

# **KALULU THE HARE**

**AND  
OTHER ZAMBIAN  
FOLK-TALES**

**RETOLD  
BY  
PARVATHI RAMAN**

*Illustrated  
by  
THE AUTHOR*

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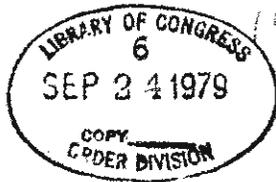
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To  
my  
**PARENTS**  
and  
**PARENTS-IN-LAW**  
who  
are  
in  
**Heaven**

29042

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## PREFACE

This collection of Zambian tales was compiled during my 13 years stay in Kabwe, Zambia, Africa, when I occasionally taught in high schools. One source was predominantly the schoolchildren who delighted in entertaining the whole class by narrating a story, when the regular lessons were over, or when I was 'sitting-in' for an absent colleague. The pupils asked one another Zambian riddles or amused each other by decoding Zambian proverbs. As these were mostly in the Bemba or the Nyanja dialects, it was a pity, I could not note them down effectively. The least I could do was to take hold of the plots of a few folk-tales and to rewrite them to suit the modern times. My other sources were old newspapers, some occasional wisecracks from friends and downright story-telling by a Zambian.

Kalulu the Hare is the inevitable hero and the wise man of these stories; the Hyena is the villain of the piece; the Hippo and the Elephant are the clowns; the Spider, strangely enough, is the lazy one, and so on. It is incredible how many human traits are attributed to the different animals. Besides being very amusing, the folk-tales carry an undertone of wisdom such as, 'folly does not pay', 'wisdom will triumph', 'greed is evil', 'sorrow does not last', and so forth.

I am thankful to Providence for placing me among the wisdom of a friendly people, and to the individual pupils and others who, unknown to themselves, helped me to make a reasonable collection of this valuable material. This is only a small part of the vast resource of stories, proverbs and riddles that may be further explored and researched in the future by more capable students of literature who care to undertake this pleasant task.

*Parvathi Raman.*  
12.7.78.

According to some African legends, the hare is the most intelligent animal in this world. There are many stories to illustrate this point. It is a commonly accepted fact that Brer Rabbit and other rabbit stories that are so popular have originated from African folk-tales. A hare is nicknamed Kalulu in these legends, and so Kalulu has come to mean wisdom or cleverness. The following Kalulu stories speak for themselves.

### **KALULU AND THE LION**

Once upon a time, a big Lion, the king of the forest, decided that all old animals must be put to death, so that there would be only young and strong animals in the forest, and that no useless animals occupied the space and ate the food reserved for the young ones. Naturally, all old and infirm animals were killed mercilessly. But one clever old Hare, called Kalulu, escaped the punishment and hid himself in a cave out of sight of the others. Only the son of Kalulu knew of the whereabouts of Kalulu.

When all was done, the forest became normal for a time, and the animals forgot all about the Lion's cruel decision and deeds.

One day, however, while the Lion was

asleep, he kept his mouth wide open, as he had a bad cold. A long Snake passing by, thinking it to be a hole, entered the Lion's mouth and made itself very comfortable in the Lion's throat.

The Lion could not roar. To add to his discomfiture, whenever the Snake changed position inside his throat, the Lion experienced terrible pain. Therefore, he announced in sign language that, if anyone charmed the Snake out of his mouth, the Lion would reward him richly.

Many young animals came forward, but none could lure the wretched Snake out of its warm and comfortable hole. As a result, the Lion grew more and more angry and restless.

At last the young son of Kalulu hatched a plot. He ventured near the Lion and whispered into his ear that he had recently seen a wise person in a cave, who could come and cure his malady.

"Bring him to me at once!" sighed the Lion.

At this command, the young Hare lost no time in running to his father in the cave. He narrated to him all the events taking place in the forest, and requested him to come and help the young animals solve the Lion's problem. Sure enough, Kalulu the Hare was delighted to be of help.

He decided to disguise himself as a great



*Kalulu made a great show of dancing rhythmically.*

magician, rather, a witch-doctor. He tied a skin cap on his head, conch shells around his body and a garland of tiger teeth around his neck. In this way he looked very impressive, indeed, as a witch-doctor. Kalulu and his son then caught a small Mouse in a trap, and set off to see the Lion.

The Lion had by then grown thin and tired, because he had been unable to eat anything for several days. His senses had grown weak, and he could not see clearly. He, however, bade the magician to set to work immediately.

To play his part fully, Kalulu made a great show of dancing rhythmically and uttering spells and invoking the spirits of the dead. Meanwhile, he quietly left the mousetrap in front of the Lion's open mouth.

After a short time, as he was singing the magic chants, the Snake inside the Lion's throat became more and more aware of the smell of a Mouse near by and slipped out of the Lion's mouth to investigate. At once the Lion felt a great relief from pain. Roaring with joy, he hugged Kalulu to his chest.

"Dear friend," he called with great emotion, "name your price now, and I will grant it this very minute!"

The Hare, modest as all hares go, said, "Your Majesty, I need nothing for myself. I only request a boon for the sake of others. Please grant that all old animals are allowed

to live, because at a time of need like this, when the young animals find themselves helpless to solve the problem, an old and experienced animal would still be of some help."

The Lion realized his previous mistake and immediately agreed to this request.

Thereafter, all animals were allowed to live for ever and ever.

## KALULU AND THE ELEPHANT

Kalulu the Hare, being a strict vegetarian, liked to grow his own vegetables. He planted rows and rows of cabbages, carrots, lettuce, turnips and other juicy vegetables and tended them regularly. He was so agile and hard-working that he had a regular supply of different kinds of fresh vegetables all the year round. Indeed, because of this, other animals envied him.

Once, while he was preparing his garden to plant some pumpkins, a big Elephant, towering over the garden fence, happened to pass by. He became curious to know what Kalulu was doing. Being a pure vegetarian himself, his mouth began to water at the sight of the ripe juicy maize cobs that were swinging gracefully in the wind. Controlling his greed, he just looked over the fence and greeted Kalulu.

"Good afternoon, brother Kalulu," he said, smiling, "busy, as usual, I presume?"

Kalulu returned the friendly greeting, as

he continued with the work. "This is pumpkin season, you know," he said cheerfully, "so I am planting pumpkins before it gets too late."

"I see," said the Elephant, "I am very fond of pumpkins myself. Could you possibly help to plant some in my garden too?" he asked very innocently.

Kalulu was very hard-working, but he was also clever not to waste his time and energy on lazy people. He did not want to fall into the Elephant's clever trap.

"I am rather too busy, as you see, brother Elephant," he excused himself politely, "but I can lend you my hoe and some seeds. You can plant them in your garden. Pumpkins grow like wild nettle, you see, so you don't have to attend to them much." Then he gave the hoe and some seeds to the Elephant.

As you all know, the Elephant is a bulky animal. Whenever he does a little work, he becomes too tired and hot. This particular Elephant had, in addition, trouble with his blood pressure, and suffered from acute palpitation when he exerted himself. Naturally, he dug a few careless holes in his garden, poured the seeds pell-mell in them, covered them with untilled soil, threw the hoe in a corner and went to bed, panting violently for breath.

As days went by, Kalulu's garden grew



*He fell asleep inside the pumpkin.*

rich with yellow flowers from the pumpkin plants. Here and there tiny pumpkins made their appearance among the lush green foliage, while most of the seeds in the Elephant's garden died of overcrowding. Those few that managed to grow, looked measly and weak. No one could tell whether they would survive to bear fruit at all. The Elephant grew more and more greedy and jealous, but Kalulu looked carefree and happy.

Soon there were several big fat pumpkins in Kalulu's garden. As it was time to harvest them and store them, Kalulu planned to do the job the following day.

He got up early next morning and went to his garden. But lo and behold! Not a single pumpkin was left on any plant. He was shocked beyond words. Kalulu knew that it could be none other than the greedy old Elephant who had stolen his precious pumpkins. Being far too clever, Kalulu did not make any fuss. On the other hand, he decided to teach the old thief a severe lesson. There were other young pumpkins still coming up. When they grew up, he would do something.

He did not have to wait long, for the young ones grew into another lot of big fat pumpkins, ready to be picked. As soon as it became dark, one evening, Kalulu chose a large pumpkin, cut a hole on the lower side,

scooped out all the flesh, then hid himself inside the pumpkin shell, and waited for the thief to come. He had a music drum with him, which he wanted to play aloud in the night and frighten the Elephant out of his wits. But in the quiet dark night, the cosy hole in the pumpkin made him drowsy and he soon fell asleep.

Presently there was a-thumping and a-plucking arising from the neighbourhood. Before Kalulu could wake up, his pumpkin was raised high up in the air and pushed deep into a warm tunnel. Kalulu woke up with a start to find himself, drum, pumpkin and all, swallowed whole by the large thieving Elephant. At first he did not know what to do. Suddenly an idea flashed into his mind. With great difficulty he crept out of the pumpkin and started beating the drum loudly and jumping violently about inside the Elephant, thus causing the poor beast immense terror and terrible pain.

The Elephant abruptly stopped eating and ran home groaning with pain and horror. After giving him a long dose of discomfort and worry, Kalulu at last stopped. The big Elephant was so exhausted that he fell asleep immediately. Kalulu quietly climbed up the Elephant's throat and slid down his tusk and ran home, happy to breathe the fresh air again.

From that day the Elephant developed a

great dislike for pumpkins, because he thought that they did not agree with his stomach and caused him nightmares. This affected his blood pressure more than ever. Therefore, he stopped stealing any more of Kalulu's pumpkins. Kalulu was thus rid of the old thief.

### KALULU AND THE FAMILY OF TORTOISE

It is often said, "Hard work and humility earn respect and power; respect and power can make one proud and vain; pride and vanity cause the downfall of all."

