We, the children of Borana



Insights into the life of pastoralist children in southern Ethiopia

Africa



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A typical scene : A herd of Boran cattle grazing in vast pastures.

How this book came about...

We, Anousha and Nimue, study Ecological Agriculture in Witzenhausen, Germany. In the winter of 2012, we travelled to Ethiopia to learn about the lives of Borana children.



The Borana people live mainly from pastoralism. We asked children in Borana families what their daily lives are like, what interests them and how they envision their future.

We also wanted to find out what role school education plays for them.

With this booklet, we hope to give some insight into the life of the Borana today.

In addition to the interviews, we took photos of the everyday life of the children. To be able to reach children in villages far from the road, we often had to travel long distances in a Jeep over sandy tracks.

In some villages, we spent only a day. In others, we pitched our tents and stayed for several days.

When we arrived in a village, there was always quite a stir and all the villagers would rush to see us, the newcomers. Of course, they were curious and wanted to know why we came to visit them. It is very rare that strangers from Europe come to their village.

Fortunately, we were accompanied by Hussein Wario, a Borana man who was then studying for his doctorate at DITSL (German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture). He was working on a research project about the Borana's knowledge of pasture use and livestock husbandry. Hussein was able to answer the villagers' questions in their language and explain why we had come to visit them.

It was not always easy to find people to interview. Usually, we arrived in the morning, after the children had already left to herd the animals or to go to school. In the evening, we would return to our camp before sunset, before the children had returned home.

However, there were always some children who had a day off and stayed in the village. But we still had difficulties in finding children who were willing to be interviewed.

The children were often very reserved; the girls, in particular, hardly dared to answer our questions.

One reason for this is probably that it is expected of a Borana girl to be reserved. That is why we conducted only a few interviews with girls. All in all, however, we still learnt a great deal from the children because, once the ice had been broken, they told us many things about themselves.

We conducted the interviews with the help of an interpreter. It was important to gain the trust of the children and to create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere so that they felt at ease and would answer our questions freely.

To break the ice at the start of an interview, we showed the children photos of our lives in Germany and told them about our families.

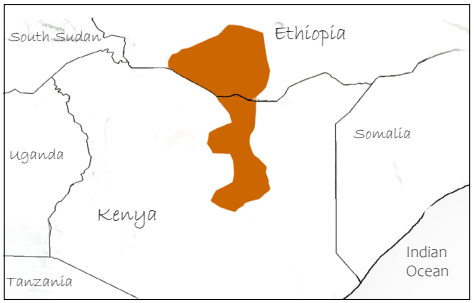
Words of thanks: We would like to extend our warmest thanks to Dr Hussein Wario, whose many forms of support enabled us to talk with the children in the villages. We would like to thank the Borana children and their parents for their warm welcome and their willingness to share information, which allowed us to gain an insight into their lives.

...into the world of the Borana

Finally, it must be said that this book can reflect only what we two experienced during our three months with the Borana. We learnt a lot from the children and we are thankful that we could gain so much insight into their lives. However, remember that this book offers a subjective perception of their lives.

Who we are

We, the Borana, are pastoralists. We live in southern Ethiopia, northern Kenya and southwest Somalia. This area lies in the tropics and, for most of the year, it is very dry and hot.



The area of Borana.

Animal husbandry is the basis of our livelihood and part of our culture. We live mainly from rearing Boran cattle, which were bred by our ancestors.

The animals are herded all year long so that they can make use of different pastures.

In the vast rangelands, the herders travel long distances to lead their animals to good pastures in the different seasons.

Each family member has responsibilities in looking after the animals. We children know that these chores are part of our lives and feel that we share responsibility for the well-being of our family.

The savannah region where we raise our animals is not well serviced. Very few of the roads are tarmacked roads. A few small towns on the roads have electricity and water services.

In the rest of the area, namely in the villages where we live, there's no water or electricity supply. We need to carry water long distances from a well, and we also need to collect firewood for cooking.

Over the past few decades, conditions for livestock husbandry have become worse. On the one hand, our grazing land is increasingly restricted and, on the other hand, the ban on annual burning of pastures (to maintain them) has led to some pastures getting overgrown with bushes, meaning less grass grows for the cattle. Because families' livestock holdings have become smaller on account of the poorer conditions, many families can no longer make a living solely from livestock. They try to earn additional income either through wage labour or by running a business. Our culture is undergoing a period of great change, and it's uncertain what this will bring.





