

Authentic story told by the hodou player, Barou Sall on 1.2.06, interpreted by Massamba Diop, crafted by Irma Gardner-Hammond, Elizabeth Burns, and Zan Lombardo.

NOTE: This story was told using a stringed instrument called a hodou. Storytellers can use any stringed instrument to tell the story and make music either quietly throughout the story or at the end.

## THE CRYING COW

In Senegal, the Fulani people love their cows. They groom their cows. They talk to their cows. They feed their cows the best of grains. And mighty fine cows they have, with shiny coats and bright eyes! They treat their cows like part of their family. They love their cows so much that when they have to part with one, both the owner and the cow often cry.

There was a Fulani man named Barou who owned some cows and a Wolof man named Massamba who owned some horses. Massamba wanted to buy one cow, so he went to find Barou who lived at the other end of the village.

"Barou, what can I offer you for one of your cows?"

"My cows are not just ordinary cows. They are the finest in Senegal. For one of my fine cows, you must give me your best horse."

They sealed the deal with a handshake. Barou took the horse and tied it in the corner. Massamba took the cow and walked away.

Massamba had not gone very far when the cow started to cry. The cow cried like a baby taken from its parents. The cow sounded like it hadn't eaten for three days, such a mournful cry. The cries reached Barou's ears and touched his heart. He left the horse alone and ran to catch up with Massamba.

"Massamba! I've changed my mind. Give me back my cow! I can't bear the tears and the wailing. She needs me. I didn't realize it would be so hard to part with her."

Massamba said, "No. A deal is a deal. Our deal is done. Go back home and mind your own horse." He turned to walk away, but the cow didn't budge. The cow mooed more sadly than ever and dug her hooves into the ground. Barou pleaded again. "Please, give me back my cow. I'll go get your stupid horse." As he said this, he put his hand in his pocket. Now everyone knows that Fulani men carry knives, so Massamba grabbed him by the arm and said, "A deal is a deal. Now get out of here. And don't pull anything on me."

But Barou wouldn't go. And as the cow cried louder and louder the two men started to fight. The fists flew so fast; it was hard to tell who hit whom up aside the head.

Barou yelped, "You hit me!" He was crying like his cow.

"I'll hit you again you cow-loving crybaby. You're as bad as your cow!"

That really hurt Barou's feelings and he flew into a rage and poked Massamba in the eye.

"Ow! That hurt."

"What do you know about feelings, you heartless horse hoarder? If you had feelings, you'd give me back my cow. Right now!"

"No! A deal is a deal is a deal."

It went on like this for some time. Soon a crowd gathered, attracted by the noise and the crying cow, but they couldn't figure out why the two men were fighting. No one seemed to be winning, so soon the crowd got bored and left. With no one there to watch the two men, Massamba and Barou finally wore themselves out and settled it this way. Massamba won the fight, but only the two men ever knew that. Massamba kept the cow that finally was exhausted and had no more tears. But because he felt sorry for Barou, he gave him his hodou for consolation. Barou took the instrument home, singing a sad song all the way. By the time he got home, he had written music that told his people the story of how he lost his beloved cow.

The music survives to this day probably because the hodou is made from the skin of a cow and truly knows how to sing a sad song.