

MRS. PIG'S NECKLACE

An African Folktale

Told by Laura Gibbs / LauraGibbs.net

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Adapted for reader's theater from "How the Turtle Outwitted the Pig" in African Jungle Tales by Carl Bender, [online at the Internet Archive](#).

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PREVIEW: Mrs. Tortoise borrows a necklace from Mrs. Pig to wear to the dance, but then things do not turn out as expected: not for Mrs. Tortoise, and not for Mrs. Pig either!

GENRE: Folktales

CULTURE: Kwe people (Cameroon, Africa)

THEMES: trickster

LENGTH: 16 minutes

READERS: 5

ROLES: Narrator, Mrs. Tortoise, Mrs. Pig, Mr. Pig, Mr. Tortoise

NOTES: **spoilers; read afterwards** This is a story of the Kwe (Wakweli) people of Cameroon, and it can also be found in the Tortoise legends of other African countries. For example, you can find the story in Oyekan Owomoyela's [Yoruba Trickster Tales](#), online at the Internet Archive. The nickname "Gruntty" for Mr. Pig comes from the original story. This story ends with an "aetiology,"

an explanation of the origin of something: why pigs root in the ground. Trickster stories often end with an aetiology like this, so that, indirectly, the trickster's actions are responsible for some aspect of the world as we see it today.

NARRATOR: There was going to be a dance! All the animals would be there, and Mrs. Tortoise wanted to make a good impression.

MRS. TORTOISE: Oh, Mr. Tortoise, what am I going to wear?

MR. TORTOISE: You've got that lovely new dress, Mrs. Tortoise. You know, the red one. I think it's very pretty.

MRS. TORTOISE: Yes, it is very pretty, but I don't have any jewelry to go with it. I need a necklace!

NARRATOR: Mr. Tortoise certainly wasn't about to go buy his wife a new necklace to wear to the dance, so he said:

MR. TORTOISE: Your friend Mrs. Pig has a lot of pretty jewelry. Perhaps she could loan you something to wear.

NARRATOR: Mrs. Tortoise was disappointed that her husband was not going to buy her a new necklace, but he was right about Mrs. Pig: she did have a lot of pretty jewelry.

MRS. TORTOISE: That's a good idea, husband. I will go there right now and ask.

NARRATOR: And Mrs. Tortoise went as quickly as she could — quickly for a tortoise, that is — to see her friend Mrs. Pig.

MRS. TORTOISE: Mrs. Pig! Mrs. Pig! Are you home!

MRS. PIG: Oh, it's you, Mrs. Tortoise! Do come in! Are you going to the dance tonight? I was just deciding which dress to wear.

MRS. TORTOISE: That's exactly why I've come to see you, Mrs. Pig! I'm going to wear my red dress, but I don't have any jewelry to go with it. Do you think you could loan me a necklace?

MRS. PIG: Of course, my dear! You can take something now and bring it back to me tomorrow. Come pick out whatever you'd like!

MRS. TORTOISE: Oh, thank you so much, Mrs. Pig! That is very kind of you, and I promise to bring the necklace back first thing tomorrow morning.

NARRATOR: Then Mrs. Tortoise began trying on different necklaces, asking Mrs. Pig for her opinion, until finally she chose one and hurried back home.

MRS. TORTOISE: And I hear you, Narrator! You better not make fun again of how I walk. I walk plenty fast, and you'd be surprised at how fast I can dance too!

NARRATOR: So that night all the animals went to the dance, and Mrs. Tortoise danced and danced until she couldn't dance anymore. But when she and Mr. Tortoise were finally ready to go home, Mr. Tortoise looked at her and said:

MR. TORTOISE: Mrs. Tortoise, where is your necklace?

NARRATOR: Mrs. Tortoise reached up a foot and clutched where the necklace should have been.

MRS. TORTOISE: Oh no! The necklace is gone! We have to find it!

NARRATOR: So Mr. and Mrs. Tortoise looked everywhere for the necklace, but they could not find it anywhere.

MR. TORTOISE: Well, my dear, I suppose someone has stolen the necklace. You'll have to go tell Mrs. Pig what happened.

MRS. TORTOISE: Oh, this is terrible. She is going to be so angry. She might even think that we stole the necklace.

MR. TORTOISE: No, dearest, she would never think that. You two are friends. I'm sure she will understand.

NARRATOR: But the next morning when Mrs. Tortoise told her friend what had happened, Mrs. Pig did not take the news well.

MRS. PIG: Lost? Stolen? I don't know what you're talking about. You borrowed my necklace, and now you have to give it back.

MRS. TORTOISE: But the necklace is gone. I don't know where it is. Someone stole it!

MRS. PIG: Well, stolen, lost, I don't care: either way, you must pay me for what you took.

NARRATOR: When Mrs. Pig told Mrs. Tortoise how much she would have to pay, Mrs. Tortoise was shocked.

MRS. TORTOISE: I.... we.... Mr. Tortoise and I... we don't have that much money to spare.

