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TRADITIONAL TALES OF ZAMBIA
compiled and edited by C.L. vas.

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DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL SERVICES


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## FOREWORD

Children learn from parents a way of life suited to their environments. One word for the 'way of life' is 'culture'. Therefore, culture consists of a people's movements, habits, occupations, beliefs, customs, law, knowledge, arts, and so on. Because of this, culture varies from nation to nation and yet its certain features are found among all peoples of the world. One of them is oral literature.

This wealth of Zambia, I am afraid, will be lost to the alien influences if left unrecorded. The Department of Cultural Services has made an effort in this direction on a small scale. This collection and many more uncollected tales of our land have been continually crossing the barriers of tribes and languages and are enjoyed with pride as a national art. The listeners find in them the emotions of our people absorbing the beauties of our forests, rivers, flora and fauna as well as rural life facing the terrors of nature's secrets that lend our country a local colour. The anonymous authors of our folklore and their patrons were never void of arts and their exposition. If studied deeply, our folklore shall prove to be a treasury of our elders' memory and conscience capable of inspiring historians and writers to dig our past and write anew.

I believe, this positive endeavour of the Department of Cultural Services will be emulated by other Zambians and as soon as this is done, our cultural heritage will come to light and offer its innate values to mankind.

## MULILO VISITS HUBU

One late evening when Hubu, the hippopotamus, was out of the river, his eyes reached the place where Mulilo, the fire, was. It was a mid-winter time. It was a mid-winter cold blowing with whistles. In the circumstances, as soon as Hubu had left the warmth of the river water he had been shivering. In the circumstances, naturally he ran towards Mulilo with a view to seek his advice to get warm when the mid-winter night cold was biting his body.

No sooner did he arrive at Mulilo's place, than Hubu felt warm. He stopped shivering. He lay near Mulilo. He slept there soundly until the sun appeared in the eastern horizon like a floating huge red ball. Then Hubu thanked Mulilo for allowing him to share Mulilo's warmth in the wintry night and returned into the river.

The following evening also Hubu saw Mulilo in the same place. He did not hesitate to reach there and make himself warm by his side for Mulilo had not spoken a word against Hubu's coming to him the previous night. Again Hubu spent the whole night beside Mulilo. When he woke up in the morning he was fresher than his own folk who shivered in the whole wintry night cold. So he began to play quite vigorously as soon as he was in the waters of the river. Seeing him playing like that, his mother anxiously cried, 'Where had you been the whole night, son? Your father as well as myself have been worrying a lot.
'I have been there, over there, ma!' he showed the place with a long glance.
'What for, mwana? What for?
'It's so warm there!'
'Maybe, but you shouldn't remain out of water for long.'

But it's so warm there!'
'Don't be silly!' retorted the she-hippo and began to throw water on her little Hubu

However, little Hubu did not heed the words of his mother. He continued to enjoy the warmth of friendship with Mulilo. Even when the winter was over and summer spread over the reeds, the grass, the trees, the river and all, Hubu continued to visit Mulilo without fail, of course not for the whole night.

Now, one evening Hubu thought to himself: 'How strange! I think my mother is right when she calles me "silly" or why should I continue to visit Mulilo, never inviting him to pay a visit to my parents? After all, friendship is not a one way traffic.'

This thinking made him to leave the river earlier. He was very eager to see his friend Mulilo. He wanted to invite him to visit his parents. So he walked also faster.

On his approaching Mulilo even before returning the greeting, Hubu said, 'I have decided to invite you to visit my home, Mulilo! My parents will be so happy to see you!

Mulilo simply smiled.
'What makes you to smile, friend? I'm not joking. I must invite you, you see,' Hubu disclosed his intention more firmly.

I thank you indeed for your invitation,' Mulilo replied, 'but I think, I'm quite all right where I am.'
'Don't be like me. D'you know? My mother calls me "silly!" Yes.
'Had I been like you, I would have at once accepted your invitation.'
'Then? I'm serious about the invitation.'
'So am I. And this makes me to think about it. You are so innocent!'
'Enough of your praise. If you don't respond to my invitation, well, I shall have to stop visiting you, you see

I thank you for your kindness, love and invitation, Hubu, but I think I must stick to the place I have been living,' Mulilo tried to explain the position.

I'm not prepared to listen to anything. You must visit my parents, must, must and ... 'cried Hubu.
'I think anything in excess is harmful.
'Does this apply to friendship also ?'
'Of course. There are certain rules which are commonly applicable to all animate as well as inanimate things. This know.
'Then know it for you. Listen. If you don't decide to visit us at my home in the river, I will stop visiting you. I shall come
tomorrow again, at this time, to know from you whether you would make me happy by paying a visit to me,' Hubu said, and left for the river.

The whole night he could not enjoy. He could not understand why his friend Mulilo was not willing to pay a visit. In the morning. Hubu went from living being to living being in the water telling them all how he was adamant to see that his friend visited his family. As none of the water creatures had seen Mulilo closely, all were excited to hear this. They eagerly waited for Mulilo's probable visit.

Early evening Hubu left for Mulilo because he knew that it was not easy for him either to understand or persuade his friend whose warmth was unreservedly enjoyed by him during wintry nights.

