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By Idenze Ezeme

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The Greedy Tortoise and the King's Magical Drum

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Once upon a time, in a great kingdom deep in the heart of the land, there lived a mighty and wealthy king. This king owned a magical drum that was the source of his wealth and prosperity. Whenever he beat the drum, food of all kinds would appear before him, and riches would pour forth in abundance. The people of the kingdom admired their king, but there was one creature who was not content—the tortoise.

The tortoise, known for his cunning ways, was filled with envy. He wished to possess the magical drum for himself, believing that with it, he would never have to work or struggle for food again. Day and night, he schemed about how he could take the drum from the king.

One day, the tortoise devised a clever plan. He dug a deep hole and covered it with leaves and branches, placing it along the path where the king's wife often walked. As fate would have it, the queen soon came by, and before she could see the trap, she stepped on the leaves and fell right in. The tortoise, hiding nearby, came out and pretended to be shocked.

"Oh, dear queen! What an unfortunate accident! But do not worry, I shall rescue you—for a price."

The frightened queen, desperate to get out, asked, "What do you want in return, kind tortoise?"

Without hesitation, the tortoise said, "I want the king's drum. That is all."



The queen, eager to escape, agreed to his demand. She promised to give him the drum in exchange for her freedom. True to his word, the tortoise helped her out of the pit, and later that night, the queen, keeping her promise, delivered the drum to him in secret.

Overjoyed, the tortoise ran home with the drum and wasted no time in using it. He beat the drum with excitement, and to his delight, food and treasures appeared before him. His family feasted for days, and he boasted to all the animals about his newfound wealth.

But what the tortoise did not know was that the drum was bound by a juju, a powerful magic, and its gifts came with conditions known only to the king. The tortoise, blinded by greed, ignored this possibility and continued to use the drum as he pleased.

One evening, his children, curious about the drum, decided to beat it while their father was away. They struck it repeatedly, eager to see more food and riches. However, because they did not follow the drum's sacred conditions, the juju was broken. Suddenly, instead of food and treasures, fierce warriors emerged from the drum. They raised their whips and began to lash the tortoise's children. Hearing their cries, the tortoise rushed home, but when he attempted to stop the warriors by beating the drum himself, they turned on him as well. Each time he struck the drum, more warriors appeared, and they beat him mercilessly.

The tortoise tried to get rid of the drum, but no matter where he placed it, the warriors continued to emerge and punish him. Bruised and defeated, the tortoise realized that he had brought this upon himself through his greed and deceit. Unable to bear the punishment any longer, he and his family fled deep into the forest, where they sought refuge under the thorny tie-tie palm tree.

From that day on, the tortoise and his descendants made their homes beneath the prickly tree, too afraid to roam freely in search of food, lest the drum's warriors find them again. And that, as the tale goes, is why tortoises are always found living under the tie-tie palm tree,

forever humbled by the consequences of their greed.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Nze is an Igbo history and culture enthusiast with an in-depth passion for exploring the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and historical narratives of the Igbo people. His works is mostly focused on pre-colonial Igbo societies, traditional belief systems, leadership systems, and the impact of European colonialism.



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