Our huts are simple, but functional and well adapted to the climate. We live together with our siblings, parents and grandparents.





We grow up with our livestock. We live and work with them every day.

Impressions of life in the villages of the Borana...



People and animals live together in the village. Herders set off with their flock of goats to graze.



Children, parents and grandparents drink tea together in their hut.



In southern Ethiopia twilight falls much more quickly and is often more colourful than it is in Germany.



At the entrance to the village, there is a fenced-off area, known as the 'kraal'. At night, this protects the herd from predators such as cheetahs and hyenas.

This is what our daily life is like

Most of us get up at sunrise. Then we wash our faces, drink tea and have maize porridge for breakfast, which the women and girls have already prepared. Afterwards, some of us help milk the cows and camels.

Now we go our separate ways. The children who don't go to school set off after breakfast to herd the livestock.

The younger ones among us, as well as the girls, herd calves, goats and sheep and stay close to the village.

The older children lead the herds to more distant pastures. When we're herding, we are usually out all day – von sunrise to sunset.

Except for us Borana girls, because our main tasks include keeping our homes clean, fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking and looking after our younger siblings. But we also go herding, usually when there aren't enough boys to look after the livestock.

We also gather feed for the young animals, which are not yet herded but stay close to the houses.

The schoolchildren among us set off for school after breakfast. The journey can be very long; some of us have to walk for up to two hours to reach the school.












Garbicha

As some of our settlements are too far from a school for us to be able to come and go each day, some of us live with relatives in town. It is only at the weekend that we come home to our village to be with our parents.

When school finishes at midday, those of us who live in the settlement go back home to help our parents with household chores – or we go to the market to sell milk, eggs or khat (a stimulant) .

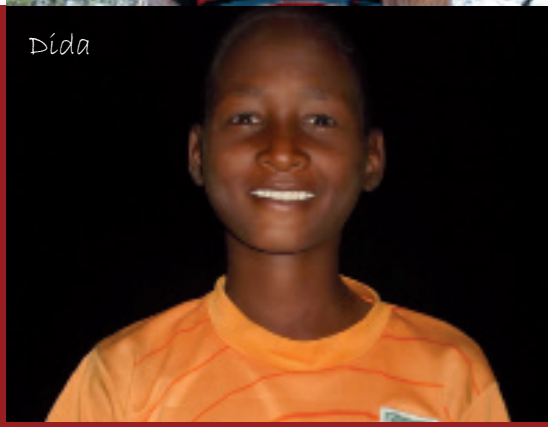
The older ones among us often have to help out with public community projects after school, such as laying water pipes or clearing overgrown pasture. Otherwise, we do our homework in the afternoons.

Sometimes we have a bit of free time; then we chat with neighbours and friends, play with plastic bottles or homemade footballs and tussle with each other. Then the girls light a fire and help cook dinner – usually maize porridge, just like for breakfast.


Galgalio


Galgaloo

Around sunset, the herders bring the animals back to the village. Then we help sort the animals and check that none have gone missing. Before dinner, the cows are milked once more. After dinner, we are often very tired and go straight to bed. A few of us read our schoolbooks in the evening, if we have a flashlight.


Dida

Our duties: collecting firewood

My name is Chuluk, and I'm 17 years old. Every few days, I set off with my axe and a rope to collect firewood.

I search in the bush for dead trees and fallen branches. With my axe, I chop the dead trunks and branches into pieces of equal length and arrange them so that they can easily be tied into a bundle with my rope.

I often have to walk a long way before I have collected enough wood. Then I tie the bundle of wood onto my back and carry it home.













I use the wood every day to light a fire so that I can make tea and maize porridge for my family. Wood is very valuable to us Borana, as there aren't many trees in our area. That's why I try to use as little wood as possible when cooking.

Our duties: milking

We milk the animals – cows, camels and goats – twice a day: very early in the morning at sunrise and in the evening at sunset, after the herd has returned.

Before milking, we let the calves go to their mothers so that they can drink some milk. Then we tie the hind legs of the cows together, so that they stand still while being milked. We collect the milk in a leather container, which we smoke out every day with a burning wooden stick. We do this to prevent bacteria and germs from building up in the container, which could spoil the milk.











Our camels are also milked. To do this, we tie their hind legs together as well, but the young camels are allowed to drink from a free teat while their mothers are being milked. Camel milk tastes much more watery and salty than cow's milk.