MRS. PIG: Then pay me when you can. But don't take too long. The next time I see you, you better be able to pay me. Or else!

MRS. TORTOISE: Yes, Mrs. Pig, I understand.

NARRATOR: But when Mrs. Tortoise went home and told Mr. Tortoise how much money she had to give Mrs. Pig for the stolen necklace, Mr. Tortoise shouted:

MR. TORTOISE: No, my dear, no! Absolutely not! We will not pay that money.

MRS. TORTOISE: But I promised...

MR. TORTOISE: Don't worry. She's just upset by the shock of the news. She'll forget all about it in a day or two.

MRS. TORTOISE: I hope you're right, my husband. Maybe she will forget!

NARRATOR: But Mrs. Pig did not forget, and after a few days had passed, and then a few weeks, she said to her husband:

MRS. PIG: Grunty, go get that money from the Tortoises.

MR. PIG: But my dear, if they haven't come to pay you, that is probably because they don't have the money. I'm sure they would pay you if they could.

MRS. PIG: Well, if they can't pay, then you must take something of theirs in return. She took my necklace, so you should go take something from their house and bring it back here.

NARRATOR: So Mr. Pig reluctantly went to see Mr. and Mrs. Tortoise. When Mr. Tortoise saw Mr. Pig coming down the road, he went inside and shouted:

MR. TORTOISE: Mrs. Tortoise, I see Mr. Pig coming down the road. I'm sure he's going to want me to pay him the money for that necklace. When he gets here you must tell him I'm not home!

MRS. TORTOISE: But you are home, my dear! He'll see you!

MR. TORTOISE: No he won't! I'm going to hide right now.

NARRATOR: And then Mr. Tortoise rolled over on his back, pulling all four legs into his shell, and his tail, and his head. Then he said from inside his shell:

MR. TORTOISE: Now get some melon seeds and put them on top of me, and then start grinding. Mr. Pig will think I'm a grinding stone.

MRS. TORTOISE: Oh, that's a good idea, my husband! Turned over on your back like that, you do look like a grinding stone.

NARRATOR: So when Mr. Pig arrived a few minutes later and knocked at the door, Mrs. Tortoise shouted:

MRS. TORTOISE: The door's open! Just let yourself in. I've got my hands full grinding melon seeds.

NARRATOR: Mr. Pig came in and greeted Mrs. Tortoise politely.

MR. PIG: Hello, Mrs. Tortoise! I suppose you know why I've come. My wife sent me to collect the money you owe her for the necklace.

MRS. TORTOISE: I understand, Mr. Pig. But you'll need to talk to my husband about that, and he's not here right now.

MR. PIG: It doesn't matter who pays me the money: you can pay me, or your husband can pay. But one of you must pay, or else I'm going to just take something in return.

MRS. TORTOISE: I don't know what to tell you, Mr. Pig, but my husband should be back soon. I don't have any money I can give you at the moment.

MR. PIG: Well, what about this fine grinding stone!

NARRATOR: And much to Mrs. Tortoise's horror, Mr. Pig walked over to where she was standing, grinding the melon seeds on Mr. Tortoise's shell.

MR. PIG: I can see this is a very fine grinding stone, so I will take this home with me now. When you bring me the money for the necklace, I will gladly return the grinding stone.

NARRATOR: And then Mr. Pig reached out, brushed the melon seeds off of Mr. Tortoise's shell, and picked up Mr. Tortoise.

MR. PIG: Ooooooof! What a fine, heavy grinding stone! I'll carry this off to my house now, and then I'll come back and explain the situation to your husband.

MRS. TORTOISE: But..... but.....

MR. PIG: Don't worry, Mrs. Tortoise. I'll take good care of your lovely grinding stone. And I'll be back soon to speak with your husband.

NARRATOR: Then, grunting and groaning, Mr. Pig pushed, pulled, and rolled Mr. Tortoise out of the house.

MR. PIG: [grunt grunt] Goodbye, Mrs. Tortoise. I'll be back later to wait for your husband.

NARRATOR: And all the time that Mr. Pig was pushing and rolling him, Mr. Tortoise didn't say a word. In fact, he was smiling with delight inside his shell because he already had a plan. Can you guess what Mr. Tortoise's plan was? Try to guess the plan if you can! Meanwhile, Mr. Pig was struggling to carry the grinding stone all the way to his home:

MR. PIG: OOOOOOOF, this grinding stone really is heavy. [grunt grunt] I think I'll just put it here by the side of the road in the bushes and come back later with a wheelbarrow so I can roll it the rest of the way.

NARRATOR: Then Mr. Pig heaved Mr. Tortoise into the bushes by the side of the road.

MR. PIG: I better mark the spot so that I can find it later!

NARRATOR: So Mr. Pig grabbed a stick and placed it down carefully, pointing it towards the bush where he had left the grinding stone... or what he thought was the grinding stone.

MR. PIG: Now I'll go back and wait for Mr. Tortoise.