This statement proved true in the case of Kalulu at one time. Kalulu, as you know, was a hard-working and clever Hare. Every one respected his wisdom. This went to his head and he started boasting of his agility and good judgement. He even went to the extent of criticizing some of the other animals, and particularly teased the old Tortoise, who was already three times as old as Kalulu himself. He named the Tortoise a slogger, a plodder and a crawler, while he bragged of his own speed of movement.

This annoyed the old Tortoise immensely. Therefore, he thought and thought for a long time to find a way to put the Hare in his proper place.

One day he called Kalulu and said,

"Kalulu, young man, you have been calling me names because of my slowness. However, I would like to compare my speed with yours. Would you, therefore, run a race with me?"

Kalulu laughed aloud. "Run a race, indeed!" he exclaimed. "Without doing any such thing, we know who will win!" he jeered.

"All the same," insisted the Tortoise, "just for the fun of it, let us run a race up to a distance of six milestones."

Kalulu agreed, with great amusement at the old one's obstinacy. They fixed the date for the race, and also the six-stone track for the race.

In the meantime, the Tortoise called a meeting of all his close relatives, uncles, sons, brothers and sisters. He chose five out of them who resembled him most, and instructed each of them to hide near one of the milestones on the race track, starting from the second stone onwards.

The great day of the race dawned. All the five Tortoises took their positions as agreed previously, unknown to any onlookers. Kalulu and the old Tortoise started on the race at the first milestone. As expected, Kalulu ran with great speed and reached the second milestone in a few minutes. But what a surprise awaited him!

"So far, I am leading," shouted the old

Tortoise, emerging from near the milestone. Kalulu could not believe his eyes. Concealing his surprise, he said, "There are four more stones to go." Then he flashed past, faster than before.

The same surprise awaited him at the third milestone as well.

"You cannot beat me!" smiled a cool Tortoise from near the stone. "I came before you and have had a short rest. Let us proceed."

Kalulu grew hot under the ears. He felt he was growing crazy and was imagining things. Nevertheless, he continued to run till the fourth stone. Once again the sight of the Tortoise near the fourth stone shook him very much. He began to grow a little annoyed, too, then suddenly he continued to the fifth milestone.

He was exasperated beyond words, when the Tortoise at the fifth stone said teasingly, "You may yet win the race, Kalulu, for there is one more stone to go."

Kalulu gritted his teeth. His indignation spurred him on to run faster than ever before. Hopping mad with anger, he sped towards the sixth and last milestone.

At the sixth stone what did he see but the old Tortoise standing with a broad grin stretched across his wrinkled face.

"I thought you would never arrive. I started growing a little weary, waiting for



*"I thought you would never arrive."*

you. I polished up my shell a bit and picked out all the thorns from my tired feet . . . .”

Kalulu did not want to hear any more. He felt utterly humiliated, for he believed it was one and the same Tortoise who ran with him and defeated him in the race. Kalulu hid his face in shame, ran home and curled up in his bed. He wished and wished that he had never boasted and had never teased anyone and never brought shame on himself.

He never teased anyone again, because he learned that even humble looking people have some hidden talents in them which, because of their modesty, they do not wish to flaunt in public.

### KALULU AND THE HYENA

One summer it was unbearable in the forest. The water-holes had all dried up, making it hot and uncomfortable. As a result the animals thirsted for water.

When conditions became worse, the Lion, the king of the forest, ordered that one of the water-holes be scooped and dug deeper. He also insisted that every animal in the forest must take part in the digging, because every one of them needed the water.

All the animals obeyed the royal command. They started digging day and night on a shift arrangement. As the king of the forest, the Lion also graciously took part in the work, but there was one cunning Hyena who avoided the hard work. When some of them were on the day shift, the Hyena pretended that he was to be on the night shift. When the night shift started, he always said that he had already done his share of the work on the day shift. This

trick held good for a few days. However, the animals soon understood the ruse of the cunning Hyena and reported the matter to their king. The Lion declared that the Hyena should not be allowed to drink from the water-hole, when it was completed.

Within a few days' time, the water-hole was dug deep enough, and to everybody's delight, a spring gushed forth. They soon made it into a well so that the water would not be wasted. The Lion asked some animals to take turns and guard the well, day and night, so that the lazy Hyena could not have any water to drink.

However, the crafty Hyena cheated each of them and managed to drink his fill of water and escaped punishment. This annoyed and vexed everyone.

This is where our hero, Kalulu the Hare, comes into the picture. Kalulu had put in his full share of hard work and had, therefore, a right to express his views. He got into one of his boastful moods.

"Our guards are rather dreamy," he remarked. "If I had been put to watch over the well, the Hyena would have been under lock and key long before this. To catch a cunning animal, one has to use vigilance and common sense. And common sense is what most of our animals lack!"

The Lion listened to him for a while and decided that Kalulu himself should guard

the well that night, as he seemed to have definite plans to catch the sly Hyena.

At night Kalulu hid himself a distance away from the well. If he stayed too close, the Hyena would know that he was there. Around midnight the Hyena made his usual appearance. He was rather surprised to find that there was no one on duty. This made him suspicious that there might be a trap. However, he wanted to be quite sure that he was alone. He took out a small gourd from his bag.

"Who wants any water?" he said aloud to himself. "As long as I have this gourd of potion, I can go without drinking-water for days and days together, thanks to the really efficient witch-doctor!"

Kalulu was watching all this from his hiding place. He was really intrigued by the Hyena's monologue. He very much wanted to know more about that strange liquid which kept the Hyena from feeling thirsty.

"Hello! brother Hyena," he called from behind the tree where he was hiding, "why don't you come over, so that we can have a friendly chat?"

The Hyena pretended to be surprised, although he knew that there was someone, somewhere, watching over the well.

"Hello! Kalulu? What a surprise!" he exclaimed, "to see you wasting your beauty sleep and keeping vigil here, when it is



*"Effective? Baah . . . !"*

really not necessary." He went up to the Hare and sat down beside him.

"Life is becoming difficult, you know," he started the conversation, "with the ban on drinking-water, ban on this and ban on that. Now it seems the king would put a ban on your sleep as well. So, I approached a witch-doctor and he gave me a liquid in this little gourd. I don't have to drink water any more."

He pulled out the gourd once again and showed it to Kalulu. The Hare got more and more interested.

"Is it really effective?" he asked the Hyena with curiosity.

"Effective? Baah . . . !!" chuckled the Hyena, "you should actually feel how it works. Ever since my last drink of water, I have never felt thirsty. It is because this witch-doctor put just one drop of this potion in my throat to keep it wet. It is so effective that the very sight of water makes me feel full."

"In that case, why did you come to the well, at this hour of the night?" Kalulu asked cautiously.

"That is merely to inform the other animals who may be on duty," said the Hyena, "that they need not keep watch any more, as I have my own private arrangement for quenching my thirst. Poor nitwits, they need to sleep, after all this digging and

what not."

"I see!" said Kalulu, deep in thought.

"Would you like to try some of this potion?" the Hyena offered. "Then you will realize the foolishness of spending so much time and energy digging a well, keeping a watch day and night, and wasting much-needed sleep. Next time, if we have a drought, the witch-doctor is the very person who would put us right."

Kalulu was quite taken in by the tall claims of the Hyena. Slowly all his plans to catch the Hyena were shattered.

"I don't mind trying your potion," Kalulu agreed, "but I must keep watch as per instructions!"

The Hyena told Kalulu that only one drop of the potion should be put deep inside the throat, so that the throat would stay wet for many days. There was no use putting it just on the tongue. To achieve this, one had to bend his head far backwards and open the mouth very wide. Faithfully, Kalulu did all this to receive the potion in his throat. During his efforts, he tipped backwards and toppled over. In a split second, the Hyena drew out a rope from his bag, tied up Kalulu from head to foot and left him lying there.

"My brother, Kalulu," he laughed, "no potion in the whole world would quench my thirst as the water in this well does!"

He kept on laughing as he drank his fill,

and ran away from the spot before it was daybreak.

Next morning, when the other animals discovered Kalulu in his unenviable state, they could only laugh and laugh, because he had been well punished for his boastfulness.

In the end, it was left to a Tortoise to catch the crafty Hyena. He never paid any heed to the prattle of the Hyena, but pretended to be a stone. When the Hyena approached the well, he just put out his head and caught hold of the Hyena's foot in between his teeth and kept him there, until the others came to his aid.

With great rejoicings the Hyena was imprisoned.

## KALULU AND THE SNAKE

Chief Mukulu had a problem. The people in his chieftom were not happy. They were afraid to get out of their huts to go and work in the fields, or go to the river to fetch water. They were afraid to let their children play out of their sight. All the while they remained huddled in groups and were startled and worried at the slightest rustling of the leaves.

All this, because of a big Snake! This Snake had killed and eaten several of the villagers, but Chief Mukulu could do nothing to kill it. He had sent his best hunters to kill the Snake. And every time he sent out someone, all that remained of him later was just a big bulge in the Snake's belly. Naturally, the ordinary people were terrified to move out of their houses.

The Snake took residence on a large tree. The Chief wanted to cut it down so that the Snake would move away, but none could undertake the big task, as the Snake

pounced on any one who approached the tree.

Chief Mukulu then thought of leaving the village and setting up his chieftom in a different area. It was a difficult decision, because he was not sure of finding another suitable spot. His chieftom was then situated in a beautiful valley surrounded by all kinds of fruit-bearing trees. The soil was good for cultivation. A clear river was flowing near by, from which his people could draw water all through the year. Who would be so foolish as to leave such a spot for fear of a stupid Snake?

In exasperation Chief Mukulu abandoned the idea of moving away. Instead, he announced that he would give away his daughter, Threshya, in marriage to anyone who would kill the Snake.

This was a great inducement. Many men came forward to kill the Snake, only to meet their doom.

All this time our hero, Kalulu the Hare, had been hearing stories and rumours of the Snake's atrocities. He also wished to try his luck. Therefore, on a fine morning, he went to Chief Mukulu's chieftom with his two pets, a Dog and a Goat, and stopped at the market place.

"I am Kalulu the 'Wonder-maker'," he announced loudly. "Come, if you please, and watch the wonder I make."

