHONA

HERITAGE · COMMUNITY

IF YOU ALONE EAT MEDICINE FOR LONG LIFE, YOU WILL REMAIN
ALONE IN THE WASTELAND.



ABOUT THIS TRANSCRIPT

This transcript accompanies Elizabeth Mudiywa's recorded performance of The Elephant, the Hare and the Leopard, an African animal tale about law, honesty, consequences and the dangers of acting only for oneself.

The wording follows the recorded performance. Elizabeth's supplied script has been used as a reference for character names, the Shona saying and unclear words. Punctuation and paragraph breaks have been added only to improve readability.

ACCESS NOTE

The timestamps are section markers designed to help readers navigate the recorded performance.

FULL TRANSCRIPT

00:00

If you alone take medicine for long life, you are going to remain alone in the wasteland. If you alone continue to take medicine for long life, you are going to remain in the wasteland.

00:20

Many, many years ago, in the tropical jungles of Central Africa, there was a kingdom ruled by Elephant as king. His subjects liked him because they thought he was fair and just.

00:40

But he had one law that he was so serious about: "No flesh-eating in my kingdom," he would tell his subjects.

00:55

"Do as I do. Eat fruits, leaves from the trees, grass from the plain lands around us, and honey from the honeycombs in the forest. That way we will have less enemies and the food is good for us all."

01:20

"Yes, yes, yes," the subjects agreed with him. "He is telling the truth." But they forgot one thing. There were many kingdoms surrounding them, and they did not have to follow the Elephant King's law.

01:45

One of the animals known for flesh-eating was the Leopard. He could not find food when he was very hungry one day, and he decided to sneak into the Elephant Kingdom's area.

02:06

He climbed up a tree and concealed himself on a branch that was overhanging a pathway underneath, hoping to pounce on any creature that walked by.

02:25

On the same day, the Elephant King sent Kalulu, his messenger, a hare, on an errand, and he had to use that same path.

02:41

As Kalulu walked down the path freely and happily, the Leopard could see him coming. As he got under the tree branch, he jumped on him. “Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!” cried the hare. “I’m going to be killed. Someone is attacking me.”

03:05

At that moment, the Elephant King was nearby gathering honeycombs. When he heard the cry of his messenger, his stamping footsteps as he ran towards the scene made the Leopard turn his head to see what was making such a loud noise. The hare slipped from his grip.

03:35

At that moment the Elephant arrived and grabbed the Leopard, lifted him up and shook him, asking, “Why do you want to kill my messenger? Do you not know the laws of my kingdom? No one eats flesh.” He threw the Leopard into a pond nearby as punishment for his disobedience.

04:08

The Leopard was good at swimming, so he managed to swim across, crawled out of the pond and stood on the other side.

04:17

He said to the Elephant, “My lord, you are mistaken. I was planning to play with your messenger. Didn’t you see that? I would never eat flesh. My food consists of fruits, leaves from the trees, grass from the plain lands, and honey from the honeycombs.”

04:47

The Elephant said, “Oh, here is a honeycomb I’ve just picked.” The Leopard grabbed the honeycomb and pushed it quickly into his mouth.

05:02

The Elephant had given him a comb full of fresh bees that started stinging him all over his body. He jumped up with pain and threw himself onto the ground, hoping to crush the bees off his body.

05:24

But the more he rubbed his body against the ground, the more the stings went through his skin. This resulted in sores forming all over his body. When these sores healed, they formed black spots.

05:48

And that is how the Leopard ended up with black spots on its skin, generation after generation, up to this day.

06:01

The Elephant and the hare walked away from the scene, pleased with themselves, while the Leopard remained alone.

06:15

The African Shona elders would say: “Tererai! Mukaita zvehu mbimbindoga, muchatambudzika mega.”

06:27

I repeat, please, please: if you alone continue to take medicine for long life, you are going to remain alone in the wasteland.

— END OF TRANSCRIPT —