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African Folktale

How Elephants Got Their Tusks

Long ago in Maasailand, Africa, fear was everywhere throughout the animal kingdom. The King of the Lions, Oteka and his pride, were taking over the African Savanna. They had already taken over the Zebra's, the Antelope's, and the Buffalo's territories. The other predators had left Maasailand in hunger, for the Lions had claimed all the prey. One animal clan had yet to be overcome, and that was the clan of the Elephants. King Mwamba of the Elephants refused to give up, but the defenseless Elephants were unable to fight back without weapons. The Elephants were not ready to stand up to the Lions. They needed help.

One day, King Mwamba of the Elephants was walking across the savanna in Kenya and he encountered a small boy. The boy was crying under an acacia tree. King Mwamba said, "Young boy, what is wrong?"

The boy replied, "I can't find my village's cow. They will punish me if I don't return the cow."

King Mwamba said "Young boy, I will help you find your cow if you promise to help make us Elephants dangerous. The Lions seek our territory and we are defenseless." The young boy agreed and in no time they found the missing cow.

"I kept my part of the promise. Now you must keep your part of the bargain," said King Mwamba.

"Yes, Yes. Take two sharp acacia branches," The young boy said to the Elephant King. Then, the young boy ran and got some gum from a tree. His people used the gum to make their spears. He ran back quickly and saw the Elephant King holding the two

sharp acacia branches. He took the gum and stuck some on both sides of the Elephant's trunk. Then he stuck the branches into the gum. He said, "Now wait for the gum to harden." The Elephant waited. He waited for a day then rammed the branches into a tree. The tree fell down and the King realized that he was dangerous. He had all his warriors do the same thing he did. The warriors did what they were told and suddenly the Elephants had become a formidable force.

At the Lion camp, preparations for war were being made. The Lions were ready to take the Elephant's territory and be the rulers of the Savanna. They were practicing tactics when King Oteka said "We are done preparing! Now we fight!!!" All the Lions roared. They were ready to battle.

At the Elephant camp, they heard the roar of the Lions. The Elephant calves hid under their parents in fear. "The time of battle is near." said King Mwamba. "The time is near."

Two days later, the Lions arrived. Early in the morning King Mwamba of the Elephants and his warriors set out and King Oteka of the Lions and his warriors did the same. They charged off to war and met each other on the Savanna. The Lions were shocked.

"How did the Elephants become dangerous?" The Lions wondered. They hesitated to go on and fight. They asked their King for advice.

King Oteka roared "Fight! We are Lions! Rulers of the savanna! We will defeat them easily!" The Elephants trumpeted and charged forward and all the Lions fled to the others animals' territories that they had captured. Out of his kind heart, King Mwamba chased the Lions out of the other animals' territories and the animals rejoiced. They all were thankful and respected the mighty Elephants.

The Elephants returned home and had a problem. The sharp sticks that made them formidable wouldn't come off. King Mwamba wept and wept. The sticks were stuck. Now it was the young boy's turn to discover someone weeping.

He said "King Mwamba, what's wrong? You defeated the Lions, didn't you?" The young boy was so confused. The Elephants were safe. Why were they upset?

King Mwamba replied "These sticks won't come off! They're stuck!" The young boy didn't understand.

He said, "King, you realize this means if you are ever attacked again or need to help someone you will be able to. You won't be defenseless. Nobody will dare attack you."

The King responded, "Why didn't I realize that. You are so smart. The Elephants are grateful. We shall name these sticks after you. What's your name?"

The young boy said "My name is Tusk." Tusk felt so honored, the Elephants were going to name something after him!

The King said, "Thank you. These sticks shall be called tusks." The elephant King was so very grateful to Tusk for helping them, he knew naming the sticks after him was the right thing to do. And up to this day, all Elephants have tusks and are grateful to that young boy.