Our duties: herding animals

After milking, we separate the calves from their mothers. The calves are herded by the younger children near the village or stay in their pen.

Most of the time, we meet up with other children and their herds. Then we form one big herd and spend the whole day together. It's better not to herd alone because, if an animal goes missing, one of us can stay with the herd while the others can search for the missing animal.

















When we leave the village with the herd, we must make sure that the herd stays together and moves quickly in one direction. We don't want the animals to graze near the village, as then there wouldn't be enough left for the young animals in the village.

Moreover, every day, we have to cover long distances to the grazing areas. That is why we always give the herd a particularly strong nudge at the start by using sticks or stones and shouting loudly.

Even so, there are always animals that break away from the herd and disappear into the bushes to graze.

...herding animals

Then we have to be especially quick and run after the animals so that they return to the herd and don't get lost.

Some of us are accompanied by our dogs when we're herding. The dogs are helpful, as they keep wild animals such as cheetahs away from the herd.









Once we have reached the pastures, we look for a spot in the shade from where we can keep a close eye on the herd. We must never lose sight of the herd, but now we have a bit of time to chat or play.

One of our favourite games is football. We made the ball ourselves out of lots of old socks stuffed inside each other. Sometimes we also play with metal rings or with our cows.











...herding animals

When we see rain on the horizon, we lead our herd in that direction so that the animals can drink from the rain-filled puddles.

In the best case, this saves us the hard work of watering them from the wells, where we have to draw the water up from deep below, using buckets.

Water is very scarce in our area and we try as much as possible not to waste any of it.







We usually spend about 12 hours on the move with our herd and we don't eat anything the whole time. However, we do carry a bottle of water and can sometimes drink milk that we take directly from the cows.

That's part of our culture, and we are hardened from an early age so we can adapt to the harsh environment in which we live. Some of us are more bothered by this than others.

But one thing is clear: we're definitely very hungry and thirsty when we get home in the evening.

The camels are usually tended by the men or by older boys. Here, we don't separate the young animals from the herd, but tie off the teats of the mothers during the day. This prevents the young from drinking.

Traditionally, we Borana didn't keep so many camels, but preferred cattle. However, we now wish to keep more camels in our herds.

Unlike cattle, camels very much like to eat thorny shrubs such as acacias. Camels also need far less water than cattle do. Both grass for the cattle and water are in short supply here, and we expect even greater scarcity in the future.











Our duties: preparing meals

My name is Tume, and I' m 11 years old. In my family, one of my responsibilities is to cook the maize porridge.

Actually, our favourite food is milk, but in the mornings and evenings we also eat maize porridge.





This is made from white maize, which we either buy at the market from farmers in the region or collect in bags from the USAID food donation scheme.

We have not had a famine in this part of Ethiopia for a long time now, but we still receive food donations from America.

When I want to make maize porridge, the first thing I have to do is remove the individual maize kernels from the maize cob. Next, I put the maize kernels with a little water into a hollowed-out tree trunk and, using a large wooden pestle, I pound the kernels until their hard husks have come away.

After that, I pour everything into a plastic bowl and keep tossing the maize kernels into the air, so that the lighter husks are carried away by the wind. All that remains are the husked kernels.

Then I light a fire and let the maize cook in a pot until the kernels have become nice and soft, and at the end I add milk.

The maize porridge is ready!

School as path to a better future?





Whether we go to school or become herders depends on what our parents decide. Many of us would very much like to go to school, but that doesn't fit well with our way of life. Because if all the children went to school, then our parents would have no one to help them look after the animals and do the housework.

All on their own and without our help, our parents could never get through the many tasks that need doing every day. That's why most parents decide to send some of their children to school and train the rest to be pastoralists.

The decision as to which of us should go to school and which should not often depends on the talents our parents see in us. If they think that one of their children has the right qualities to become a herder, then that child is trained as a herder so that he or she can later earn a living as a pastoralist.

However, it also happens that we do the herding until one of our younger siblings is old enough to take over our work. Then we also get the chance to go to school. By then, however, we are already past the usual age for starting school and have to catch up on quite a bit. It also happens the other way round, namely that we go to school, for example, until third grade, and suddenly there is a shortage of labour and our parents need help. Then we have to leave school again. Once our parents have decided which of us should go to school and which should not, we actually come to terms quite well with our role in the family. We know that there must also be herders so that we can continue to raise livestock.