In a village anything new attracted the attention of the people. They were eager to see something sensational, and so most people, young and old, forgetting their fear of the Snake, gathered round Kalulu.

The Snake, whose attention was also drawn by the loud announcement, put out his head on the fork of a tree to watch the goings on below.

"Please fetch a few pieces of meat and a basket of fresh grass!" Kalulu asked the people politely.

In no time the solicitous people brought meat and grass as required by Kalulu. He then chained his Dog to one tree and tied the Goat to another.

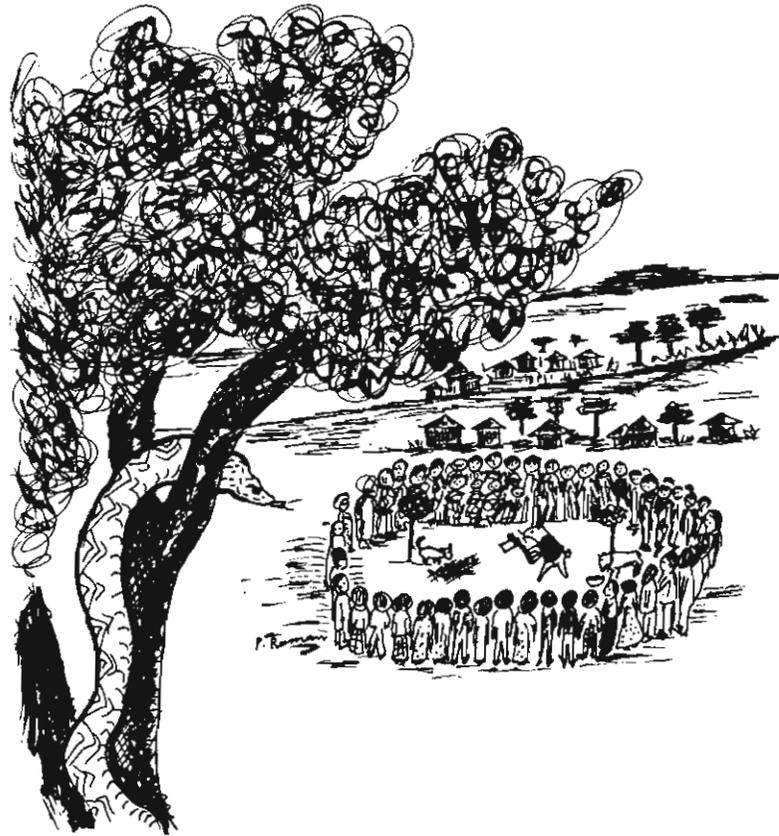
"Ladies and gentlemen!" he addressed the people, after clearing his throat, "here you see two different types of animals. I brought them up since they were babies. I have taught the Dog to eat grass and the Goat to eat meat. You are now going to watch both of them eat."

At this elaborate announcement, the people laughed aloud.

"There is nothing to laugh at!" Kalulu warned. He then placed the meat in front of the Goat and the grass in front of the Dog.

"My dear pets," he spoke to them tenderly, "at the word 'Go', start eating what is in front of you!"

There was a hushed silence, and the



*The Snake put his head on the fork of a tree.*

people waited expectantly.

"Go!" Kalulu gave the word.

What do you think happened?

Nothing!

The Goat turned his head away, and the Dog remained equally indifferent.

"My children," Kalulu coaxed them, "are you shy to eat in front of strangers? They are friends and they won't harm you."

Again nothing happened.

Kalulu got slightly annoyed.

"Who do you think you are," he demanded a little sternly, "to keep these honoured people waiting? Eat the stuff quickly, and let them go home!"

Still the same result followed.

"Look here," he scolded the animals, "are you going to keep these people waiting in the sun for ever?"

The Goat and the Dog continued to remain unmoved by all these demonstrations.

In the meantime, the people showed signs of impatience and mockery, but Kalulu insisted that they stayed and watched the wonder.

"Sooner or later they are bound to eat, when they are hungry, because they are used to eating each other's food," he said.

Soon it became evening. No amount of good words or coaxing would move the animals even a whit to taste the food in

front of them.

Kalulu grew more and more angry. He shouted abuses at them. He kicked the Dog and hit the Goat and then he called for an axe.

"There is no use keeping these disobedient pets," he shouted, "let me teach them a lesson. How dare they defy me in front of strangers and put me to shame?"

With these words Kalulu took hold of the axe, handed to him by someone. The people stood aghast. The Snake, who had been watching the proceedings from his tree, had had enough of this farce. He could not bear to see the innocent animals being nagged by the stubborn Hare.

Deciding to put an end to their suffering, he slithered down the tree to exchange the food in front of them. Just as he came down, Kalulu raised the axe. With one blow he cut the Snake's head off his body. That was the end of the Snake. An unexpected cry of admiration from the people reached the sky.

The people, who had come to watch one type of wonder, saw another wonder — that of Kalulu killing the Snake.

"Hurrah for Kalulu the 'Wonder-maker'!" they chanted. "Carry him to the Chief."

The Chief listened to their narration with great attention and offered Threshya as wife to Kalulu.

"How can I marry a girl?" laughed Kalulu. "It will look as ridiculous as a Dog eating grass! Give her in marriage to a man!"

Everyone understood the point, and joined in the laughter. Kalulu looked around. There he spotted a handsome hefty young hunter.

"Give her to this young man," Kalulu suggested.

The Chief was happy to do so. Threshya was overjoyed to get a human husband.

The hunter in his turn, was deeply grateful to Kalulu as he had never expected to be the husband of a chief's daughter. He promised that he would never, ever hunt and kill any Hare.

Kalulu left the place with his pets, while Chief Mukulu's problem was satisfactorily solved.

### KALULU AND THE KING

The Lion, the king of the forest, had once again become aggressive, terrorizing the poor animals in the forest. he had killed most of the grass-eating animals for his food. As their number steadily decreased, other carnivorous animals began worrying about their own livelihood. They tried to advise the king to exercise restraint in his eating habits. This angered the Lion all the more. He felt that, being the king of the forest, he had every right to do what he pleased, and scorned anyone who dared to criticize his actions.

Besides the animals, the Lion also attacked human beings. He raided lonely villages and killed many innocent people. Once, while he was on such a raid, he was wounded in his paw by the spear of a hunter. For a few days thereafter, he was confined to his cave. This gave time for the other animals to come together and discuss ways and means to teach the Lion a *polite*

lesson. Many different plans, some fantastic and some impracticable, were suggested, and so the animals did not come to any satisfactory solution to their problem.

In the meantime, the Lion got better and started on his rampage again.

One day he had just killed and feasted on a Zebra. Having found a shady nook, he was taking a cosy nap there, when Kalulu the Hare spotted him from a distance. He remembered his own bright idea that he had put forth at the meeting. He decided to put it into practice, and ran home to get a strong gunny bag.

Tucking the bag under his arm, he reached the place where the Lion was asleep. He was disturbed as Kalulu made a noise stepping on dried crunchy leaves and busied himself collecting firewood and twigs.

"What is going on there?" the Lion asked in annoyance.

"I am collecting firewood for you, Sir," Kalulu replied politely.

"I do not need any," retorted the Lion, "what gave you that crazy idea?"

"Soon you will feel hungry, Sir," said Kalulu, "and you may need the fire, Sir."

The Lion laughed aloud. "If I feel hungry, I will need food and not fire!" he said, still laughing, because he was much amused by Kalulu's simplicity.

"Precisely, Sir," said Kalulu humbly. "Have you ever thought of cooking your food before eating it, Sir?"

"Why, no!" said the Lion in surprise.

"Now you can try, Sir. On the fire I will be lighting for you, you can cook your food, Sir."

"I don't see any food."

"You *are* seeing, Sir."

"What do you mean?" asked the Lion, a little puzzled.

"You are seeing *me*, Sir," Kalulu said very charmingly, "I'll be your food for your next meal, Sir."

"Oh, ho!" laughed the Lion. "How is it that you do not want to run away from me?" He was really being amused by the simple Hare.

"There is no need, Sir," replied Kalulu, "because you have already seen me, and would want to kill me for your food. Even if I run away, you would still catch up with me and kill me, Sir. Therefore, you may as well do that, Sir, without going through all the running, gasping and panting. We both are sensible beings, Sir, so let us spare all the unnecessary details, Sir."

"Where does the fire fit into the plan?" the Lion wanted to know.

"Pardon me, Sir, for teaching you," Kalulu excused himself, "but human beings say that rabbit meat tastes good when



*The Wild Buffalo pretended to be the witch-doctor.*

cooked, Sir. I have decided to offer my best to my king, Sir. Hence, when I get the fire ready for you, it will be just a question of your killing me, cooking me and eating me . . . as simple as that, Sir."

"You are strange, indeed!" the Lion marvelled at Kalulu's open talk. He was also pleased to have met someone who would talk freely to him. All his subjects only said, "Yes, Sir," or "No, Sir," whenever he spoke to them. Here was someone with whom he could chat for a while, really.

"What is that under your arm?" he asked, changing the subject.

"This, Sir?" Kalulu asked, casually pointing to the gunny bag. "This is just a magic sack a witch-doctor gave me, Sir."

"A magic sack?" the Lion got interested.

"Yes, Sir," said Kalulu, "he told me not to keep it down, Sir. If I did, the magic in the sack would fade away, Sir."

"What magic is it?" the Lion's curiosity was tickled.

"Nothing much, Sir," replied Kalulu, "it makes heavy things light and light things heavy, Sir. I use this for carrying heavy loads of wood, Sir."

"And you call it 'Nothing much, Sir'?" the Lion mimicked the Hare.

"I thought you would not be interested, Sir," Kalulu said.

"Why not? I am as interested in magic as

any one else," declared the Lion firmly. "Why don't you show it to me?"

"If you so wish, Sir," Kalulu said hesitatingly as he got ready to demonstrate the magic of the gunny bag.

