

TO CAGE A LEOPARD

By

ROTIMI OGUNJOBI

Rotimi Ogunjobi  
websesamegmail.com  
+1(470)727-0678

FADE IN

EXT. A PLACE IN THE WOODS - DAY

A footpath in a placid tropical forest. We see LEOPARD approaching, GROWLING.

LEOPARD

(growling)

I am hungry. I want somebody to eat. Where is everyone? I am hungry.

There is a steel cage standing by the side of the narrow footpath. It is open and inside it is some food. Leopard stops at the cage and looks inside .

LEOPARD

What is this? It is an open box. Now, who would put such a thing here near the road? Wait a minute there is some food inside it. How nice. I will steal the food before anyone comes here.

Leopard enters the cage and eats the food. He finds that the cage is locked and he cannot go out again.

The gate to this box is locked. I can't get out. It was a trap. Help! Help me someone! Help! I didn't do anything! Help!

USMAN, a farmer is walking down the road humming cheerfully. He notices the cage and stops.

USMAN

What is this? It is a cage; a steel gate.

He sees that there seems to be someone trapped in it. He walks to the cage and peers inside.

Oh, it has also got a Leopard trapped inside there too. Now that is very interesting.

LEOPARD

(pleads)

Rescue me from this horrible trap my good man. Please open the gate so that I may escape. I am so afraid. Open the gate of this horrible trap.

(CONTINUED)

USMAN

(amused)

This is so interesting. How in the world did you get yourself inside there?

LEOPARD

It was not my fault, believe me. I was just going my way and suddenly I found myself inside here. Please rescue me.

USMAN

I really do want to help you, but I fear for my life. Certainly leopards eat people.

LEOPARD

(desperately)

Not me; I don't eat people. What is your name my good man? Let's be friends. Tell me your name.

USMAN

My name is Usman and I am a farmer on my way to work on my farm.

LEOPARD

Nice to meet you, USMAN my dear friend. Kindly open the gate of this cage before it is too late for me.

USMAN

(shakes his head)

I will be very foolish to do that, even though I always like to help people. I am unfortunately afraid of you.

LEOPARD

(Unhappy)

There is no reason for you to be afraid of me. What is it that I have ever done to you? Do you not know that I could one day be of help to you too?

USMAN

I unfortunately don't see such a possibility.

(CONTINUED)

LEOPARD

That is so awful. It is true that everyone calls me a dangerous animal, but I know this is not true. You know how wicked humans are and how they hate one another, and say bad things about one another.

USMAN

That's true, but hardly enough to convince me to do such a stupid thing.

LEOPARD

You are completely mistaken about me. If you live with me for only three days, you will never want to leave my home because you will see how pleasant I really am. Certainly, if you go away and you leave me in this cage, someone else will soon come along in a moment to release me. You should then pray that our paths never cross again, but we certainly will one day meet.

USMAN

(nods in agreement)

What you say is true and I even understand what you have not said. However, I cannot help but be afraid that after you are free, will then attack me and tear me to pieces. How foolish everyone would then consider I have been.

LEOPARD

I give my word that I will do you no harm. But hurry because time is precious.

Usman opens the gate of the trap. Leopard jumps out quickly and rejoicing. Moments later, Leopard moves slowly and intently toward Usman, his fangs bared and it is clear he intends to kill Usman.

USMAN

(shrinks back in fear)

Don't kill me please!

(CONTINUED)

LEOPARD

Why not? I am still hungry, and I want to eat someone. You look delicious to me.

USMAN

But you promised not to kill me if I let you out of the trap.

LEOPARD

(evil laugh)

I am a liar. I tell lies all the time. I am going to kill you and eat you. As you correctly said , Leopards do eat people.

USMAN

That is very bad of you. But be patient with me. Let us bring this situation to be heard and judged by five persons, and then we should both abide by their judgment.

Leopard stops and scratches his head .

