

# THE MONITOR LIZARD NEARLY FLOORS THE HYENA IN A WRESTLING MATCH

(As narrated by Uninkpel Gmasimboon in Chakping on 16/03/2022)

## Introduction

The story below relates the near-death experience of a greedy and overconfident hyena. The hyena challenges the monitor lizard to a wrestling match but soon finds out the hard way that one must never judge a book by its cover. The story borders on a common Konkomba practice in which young men often engage in wrestling contests or games as part of their pastime activities. As the hyena rightly admits at the end of the story, the tale seeks to teach the youth to never underestimate their opponents – or challenges in general. To watch the Likpakpaln narration [click here](#).

## Story

There once lived an *uwul* who started a community market. In this market, the main (business) activity was wrestling – anyone who defeated his opponent would usually kill him and feast on his carcass as a reward.

One day *saadaan* participated in the wrestling competition and defeated his opponent. In accordance with the rules of *uwul*'s community market, *saadaan* killed his opponent, took the carcass home and feasted on it.

*Naachiin* paid *saadaan* a visit and saw the latter's children eating the meat and enquired about its origin. In reply, *saadaan* told him that *uwul* had started a community market where people wrestled. He added that the winners always killed the losers and feasted on their carcasses.

The next day *naachiin* dashed to the market square at the crack of dawn. When he got there the market was empty, for the wrestling market had not started so no one was present. Fortunately, he spotted the market's owner, *uwul*, resting on a nearby tree. *Naachiin* lit up with joy and attempted to forcibly bring down the market's owner to wrestle with him. However, the market's owner said: 'Ah! This is my market; why are you disturbing me at my own market by attempting to pull me down? Please exercise patience.'

But *naachiin* wouldn't hear any of that. In response to *uwul*'s call for patience, he replied sharply that he was eager to floor *uwul* and use his carcass as an appetiser before the bigger animals arrived. *Uwul* obliged and descended. The two locked arms and the wrestling match commenced. *Uwul* tied his tail tightly around *naachiin*'s rear – near the hip and tail region of *naachiin*'s hind legs. As the wrestling peaked, *uwul* broke into song:

*(The storyteller intones the song and his audience join in.)*

### **Likpakpaln transcription**

Njɔ le bui ki u ga lii mi ee  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
Muin u bui u ga lii mi ee.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
Njɔ le bui u ga lii mi ee.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
Njɔ wee bui u ga lii mi ee.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
Njɔ le bui u ga lii mi ee.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
U bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
Njɔ le bui u ga lii mi ee.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
U bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
Njɔ le bui u ga lii mi ee.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
U bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
A u bui u ga lii mi.  
Naa fuu mbiŋ ni  
Wee bui ki u ga lii mi.

### **English translation**

My friend says that he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
So he says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
My friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
This friend of mine says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
My friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
He says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
My friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
He says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
My friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
He says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
And he says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
This one says that he'll floor me.

At this point, *naachiin* also broke into song:

*(The storyteller intones the song and his audience join in again.)*

### **Likpakpaln transcription**

M ɲa nyar-nyar ki u joo mi oo.  
Mchaŋ ee! Mchaŋ ee!  
M ɲa nyar-nyar ki u joo mi oo.  
Mchaŋ ee! Mchaŋ ee!  
M ɲa nyar-nyar ki u joo mi oo.  
Mchaŋ ee! Mchaŋ ee!

### **English translation**

I've wriggled hard but his grip is tight.  
Oh, my waist! Oh, my waist!  
I've wriggled hard but his grip is tight.  
Oh, my waist! Oh, my waist!  
I've wriggled hard but his grip is tight.  
Oh, my waist! Oh, my waist!

After that, *uwul* also resumed singing:

*(The storyteller intones the song again and his audience join in.)*

## Likpakpahn transcription

Njɔ bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
U bui u ga lii mi.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
Njɔ gban bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
Njɔ le bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
U bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
Njɔ bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
U bui u ga lii mi.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
Njɔ wee bui u ga lii mi.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
Wee bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.  
Njɔ gban bui u ga lii mi oo.  
Naa fuu mbiɲ ni.

## English translation

My friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
He says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
That my friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
My friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
He says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
My friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
He says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
I'm not scared.  
This friend of mine says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
This one says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.  
That my friend says he'll floor me.  
I'm not scared.

*Naachiin* soon realised that he couldn't floor *uwul* so he disengaged from him. *Uwul* also let go of him, whereupon *naachiin* fled the scene. On arriving home, his wife enquired about what transpired at the market but he uttered no word. She then asked, 'Were you floored by the red antelope?' *Naachiin* remained silent. 'Were you floored by the buffalo?' she probed further. But he remained tight-lipped. To prevent further probing, he finally retorted: 'But for his skin, do you think the monitor lizard is a weakling?'

*(The storyteller and his audience burst into laughter, after which he resumes and concludes thus:)*

*Maatiin gur ki m muun.*

## A Glossary of Likpakpahn Words and Phrases (or Expressions)

### **maatiin gur ki m muun:**

translated as 'May my story diminish while I grow.' This is a short version of the standard conclusion, 'Maatiin gur ki m muun ke n-yaaja aagbem na' (translated as 'May my story diminish while I grow as tall as my grandfather's Kapok tree'). This is one of the numerous ways in which a Konkomba storyteller can end his/her story. This ending and its various variants suggest that Konkombas believe that storytelling (or

entertainment in general) has health benefits, especially healthy physical growth. The association of storytelling with physical growth is so entrenched in the Konkomba belief system that it is even believed that when a child engages in storytelling at daytime – for Konkomba storytelling sessions are held normally in the evenings after supper – he or she will have stunted growth.

**naachiin (aka toko):**

Likpakpaln word for a hyena. In Konkomba folklore, naachiin is the most unintelligent animal character. It almost always falls prey to the antics of others, especially sandee or saadaan.

**saadaan (aka sandee):**

a rabbit, hare or bunny. Saadaan is the wisest and trickster character in Konkomba folklore. It is notorious for often using its cunning and witty nature to deceive other characters or wriggle its way out of difficult situations.

**uwul (also spelt uwol):**

Likpakpaln word for a monitor lizard.