Kalulu took out a rope from the sack, tied it to one end of the mouth of the sack and threw the other end of the rope over the branch of a tree, so that the sack dangled on one side and the loose end of the rope was on the other side of the branch. After this, he appeared hesitant.

"What is the hitch?" the Lion demanded.

"I'm sorry, Sir," said Kalulu, "I need your help to hold the rope."

"I'm willing," the Lion said, and rose from his cosy corner and came to the tree.

"Sir," instructed Kalulu, "as soon as I get into the sack, please pull the rope and see if the sack goes up."

The Lion gave time for Kalulu to get into the sack, then pulled at the other end of the rope. To his great surprise, the sack would not rise even an inch. He tried hard, but it remained where it was. The Lion was convinced that the sack had made the Hare a very heavy object. Actually, Kalulu was holding fast to a lower branch of the tree when the Lion was pulling at the rope, thus preventing the sack from rising up.

Kalulu got down from the sack.

"Would you like to prove the other point,

Sir," he suggested politely, "that a heavy object can become light inside this sack?"

"Why not?" asked the Lion, as he prepared to climb into the sack. With a great show of servility Kalulu helped him into the sack.

"Are you ready, Sir?" he asked greatly concerned. "May I pull?"

"Yes, pull!" the Lion gave the royal command.

In a single heave from Kalulu, the sack moved from its original position and went up and up. The Lion laughed in wonder.

"It is indeed full of magic!" he agreed, "how strange that a small animal like you can raise a heavy animal so high up."

"Yes indeed, Sir," observed Kalulu as he raised the sack very high up on the branch, while he tied the other end of the rope securely to the root of the tree.

"Now let me down," said the Lion as he felt that he was staying too long in the sack.

"I cannot, Sir," Kalulu replied, as if greatly worried.

"Why not?" demanded the Lion, this time in panic.

"The sack seems to have made you lighter than air, Sir," Kalulu appeared to be more and more worried, "I cannot get you down without help, Sir. To prevent you from rising any further, I have secured the rope to the tree, Sir."

"Then do something quickly!" the Lion urged.

"Yes, Sir, I shall run to the witch-doctor and get him in person to come and remove the magic, Sir. I am sorry, Sir. It is all my fault, Sir."

With these words he ran away, not to the witch-doctor, but to the other animals, to whom he explained what had happened.

All the animals came there to watch the fun. The Wild Buffalo changed his voice and pretended to be the witch-doctor.

"Lion, the king of the forest," he called, "you have used my sack without my permission. If you want to regain your original weight, you should promise me something. If you refuse, you will get lighter still, and fly away from your kingdom."

"I promise anything!" the frightened Lion shouted in dismay. "Just get me out of here!"

"To regain your normal weight, you must revert to normal eating habits."

"Yes, I promise that," said the Lion meekly.

"Just one meal a day, understand?"

"Yes, yes, just one meal a day and sparingly too!" the Lion was impatient.

"You are a good soul. Your weight is restored," announced the witch-doctor.

Kalulu signalled to the other animals to go

away. When they were all gone, he brought the sack down and let the Lion out.

"Where is the witch-doctor?" he asked cautiously.

"He has vanished into air, Sir," Kalulu explained. "It is one of his magic powers, Sir, to disappear, when his work is over . . . ."

The Lion did not want to know any more of the magic. He was sick and tired of it. Without further ado, he moved away to keep his promise to the witch-doctor.

Kalulu's trick thus brought order back to the forest.

### **KALULU AND THE BOILING WATER TEST**

Once Kalulu the Hare was greatly annoyed to hear that a neighbouring Chief and his daughter were causing great concern to the young men of the chieftom.

The Chief's daughter was a very pretty maiden and many young men felt it a great honour to be able to marry her. However, as the Chief and his daughter were very vain, they felt that none of the young men was worthy of the girl's hand in marriage, and decided to punish all those who dared to press their suit. Therefore they devised a very cruel test to eliminate them.

To carry out this test, the Chief called all his subjects together into his courtyard, and seated them in a large circle. In the centre of this circle, a huge earthen pot of water was kept boiling. The eager young men were asked to line up, and to come one by one to take up a bowl of boiling water from the pot and to drink it bravely in one pull, in order to prove their deep love for the young lady. No

need to say that it was an impossible thing to do. At the very first sip, all the young men scalded their lips and tongues so terribly, that they could only drop the bowl suddenly and run away in great pain and shame. The Chief and his daughter laughed aloud to see them thus humiliated, for the young men were rendered speechless and foodless for many days to come.

This was the story which came to Kalulu's ears and he decided to teach a severe lesson to the cruel Chief and his vain daughter. So he came to the Chief's village to attend the next session, when a new set of suitors were to be tested.

Kalulu took his place in the line of young men. When his turn came, he went to the pot of boiling water, took out a bowl of water and placed it on the ground beside him. Then he started bowing down respectfully, left and right and all around, greeting all the assemblage. So far, the villagers were used to seeing silent young men, who came quietly to the boiling water, took a bowlful, tasted it and ran away in a great hurry. Today the event was completely different. The grinning Hare was bowing to everyone. The people's interest was aroused, as they settled themselves down to watch some curiosity.

After elaborate salutes, Kalulu addressed the Chief politely.

"Sir," he said, "suppose I succeed in drinking this boiling water, will you promise me something?"

"Baah!" said the Chief disdainfully, "you are not going to succeed."

Kalulu winked at the people and hilarious laughter broke out. We are, by now, aware that Kalulu possessed a great gift for showmanship. He delighted in holding his audience spellbound for a long stretch of time. In this episode, Kalulu exploited his talent to the full, and succeeded in diverting the attention of the people from the bowl of boiling water that he had left on the ground.

"Suppose, for argument's sake," Kalulu persisted, taking up the conversation, "suppose I win, will you then . . . promise, Sir?"

"I give no promises!" shouted the Chief, somewhat annoyed.

"It is only fair, Sir," Kalulu pointed out politely, "in the interest of your daughter's future happiness . . ."

"All right, all right. What is it?" the Chief barked with visible impatience.

"Please say, 'I promise', Sir."

"I promise," said the Chief without caring, because he was growing more and more cross with this impertinent nobody of a Hare, and wanted to put an end to this foolish delay in the proceedings.

"Now, that is your word of honour, Sir,"



*He delighted in holding his audience spellbound.*

Kalulu was firm, "say that you will never again organize any type of cruel tests in your village for any reason whatsoever!"

A thunderous hand-clapping from the cheering crowd drowned the words of the Chief. The Chief was taken aback, for he could not walk back on his promise in front of his subjects.

"All right, all right, go ahead and drink," he shouted at Kalulu and waved his hands impatiently. He was very much vexed with himself for being trapped by a mere nobody of a Hare. All the while he hoped that the upstart would miserably fail in the boiling water test.

This part settled, Kalulu took one look at the bowl of boiling water, which still looked quite hot.

"I am to die," he wailed, pointing to the bowl dramatically, "let me go home and take leave of my beloved parents, for I may never see them again!"

Without waiting for the Chief's permission, he darted towards the bush in a great leap, while the sympathetic assembly waited for his next move. It was indeed a very interesting turn, adding excitement to the usual dull procedures of the previous years.

Some onlookers even shouted, "Bravo, Kalulu," or, "Buck up Kalulu," or, "Kalulu the Greatest," or, "God be with you,

Kalulu," and so on.

After a sufficient lapse of time, Kalulu emerged from the bush in a great flutter, took up the bowl of 'boiling' water from the ground and in one draught drank up and emptied the whole contents.

The crowd went into a mad frenzy of songs and dancing, congratulating Kalulu in good cheer. All those young men who were waiting their turn behind Kalulu, heaved a sigh of relief, for they need not undergo the ordeal any more. But the Chief's face went pale, while that of his pretty daughter grew angry and ashamed. For, after all their tricks to eliminate the unsuitable young men, she was now landed with this nobody of a Hare! She felt very much humiliated and burst into tears. Kalulu thought it punishment enough for her, and asked her to choose a human man in a sensible way.

This question settled, Kalulu made sure that the Chief too stood by the promise he had given to Kalulu. Thereafter, there was peace and plenty in that land.

\* \* \*

With this episode, we bid farewell to our hero, Kalulu the Hare and turn our attention to other Zambian stories.

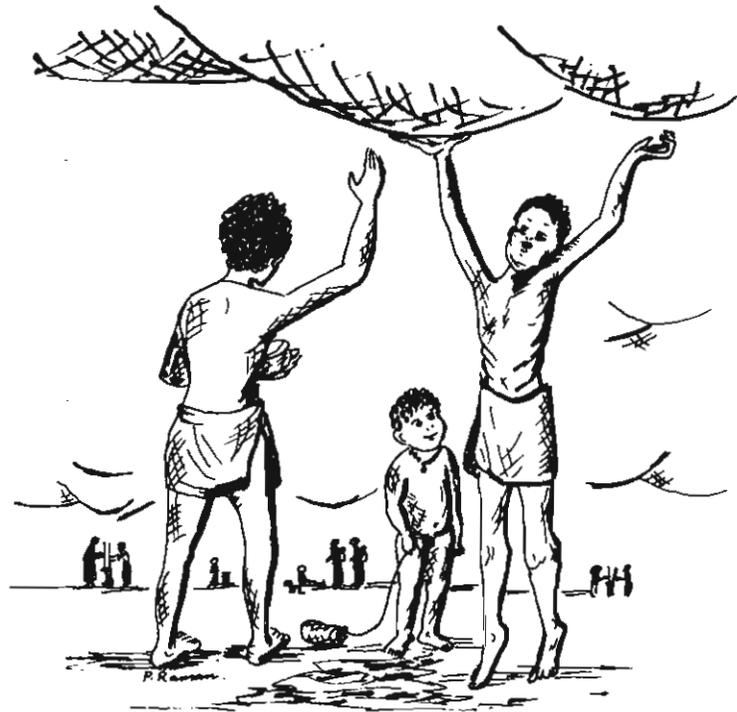
### WHY THE SKY IS SO HIGH *A Zambian Belief*

According to an early Zambian belief, the sky was like a roof over the earth. It was so low, that the people could reach and touch it. At certain places it was even hanging down loose, like a mosquito net that we use over our beds at night.