This time Hubu went closer to Mulilo. At this Mulilo cried: 'Don't rush on me, or you'll be hurt.
'Why? Are you not my friend? Does the friend hurt his friend?' queried Hubu.
'Friends also must remain in their limits if they wish to remain friends. It was good that you had been enjoying my warmth from a certain distance. And I, had I ever been emotional to hug you?' explained Mulilo.
'All right, then, but look. If you don't accompany me to my home, I shall not hesitate to make fun with your form. I tell you that,' warned silly little Hubu.

Mulilo thought for a while seriously but finding no way to turn away Hubu satisfied, he prepared to fulfill his friend's wish. When Mulilo stood up from the earth he looked ferocious. He grew instantly big, very big; so big that Hubu could not measure his shape or size. However he remained undaunted because he was very delighted to see that Mulilo was preparing to visit his parents.
'Come on now. Are you ready?' asked Hubu.
'Yes, but you walk ahead of me and l'll follow you, answered Mulilo.
'No. We shall walk arm in arm,' Mulilo insisted
'Well, then. I don't want to come with you at all,' said Mulilo and sat down.
'All right. All right. Do as you wish but visit us in the water. This you must, you must. I've informed all the bodies and souls living in the water of your visit. They must be anxiously waiting for you. You see,' advised Hubu and began to walk in the direction of his home.

Mulilo followed Hubu halting at various places, sometime walking fast, sometime slowly; sometime breathing low,
sometime fast; sometime hiding in the forest, sometime growing taller than the tallest tree in his way; sometime contracting his shape, sometime expanding his size.

Hubu felt happy at this though he was growing impatient for Mulilo's indifference of this kind in greeting his friends' place and people.

No sooner was Mulilo a furlong away from the river than he stopped there. Hubu out of over-joy, for at last succeeding in persuading his friend Hubu in agreeing to satisfy his wish, without looking behind, had already arrived into the waters. Not only that but also he had already called all the water creatures to warmly receive his friend Mulilo. But seeing Mulilo not approaching, they all laughed at Hubu. Then Hubu realised that his bosom friend Mulilo was reluctant to meet his acquaintances, neighbours and relatives.

So he felt sorry. Now it was not the question of Mulilo visiting the place only. It was a question of Hubu's prestige of boasting about his friend's kindness. Instantly Hubu ran to Mulilo.
'Delay not please; follow me as you've promised. None of the water folk will insult you or do any harm to you. They're so kind and eager to receive you.'
'I gather from your behaviour that they must be kind. They might also not be insolent as they are cold-blooded creatures, but I'm afraid I shall have to stop here. This will be in their interest as well as in the interest of our increasing friendship,' Mulilo began to explain.

But Hubu had become so emotional that he did not wish to hear his friend's sober words any longer. Despite Mulilo's insisting to stay at that distance and enjoy the sight of his hosts, Hubu, failing to understand him, demanded that he must greet the anxiously waiting crowd.

Now Mulilo had no other alternative. He arrived at the river. He embraced its bank. He kissed its reeds and grass and he wrapped Hubu and his family in his love. All this he did just to satisfy his friend.

While doing this he was crying: 'All friends don't live close by. All friends don't visit one another. True friends also must remain within their limits and try to be helpful in need.'

Mulilo said this because he knew the consequences of his closely greeting any living being. Well. One by one, the grass, the reeds, the other creatures, together with Hubu's family, got their bodies burnt with the bright flames of Mulilo. Many of them screamed and plunged intb water to cool the burns. Only those who were scared by the screams and did not
come near Mulilo were saved from the disaster. Among them all, the family of obstinate Hubu suffered the most. The flames of Mulilo could not help giving their bodies burns. They were burnt all over. And as soon as they could not bear the agony they dived into the water, but when they came out after Mulilo returned to his place, their bodies had lost their original black colour. They were all copper colour now.

And since then, no water creature is willing to go near Mulilo, let alone Hubu's kind. Whenever Mulilo is seen ablaze, most of the forest beasts look at Hubu's descendants with scorn. Poor hippopotamuses, out of shame, dive deep into the water as if they are begging pardon for their ancestor's action.


## SERVICE BEFORE SELF

There was a chief who had a very loyal messenger. No one could wear his shoes in the matter of service. Not only was he prepared to die for his chief but also for any man, even for a domestic animal, if he could save any one of them from ruin or death in that way.

One day the chief ordered him to carry a message to another chief of his tribe in the area of their origin.
'This is very urgent, messenger. See that you are straight on your way to my brother chief,' ordered the messenger's master.