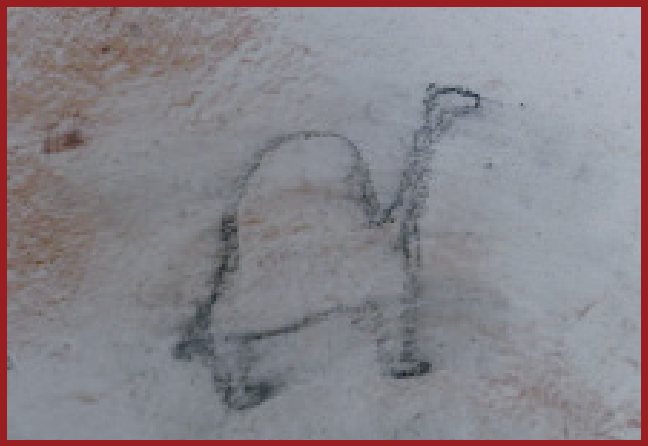
We are happy for our siblings who go to school. Because their school education gives them better chances to find a job, and that benefits the whole family. The income they earn is used to support the whole family's well-being.

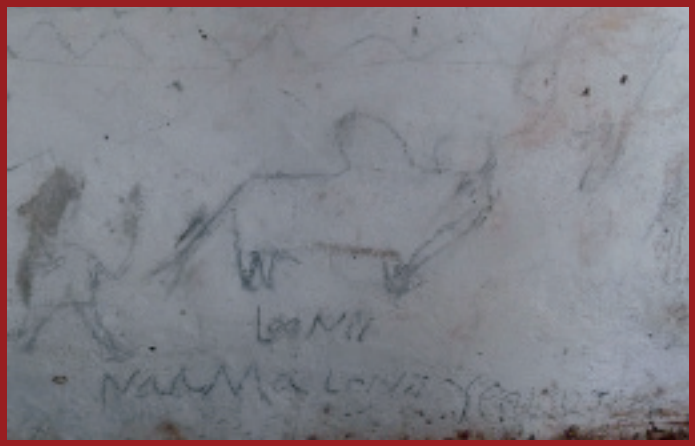
Even so, some of us really want to go to school and not become herders, because we believe that a school education changes the way we think, broadens our minds and makes us more intelligent. Sometimes, if we're lucky, with a lot of persistence, we can persuade our parents to send us to school after all.

Unfortunately, however, it is often the case that, after finishing school, we can't find a job. Then we feel bad, because we can't repay our family for what they have invested in our education. This is what our parents fear, and sometimes this is also why they don't send their children to school from the very start. The fact is that our parents send us to school so that we can earn money later on. With this money, we can buy medicines or expand our herd so that we have enough animals to make a living.









There are several reasons why many of us can't find a job. First, there aren't many jobs in the Borana region where we live, and second, we're often still not well enough trained by the time we leave school.

Most of us finish only primary school and almost no one has the opportunity to complete vocational training or to go to university. The problem is that our village schools often provide only primary-school education. Those who want to continue their education would have to move to town, which costs a lot of money.

Moreover, the teaching here is not particularly good. Teachers often arrive late and leave early, and some are not very motivated to teach us. On top of that, we don't have much money for textbooks or pens.

And our education suffers as a result. The few good jobs go to people who are well educated, which means our chances of finding a well-paid job are very slim. That is why we work as unskilled labourers in agriculture, build water pipelines and roads, or work in gold mines.

However, these jobs are very strenuous, and so we end up wishing we could work as herders again.

But because we went to school, we never really learnt how to be herders, or we have already forgotten how. This means that, if we cannot find work after leaving school, we have to go back to working as herders, but unfortunately, we can't do this job very well anymore either, because we lack the knowledge and experience.

Portrait: Abban

My name is Abban Umuroo, and I'm 18 years old. It's school holidays right now, and I'm spending them in my parents' village near the Kenyan border.



I usually live in Kenya and attend a boys' boarding school there. I share a room with three other classmates. Our day usually starts at 3.30 am with morning classes, after which I take a shower and eat breakfast. Then we have to tidy up and clean our rooms and the bathroom. At 7.00 am, classes continue until 1.00 pm.

Afterwards, we go for lunch. In the afternoons, we have gym class and school finishes at 5.00 pm. I usually take a two-hour break and then study on my own until around 10.00 pm.

During the holidays, I do a lot of sport, such as volleyball, football and swimming in the nearby reservoir. In the evenings, I meet up with friends or listen to music.