The Gods and Spirits of our forefathers lived inside this sky, and they could always listen to the prayers, songs, chatter and squabbles taking place on earth.

The sky was so low, that the people could talk to the Gods and get their wishes fulfilled immediately. They could also get their quarrels and differences sorted out as quickly.

But the Gods had no rest. The incessant chatter of women was a constant nuisance to them. In addition, the children often wiped their dirty hands on the loose folds of the sky and made the abode of Gods very filthy. For a long time the Gods and the Ancestors could not solve their problem,



*Children wiped their dirty hands on the loose folds of the sky.*

and had to put up with the thoughtlessness of the human beings.

One day, after harvest time, all the women of the earth gathered together and started pounding their corn in a countless number of mortars with long and heavy pounding sticks. As the sticks were raised and lowered, the women also started poking and punching the face of the sky, this way and that, all over the place. Some of the Gods were knocked and pushed around violently. To add to this, the ceaseless chatter of the women was deafening. So much so that the Gods had to have an urgent meeting called and decided that the sky must be raised quite high, if they wanted to be safe from the thoughtlessness of the talkative women.

At a moment's notice they raised the sky so high that the women of the earth could insult the Gods no more. Ever since then, the sky has remained where we see it today. Along with the sky, the Gods too stay far away from the easy reach of any ordinary human beings.

So, you see, this is how the foolish chatter of silly unthinking women drove the sky and the Gods far away from us.

### THE FOURTH GOURD OF COWRIE

Chipila and Zongwe were friends. They lived in adjacent huts and owned adjacent pieces of land. They helped each other with the tilling, hoeing, sowing and reaping. They were such good friends, that people called them the Twin Gods.

One day, the Twin Gods were tilling Zongwe's land. They sang and chatted merrily as they worked. Suddenly Zongwe felt dizzy. He ignored it for a while, but the heat was oppressive and he fainted. Chipila, his friend, helped him into his hut and made him comfortable. He then called the village elders in, to look after Zongwe. When they assured Chipila that it was nothing serious, Chipila went back to Zongwe's land to resume tilling, so that they would not lose precious time.

As he tilled, he found that a particular spot on the ground sounded peculiarly hollow. He tilled a little more and discovered a rotting piece of wood. He heaved it upwards to remove it from the ground. As

he did so, he was amazed to find underneath, a narrow ditch with lined walls. It was roomy and held four gourds.

Chipila wondered who could have left them there. His first thought was that Zongwe's elders must have buried gourds of sugar-cane liquor to ferment there, and then had forgotten them. In that case, he thought, he should not disturb them until they were ready to be drunk. And yet his curiosity spurred him on. He wanted to know what was inside. He carefully removed the skin cap that covered the mouth of the first gourd. His eyes grew round with awe. The gourd was full of cowrie shells.

This was indeed a great treasure that the ancestors of Zongwe had buried there. Zongwe must be the descendant of a very great family. Chipila's eyes grew rounder and rounder as he opened the second and the third gourds, and found them also filled with cowries. His heart swelled with joy. His first impulse was to run shouting to Zongwe and drag him out to show how lucky he was to have such a great treasure on his land. Next moment, Chipila's thoughts changed. "Why should I tell Zongwe?" he reasoned. "I found it, so it is mine. The finder is the keeper."

Chipila got busy. He opened the fourth gourd. But his heart sank with disappointment to find it only half full.

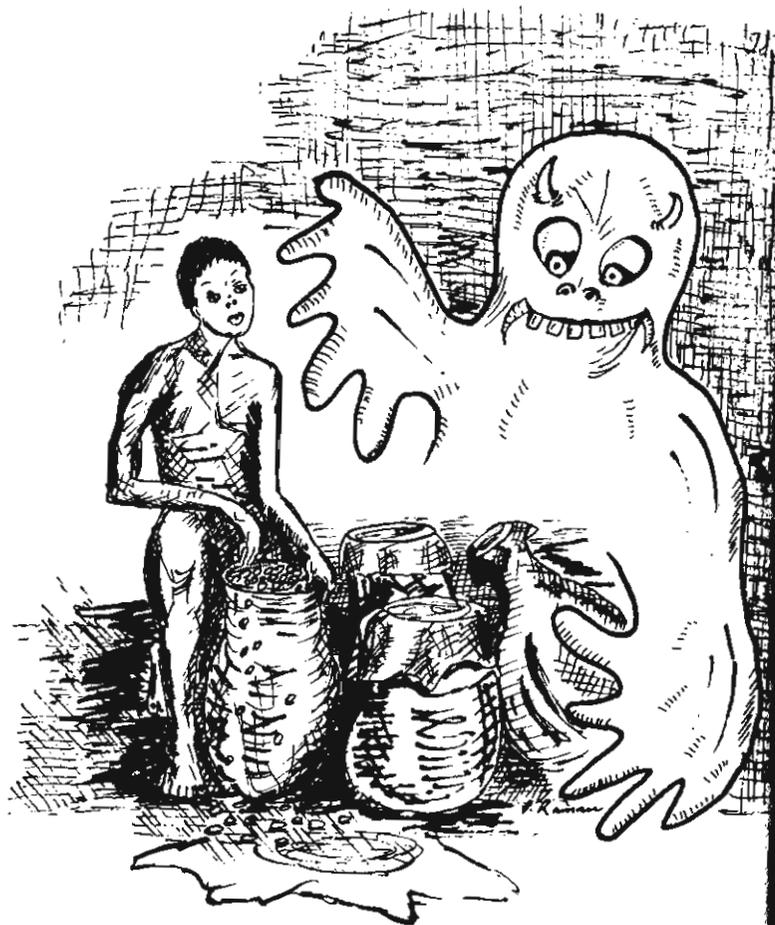
"If only this too was full," he mused, "I would be the richest man here."

He was not at all satisfied with the fourth gourd. But he hurriedly took the four gourds and hid them deep in a cave. Later he filled the hole in the ground with plenty of tilled soil. It helped him immensely that most of the villagers were with the sick Zongwe in his hut. Chipila could do his wicked deed undisturbed.

At dusk he made a great show of concern for Zongwe. He sat with him and reassured him over again that the tilling on his land was done and the sowing could begin straight away. But not a word escaped his lips about the gourds of cowries.

Chipila's mind was constantly nagged by the unfilled gourd. He thought of ways and means to fill it. He worried about it. He had completely forgotten that there were three other gourds full of cowries. Strangely enough, he was utterly and miserably preoccupied with the fourth gourd alone. As days went by, his whole life seemed to centre around that one half-filled gourd.

He began to economize. Every cowrie he earned, he dropped into the gourd. The gourd swallowed all the cowries that he put in and remained at the same level. He started selling his animals, clothes, old cooking pots and such like to obtain more cowries. He then sold his precious shield



*"My son, you have indeed done it!"*

and spear. When he found that this too did not fill the gourd, he sold his hut. He was pleased to find that the level was rising slowly. But it was still not full. So Chipila sold all his ancestral property including his piece of land.

All the elders advised him not to be so foolish. But the greedy youth would not listen to good advice. He became rude and annoyed if people stood in his way. He began to gamble and cheat, to get more cowries. He worked on other people's land to earn more cowries. If he was not satisfied with the wages, he grew angry and fought. Chipila, who was once so sweet-tempered had turned into an aggressive fiend because of his greed and discontent.

In spite of all his efforts, the fourth gourd remained unfilled for a long, long time. Chipila became very impatient. He had become so unfriendly, that even Zongwe had to stay away from him to avoid trouble. Zongwe was very unhappy that his friend was wasting his health and youth in such a foolish manner. He could not understand Chipila's strange behaviour at all. At times he even suspected that some evil people had set witchcraft to work on Chipila. Yet, Zongwe offered shelter and food to Chipila in his own hut and watched over him with great care and tenderness.

Chipila started stealing things from people and bartering them outside his village. This pilfering went on for a while, till Zongwe got busy with harvesting on his land. As Chipila had become an unreliable loafer, Zongwe had to take the help of others. When the work was over, Zongwe stored part of the produce in a huge kiln for future use, and bartered the rest of the corn for a skin bag full of cowries. This bag attracted the attention of greedy Chipila. His wish to fill his gourd grew. Chipila began to watch for the moment when he could steal Zongwe's bag and run to the cave.

His chance came early one morning, when Zongwe was fast asleep. Kind, trusting Zongwe had left the bag unattended in the corner of the hut. Chipila crept out of his bed, grasped the bag with both hands and quietly left the hut. Chipila's greed had made him forget that it was Zongwe who had fed and sheltered him all along. His greed blinded him completely.

In a short time, Chipila found himself in the cave. He hurriedly undid the string from the bag and eagerly poured all the contents into the fourth gourd. Instantly the gourd filled up to the brim and overflowed, while some of the cowries scattered all around him. What a great relief! How glad he was!

"Hee hee hee, ha ha ha!" Chipila laughed

with great satisfaction, until the cave echoed with his laughter.

"I have done it! I have done it!" he repeated several times.

"Hee hee hee, ha ha!" came another laugh from within the cave.

Chipila turned round to see who it was. There, in front of him stood the most evil-looking spirit any human had ever seen. Chipila's mouth and eyes opened wide with awe, for that was truly the spirit of an ancestor, a greedy old man though he might have been.

"Hee hee hee, my son," continued the spirit with a ghastly smile, "you have indeed done it. I have been waiting all these years for someone to fill the fourth gourd for me. Now my wish is fulfilled, and I am deeply thankful to you!"

Laughing aloud, the greedy spirit vanished into thin air, taking all the four gourds with it.

