

International Conversation Cafe

Folk Tales From Around the World

Sudan: Samba the Coward

Topic: Bravery and Fear

In a great country far away, there lived a king who had an only child called Samba. Now, from the time that Samba could walk he showed signs of being afraid of everything, and as he grew bigger, he became more and more frightened. The years passed away, and Samba had become a tall and strong youth. He was good-natured and pleasant and was liked by all, but when it came time for Samba to avenge his people against his enemies, Samba could nowhere be found.

Soon, he was ridiculed and called, 'Samba the Coward' At length, he could bear it no longer and he rode away northwards to another land where peace had reigned since the memory of man. As he approached the main city, Samba caught the eye of the princess of the land. 'That is a gallant figure,' thought she, and immediately wanted to marry him. Her father consented because he had been unsuccessful in finding a suitable husband for her, and he was charmed by Samba's good humor and pleasant ways.

The princess was very proud of her tall handsome husband, and for some time she was quite content that he should pass the days with her under the palm trees, telling her the stories that she loved. But, by-and-by, this was not enough; she wanted other people to be proud of him too and longed to see the city praise him for noble and courageous deeds.

Not very long after this, the people of the city were attacked by an enemy kingdom. The king gave orders that the war drum should be beaten, and the warriors assembled. Loud were the cries for instant vengeance, and for Samba, son-in-law of the king, to lead them to battle. But shout as they might, Samba never came. And, where was he?

To her dismay, the wife found him hiding in a dark cellar of the palace, and she tried with all her strength to kindle in him a sense of shame, but in vain. In order to save herself embarrassment, she dressed in armor and went to battle pretending to be Samba. Following the defeat of the enemy kingdom, the people sang praises of Samba their leader, calling him 'Samba the Brave'.

However, during the thick of the battle, Samba's wife was wounded on the leg, and when the time came to face the enemy kingdom again, she told her husband she could scarcely walk and could not mount her horse without help. So, she told Samba to dress in armor, harness her horse, and ride it to a meeting place outside the gates where she would change places with him and go into battle.

Samba, who loved riding in times of peace, mounted as she had told him, and when he was safe in the saddle, his wife dealt the horse a sharp cut with her whip, and he dashed off. Before he knew what was happening, he was in the thick of battle with other warriors from his town.

Then a miracle happened. Samba the coward, when faced with the opponent, found something sprang into life within him, and he fought with all his might. And when a man of his size and strength begins to fight, he generally fights well. That day the victory was really owing to Samba, and the praises of the people were louder than ever.

When he returned, the old king said, 'Oh, my son, how can I ever show you how grateful I am?'

But Samba, who was good and loyal when fear did not possess him, answered straightly, 'My father, it is to your daughter and not to me to whom thanks are due, for it is she who has turned the coward that I was into a brave man.'

<http://mythfolklore.net/andrewlang/334.htm>

Discussion

1. Define unknown words and retell the story in your own words.
2. Everyone feels afraid at times. Tell about a time you were afraid and how you overcame it.
3. Choose a or b
 - a. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Do one thing every day that scares you."
What do you think she meant by that statement?
 - b. After Jesus returned to heaven, his followers let everyone know that Jesus, who had been crucified had now risen from the dead. They seemed to be fearless in front of the very authorities that sent Jesus to be crucified. "When they (the authorities) saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13,14).
How do you think Peter and John had such courage when most people would be afraid for their lives?
4. In the story of Samba the Coward, his courage was forced on him when his wife tricked him, sending him to the battle. Once there, he found the courage to face his enemy.
What are some ways people face their fears?
Is it possible to help others become less fearful? How would you do that?