Obeying him, the messenger left the village without taking any food with him. What he had was only a spear that he used to carry with him on any errand. The distance was so long that it demanded a walk of a few days and nights. Once he thought he should walk more than he could during daytime. So he continued walking even after sunset. En route, he caught sight of a faint light. And he was tired too. Therefore, he went in the direction of the light. As he approached a village, he discovered that a hut with a faint light was standing on a hill in the outskirts of the village. Without disturbing any one of the sleeping villagers he came to the hut on the hill and knocked at the door.
'May I have some water to drink?' He asked an old man who opened the door.
'Why not? Come in, please,' was the response.
After serving the messenger with water, the old man baffled.
'Why are you baffling?' asked the messenger.
'Well. You know, our tradition is to be a host of even a stranger. It's a pity that we haven't any food in the home. We
ate the little we had. And no one dares go to the fields at night for fear of a cruel wizard roaming about the village.'
'Don't you worry. I appreciate your difficulty,' consoled the messenger. 'If you provide a corner to me for the night . . .
'This goes without saying. What I feel sorry about is that you shall have to spend the night hungry. The wizard! Oh! The spirits of the spirits are also scared, and he goes on taking toll of our brothers, sisters and children!'
'And nobody is able to kill him?'
'No. Not even the Paramount Chief or his diviners!'
'If I try?'
'Oh! Please don't. I don't want anyone to point at me saying I allowed my guest to be killed by the wizard.
'Thanks for your regard for the guest. I appreciate your philosophy of hospitality. However, I wish to try to do a service in turn.'
'How can I agree with you, fully knowing the result of such a service is death ?'
'It is because you don't know me. With the kind permission and assistance of my ancestral spirits I have saved my village from strange sufferings and unknown outbreaks of devils. Show me your fields and I'll do the rest. I cannot kill anyone without his offending me. If he obstructs me in gathering some mealie cobs, I'll prove a match for him,' said the messenger, took his spear and stood up to hear from his old host.

When both were out of the house the old man pointed out his fields to the messenger with terror in his eyes.

The green cobs of maize looked very attractive in the moonlight. As soon as the messenger arrived, he took the path between the two fields of his host. After picking some rich cobs he came near a watch-hut, temporarily erected by the old man. There he saw fire in the fire-place. He added some fuel and roasted the husks. When the husks were fairly hot he buried them in the hot ash and looked here and there.

And he saw the wizard carrying a corpse on his shoulders with great difficulty, perhaps because of its heaviness. His fast breathing was heard by the messenger who as a precaution entered the watch-hut and hid under a broken bed lying in the corner.

Now, it so happened that the wizard, though he was a wizard, seemed losing his energy to carry the corpse to his destination. At the very moment he saw the blazing fire-place outside the watch-hut. Knowing that no-one dared live in that hut at night, the wizard thought it wise to carry the corpse there and roast it for food. And this he did. He brought the corpse to
the watch-hut and lay it on the broken bed to facilitate himself to tear it into pieces of his liking.

As soon as he entered the hut he had a smell of a living human being, but he laughed and said to himself: 'Don't be silly! How can a living human being be here at this time? I don't see anyone. Perhaps, my kill is still alive and that's why there's the smell. Never mind. I'll just now put an end to my doubts.'

Saying this he began to tear the dead body with his long nails and teeth. When he was doing this, the blood from the dead body poured on the messenger under the bed, until then he was lying like a log, breathing so slowly, but as the blood poured into his nose also he turned his body. This made the bed shake a bit. The shaking turned into fidgeting at once. Now the wizard began to fear. He thought that the spirit in the dead body was gaining strength to make the man alive.
'I see!' he suspected. 'If this is the body of one of the diviners of the chief of the village, he would become alive and kill me. Therefore, it would be better if I make way.'

While he was considering what to do, the bed and the body had begun to make movements because the messenger had started to play on the fear of the wizard. Because the situation did not console the wizard, he rushed out of the hut. The messenger now sneezed because of the corpse's blood in his nose. This frightened the wizard who began to run instantly. And when he looked back he saw the messenger in hot pursuit of him. Mistaking the messenger for the dead man come to life, the wizard ran as fast as his legs could carry him, left the area and disappeared for ever.

Then the messenger ate the green grains of mealies and returned to his host who breathed well when he saw his guest safely arrived. He was overjoyed, when the messenger narrated how he had chased away the wizard.
'What can I do for you? I am sure our chief would be pleased to meet and reward you for this gallantry,' said the old villager.
'Thank you for your praise-words. I have to go a long way. What I did was just a normal thing. You received me warmly; I did a service to you. Thus, our account is squared. This is how the world goes on, you see. So, good-bye,' said the messenger and left his host to fulfill his errand.

## HOW THE PEOPLE WERE DIVIDED

For a few years it so happened that the children, in a thickly populated area, continued to die. After some time this became unbearable for the parents. After a year or two the whole area seemed to be without children playing around. Eventually, the grown-ups in the area became desperate When no medicine could save any child from sickness, they all got together to find a way out of the disaster.
'This means the witches and wizards live amidst us,' an old man expressed his mind.
'Perhaps they are in bigger number here than anywhere else,' added another old man.
'Generally the old men and women turn to this dirty profession,' contrasted a young father.
'I agree with you. Some of our old folk must be witches and wizards,' voiced another young father.
'Quite right. Otherwise how could there be such a number of old people extending their life?' supported the first young man.
'It is a standing grievance that, with the passing of the time, we don't deal with witches and wizards as our greatgrandfathers used to do.'
'Do you mean that the old people should commit suicide if they don't meet natural death?' feared an old man.
'Tell us, then, how can anybody remain alive when all the people of his or her age have already joined with their ancestral spirits everywhere?'
'Does this mean that such people possess charms and live longer by witchcraft?'
'Of course. There's no doubt about it. Otherwise why do children continue to die hour after hour, though they have been

## doctored and cared for the most?

Is it not known that by killing others, the witches and wizards prolong their life?
'Such people must be rejected by the society downright.'
'They should be driven away into the bush and be left there to look after themselves,' agreed all.
'Before you are in a hurry to act, find out such witches and wizards who live upon our children,' interrupted the oldest man of the area.