### HOW THE MONKEYS CAME TO BE

A long time ago, deep in the African jungle, there was a glade, where a certain tribe of people had built their huts and lived peacefully. In their midst were a skinny old man and his wife, a skinny old woman. These two were always complaining of their hunger and poverty. Naturally, all the good neighbours took pity on them and often invited them to share a meal with them. However, whenever they visited a hut, they made it a point to steal something to keep for themselves. Soon the kind neighbours started suspecting the old couple. Their suspicion was confirmed one day, when the skinny old couple stole a leather bag full of cowrie shells from a sick man.

The sick man was too sick to get up from bed when the couple stole into the hut and carried the bag away. In those days, the cowrie shells were used in the place of money, and a bag full of cowrie shells meant a very great fortune. Hence, it would

be a very great loss for the sick man to lose them. Even in his delirious condition, the sick man recognized the old couple and shouted with all his might for help. By the time the neighbours heard his cries and came to his aid, the scraggy old couple had run away to hide the treasure.

The neighbours searched the couple's poor shabby hut thoroughly, but could not find any trace of the bag. To add to this, the old man and his wife stoutly denied having anything to do with it, and insisted that it was all the ravings of a very sick man, who was imagining things. But as soon as the neighbours left their hut to think things over, the old couple grabbed the bag of cowries from the hiding place, and started running towards the deep jungle. Just in time someone spotted them and raised an alarm. And so, all the village came running after the culprits.

To escape from them, the skinny old couple clambered up a tall stout tree, and decided to wait there until the people moved away. However, the people were determined to catch the cunning old scarecrows and punish them severely. For a long time the people were sitting and standing around the tree. Some of them even started building small shelters all around to cook their food. Soon the whole village built several huts there to keep a

watch over the old couple. Days and months and years passed. While the people kept their vigil, the skinny old couple still clung on to the top of the tree.

From the many huts down below, the rich smell of fried fish and fowl came up to their nostrils and turned their inside with longing. The couple felt more and more miserable, day by day, due to their increased hunger, but all they could do was to eat the fruits of the tree first, then the leaves. During winter time, when there was nothing else growing on the tree, the hungry old couple stripped off the bark of the tree and chewed it for food.

The cold and rain severely affected them at first, but soon they began to grow protective hair all over their bodies to keep them warm. Their hands gradually turned into rough claws, because they had clung on to the tree far too long. Now they had almost forgotten how to speak.

Suddenly one morning, the skinny old man woke up and said, "I have a very peculiar feeling at the end of my spine, as if it is growing!"

The skinny old woman looked at him and said, "Indeed, you are growing a tail!"

They stared at each other for a moment, then the woman said, "I believe I too am growing a tail!"

"Indeed, you are growing a tail like



*Those were the last human words they ever spoke.*

mine!" exclaimed the skinny old man.

Those were the last human words they ever spoke to each other, because all their speech afterwards turned into chattering and gibbering. They no longer resembled their former human selves.

As their tails grew longer and longer, they learned to jump from tree to tree. One day, while fighting over a fruit, they dropped the bag of cowries down on the ground. It never occurred to them to pick it up again, because by then they had completely forgotten the value of the cowrie shells.

The villagers waiting at the foot of the tree picked the bag up and shared the contents among themselves, as the sick man had already died, being tired of the long wait. Soon afterwards the scraggy old couple disappeared into the thick jungle.

Today, when monkeys come near the huts, the people jeer at them and say that they are the descendants of the skinny old couple, who stole the bag of cowrie shells long ago.

### MUTI GETS A HUSBAND

Muti was an orphan. She lost her parents when she was very very small. To add to this misfortune, she was also not good-looking. As a result, no one bothered to care for her or teach her the needs of everyday life. She spent most of her time roaming in the village, lazing on the grassy fields or just gazing into space.

Some kind people gave her old skins to tie round her body and left overs to eat. But there was none to love her. It was in this atmosphere that Muti grew up into a maiden. She started watching people around her. While all other girls of her age found good husbands, no young man came forward to marry her. She felt hurt when people made comments about her unkempt appearance and crude manners. When she played with little children, they taunted her for being childish. If she tried to talk to older women, they snubbed her by saying that she was too young to join in the big people's

conversation. Muti became more and more puzzled and vexed by such treatment, until one day, she could bear the insult no longer. She went to a quiet corner and began to weep.

Suddenly she felt someone gently stroking her hair. Muti looked up and found an old man standing beside her.

"That is a sorry sight," he said, "why are you so sad, my child?"

Between sobs Muti explained to him everything.

"Never mind," he consoled her, "come with me. My clever wife will be able to help you."

He then took Muti to his wife who really looked very, very clever.

"Muti," the old woman addressed her sternly, "you must promise to do whatever I ask you to do. In the end, if you prove that you deserve a husband, I will get you one."

Muti was so eager to get a husband, that she promised again and again that she would do any work for the old woman.

From the next day Muti was set to work from morning till night, each day and every day. She had to clean the hut, thatch the roof, mend the skin, make ropes, knit fish-nets, cook food and do many more chores. Muti was always puzzled as to how she should begin each chore, because she had never had any training before. Now she

was too scared of the old woman to ask for any guidance. Whenever she found herself in such predicament, she thought of the husband she was promised, and completed any job assigned to her, in her own clumsy way. Yet to her great amazement, the old woman always seemed to be very pleased with her efforts.

One day she told the girl, "Muti, there is a thicket on the north side of our hut. Go and clear it. In that place you should then build a small hut for yourself to stay in."

As usual, Muti was perplexed at this enormous task. However, with a heavy heart she began the work. To her own joy, in three days' time Muti had built a little hut there, all by herself. She was very much excited to see her own achievement. Shouting and crying with joy, she ran to the old woman.

"Where is the husband you promised?" she demanded breathlessly, "he can now live in the new hut I have made. Come and see it yourself!"

"Don't be so hasty," the old woman replied harshly, "there is something else to be done."

"What is it?" Muti asked, a little put out.

"Tomorrow morning you must knit a fish-net," ordered the unkind woman, "take it to the river and catch a male fish. Be sure it has no cut or blemish on its body." She

then gave Muti an earthen pot.

"Half fill this pot with water. Put the fish in it. Cover it with a large leaf and then bring it to me."

The next day Muti was very busy. It took her more time than she had expected. Every fish that she caught turned out to be a female, and most of the male ones had one blemish or another. It was past midday when she caught one to her full satisfaction. She then took it to the old woman as directed.

"Now you can go and rest in your new hut," the woman said and added, "exactly on the fifth day from today, wake up before anyone else, and come to have a peep at this pot."

Muti really needed the rest and left for her hut. For four days she had no work to do. Exactly on the fifth day, Muti woke up at dawn, slipped out of her hut and went into the old woman's hut. The pot was still standing in a corner. Quietly Muti raised the dried leaf that was the cover. My! What a surprise she had!

"Good morning, my wife!" greeted a tiny man from inside the pot. A thrill passed through Muti. She saw a man, no bigger than the fish she had caught from the river. As she was gazing with wonder and admiration at this little man, the old woman stole up behind her.



*My! What a surprise she had!*

"That is your husband, Muti," she said, "take him home to your hut and look after him carefully."

Muti was only too glad to do so. But the old woman put up a warning finger. "Remember, Muti," she warned, "under no circumstances should you eat anything that your husband eats. If you forget this, you will regret it."

Muti promised to be careful, and took her tiny husband joyfully to her hut. Muti was overwhelmed with happiness. Every day brought her new reason for wonder and gratitude. She was more and more surprised to see such a small man doing a great deal of work for her. He gathered fruit and firewood, fetched water, trapped animals and even sang songs! He generally made Muti's life very pleasant. They loved each other very intensely. By this time Muti had noticed that her husband never ate any meat or vegetables, but was always satisfied with only a certain type of red berry. She always begged him to taste all the nice things she specially cooked for him, but he flatly refused. Remembering the old woman's warning, Muti herself ate only those things that her husband did not like to eat.

Meanwhile, a severe famine struck the land. For miles around there was no water. Vegetation wilted and withered. Animals

and birds perished. Human beings wandered away to new lands in search of food and water. Strangely enough, the fish-man was very active and energetic. The simple reason was that, while everything else perished, only the red berries that he ate were growing in plenty. Muti made a sacrifice to stay with him while her neighbours went away. She grew thinner every day, as she could not find even a drop of water to quench her thirst.

One day it was especially very hot. Muti felt she would die, if she did not find something to wet her tongue. Her eyes fell on the basket that her tiny husband had brought in. It was full of the juicy red berries. She watched for the moment when he would be away. As soon as he went out, she shelled a handful of the berries and shoved them into her mouth with trembling fingers. She no longer heeded the old woman's warnings. Her hunger and thirst had driven her to do this desperate thing.

Oh, but what a relief from thirst! How tasty they were! Why did she ever keep away from them so long?

These dreams lasted only for a few minutes. She heard the husband come into the hut. Hastily she tried to hide the shells behind the cooking pots. However, his sharp eyes had seen her, and he understood what she had just done.

He stood stone still for a moment as if stunned.

"Muti, my wife," he groaned, all his energy failing him, "look what you have done! You have deceived me! Now we must part!"

With those words he ran towards the dry river. Muti followed him, frantically crying and yelling for him to stop. She apologized over and over again, as she ran behind him. But the fish-man had gone. He had once again changed into a fish, and dug into the sand to find water.

Muti was heart-broken. She melted into her own tears and mingled with the dry sand.

### MILIKA'S CHILDREN

Chanda married Milika, because she was a beautiful girl. Her modesty and wisdom only added to her beauty. They led a very happy life together for five years, but they slowly became sad, because they did not have any children. Chanda's relatives started persuading him to marry another girl, as Milika had no children.

Whenever they spoke about this in Milika's presence, she wept with bitterness, but Chanda loved her and promised that he would never send her away. Milika was a sensible girl and she felt it was her duty to see that her husband had children, whom he could call his own. Therefore she searched for a good girl who would deserve to be the second wife for Chanda. Soon she came across a hunter's daughter called Eneli who satisfied all the qualities she was looking for. Milika asked Chanda to take Eneli as his second wife. At first Chanda refused, but Milika's repeated requests and tears made

him agree in the end.