I enjoy going to school because I get an education there and meet my friends. School prepares me for my future.

I like my life, but sometimes I am afraid of people from other tribes. Every now and then, I get beaten up by a group because I am from a different country and a different tribe.

Back when I was still at primary school, I used to go herding during the holidays, but I never really enjoyed it and found it too tiring. Now a relative helps my parents with herding, and they have hired herders to look after the livestock. My father doesn't just have his livestock; he is also a businessman and works as a broker.

Fortunately, my father makes enough money and doesn't need my help.

Later on, I'd like to lead a secure life and perhaps work in a bank or as an engineer.





I would like to have an easy life and would love to learn a lot more.

I don't know yet where I will live. I could imagine living in a city but, if you don't have a job, it's very hard there and the cities are often overcrowded with people and there's a lot of crime.

If I were to live in the countryside, I could help people through education and development work. I would really like to live in Brazil or Spain, because of the beaches, the women and the football.

I would also like to marry an educated woman rather than a traditional Borana woman, because I want a woman with whom I am on the same level. I'm not interested in the girls from my home village; they're not educated and only know about cows. I'm glad that I go to school in Kenya and not in Ethiopia. Ethiopia as a country may be developing, but its people are not.

It's different in Kenya. There, the country and its people are developing. The reason for this is probably the better school education, which is evident from the fact that in Kenya many more people speak English well. At my school, for example, almost all subjects are taught in English, and the school system is also structured in a very British way.

Portrait: Chilimpa

My name is Chilimpa, and I'm 15 years old. My parents have decided that I should not go to school.

Instead, I help with the work in the village and cook meals for my family, fetch water and collect firewood.



I would have liked to go to school, too, but my parents need my help.

If I had gone to school, I would have liked to train as a doctor afterwards, so that I could look after my parents or the people from my village if they were sick and couldn't travel to the city to see a doctor.

But now I'm too old to start school, so I don't even think about it anymore. I hope that someday my family will have lots of livestock. When I get married, I hope it will be to a man who has a large herd.

I could imagine one day running a small shop or business in the town instead of staying a pastoralist forever. But so far, I haven't left my village very often, and the only town I know is Dubuluk, 35 km away.

I think I'll continue to be a pastoralist in the future, too. I find that our life as herders is more interesting than the life of city dwellers. The people there are poor and live from hand to mouth. By that I mean they have no capital and therefore no security. Every day, they have to figure out how to earn enough money to survive.

It's different for us. If we ever need money, we can slaughter a cow and sell the meat, but otherwise we can live off what we produce ourselves.

The only thing I'm afraid of is dying before I have got married or become a mother. Because in our culture, it is only in that way that a woman gains higher status, recognition and influence.

Portrait: Huka

My name is Huka, and I'm 20 years old. I have never been to school; instead, I used to be a herder and now I man-age our herd and help in public community projects.



Every now and then, I also work in a gold mine, but the work is very strenuous and dangerous.

I wish there were a school near my village so that I could work during the day and then go to evening classes.

Even though I don't have any education, I still think that my future will be different from that of my parents and grandparents.

The only source of livelihood for the older generations was their livestock, on which they were completely dependent. That's why droughts have such a severe impact on us.

But we, the new generation, will do things differently by building houses in towns and setting up small businesses in addition to raising livestock. This will give us multiple sources of income and make us less dependent on climate change.

Moreover, we will then have a way to save money so we can make ends meet in times of need. That's why I think my future will be better than that of previous generations.

I look to the future with con-fidence and am very grateful right now that our cows are having many healthy calves. Our herd is growing, and being part of this process makes me very happy.

Portrait: Tume



My name is Tume, and I'm 12 years old. I go to school, but it took a long time before I managed to persuade my parents.

I kept pestering them about it every day, and then eventually they let me go.

Five days a week, I go to school, and on the other two days, I stay at home to collect firewood and fetch water.

In the afternoons after school, I help my mother make tea and do the cleaning. In the mornings and evenings, I also help with milking. After that, I do my homework.

I'm very happy that I get to go to school, because there I learn English and Amharic. Now I also know how a calendar works and a bit about geography, too.

When I have finished school, I don't want to keep living as a pastoralist. God willing, I'll get good grades and then I would like to become a teacher, a driver or a doctor.

I'd also love to do something like you do! Talk to other herders and convince them to send their children to school. Because education is important! I think that parents should take care of their herds and their children should go to school.

Later, I'd like to live in the city and look for work there.