This last statement bewildered all who had gathered to find a way out of the chaos. Again, the same situation prevailed. Even the newly born children continued to die. The people became alert again when their Chief's only son of fourteen died. The Chief summoned all of his subjects to decide and act on the issue once and for all. After whole day's and night's deliberations, at the following sunrise it was resolved that all the grandparents be removed because they were dangerous to life.

We will act upon your demand. We will quit the land of our own. But do you think this will guarantee that children will stop dying?' asked the oldest man.
'That's right. After all, we don't know who is guilty of the death toll,' shouted another old man.
'Therefore, will it not be wise to hunt for the persons responsible for our children's death and then drive them away? To drive away all our old people is not wise,' said the third old man.

At this the young folk stood up with rage to drive the old people instantly away, but the Chief, being wiser than any other of the gathering, quietened them and said: 'Have faith in the wisdom of the old. After all we have suffered more than we may suffer now. Let us invite a specialist, from outside our area, to come and pick out the witches and wizards from us. Then we will be justified for any of our rash actions.'

The young blood took time but ultimately cooled down and the Chief's judgment was accepted. In a few days one of the best available diviners was found sitting with the people discussing their problem with them and deeply meditating over the heard words. The diviner was said to have powers of the most powerful ancestors and gods. He had a small walkingstick which, according to him, worked as a magic wand.

After a wonderful reception, introduction to the people and description of the calamity in the area, the diviner was given a nice house to live in and a big number of attendants to look after him. Nevertheless the day after his arrival, a child of the Chief's daughter died without suffering from any illness or
accident. When asked, the diviner said, I knew that a child would die before I embarked upon the terrible task.' Especially the old people marvelled at the statement but the young villagers demanded how the medicine man knew that and if he knew it why did he not avert it?

The diviner coldly replied, 'My magic stick told me about it but the witches and wizards had already stolen away the child's spirit, so I could not save him.
'I give you a day. Then you should start your work before we lose any more children,' the Chief informed the diviner.
'Then hear from me, you all the people of the area,' instructed the diviner. 'I shall go from door to door and inspect each of the houses in and out. Then the households possessing charms responsible for the premature deaths shall be revealed.'
'We will remove such persons from our area at once,' determined the people.

The following day all the people from the area left their homes for their gardens so that the diviner might have no difficulty or hindrance in inspecting the houses to his satisfaction. The diviner, during his round, was able to bring out a few strange charms from a couple of houses in which there were no old, but young, persons living.
'But these are young people who have never been thought of possessing charms,' the Chief challenged the diviner.
'And we have not seen these charms in our homes, let alone their use,' cried the house-owners.

The diviner calmly replied, 'Charms are not the monopoly of the old. And there is no reason for suspecting me. I had four attendants with me during the search. Ask them if you wish.'
'There is no doubt the charms were found from those respective homes,' said the attendants without the people asking them.

Though the people were not satisfied with the outcome of the diviner's inspection, those home-dwellers were ordered to quit. For no fault of theirs they were forced to obey the Chief. They took their property, left the village and rehabilitated in a remote forest as a very small unit.

After few days, again, the diviner discovered with his keen eyes some charms from some other homes which, then were vacated by their dwellers to build their houses in the deep forest and live in a smaller unit. This went on for days, until four families of the Chief and his cousins were left unchecked. The same method of inspection was followed in the whole area and the people were divided into smaller units.

You would naturally ask, 'Why was the problem solved thereby?'

Listen. No problem can be solved in this way, and that too by an outsider. In fact the diviner was a cunning man who had placed charms in some parts of the buildings the night before their inspection. So he took little time in finding them. He was simply interested, thereby, in destroying the society.

The Chief suspected, though late, the treachery of the diviner. So he asked his cousins: 'Tonight, you watch the movements of the diviner, and, if need arises, awake me.'

The instruction was followed with utmost attention. In the middle of the night the diviner was found hiding something in the roof of one of their houses. The cousins of the Chief caught him and brought him to the Chief who, after hearing the case, speared the diviner to death. And in the morning he sent messages to his subjects, who had evacuated their homes, to come and rehabilitate the area but they thought it safer to live where they had settled by that time.


## THE TORTOISE FLIES

This is the story of the time when the chiefs used to have birds, beasts as well as reptiles in their courts. In one of such courts in one of such chiefs, a tortoise was one of the counsellors. Whenever any occasion of showing wisdom arose, the tortoise would say: I'm the wisest of all your counsellors. Isn't it so, my chief?'

The chief, looking into the size and flexibility of the body of the tortoise, would say: 'That's why you're among my counsellors.'
'Then ask me any odd thing to do and I'll prove my worth,' the tortoise would demand.
'Indeed, your talent will certainly be used,' the chief would say graciously and the tortoise would rejoice.

This atmosphere prevailed and the tortoise began to grow proud, prouder and prouder, day by day, until he crossed the limits of regard and respect for the chief. Every time the chief ignored his boasting, the tortoise beat his own drum before the subjects of the chief. Gradually he developed the idiocy of interrupting the chief and other counsellors.