The marriage was celebrated amidst great rejoicing among Chanda's relatives, for Chanda was a rich man and could afford two wives. Eneli came to live with Chanda and Milika. A year later Eneli gave birth to a son. The elders and relatives showered presents and honour on Eneli, while Milika was left to do all the washing and fetching and cooking for all the visitors who came and went, as they pleased. She worked so much, so that she had scarcely any time left, even to look at the new-born baby. This saddened her. She wanted to hold him and fondle him, but she had no time.

To add to this, Eneli was complaining that the child took all her time and so she could not attend to any household chores any more. Therefore, it was decided that Milika should look after all the housework, while Eneli attended to the pleasant job of looking after her little son and her husband.

Chanda began loving Eneli more and more, because she had given him a son. There came a time when he even forgot that Milika was in the same house. She was being treated as a mere housemaid, who looked after the comfort of others. At times she had to put up with harsh words. However, she stayed in the same house, because she felt that a woman's place was with her own husband.

In a few years' time, Eneli bore many more children and became the honoured lady of the house, while Milika remained virtually, a housemaid.

When the children were growing up, drought struck the land. Like his neighbours, Chanda also prepared to move his cows and oxen. He wanted to take his family to a more suitable place. He tied two sturdy oxen to his cart and ordered all his children and Eneli to get into it. Just as they were about to move off, Milika came running with her own personal belongings and tried to clamber in.

"Where do you think you are going?" Chanda asked mockingly. "Get down. You are not going with us. I cannot afford two wives any more, in this drought. Stay here and look after the house."

This harsh and stern command was so unexpected, that Milika was dumbfounded. She hurriedly got down. This appeared so comical that the small children burst out laughing. Even Eneli laughed aloud.

Milika had accepted all the indifference and ill-treatment for so long, but this humiliation from her husband, in front of the children and his young wife wounded her heart very deeply.

She ran weeping into the house, as Chanda and his family moved off unconcerned. Milika was much hurt. In her

despair, she cried aloud, calling all the spirits of all her ancestors.

"Fathers of my father!" she sobbed, "how can you ever let me be insulted for no wrong done by me? Have I not suffered enough agony? Give me children who would make me happy and bring honour to me and to themselves. Wipe out all the insults heaped on me by Eneli and her children."

Milika wept so long and so bitterly, that she fell asleep. In her dream, one of her ancestors called to her softly.

"Milika, Milika . . ." he whispered, "your troubles are all over. Go to the ancestral shrine tomorrow and offer a monkey fruit."

When she woke up, she felt it strange that anyone could ask her to offer a monkey fruit to the spirits. She took up courage and chose the best monkey fruit to take to the shrine.

Just as she lay the fruit at the shrine and knelt down to pray, she heard a crash as if something broke. Looking up, she saw the useless fruit split into two, and three beautiful girls emerged from within.

"Mother, mother!" they shouted, "we have come to live with you. Please promise that you would never speak a harsh word to us!"

Milika's joy knew no bounds. Scooping the three girls in her arms, she ran home, all the while thanking the spirits for this special



*Even Eneli laughed aloud.*

gift. She promised the girls that she would never ever say a harsh word to them.

Life was happy again. Rains returned and the land flourished. People came back to resettle on the land. Milika's daughters grew up to be useful and diligent young maidens.

"If only I had a son . . . ." Milika wished often, "if only one of them was a son, life would have been much better."

Again Milika had a dream of the same spirit, asking her to offer a monkey fruit at the shrine. As before, when she placed it there, it split into two and three healthy boys came out of it calling, "Mother, mother, we have come to live with you. Please promise that you would never scold us."

Milika promised that, and took them home. Her heart was filled with gratitude.

The boys grew up to be hunters and farmers. Milika's children were admired by all the people. They brought her honour, riches and happiness. Soon it was time for them to get married. Milika gave away her two daughters in marriage to the neighbouring chieftains. The first two sons married beautiful young girls and set up their own homes. Wherever she went, Milika was treated with great respect because of her children, but there was just one worry in her heart. Chanda and his second wife Eneli had

never returned to the house to see her glorious life. She had never had the opportunity to show off in front of them. Besides, the youngest son and the youngest daughter still remained unsettled.

When these two young children were also properly settled to a good life, she thought, she would go in search of her husband and Eneli and show them how she had thrived in spite of their ill-treatment of her.

As days went by, she grew more and more impatient. This impatience grew into exasperation and finally anger.

"Why don't you two ever get settled?" she scolded them one day. "Are you not old enough to marry and start a life of your own, and raise a family?"

The boy and the girl looked up in great sorrow. "Our human mother has scolded us," they chanted plaintively in unison, "we, born of the fruit, must go back to the fruit."

This chant grew louder and louder, before Milika could understand its meaning. Her angry words had drawn all her children to the house, from far and wide. They were all chanting the same words over and over again. When the sixth one also arrived at the scene, they all linked hands and walked towards the monkey fruit tree. Still chanting the same doleful words, they all entered into one of the fruits, one by one and thus

disappeared from all human eyes.

The whole village came to watch them disappear, but none could do anything to get them back.

### WHY THE JACKAL HOWLS AT THE MOON

Long, long ago, in the middle of a dark forest in the Congo, there lived a Jackal. He was big and strong and all the other animals were afraid of him. At nightfall every evening, he would take his gold-tipped bamboo spear and go out hunting.

One night, as he set out into the forest, the Moon, up in the sky, was watching him, as he hunted among the trees with his gold-tipped spear. In a few hours' time, he had killed two Kudus and a wild Pig. The Moon became jealous of the Jackal's success and planned to steal the spear.

So, the next night, as the Jackal returned home after killing four Bushbucks, the Moon came out from behind a cloud and watched him to see where he hid his spear. She saw him hiding it behind a cupboard.

The next day, an Owl knocked at the Jackal's door. It was really the Moon in disguise.

"What do you want?" demanded the Jackal.



*The Jackal climbs a hill at night and howls at the moon.*

"Please, Sir," replied the Owl, "I have come from a far off land. Pray, let me sleep in your house tonight."

"Oh, all right," agreed the Jackal.

That night, when all was quiet, the Moon took the spear out of its hiding place and tried to run away with it. But, she tripped over a big drum and the noise brought the Jackal running to the spot.

"Go away, miserable thief!" he shouted, when he saw what had happened.

The Moon went back to her home in the sky.

The next day she disguised herself as a Cat, and went again to the Jackal's house and knocked at the door.

"What do you want?" asked the Jackal.

"Please, Sir," replied the Cat, "I have come from a far off land. Pray, let me sleep in your house tonight."

"Oh, all right," agreed the Jackal.

That night, when all was quiet, the Moon once again stole the spear. But, just as she was going out of the door, she knocked against some cooking pots. The noise once again brought the Jackal running to the spot.

"Two thieves in two nights!" he growled, "go away, and don't come back!"

The Moon went back home, but she was determined to have a last try. So the next day, she knocked again at the Jackal's

door, but this time, without a disguise.

"What do you want?" asked the Jackal, in his usual gruff voice.

"It is so cold up there in the sky," replied the Moon, "please let me sleep in one of your cosy beds tonight."

After his bad experience, the Jackal was reluctant to grant the Moon's request, but her charming manner soon made him change his mind. So, that night, when all was quiet, the Moon took the gold-tipped spear for the third time. She managed to get out of the Jackal's house, but in the garden she fell over a bucket. The Jackal woke up but was not quick enough to catch the Moon this time, as she was already high up in the sky.

The gold-tipped spear had a magic power that enabled the Jackal to hunt successfully, but now, without it, he was helpless. He became thin and sickly, and the only food he got was the left overs from other animals' meals.

So, to this day, the Jackal climbs a hill at night and howls at the Moon to make her return his spear.

## THE WAX-MAIDENS

There was once a woman, a hunter's wife, living in a little village, deep in the woods. She was very clever in making dolls and other figures out of clay, wood-gum or bees' wax. She used to give them away to little children in her village. During the rainy season, her husband would collect a number of honeycombs, and store the honey in earthen pots or gourds. The woman gathered the wax from the combs and used it for her own amusement.

Once she had gathered enough wax to mould two beautiful maidens, as large as real human beings. When the work was completed, she was herself so struck with their beauty and grace, that she wished intensely for them to come alive and sing and talk to her. In all her prayers to her ancestral spirits, she asked for this boon. Sure enough, the ancestral spirits listened to her plea, and the wax-maidens came alive. This was a great occasion for the

whole village to celebrate. Life became very pleasant for the hunter and his wife, when they had these two daughters of their own.

After a long time, when everyone had accepted the wax-maidens as normal human beings, a young farmer from another village happened to see them, when they were sitting in the cool shade under a tree. Not knowing who they really were, he wondered that such wax-like, pale beauties could exist in the world. Full of admiration for them, he returned to his own village. Since that day he could think of nothing else. He wondered if they were strange, beautiful spirits who haunted young men, or whether they were real human beings, whom one could marry. He was all the more thoughtful, because he was a married man, and wondered whether his first wife would allow him to marry more wives. But he was desperately in love with the two maidens and pined away thinking of them.

Observing his dejection, his first wife asked for the reason. Reluctantly he revealed to her what had happened. Being a dutiful wife, she gave him permission to marry the wax-maidens, on condition that they too shared in the housework and hard tilling work in the field, because she honestly believed that the wives could together greatly increase their wealth.

This was enough encouragement for the



*She placed the toe in a pot of cold water.*

young farmer. He hastened to the wax-maidens' parents with his proposal of marriage. His status in life satisfied them. His straight and honest conduct won the parents' admiration. They agreed to celebrate the marriage, when the young farmer paid them eight head of cattle, four goats and six hens as the 'Lobola' or the bride-price for the much valued wax-maidens.