LEOPARD

(distrustful)

You are not trying to trick your way out of being eaten, are you? Otherwise, I will make you so sorry.

USMAN

How is that possible? I am unfortunately now at your mercy.

LEOPARD

(agrees half-heartedly)

Okay, I will permit your last wish. If even just one of the five speaks for you, I may let you go. I think I am going to eat you anyway. Lead and I will follow behind so that you don't escape.

They walk along the forest path for a while and soon find Goat walking along the road.

USMAN

Look, here is GOAT; let us talk to him. Good morning Goat.

(CONTINUED)

GOAT

(distrustful)

Good morning; what can I do for you?

USMAN

I want you to be a judge to this situation. There I was, quietly going on my way to the farm and then I saw Leopard in a steel cage. He pleaded with me to open the gate for him, with the promise that he will not hurt me if I helped him. But now that he is free, he wants to eat me. Is this at all kind of him?

GOAT

(To Leopard)

humans are wicked and full of lies. Ever since my owner bought me, I have had nothing but misery. When I have kids I care for them all by myself. And when they are grown up, my owner takes them from me and sells them away. And sometimes, when he is drunk, he takes a stick and beats me soundly, all for his pleasure. Humans are no good at all; Leopard must surely eat you.

Goat walks away in a huff. Laughing, Leopard prepares to eat Usman. But Usman defensively holds out his arms.

USMAN

Wait! Remember you agreed that we bring this situation to be heard by five persons, and then we should abide by their judgment. We have only seen one so far. Goats are foolish anyway, so I am not surprised at what this one said.

LEOPARD

Okay, but I am going to eat you anyway. Lead and I will follow behind so that you do not escape.

They walk along the road for a while till they arrive at a field.

(CONTINUED)

USMAN

Look, there is HORSE; let us talk to him. Good morning Horse.

HORSE

Good morning, how may I be of help to you?

USMAN

I want you to be a judge to this situation. There I was, quietly going on my way to the farm and then I saw Leopard in a steel cage. He pleaded with me to open the gate for him, with the promise that he will not hurt me if I helped him. But now that he is free, he wants to eat me. Is this at all kind of him?

HORSE

(laughs)

Humans are full of deceit. They flatter you with kind words but inside their thoughts are wicked. I understand your situation and I sympathize with you, but my experience with your kind has been quite unhappy. A humble beast I am, and always minding my own business, but see what they do to me even because of this.

USMAN

Were you so much tormented ? You are such a fine beast. I am so sorry to hear that.

HORSE

(rueful)

They climb on my back and make me carry them everywhere they want, Even when I am tired and cannot run very fast anymore, I am prodded with sharp spikes, and whipped until I am sprinting again as if for my life. But sometimes when the pain becomes unbearable, I throw the rider from my back and then you know what they then say?

(snorts)

I hate all humans, and I want Leopard to eat you.

(CONTINUED)

Horse proudly canters away .Laughing, Leopard again prepares to eat Usman. But Usman defensively holds out his arms.

USMAN

Three more persons to go, you cannot eat me yet. Remember you agreed that we bring this situation to be heard by five persons, and then we should abide by their judgment.

LEOPARD

No problem. Lead and I will follow behind so that you do not escape.

They walk along the road for a while until they arrive at an orchard.

USMAN

Look, here is a MANGO TREE; let us talk to him. Good morning Mango Tree.

MANGO TREE

It definitely is a good morning. Where are you two off to?

USMAN

Nowhere in particular, but I am certainly fighting for my life. I want you to be a judge to this situation. There I was, quietly going on my way to the farm and then I saw Leopard in a steel cage. He pleaded with me to help him escape, but now that he is free, he wants to eat me. Is this at all kind of him?

Mango Tree noisily rustles the branches, some fruits falling to the ground. Leopard picks one up bites it and spits out the bitter fruit. He glares impatiently at Usman.