Once the chief was having deliberations with his counsellors, seriously, on the border dispute with a chief of the neighbouring area. The tortoise grew overwise and said, 'Why don't you use my wisdom in this matter? Do you think I'm less talented than these counsellors?'

Though the chief was greatly disturbed at the interruption he politely but sarcastically said, 'You're right. How can I ignore you and your ability? I entrust you with the duty of guarding the border post and bringing the news from the enemy's side.'
'Off I go to prove my worth, in this case,' said the tortoise
and began to leave the court.
'Stop!' interrupted another counsellor of the chief. 'If necessary, you may cross the border flying and bring the news from the enemy's court also. Can't you?' Who was this? (The jackal, of course.)
'That I bet,' replied the tortoise boastfully, but grew pale, thinking of his inability to fly, and left the place.

When his wife saw her worried husband, she also got baffled at first but soon asked: 'What is the matter with you today? Where have you left your jolly mood?'
'There's nothing like that, dear!' he replied, and added, 'however, if I'm late this afternoon don't you worry. After all chief's court is like that.' Then he went to a fig tree where his friend the eagle was living.

As the tortoise was approaching, the eagle flew low to greet him: 'Good day, my bosom friend! I see you after a long time. How are things?'
'Things are in their order. As for my late visit, after all the chief's court is the chief's court, you see. I hope everything is okay with you and the family.'
'Well, well. As long as the river is not short of water there are lots of fish to eat. And what else do I need to maintain my family? However, I don't find you in mood today. Pray, tell me the worry; I shall try to bury it for you.'
'That's what you've always done. Kind friends are a godly gift everywhere for everybody. And I do have a worry, friend,' answered the tortoise.

At this moment, the jackal was seen approaching fast. Breathing fast, he cried, 'Counsellor tortoise! The chief has asked me to inform you that if you fail in flying over the border you will be put to death.'
'Now I understand your anxiety, tortoise!' said the eagle, astonished. 'What a strange chief you have! How can he ask for the impossible?'
'Well, he has asked me, and l've promised to fly. This is the reason I've come to you; to seek your advice,' explained the tortoise.
'Don't you worry. After all, you're my friend. I'll try my level best to assist you.'
'But how? The more I think of the flight the more I am scared.'
'Hear then. It's but natural that you cannot fly. I think the jackal wants to outdo you, but never mind. I'll fulfill for you the command of the chief. You've just to ride on my back.'
'Really!' exclaimed the tortoise.
'Let's try if you wish,' responded the eagle.
'Done!' said the tortoise, climbed on the back of the eagle and asked: 'take me to the chief's court. Let him and his, counsellors find that there is nothing impossible in the world.'
' I'll do that and do that just now, but remember one thing. Soon you're on my back and have held tight some of my feathers in your mouth, don't utter a word or you'll be finished before the flight is won,' cautioned the eagle.
'That I promise,' said the tortoise and took his seat with great difficulty on the eagle. 'Now I'Il show to the chief that I can fly.'
'Have you got hold of my feathers in a way that you don't lose the grip?' asked the eagle before flying.
'I've done,' replied the tortoise.
When the two approached the chief's court, the eagle proclaimed: 'May I draw your attention, the chief and his counsellors! Look here and rejoice at the wisdom of the tortoise. He shall definitely fly over the border and bring you the news of the enemy's next move against you.

As the village was watching with amazement the tortoise flying low, a young girl exclaimed: 'I think, the tortoise is the wisest of us all.'
'And so I am. Am I wrong, my chief?' cried the tortoise out of madness of joy.

No sooner did the tortoise say this, than he fell on a rock and broke his bones. Despite the sad end of the flight, the feat had pleased the chief so much that he called the witch-doctor to cure the tortoise.

After examining the tortoise, and consulting the spirits, the witch-doctor declared: 'The bones can be set but to protect the back of the tortoise, something more difficult will be required to do.
'You just suggest and I'll do everything for the one who has obeyed me well,' commanded the chief.
'Then ask the whole village to get together to feast and dance, to please all the ancestral spirits to endow upon the tortoise the gift of a shell. That would protect him for ever.'

This is how the tortoise got his shell, to protect all the parts of his body.

## THE FRUIT-CHILDREN

In a village, there lived a couple who had married for some years but had no children. Both the husband and the wife were sad at this. So the wife insisted upon her husband marrying another woman. After long reluctance he agreed to the proposal and married a girl who gave birth to a boy in about a year. So the man was convinced that his first wife was barren. Eventually, he began to love the second wife more than the first.

The husband ordered the senior wife to help her junior in nursing the child, fetching the water, pounding the mealies, etc. In short, most of the domestic work was required to be done by the first wife, while the second one just sat by the side of her husband and passed the time chatting. If the first wife asked for anything, he would not pay attention to her requirement. If the second wife asked for one fig he would try to bring two.

So the senior wife thought of propitiating ancestral spirits to save her from the situation. At mid-night she began to wake up, go to the shrine and say: 'O Spirits of my parents and their parents and theirs! Please assist me, with all your might, to be happy.'

In the meantime, a heavy rain fell and the houses in the village ruined to earth. The crops in the gardens were finished. Now the village headman called the men and said, 'we've lost almost everything, except our lives. I don't think anyone likes to lose his life. Therefore, I ask you to follow me. Let's inhabit another place.'