However, the parents warned him that their daughters were delicate creatures, who should be treated very gently. They should not be allowed to work in hot and sunny places, nor allowed to exert themselves too much. If he neglected this warning, they would melt away. In his over-eagerness to marry them, the foolish young farmer agreed to this condition. However, he did not reveal this truth to his first wife, for fear that she would scold him for marrying useless women, and prevent the marriage.

After the ceremony, the young farmer proudly brought his beautiful brides home. The moment they set their feet in the house, the first wife realized what a tremendous mistake it was. The maidens looked so dainty that she knew they had never done any housework at all. Their hands were so soft and sleek, they were utterly unfit for hard work in the fields. They walked so

straight, that they could never carry loads on their heads nor babies on their backs. What a waste of the 'Lobola'! Besides, she noticed day by day, they were both in great dread of the fire. They refused to cook food on the hearth and always preferred to eat cold things. They avoided long exhausting walks and generally became tired all too soon. Most of all, they would never venture out into the open, sunny fields to do the important work of the farmer. For a few months the first wife tolerated this dainty nonsense, and carried on with all the chores, single handed. Soon however, the additional work of catering for the lazy women proved too much for the simple woman. It was infuriating. While she toiled away like a mule, the two pale creatures enjoyed the cool comfort of the house.

Tearfully, the bitter woman complained to her husband about the attitude of his new wives. The foolish man only laughed, because it suited him perfectly to have two beautiful women to entertain him with sweet songs and talk, while a hard-working woman looked after all the other chores in the house. He never explained to her the reason for their laziness, but carried on without paying any heed to his first wife's complaints.

Seeing her husband's heartless behaviour, the first wife confided in her neighbours,

who advised her to use her wit to extract work from the lazy women, when the husband was not in the house.

Since that day, she pretended to be kind to the wax-maidens in her husband's presence, but when he was away, she set hard work for the girls to do. She demanded obedience, as the first wife, and supervised all their chores untiringly. But the hard work severely told on the poor helpless creatures. The waxen beauty began to wear from their face and hands, they became lean and listless. Nevertheless, the revengeful wife drove them into the field to till the land. The elder one ran to the field. In great alarm, the younger maiden begged for mercy, because she feared her sister would surely melt away in the hot sun.

"Nonsense," retorted the first wife, "no woman ever melts away by working in the sun."

Under the midday sun, the elder maiden actually began to melt. The wax dripped down from her body and ran on the soil. The young sister watched helplessly, because she could not go to her rescue. By evening she had melted so much that only a big toe from her foot remained on the field. In the cool of the evening, the young one ventured out to collect the toe and placed it in a pot of cold water. Not wishing to stay in the house any longer, she went to her mother's

house, lamenting her sister's fate.

When the young husband returned in the evening, his first wife was still enjoying her leisure, believing the wax-maidens to be at work. But the food was not cooked, the field was not tilled and the wax-maidens were nowhere to be seen.

Frantic with anxiety for the safety of his beloved wax-maidens, the young husband ran to the village of the maidens, only to learn the sad news, and to see the only remaining wax toe of the beauty. Due to the long walk and her heavy heart, the young sister too had melted into a grotesque lump of wax, beyond anyone's recognition.

Tearing off into the dark night, an anguished cry escaped the lips of the distracted husband, as he blindly ran into the woods, never to return.

### A DIFFERENT BABY

This story took place a long time ago, when strange things used to happen off and on. In those days a man and his wife lived in a country full of happy people. The couple had four healthy sons, but they yearned for a little daughter. When the wife was expecting their fifth child, they hoped it would be different this time, a girl child, for example. The man and his wife prayed day and night, repeating the same words, "Please, God, make it different this time, make it different this time."

They could not say anything else. When finally the day came, when the mother went into labour, the father fell on his knees, requesting all the Gods and Spirits to remember their prayer, and make it different.

In a few hours' time the mother was safely delivered of a handsome baby, and an old nurse brought the news to the father.

"Glad news, master," she informed him

politely, "it is, indeed, different this time."

"Different?" gasped the father in exultation. "God be thanked a thousandfold!"

"Yes, different," announced the old woman solemnly, "the lady of this house has just given birth to a handsome little puppy dog!"

"What?" The father was at first greatly shocked at this news. He stood petrified for some time, but when once he set eyes on the cute little puppy dog, all his anger vanished, and his heart melted with tender love for the soft, helpless creature.

Days went by and all the family cherished the little puppy dog, because of his lovable, gentle nature. He followed his elder brothers wherever they went, and guarded his father's home and property with devotion. Even as a baby, he was no trouble to his mother, as he was the most obedient child anyone could ever want. All the world adored him.

When the boys grew up to be strong, handsome young men, the father bade them to seek their fortune in the wide world, on their own merit, because, he said, it would not be manly for them to stay protected in the parental home any more. He gave them good advice and his blessings.

Later, he also gave each of his sons a hoe, and a sharp knife with which to fend for



*The mother tied up some food and sent them on their way.*

himself. The mother tied up some food in five identical bundles for them and sent them on their way.

Now the little puppy dog had grown up to be a very strong animal, almost resembling a lion, but his nature remained as gentle as before. As he could not carry his hoe and his knife and his bundle of food, his elder brothers carried them for him.

After various encounters, the young men at last arrived at the country of a good Chief. They presented themselves before the Chief and requested him to try their skill. The Chief was much impressed by their fearless, yet courteous bearing, and so, he employed them to lay a path leading from his palace to the river. Thus the cargo from the boats could be transported into the palace yard easily.

This was a distance of about fifteen miles or over. In those days, it was a great distance indeed. Yet, without a murmur, all the brothers set to work immediately, in unison. In a very short time they laid a very good passable path, on which carts, cattle, horses and men could carry their goods with comfort.

While the work was going on, the little dog guarded the possessions of his elder brothers and protected them from wild animals.

It was only a test to prove their skill. No

need to say, they passed it with great honours. By some strange coincidence, the Chief had five beautiful daughters, whom he wanted to give away in marriage to deserving young men. The four elder brothers proved to be the best choice any parent could make as suitors to his daughters. Without a moment's hesitation, the Chief offered his four elder daughters in marriage to the four elder brothers.

When the ceremony was going on, someone was very unhappy. This was none other than the Chief's youngest daughter, Nalishebo. She was very disappointed that she could not find a husband from among the hard-working brothers. Thinking it to be a joke, the elder brothers offered their puppy dog as her companion. The girl accepted the dog, and looked after him carefully.

As the Chief was growing old, he gave a portion of his land to each of his daughters and bade them to lead a peaceful life. Now was the real time for competition among the elder brothers. They vied with one another in cultivating their respective lands and growing different types of produce. They built roomy huts and homes for their families. They hunted many animals and procured warm skins. They had, in short, much to eat and drink and enjoyed a bounteous life.

Nalishebo alone was left out. Being a fragile young maiden, she could not do all the work a man would do. As a result, she could hardly keep her hut clean, let alone, cultivate the land. She was tired and ashamed to have to borrow food and skins from her father or her sisters. One day she was far too dejected about her situation and spoke bitterly to the poor dog.

"Look at all my sisters," she remarked, venting her wrath on him, "they have good strong men to help them. But what have I got? Only a worthless dog who can only eat and sleep!"

The poor dog could only whine sympathetically and wag his tail.

Next morning, when Nalishebo woke up and looked out of her hut, a great surprise awaited her. As if by some strange power, the weed had been completely cleared from her land. At the back yard, several rows of newly dug beds were laid ready for planting seeds. Nalishebo wondered who could have done this good work for her.

All her sisters came to see the work. There was much guessing and much talking, but none could find out who did all the work. Day after day passed, each morning bringing new reason for wonder to the young girl. One day fresh thatch was laid on the roof, the next day all land was tilled, on the third morning saplings were

planted and on the fourth, there were blossoms everywhere. Nalishebo imagined she was living in a dream-land. Even her sisters and their husbands left off teasing her, because they could not, themselves, make their lands flourish so well. They even suspected that there was some spell, good or bad, working on Nalishebo's land. Many nights they kept watch to catch the worker red-handed. But all their efforts were in vain.

Once, at dead of night, Nalishebo suddenly woke up to hear the noise of someone tilling the land. She quietly slipped out of her hut. In the dim moon light she could see a young man bent over his work, in deep concentration. She had never seen any one of that stature in the neighbourhood. Her heart pounding with excitement and fear, she approached the man to have a closer look. She took a few steps forward, but suddenly she stepped on something soft and warm. As she bent down to examine the object, she screamed, "Oh my pet, my dear dog is dead!" and tearfully she gathered the animal in her arms. Strange to say, it felt very light.

Her scream alerted the working young man. He came running to her, "Please, give me back my skin, quick!" he urged.

At once everything became clear to Nalishebo. The handsome young benefactor

was none other than the dog himself. By some magic power, this young man could get in and out of the dog skin, as he chose! He had been keeping this power a secret for many years, but Nalishebo accidentally discovered it that night.

The young man begged Nalishebo not to divulge the secret to anyone, because if many others knew of it, his power would wane and he would be condemned to remain a dog for ever.

Such things could not be hidden from prying eyes for long. As her sisters and others suspected that she entertained a secret lover, the young girl thought of a plan to bring the matter to the open, at least to protect her own good name. In those days it was considered very important that the daughters of the Chief set an exemplary example for the other maidens of a chieftom. If Nalishebo was proved to be a wanton maiden, she could be punished severely.

Nalishebo realized that the secret of the young man would be out some day and he would be condemned to be a dog for ever. On the other hand, if she protected the secret much longer, the Chief and the elders of the country would punish her for her wayward behaviour.

Therefore, when next time the young man came out of the dog skin at night, she crept



*She stepped on something soft and warm.*

up behind him to steal the skin. When he was hard at work, she burned the dog skin to ashes. It was a pity, though, to have to destroy such a smooth, healthy, lovely skin that she adored all along. This she had to do, in order to retain the young man in his human form for ever, and to extricate herself from the false stories.

In this way, Nalishebo broke the spell, and married the fifth young brother, and they all lived happily ever after.