NARRATOR: So Mr. Pig went back to wait for Mr. Tortoise at his house. Meanwhile, as soon as Mr. Tortoise heard that the coast was clear, he reached out his head and his feet, and then he grabbed hold of the bushes in order to flip himself right-side-up.

MR. TORTOISE: Oh my, that feels much better! And luckily for me, Mr. Pig has provided the perfect way out of this situation! [laughing] I can't wait to see the look on his face when he comes back here for the grinding stone and finds out that someone must have stolen it!

NARRATOR: With that happy thought, Mr. Tortoise laughed all the way home where he found Mr. Pig waiting for him.

MRS. TORTOISE: Oh, I'm so glad you're home, my dear. Mr. Pig is here and...

MR. PIG: [interrupting] Mr. Tortoise, I came here to tell you that the time has come to pay for that necklace. When your wife said she didn't have any money to pay me with, I helped myself to your fine grinding stone and took it away to my house. So, all you have to do is pay me for the necklace, and I'll gladly return the grinding stone to you.

MR. TORTOISE: Oh, but of course, Mr. Pig! I'm so sorry to have inconvenienced you. I'm ready to pay, and I would like to apologize to Mrs. Pig in person, so I'll bring the money to your house right now, and then I'll carry the grinding stone back here myself to save you the trouble.

NARRATOR: This was not what Mr. Pig had expected, so he said quickly:

MR. PIG: Oh, there is no need to trouble my wife about it. Not at all. Please just wait here, and I'll bring the grinding stone back immediately, and then you can give me the money.

MR. TORTOISE: Well, that sounds like a lot of trouble for you, my dear Mr. Pig, but if that is what you prefer, of course. I'll just wait here for you to bring back the grinding stone.

MR. PIG: That sounds like a plan, Mr. Tortoise! I'll be back as quick as I can.

NARRATOR: So Mr. Pig rushed out the door, delighted that he wasn't going to have to carry the grinding stone to his house after all. But when he found the spot he had marked with the stick, there was no grinding stone in the bushes.

MR. PIG: I don't understand! I'm sure this was the place. But where is the grinding stone?

NARRATOR: Then Mr. Pig began running frantically through and in and around the bushes, looking for the grinding stone. But it was gone!

MR. PIG: Oh no! Mr. Tortoise's grinding stone: it's gone! It's been stolen! What am I going to do?

NARRATOR: Scared and ashamed, Mr. Pig went back to the Tortoises' home and knocked on the door.

MR. TORTOISE: Ah, Mr. Pig, it's you! Back so soon! Please come in.

NARRATOR: But when Mr. Pig came in without the grinding stone, Mr. Tortoise exclaimed:

MR. TORTOISE: My dear Mr. Pig, I don't understand! Where is my grinding stone?

MR. PIG: Well, Mr. Tortoise, it's like this. I couldn't carry the grinding stone all the way home — it being very heavy, you know — so I had left it in the bushes, and I marked the spot very carefully, but when I went back to get it, well, the grinding stone... the grinding stone was gone. Someone must have stolen it!

MR. TORTOISE: Stolen it? But that grinding stone has been in my family for generations. For generations, Mr. Pig!

NARRATOR: Then Mr. Tortoise called to his wife:

MR. TORTOISE: Did you hear that, Mrs. Tortoise? Mr. Pig says someone has stolen the grinding stone.

MRS. TORTOISE: Oh no! I wonder if it could be the same thief who stole Mrs. Pig's necklace!

NARRATOR: At that moment, Mr. Pig stared at Mr. Tortoise, suspecting a trick, but he didn't say anything. Then Mr. Tortoise stared right back at Mr. Pig and said:

MR. TORTOISE: Well then, I suppose this makes us even. But if you do find that grinding stone, please bring it back, and then I will pay you the money for your wife's necklace.

NARRATOR: Mr. Pig was sure that somehow Mr. Tortoise had tricked, but he couldn't prove it, so he shouted:

MR. PIG: I'll find it! I'll find that grinding stone! And then I'll be back here to collect the money you owe me.

MR. TORTOISE: I'm sure you will, Mr. Pig, and the sooner the better. But it's getting late now, so I'll say goodnight.

MRS. TORTOISE: And please give my best to Mrs. Pig!

NARRATOR: Then Mr. Pig ran off into the night, inspecting every bush and digging in the dirt, looking for Mr. Tortoise's grinding stone.

MR. PIG: [grunt grunt] I know it's got to be here somewhere! I'll just keep on digging. [grunt grunt]

NARRATOR: Mr. Pig never did find the grinding stone, but he never gave up looking. And then Mr. Pig taught his little piglets to keep looking for the grinding stone too, digging in the dirt and rooting in the mud, looking everywhere. They still haven't found the grinding stone, and that's why pigs are always digging in the dirt and rooting in the mud, even today. So if you ever wondered why pigs like to dig in the dirt and root in the mud: now you know!

It's all because Mrs. Tortoise borrowed Mrs. Pig's necklace to wear to the dance a long long LONG time ago.