Actually, I don't really like life there, and I would live in a city only because I could do an apprenticeship there or have a job.

God willing, I'll find a job, and then I'll be able to support my parents financially.

Portrait: Abduba

My name is Abduba Qampicha, and I'm 16 years old. I come from near Yabello. My family is very large, as my father has two wives, and I have six siblings.



As we had to move very often because of our livestock, my siblings and I couldn't go to school.

We are all herders, and I go herding almost every day, but I take turns with my siblings so that each of us also gets a day off now and then. On such days, we stay in the village and rest or chat with our friends.

I would also have liked to go to school to broaden my knowledge and learn languages, but my family has so much work with the livestock and there's no one who could take over my share of the work.

But I also like looking after my own livestock. That's better than not working and spending the whole day in the village. Especially during the dry season, I have a lot of work. Our animals are very weak then and need a lot of care. It's also difficult to find enough for them to eat.

If it rained more here, my life as a herder would be much easier; then there would be enough water and grazing for our animals, and they would be well-fed and healthy.

Sometimes I wish I could work in the city and earn money. If that were the case, I could support my family and we could expand our herd. With a larger herd, we could sell more livestock again and, with the proceeds, we could build a house in the city and maybe open a shop there.

But as long as our animals are well fed and provide plenty of milk for us, I'm happy with my life as a herder.

One day I was especially happy, namely when my father sold a bull and I got new clothes with the money.

Duri-Duris

Duri-Duris are traditional fables passed down orally, which are told to children in the evenings by the campfire.

The brave red eyes

Once upon a time, long ago, there lived a squirrel and a leopard. The two were good friends, and they shared a herd of goats.

Taking turns – one day the leopard and the next day the squirrel – they tended their herd. One day, the squirrel had an idea: he asked his mother to climb an acacia tree. Whenever he passed the tree with his herd, he would call to his mother: 'Ajo urbo chacha!' – let the fruit fall down. Then its mother would shake the tree and the fruit and leaves would fall down, and the goats had plenty to eat. This had the advantage that the squirrel never had to travel far with the herd, and the goats always returned to the village in the evening with full bellies.

After a while, the leopard wondered and asked the squirrel: "How do you always manage, when you are herding, to make the goats so well-fed? When I go herding, I never find enough for the goats to eat and they don't get their fill." "Do you even know how to herd properly?" replied the squirrel, "You have to do it the way I do. First, I lead the herd to areas where there are plenty of bushes, then to areas that have been burnt previously*, and before I come home in the evening, I take the flock through rocky terrain."

The next day while herding, the leopard followed exactly the instructions that the squirrel had given him. But when he returned with the herd that evening, the goats were still hungry. Puzzled, the leopard asked the squirrel: "How is that possible? I did exactly what you told me to do." Then the leopard became suspicious. So, the next day, he secretly followed the squirrel.

He watched as the squirrel went over to a tree, called out something, and suddenly the fruits just fell to the ground.

So he thought to himself: "I'll show him, I can do that just as easily." The next day, he took his herd to the acacia tree and called out: "Ajo urbo chacha", but nothing happened. For the squirrel mother had immediately realised that it wasn't her son calling from beneath the tree.

Then the frustrated leopard became very angry and climbed up the tree. There he found the squirrel mother and killed her. When, the next day, the squirrel stood at the foot of the tree and called out, nothing happened. It called out again, but still nothing happened. So, it climbed up the tree and found its dead mother. The squirrel burst into tears and wept and wept terribly until its eyes turned completely red.

When it later returned to the village, the leopard asked why its eyes were so red. "I did something that only the very brave dare to do," replied the squirrel. "I held hot stones up to my eyes, so that they would turn red and I would look like someone who is very brave." Jealously, the leopard replied: "Oh, I would love to look like that, too." "I'm sorry, but I can't help you with that," said the squirrel dismissively.

But the leopard didn't give up until he had persuaded the squirrel. "Okay, if you really want me to help you with this, then you must listen carefully now and do exactly as I tell you. Go to your bed now and hide under lots and lots of blankets and just wait. I'll take care of the rest, and afterwards you'll look like a really brave leopard with red eyes," explained the squirrel.

That is exactly what the leopard did: he lay down in his bed and waited. Meanwhile, the squirrel set the leopard's house on fire and called out to the leopard: "Just wait and don't move until I tell you to."