The men agreed and moved, to build another village. When this was done, they returned to collect their belongings and ask their families to follow them to the new village. When
all began to vacate the village, the senior wife also began to gather the few bits and clothes she had.

Seeing this, her husband shouted: 'What are you preparing for?'
'To follow you to the new village,' replied the woman, and hurried to bundle her things.
'Stay where you are and die when you want. I haven't built a house for you. I don't want you, understand?' warned the man, and joined the villagers with his junior wife and son, to settle in the new village.

The senior wife felt sorry but did not lose heart. When the village people went out of sight she rushed to the shrine and prayed to her ancestral spirits: 'O Spirits of my parents and their parents and theirs! Please build a house for me or send the death to take me away.' And she wept loudly. She became so nervous that while weeping she slept, and when she awoke she found a good house standing before her. So she began to live a lonely life in a solitary place gathering wild fruits.

At night she heard an old man's voice, 'Don't you worry. I, with my folk, will protect you and provide for you, I with my own group of spirits.

The woman got consolation and continued her struggle for existence. Whenever she saw a leopard rushing on her or heard a lion's roar nearby, she used to close her eyes and prayed to the spirits for help, and to her surprise the cause of panic always disappeared. Therefore, she spent most of her time praying.

While roaming for food she found seeds of intonge, a melon-like fruit. These she planted near her house. In a short time the intonge fruit came out. They were so sweet even when still green. Half of the lutanga (singular of intonge) was found enough to feed her hunger. Gradually, she began to put on weight.

After a few months a man in the village asked her husband:
'Where's your old wife?'
'I did not bring her with me,' replied the man.
'What? I thought she had gone to visit her relatives at a distance!
'No, I left her behind to die.'
'What a cruel man you are!'
'I cannot maintain both the wives.
'Don't be a coward. Let's go and see her at least. Come on.'

So the two men came to the old village where they found a comfortable house surrounded by greenery. At the threshold
was sitting the senior wife. They were amazed to see her healthy. The husband could not stand the sight out of his shame for neglecting her. He dragged his companion away and without speaking a word returned home.

The woman did not mind her husband's attitude much but felt lonelier than before as the two men left the place. She rushed to the shrine and prayed: 'O Spirits of my parents and their parents and theirs! Please populate my house and make me happy.' Saying this, she cut her little finger, and propitiated the spirits with her blood.

Having satisfied with the sacrifice of their child, the spirits began to work out the plan that would not keep her miserable any longer. When she plucked an intonge fruit, took it to the shrine, and cut it to offer it to the spirits to appease them, there came out a triplet of girls of ten years of age. The woman was startled at the phenomenon. She could not believe her eyes. Before she got afraid, a voice was heard: 'These are a gift from your dead ancestors. Now populate your house and be happy. Then she breathed with satisfaction, embraced the girls and hurried them into the house. Now she got so busy looking after the girls that she complained: 'Have the days and nights grown short?' Only the laughters of the spirits cared to answer

Nevertheless, she began to feel sad after some time. Often she said to herself: 'It was the birth of a boy that made my husband love the younger wife and hate me. I have children but they are all girls.'

One day out of despair, she prayed to the spirits: ' $O$ Spirits of my parents and their parents and theirs! Can't you give me sons, and satisfy my motherly instinct?'

At once the triplet of boys fell on the ground from the shrine and stood before her. At the same time a voice was heard: 'Here are your sons. Now please yourself, but don't be greedy. Don't ask for any more children. And remember not to offend them.'

The daughters and sons began to grow bigger and bigger day and night. One house could not accommodate all. So another house was built. The story spread over the area. The boys and girls of the surrounding villages heard the stories about the three sisters and three brothers very attentively. Some of the girls wished they would have the boys as their husbands. Some of the boys began to visit the girls and helped them in their gardens to win their hands. The houses were repaired and a variety of crops were grown. The home of the woman seemed to be a hive of young hearts.

After a few months, two of the girls were married to the young chiefs and two of the boys married the chiefs' daughters. The woman felt very proud. Now the two were left, a boy and a girl who could not get suitors of their choice. So the mother got angry one day. In an unhappy mood she yelled: 'I am really an unlucky woman who had her children from intanga,' and ran to the shrine.

So the brother and sister began to sing a mourning song: 'Bamuka Mboloma, tulibana ba'ntanga bweleni,

Kamubwela, tuli bana ba'ntanga.'
(Mother, Mboloma! We are children from intanga.
Come back. Come back. We are children from intanga).
The mother returned to the children who continued to repeat the song. She tried to console them and divert their mind, but in vain. As if their song was heard, the married sons and daughters also gathered hurriedly on the spot and began to sing the same song together. Singing and weeping, they came near the intonge fruit which at once burst open. To the sorrow of the woman, the young sons and daughters entered the fruit. Then it closed itself. The mother could not bear the loss. She could not believe the startling disappearance of her children. At once she smashed all the litanga on a stone, with a hope to get her children back, but only the seeds scattered over the ground.


