

How the Guinea Fowl Got Her Spots

Narrator 1: A long time ago, when everything had just been made, Nganga the Guinea Fowl had glossy black feathers all over

Narrator 2: She had no white speckles as she does today, not a single spot

Narrator 3: Guinea Fowl was a little bird, but she had a big friend. And that was Cow.

Narrator 4: They liked to go to the great green hills where Cow could eat grass and Nganga could scratch for seeds and crunch grasshoppers.

Narrator 5: And they would both keep an eye out for Lion.

Narrator 6: One day, Guinea Fowl was crossing the river to meet Cow on the most delicious hill they knew.

Narrator 7: The grass was so juicy and thick that, even from the river Nganga could hear Cow hungrily tearing up one mouthful after another.

Narrator 8: But...what was that Nganga saw slinking toward Cow? Was it...? Yes, it was LION!

Narrator 9: Now, you might think that a guinea fowl is no match for a lion, but Nganga didn't think that. In fact, she didn't think at all.

Narrator 10: She scratched and scrambled up the bank as fast as she could and whirred right between Cow and Lion, kicking and flapping in the dust.

Lion: RAAUGH! My eyes! This sand! What was that?

Narrator 11: When the clouds and dust thinned, there was no sign of anyone – certainly not any dinner for Lion.

Narrator 12: He went home in a terrible temper, growling like his empty belly.

Narrator 13: The next day, Guinea Fowl was at the grassy patch first. You can be sure she had her eyes wide open for Lion.

Narrator 14: Soon she saw Cow cautiously crossing the river to join her - shlip, clop, shlop. But something yellow was twitching in the reeds. Wasn't that Lion's tail?

Narrator 1: Up whirred Nganga, half tumbling, half flying with her stubby wings. Lion looked up, startled, from his hiding place

Narrator 2: Frrr... a little black whirlwind was racing across the grass to the river, calling to Cow

Nganga: Whee-klo-klo-klo!

Lion: Guinea Fowl! That's where the duststorm came from yesterday!

Narrator 3: growled Lion between his sharp teeth. But the next moment, the whirlwind hit the river.

Lion: RAUGhmpf!

Narrator 4: Lion exploded with a roar that ended underwater.

Lion: I'll teach that bird to chase away my dinner!

Narrator 5: But by the time his roar was working properly again, Cow and Guinea Fowl were safely over the next hill at Cow's house.

Cow: Nganga, twice you have helped me escape from Lion. Now I will help you do the same.

Narrator 6: Turning around, she dipped her tasseled tail into a calabash of milk.

Narrator 7: Then she shook the tasselful of milk over Guinea Fowl's sleek black feathers – flick, flock, flick – spattering her with creamy white milk.

Narrator 8: Guinea Fowl craned her head and admired the delicate speckles covering her back.

Narrator 9: She spread her wings and Cow sprinkled those with milk too – flick, flock, flick.

Nganga: Whee-klo-klo! That's beautiful, Cow! Thank you my friend

Narrator 10: And she set off for home.

Narrator 11: Whom should she meet where the path crossed the river but Lion, still shaking the water out of his ears and angrier than ever.

Lion: Ho, Speckled Bird, have you seen Guinea Fowl on your path?

Nganga: Oh yes, I believe she went that way!

Narrator 12: Nganga clucked, hiding a smile. She pointed with her speckled wing to the hills far down the river.

Nganga: If you go quickly and don't stop to rest, you may catch up with her in a few days.

Narrator 13: Lion leapt up at once, not bothering to thank the small bird. A minute later, he thought about taking her along for a traveling snack, but when he looked back at the riverbank, he could see no trace of her.

Nganga: These lovely spots are just the thing for hiding in the shadows and grass.

Narrator 14: laughed Nganga, who was, in fact, right where Lion had left her. And she turned back to Cow's house to thank her friend again.