After a while, the leopard heard some noises and called out: "What are those noises, squirrel?" "Oh, that's just two of our goats, one of yours and one of mine, fighting with each other," replied the squirrel. Excitedly, the leopard cried out: "Oh, which one is winning?" "I think yours is," replied the squirrel. The leopard was delighted and continued to wait under the blankets. But after a while, he noticed the heat and the smoke. The leopard began to panic and screamed: "Help, help! Please, squirrel, get me out of here! It's on fire!" To which the squirrel simply replied: "Will you then also bring my mother back to life?"

* Burning pastureland is a method to prevent scrub encroachment and to stimulate grass growth.

Once upon a time, long ago, there lived an elephant and his wife, known as the elephant family.

One day, the elephant man set off to gather wild honey. He took his honey pot and left his house.

In the forest, he gathered the honey and, once the pot was full, he headed back home. On the way, he met a crying monkey sitting in a tree. "Oh, what's the matter with you?" asked the elephant. "You see, I am very poor, and I have no one to look after me or protect me. What's more, my whole family has abandoned me. Now I have no choice but to sit here and cry," sobbed the monkey. "Oh, if that's the case, just climb onto my back and I'll take you home with me," replied the elephant. So, the monkey sat next to the honey pot on the elephant's back, and they set off for the elephant's home.

As the monkey sat there on the elephant's back in front of the honey pot, he fancied eating the honey, but to do so, he had to outwit the elephant. So, the monkey said, "You know, I often cry because I'm always so lonely and nobody cares about me. So, don't be surprised if you feel drops on your back – those are just my tears. And if you hear a noise, you don't need to turn around; it's just because I sometimes have to fart." "No problem, you can do whatever you like up there,' replied the elephant.

After they had been walking for a while, the elephant heard a noise, but he didn't react to it and just kept walking, since the monkey had already warned him. However, what the elephant heard wasn't the monkey farting, but the sound of the honey pot being opened. The monkey began to eat the honey, and it dripped onto the elephant's back. But the elephant simply thought that the monkey must be crying now, and he continued walking at a leisurely pace.

After the monkey had eaten his fill and the container was empty, the monkey explained to the elephant that it was customary among monkeys to walk under tall trees during long walks. "Oh, if that's the case, that's no problem at all. We'll soon reach some large trees that we can walk under," replied the elephant.

So, when they reached the trees, the monkey jumped unnoticed into a tree, and the elephant just kept walking, without having noticed a thing.

When the elephant arrived home, he called out to his wife: "Open the gate quickly! Open the gate quickly!" "What on earth is going on?" asked the elephant's wife, puzzled. Then the elephant told her that he had collected some honey and that he had brought a guest with him.

So, his wife quickly opened the gate and helped unload the honey container. "My dear wife, please welcome our

guest," said the elephant to his wife. This greatly surprised the elephant's wife. "But what guest are you talking about? I don't see anyone on your back," she replied.

The elephant didn't understand. "But surely there must be someone sitting on my back. Please help him get down," demanded the elephant. The elephant's wife really couldn't make head nor tail of this, and she wondered if her husband had lost his mind. 'But there's no one sitting on your back! I can't see anyone," she shouted.

Stunned, the elephant rolled over onto his back to make sure that there really wasn't anyone sitting there.

Then the two of them opened the honey pot, but to their horror, they discovered that the honey was gone and that a small pile of monkey droppings now filled the pot. "Yuk, what is that? What did you bring me here?" snapped the elephant's wife angrily. Slowly it dawned on the elephant, and he realised what had happened. Furious, he ran back into the forest to look for the monkey.

When he reached the tall trees, he spotted the monkey and caught him. "I'm going to teach you a lesson," shouted the elephant. Then the monkey started crying again. By now it was already late, and the sun was setting. Its light shone through a few scattered clouds and formed separate rays on the horizon that looked as if they were touching the ground. "Okay, okay, you can punish me if you like, but if you do, then please do it how we monkeys traditionally do it. Because when we're beaten as punishment, it's always with just a ray of sunshine," said the monkey.

The elephant agreed. He tied the monkey to a tree trunk and set off to fetch a ray of sunshine. The elephant ran and ran and ran, but before he could reach the rays of sunshine, the sun had already set.

Slowly, he realised how the monkey had again tricked him. "Damn it, that monkey has tricked me yet again," the elephant shouted and ran back to the tree to which the monkey was tied.