## BEWARE OF THE HOME BREAKER

There was a very beautiful girl in a village. No handsome young man was a match for her. So she was growing up with no betrothal. She had turned down so many offers of marriage that when she married a stranger, the rest of the young men began to envy him. This gave the married man a sense of pride that he was the only man whom the girl accepted as her husband. The pride was mixed with love, and love with satisfactory behaviour leading to happiness.
'Is he very handsome?'
'None of us is as handsome as he is?'
'What is matchless in this man that the girl of our village madly married him?'

Did the parents think of the consequences?'
'All will repent, perhaps.'
These were the talks of the time among the males of the village.

Here, the couple were growing contented with each other. The husband was ever ready to be as useful as he could be in the domestic work. The wife was conscientiously trying to satisfy the man with his needs. If he forbade her to work in the fields, she stopped him doing her work, out of love. There was neither a difference of opinion nor a reproach, let alone a quarrel. If one was cross, the other kept quiet. If one was not feeling well, the other nursed to make the partner recover soon. And when both of them sang songs of love at the end of the day, the whole village flocked to dance around them.

In due course, the wife became pregnant. The husband left no stone unturned to satisfy her wish during that period.

When she gave birth to a boy, he nursed both so well that the woman came out of the bed after a short period. While all the men were gossiping about the affair, the women wished each of them had a husband like that faithful one. When the men argued: 'If he were a real man he would not have obeyed his wife blindly,' the women said he was the only man who knew the meaning of marriage. Though the couple heard about this they continued to live in their own way; warmly, kindly, lovingly. Both behaved as if they were companions, nurses and mothers to each other.

If the women asked the man about his wife, he would say, 'Oh! God is gracious. It is a privilege to have such an amicable wife.'

If the men asked the woman about her husband's attitude towards her, she would say, 'I am exceptionally lucky. Very few girls are so fortunate.'

It was not that they were having no interlude of tension, but this was immediately softened with apologies and discernment.

One day, the wife said, 'For about two months we haven't tasted honey.'
'Yes, yes, and you'll have it this afternoon,' promised the husband. He took a spear and started off

He went deep into the forest but, to his disappointment, he could not find a single honey-comb, big or small. He wished to surprise his wife with more than one comb, but he did not find any. The sun was lowering down to set in the west, and he was far away from his village. So grudgingly he returned. On his way, he came to a stream. He thought of taking a bath. When he selected a nice spot to bathe, he saw a beautiful woman, more beautiful than his wife, bathing in the stream. She smiled at him shyly and moved aside. He watched her symmetrical body and went mad. He looked in front, at the back, right and left, high and low to make sure that he was on earth and not in the world of heaven. He stood there spell-bound and then took to his heels, thinking that the woman was a spirit.

The whole night he lay awake thinking and fearing the spirit. In the morning, however, he left the house before the sun rose, telling his wife that he was going to try his luck for the honey. When he arrived at the stream he heard a womanly voice saying 'Hallo!'

The man went near the woman and asked: 'Who are you?'
'Guess!' she said and smiled attractively. This bewitched the man.
'Are you alone?' asked the man.
'Yes and no.'
'How?'
'Of course I live here alone but now you are here, so I'm not alone.
'I see.'
'Yes.'
'Are you married?'
'Why do you ask that? Are you not married?'
'I'm married.'
'Then, why do you ask me about marriage?'
'Just to know. Anyway, may I know your name?'
'For what?' she replied and made her hips and breasts dance. She looked extraordinarily beautiful
'Just to know.'
'Sanda Apolala.'
'What an unusual name. Where are your parents?'
'Why do you ask that?'
'Just to know.'
'They died when I was a child.'
'Where is your house?'
'In the middle of the bush where the open space is.'
'May I accompany you to your house?' asked the man, expecting response in affirmative.
'Why?'
'Just to know where you live.'
'But why?'
'Are you married?'
No,' said the girl and ran away from the stream, to disappear quickly into the bush.

The man began to look for honey-combs, all the time thinking of the girl of the stream. At last he saw one. He managed to get rid of the bees and took the comb down. It was only then he realised how many stings his body had suffered whilst getting the comb, with his mind captured by the woman. He took the comb home.

Happily, his wife asked, 'couldn't you get any more combs?'

Having his mind engaged in cherishing and developing the image of the stream-girl, the husband got annoyed, slapped his humble wife for the first time and went out of the house. The woman failed to understand and got hurt physically as well as mentally. She had never found her husband so strange. It was an awkward situation, difficult to improve. Yet the wife controlled her emotional nature and approached her

## husband.

I'm sorry for the annoyance. Forgive me and behave with me as my noble husband that you have always been,' she said and sat down by his side. Apparently, the man expressed his sorrow too, for what had happened, and entered the house with his wife.

In the following morning, he remembered the streamgirl and went to see her without telling his wife anything. The wife could not understand this, but did not mind his going. Love is blind, you see. It does not find fault with the lover or the loved. If at all it does, forgiveness follows, the fault is forgotten and love prevails.

However, this was the beginning of something unexpected. Often the man visited the stream-girl. Often he quarrelled with his good wife for no apparent reason. This had no end.

One day, the man asked the stream-girl, 'won't you accept my offer to marry me?'
'But you've got a wife!' exclaimed the girl sarcastically.
'Wife I have, but your beauty is excellent, your love is superior, your approach to me is natural,' argued the man.
'How can a girl marry a man who has a wife?' asked the girl again.
'Do you mean I should divorce her before you marry me?'
'That's up to you. I don't demand it. You are proposing marriage, not I,' said she and turned aside her head.
'I see, I understand what you mean,' said the man and returned home.