MANGO TREE

(balefully)

Very nice of you to tell me all this, but is there any good thing that can be said for a human? Here I stand everyday all by myself, doing nobody any harm, and when the sun is hot they come to sit in the shade under my branches.

(CONTINUED)



USMAN

A good service you have been giving to those needing a shelter from the sun, I believe.

MANGO TREE

So I believe. But when my fruits become ripe, their pesky children throw sticks and stones at my branches and I become scarred all over. I think humans are even more wicked than monkeys. I certainly have nothing against you ending up in the leopard's belly. .

Laughing, Leopard again prepares to eat Usman. But Usman defensively holds out his arms.

USMAN

You can't eat me yet. Two more persons to go. Remember that you agreed that we bring this situation to be heard by five persons.

(sotto voce)

Why did I even think of asking a tree for advice?

LEOPARD

(laughs aloud)

After you, my dear walking dinner.

They walk along the road for a while till they arrive near a farm house.

USMAN

Look, here is DOG; let's see what he thinks. Good morning Dog.

Dog shrinks back, afraid of Leopard. He constantly keeps a watchful eye on Leopard as he speaks.

DOG

(stammering)

Good morning to you too. What do you want of me?

USMAN

Listen to this situation. Not so long ago, I was minding my business and on my way to the farm and then I saw Leopard in a cage. He pleaded with me to help him escape and being a kind person I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

USMAN (cont'd)  
did as he asked. But now that he is  
free, he wants to eat me. What do  
you think of the situation?

DOG  
(Barking in fear)  
Eat him! Eat him! Eat him!

Dog flees away as Leopard bares his fangs at him . Leopard  
again prepares to eat Usman. But Usman defensively holds out  
his arms, this time hopelessly shaking his head.

USMAN  
One more person to go; you  
cannot eat me yet. I am so  
disappointed in Dog; I thought a  
dog is meant to be man's best  
friend.

They walk along the road for a while till near a chicken  
farm, they find Fox hiding in the bushes.

USMAN  
Here is FOX. He is my last hope  
but let us talk to him anyway.  
Good morning FOX.

FOX  
(Chuckles)  
It certainly doesn't look like a  
good morning for you my good  
fellow. There is a Leopard  
following behind you.

Usman falls on his knees. He looks hopelessly at the  
grinning Leopard and then more hopefully to the puzzled Fox.

USMAN  
(crying)  
Yes, I know Dear Fox, that there is  
a Leopard behind me and I will tell  
you why. I also know that you are  
a very wise one, and so I plead  
with you to judge with true wisdom.

FOX  
Go ahead and tell me what is on  
your mind. You certain appear so  
distressed.

USMAN

I was minding my business and going to my farm when I saw Leopard in a steel cage. He pleaded with me to release him from the cage. I feared that after he is free, he might think to eat me, but helped him regardless. But as soon as he was out from the cage he leaped at me, held me by the neck and would have torn me to pieces and eaten me. I asked however that he permit this story to be heard by five persons and that is why you find both of us standing before you. You are my last hope of not becoming dinner to this ungrateful beast.

FOX

(feigns anger)

What was that all about? I didn't even understand a word of your story at all. Don't you know that you are standing before the great Leopard? Are you not afraid to be in the presence of the great Leopard? I know you are somehow confused but so I am about your story. I want you to carefully and patiently tell me the story once more, because we are both standing before the great Leopard.

USMAN

Okay I will tell my story once more. I was minding my business and going to my farm when I saw Leopard trapped in a steel cage...

FOX

Stop there for a moment! What is a steel cage?

USMAN

(puzzled)

A steel cage is of course a cage made of steel.

FOX

(annoyed)

How so vague a description you have given. Again I ask you what a steel cage is. Tell me what it looks like.

(CONTINUED)

USMAN

(sighs tiredly)

Fox, I know you are very wise, and I know for certain that if you do not know what a steel cage is, you do know what a chicken cage looks like, because you love eating chickens.