While the elephant was searching for the sun's rays, a hyena spotted the tied-up monkey. "Hey, what are you doing here?" she asked. "You see, my parents want to force me to eat this greasy piece of mutton*, but I find it so disgusting and refuse to eat it. That's why they've tied me up here and they want to force me to eat the greasy meat," wailed the monkey. Gleefully, the hyena replied: "Oh, is that all!? I'll untie you and you can tie me up here in your place. I like to eat the meat, and when it's dark, no one notices who's tied up here!"

So, the monkey tied the hyena to the trunk and hid high up in the treetop. When the elephant returned, he was very angry. He was carrying a stick to punish the monkey. When the elephant reached the tree, it was already dark, and he began to beat the creature that was

tied to the tree.

"Stop it! I will eat it all up. I promise," whimpered an unfamiliar voice. "What are you going to eat?" roared the elephant.

"I will eat it all up, everything, I promise," replied the voice again.

But the elephant kept hitting it. Eventually, it hurt the hyena so much that she screamed: "Ruuhwuu!" That was a typical sound that only hyenas could make. Only then did the elephant realise that he hadn't been hitting the monkey. "How on earth did you get here, and who are you?" cried the elephant.

The hyena began to explain what had happened, but by then the monkey had already disappeared and made his way to safety.

* The Borana breed of sheep has a fat deposit in its tail, which functions like that of camels as a food reserve. When there is not much to eat during the dry season, these sheep are slaughtered, and the children are told to eat the sheep fat, as it provides a lot of energy.







source: free-pictures.net

New shoes for the lion

A long time ago, there were once four animals: the eagle, the hare, the jackal and the lion. The eagle had built a nest in a tree and was raising six chicks there. One day, the jackal came by and saw the eagle sitting in the nest with his chicks. Then the jackal began to threaten the eagle, saying that, if the eagle didn't throw one of his chicks down to him, he would climb up the tree and eat them all. The eagle became frightened and pushed one of his chicks out of the nest. The jackal ate it and disappeared.

The next day, the jackal returned, and the game started over again. Over the next few days, the same thing happened, until only two chicks remained. The eagle was very sad and was afraid that the jackal would soon return to eat the remaining chicks. Then a hare came by and noticed that the eagle was very sad. "You look so sad – what's the matter?" asked the hare.

Then the eagle whined, "Oh, never mind; even if I tell you what's going on, you can't help me anyway." But the hare wouldn't give up until the eagle told him what had happened. "How can you be so stupid? Don't you know that the jackal could never climb this tree? Why don't you use your head! From now on, you won't give any of your chicks to the jackal anymore." The eagle was not quite convinced yet, but agreed all the same.

The next day, the jackal came back, as expected. "Hey, eagle, throw one of your chicks down to me, or I will climb up and eat you!" Bravely, the eagle replied: "No, I am not that stupid anymore. I know now that you can't climb up the tree." "You would never in a million years have figured that out on your own. Who was here and told you that I can't climb trees?", the jackal wanted to know. "Well, it was my friend the hare who told me everything," said the eagle.

The jackal wanted to take revenge on the hare, so he went to the lion, the ruler of all the animals. "Hello, Mister Lion, you are the king of the animals, but you don't even have any shoes. Why don't you ask the hare – he's a good shoemaker – to make you a pair of good shoes out of leather?" said the jackal. The lion liked the idea and sent for the hare. When the hare arrived at the lion's den, the lion said: "I've heard that you know how to make shoes. I would like you to make me some good leather shoes." The hare looked around and thought for a moment, then replied: "Yes, I know how to make good leather shoes, but you will have to provide the materials yourself. By the way, if you want really good shoes, then they should be made of jackal leather." Upon hearing this, the lion agreed to provide the materials and had the jackal killed so that shoes could be made from him.

The Borana children in southern Ethiopia told us this and much more....

I would not want to live in the city either! The people there are obsessed with hygiene and are constantly washing themselves and their clothes. Besides, there's no milk in the city!

I'm afraid of wild animals when I don't reach home until after sunset.

During the rainy season, I'm happy!

Droughts are our biggest challenges, because then we lose so much of what our lives depend on.

I miss my family when I'm staying with my relatives in the city during the week to go to school there.

I think I'll continue to be a pastoralist in the future, too. I find that our life as herders is more interesting than the life of city dwellers.

I wish there were a school near my village so that I could work during the day and then go to evening classes.

I wish I had a camel and a few more goats.

We, the new generation, will do things differently by building houses in towns and setting up small businesses in addition to raising livestock.

