

The Elephant and the Giraffe Part 1

Malga and Oubo were running and playing chase together, as the sun was setting in the grasslands.

They had helped their father for some time to make bricks to add a new room to their house. Now they were having play time.

“Be careful for the snakes in the long grass!” their mother called out as she kept stirring the pot of maize and beans.

This family had moved to this part of Africa in order to learn more about the land of their forefathers. They thought if they left the city life behind for awhile that would help them find civil order and get back to their roots.

Speaking of roots, Savannah, the oldest sister, with her baby strapped her back finishing her work out in the field they had all cultivated.

The men of the team were out working a new patch of land for growing a good crop of vegetables.

When supper time came, the simple food was served, though it had taken a long time to make it.

Pounding the grains took time and strength, cooking took time also—not to speak of all the work that someone had put into growing that food, transporting and selling it.

They had brought plenty with them to last them for a long while, as long as they ate a moderate amount.

They had to find ways to keep the foods safe from creatures—tiny or big—that might help themselves to it. They had to keep it preserved from weather conditions also, so it would last well.

Under the stars, around their campfire, the simple family chatted

about their successes. Life indeed was harder in some ways, but for now it was the best they could do. They enjoyed the quiet.

The fresh air, and the working together as a family team, were good. Things weren't easy. No matter where they lived there would be great challenges.

Each family has to choose what type of challenge they want. Sometimes there is a choice, or sometimes you are served something in life and just have to make the best of it, without having much choice in it.

As the evening fire this family sat around was fading, Malga asked her dad, "Why is the neck of the giraffe so long?"

She had seen a few in the distance that day, and was pretty excited about it.

"Well, if your dinner bowl was set up in that tree over there, and you didn't have a ladder to climb, don't you think you would like to have very long legs, and an extra long neck so you could reach it?" Daddy asked.

The children giggled.

It was part of the design. If an animal was created to eat and digest a certain type of food, it also needed to have the way to access or get that food.

Father explained to his attentive children:

"See we have specially made hands and arms, and legs too, that make us able to work hard to grow food, and then to be able to prepare it for eating, and store it for later.

"We have what we need to help us get the food that our bodies need. Giraffes need the nutrients of plants, and in this place it's up in the trees that some great green food is growing.

It's like a puzzle piece," their father continued teaching.

"Just like the pattern on the long neck of the giraffe looks almost like a puzzle all fitting together, so does the plan for keeping this type of creature surviving and thriving for thousands of years.

"Its fast and strong legs can run away from danger if need be, or they can spread out wide to help the giraffe keep its balance as it reaches down to take a drink of water.

"The long neck can help it reach green foods that grow way up high, even when the grass and plants below are turning dry from lack of rain at times."

Oubo was imagining how useful it would be to have a pet giraffe that was trained to pick fruit for them from the tops of high trees—or to let him climb up its neck to go and pick them himself.

Mother added,

"I saw giraffe's dancing one time, it was the most graceful dance I ever saw! They can gracefully use their necks to move, as if some relaxing music was playing and they were swaying this way and that way, undulating and moving, together with another giraffe.

"You can almost hear music seeing them dance with their necks, nearly wrapping them around each other."

Malga and Oubo got up and stretched up one of their arms, pretending it was a long neck on a giraffe.

They moved them about gracefully as they walked around and wrapped their arms around a bit, then went off to use their hands as their pretend giraffe's mouth, to find some leaves to eat.

"I think these young giraffe calves have had a long day—about as long as a giraffe's neck! I think it's time for them to rest their long legs and long neck and go to sleep," mother said.

After she helped to tuck them into bed, and said good night, then Savannah their older sister, came to tell them a story. Savannah snuggled and nursed her little baby to sleep, while telling stories to her younger brother and sister.

“Would you like to hear the story about the wide and short giraffe, and the tall, thin elephant?” she asked.

It sounded funny already, and so they drifted off to sleep, half listening, and half dreaming about the story she told.

“Of course this is not a true story—but it has something we can learn from it,” Savannah began.

“It was the time of year when new calves were born. In some places there were cattle calves just beginning their young life. In the ocean there were dolphin and whale calves, learning to swim and find food, and staying real close to their parents.

“But around here there were some new giraffe calves, as well as some elephant calves starting to run and learn about how to be such creatures.

They stayed close to their mother, and were given lots of nice milk to drink. When they were old enough, they were taught how to drink water on their own. It was a difficult task for each of them, but they would soon get the hang of it.

The giraffe calf had to learn how to stay balanced while reaching his very long neck all the way down to the water at the edge of the water hole.

The elephant needed to learn how to use his nose like a straw to suck up the water, hold it in there, and then bend his nose straw to reach his mouth, and pour it in.

They had daily lessons on this, and soon they were able to do

the job well. They were learning and it was another good step to being able to care for themselves one day.

The next lesson was in how to eat leaves and plants.

The giraffe had to reach up and learn to use his very long tongue to manoeuvre plants into his mouth, using no hands at all—like we get to use.

The elephant had a neat tool at the end of his long nose. It was like a pair of lips that could pick things up, but without a long tongue that could be extended, like the giraffe had.

The elephant's trunk was strong too. If there was some fruit on a tree that was too high up, he could wrap his trunk around the tree and shake it, or push against it to make some ripe loose fruit fall.

So one day when at the waterhole they were examining the different qualities they each had or lacked.

As the giraffe calf and the elephant calf chatted it seemed they each wished to have what the other one had.

Each of these creatures could do different things to get their food and water, and these two animals seemed in many ways to be opposites.

One was slim and tall, the other was strong and shorter. One had to go down to drink water, the other had to bring the water up. One was patterned with colour, the other was plain grey.

There were many differences that the giraffe calf and elephant calf noticed each time they saw one another.

“I wish I was beautiful and graceful like you, are giraffe,” said the elephant calf.

“Oh, but you are so strong, even the lions are afraid to trouble you. You can do so many things that I can't,” the giraffe

responded.

“Do you wish you were an elephant?” elephant asked his friend.

“No, not really. I like my family, but I wish I was just a bit different and had all the great things that you do,” Giraffe said.

He was imaging himself very fat and wide, with ears that were extra big, and of course with a trunk that could wave.

Giraffe also he wanted to have shorter legs, so he wouldn't have to reach down so low to get water on the ground level.

However, giraffe didn't realise what trouble that would be for him, if his wish came true.

Elephant thought too,

“Maybe if I had a long and tall legs, and thinner ones then I could walk without thudding along. I think it would be nicer.

I would be tall enough to then reach up high into the trees, that would be great.”

Savannah then said, looking at the sleepy children, and her own sleeping baby,

“Stories with Savannah will continue tomorrow night. I'll tell you 'Part Two' of

“The Short Giraffe and the Tall Elephant.”