FOX

Yes, I love to eat chicken; that is absolutely correct.

USMAN

That I also know. And even before I met with this misfortune, I said to myself that on the day that I do meet Fox, I will give him a gift of two or three fat chickens, because all the animals never stop saying good things about how good a person you are.

FOX

(strutting)

Yes, you got that completely right. Every one loves me. I am a fantastic guy.

USMAN

That is Absolutely true, Mr. Fox. Even if Leopard kills me today, I will still one day fulfill my promise and you will certainly get your three fat chickens. What do you want, hens or cockerels? The choice is yours.

FOX

(annoyed)

Stop blabbering and get to my question, you funny fellow. What exactly is a steel cage. Answer the question.

USMAN

I certainly will. A steel cage and a chicken cage are not so different; but the steel cage I saw is made of steel and it is much bigger than a chicken cage. That is all I can say, even though my life depends on you.

(CONTINUED)

FOX

(sneers) )

Hmmn..What do you take me for then, a chicken thief? All you humans think I am a chicken thief. If you do not take me to the place where the steel cage is, I will not let you go away alive, because I think you are a liar and there was never any steel cage.

USMAN

There was a steel cage. I swear there was one.

FOX

(To Leopard)

Sir, I completely believe this fellow standing before us is a fool and i aim to prove it. Please do not think it disrespectful if I ask that you come with us so that he can show me where the steel cage I can be found. To be candid, I believe he has cleverly made the story up, but I want him to see what a liar he is, so that when you eat him there will be no doubt that we have all been fair.

LEOPARD

Thank you, Fox. Let him lead and I will follow behind so that he does not escape.

They walk along until they again arrive at the cage trap.

USMAN

There it is; there is the steel cage.

FOX

(sternly to Usman)

Where were you standing at that time?

USMAN

(points away from the cage)

I was standing there, away from the cage.

(CONTINUED)

FOX

Okay stand there once again.  
(courteously to Leopard)  
Where were you at that time sir?

LEOPARD

(points inside the cage)  
Inside there.

FOX

(feigns confusion)  
Sir, I am sometimes no better than  
an idiot, and and I never  
understand anything so easily. If  
you don't stand where you were at  
that time, I am unfortunately  
unable to see what this fool you  
are about to eat is talking about.

Leopard walks into the cage.

LEOPARD

I was standing in the cage like  
this.

FOX

Now it is becoming a little clearer  
to me.

(accusingly to USMAN)

You liar, I thought you said you  
set him free? Tell me what is to  
prevent him from coming out of the  
cage by himself . The gate is wide  
open, isn't it ?

USMAN

The gate was locked when I found  
him.

FOX

(scolds)

The gate was locked? What do you  
mean by locked?

Usman Takes the gate of the cage, slams it shut and locks it  
with the key.

USMAN

The cage was locked like that.

FOX

Good, I now completely understand.  
Do you mean that Leopard  
cannot again escape from the cage?

(CONTINUED)

Usman shakes the gate of the cage with all his might and shows that it is firmly locked.

USMAN

No, Leopard cannot escape by himself unless someone releases him.

FOX

(Looks at Leopard in the cage and burst into laughter.)  
Now who is the fool, Leopard? Again you are caught in the trap and this time there will be no escape.

Leopard roars in rage and shakes the steel cage, but he is truly trapped. Usman gleefully hops around the trap.

USMAN

Thank you Fox; thank you for saving my life.

FOX

Go on your way good man. But don't forget my chickens. And when you get to the nearest town, tell them that their enemy, Leopard, has been caught in the trap and they can now sleep peacefully.

USMAN

Thank you, I certainty will do as you say.

Usman and Fox leave. A CROWD come with sticks to beat Leopard. They take Leopard away tied to a pole

LEOPARD

(sadly)  
If I have lived kindly , I wouldn't be about to die so awfully.

FADE TO BLACK