On the way he thought and thought. On what grounds could he divorce his kind wife? For days he continued to find fault with her, though there was none, insulted her, engineered quarrels and beat her too. For some time the wife tolerated this, but after all she was also a human being and a woman. Her patience exhausted, she gradually began to pay him in the same coin. At last, a divorce was found as an alternative.

Pleased with the achievement, the man ran to the streamgirl and said, 'I've divorced her, divorced her; now come and be my wife!' And he went to embrace her.

She moved away from him. He went near. She moved further.
'Why do you do this now? I've fulfilled your wish, now you do mine,' said the man and tried to catch her in his arms.

She went into the deep water. He followed and caught her by arms, but she dived into the water. And lo! What did he behold? What was in his hand? There were two pieces of
bleeding reeds. When he threw them into the water, he heard the girl's voice.

I told you that I was Sanda Apolala, the home-breaker. I have done the job worthy of my name. I have spoiled your life and broken your home satisfactorily. I have never thought of marrying anyone. My interest is to break the home and happiness of foolish men like you.'

The man beat his chest, pulled off his hair and returned home. He had lost his wife, who did not like to return to him again. So he went crazy, insane, simply to cry: 'Beware of the home breaker! Beware of the home breaker! Beware of the home breaker!' and died in a very bad condition.


## QUARREL IS EVERYWHERE

In a deep forest, a buffalo chased a Zebra until it fell down and said, 'I can understand if a leopard or a lion chases a grasseater. Have you gained anything by chasing me?'
'Haaaa!' cried the buffalo, 'I was testing my strength.'
'Do you know, how much your test for you has lost me?' retorted the zebra, he stood up and walked to show that he was hurt badly in a foreleg.
'Why should I care to know? The men don't care to know our agony when they spear us.'
'Right, but have you seen them quarrelling among themselves? Whereas, you buffaloes are always in the habit of terrorising my folk, the deer and other small beasts, though we all belong to the grass-eating stock.'

While the buffalo looked down into his feet out of shame for his rash behaviour, he heard a giraffe saying, 'Don't be mistaken, zebra! Men do terrorise one another, their own folk.'
'Really?' The buffalo got courage.
'For you this may be a fact stranger than fiction,' replied the giraffe affirmatively.
'How do you know that?' asked the zebra and drew near the giraffe, forgetting the tussle.
'You may be right. Yes, but how do you know that?' added the buffalo and came near, forgetting his shame.
'Don't you see, l've a long neck, long enough to cast my eyes into the village where the men live?' answered the giraffe, stretching his neck as high as possible in the direction of a village nearby. I've seen them teasing, troubling and harrassing their own people who pant at the end, like us, you see.'
'I'm interested to see them behaving as we do.' The buffalo showed interest in what the giraffe had said.
'So do I,' supported the lame zebra.
'I can show you that, but in their case it's the third party who is responsible for the fight,' said the giraffe, showing wisdom on his face.
'Whosoever is making them fight. We want to see how they fight. You've to prove what you've said,' said both the buffalo and the zebra.
'That's not difficult. If you agree with me to be a third party in their affairs, I can show you how two men come to their wit's end,' demanded the giraffe.
'Done!' agreed the buffalo and the zebra.
'Then follow me. I don't believe in taking time,' said the giraffe, and took them to a place where a hunter had set a trap. A rabbit had already fallen into it.
'Now don't ask me why, but set the rabbit free,' ordered the giraffe.
'How can this action make the men quarrel?' asked the buffalo.
'Yes. How can this make the men fight?' added the zebra with suspicion.
'As I said, don't ask how or why. Do as I say if you want to see them quarrelling,' commanded the giraffe.

So the buffalo and the zebra set the rabbit free, after some struggle.
'Now follow me,' ordered the giraffe.
On their way they came across a dead lizard. 'Pick this dead body up and come with me to the river,' said the giraffe.

The buffalo picked the lizard's body up and placed it on the zebra's back, to carry it to the river. At the riverside, a fisherman had set a basket to catch fish. There was a big fish lying dead in it.
'Do you see the basket?' asked the giraffe.
'Yes,' replied the other two.
'Do you see the fish in it?'
'Yes.'
'Replace the fish with the lizard.'
'Don't be silly, you giraffe,' reproached the buffalo. 'How can this make the men to be enemies of their own folk?'
'I also don't understand that,' supported the zebra.
'You do as I say and then if I am wrong you'll have every right to expose my folly,' said the giraffe with confidence.

So the buffalo took down the dead lizard from the zebra's back, placed it in the fisherman's basket, and put the fish on the zebra's back. Then the three returned to the hunter's trap.
'Now quickly put the fish in the trap. And let's hide in the
nearest bush. Don't you see the hunter with his spear approaching?' warned the giraffe.

So the buffalo and the zebra obeyed the giraffe hurriedly, and then all the three hid in the bush.

The hunter was as much annoyed as surprised to find the fish in the trap set for the animal.
'How can this be?' Thought the hunter, 'I think the fisherman has tricked me. He's so jealous! And he wants to eat the flesh of an animal trapped by somebody else. I must teach him a lesson.' Saying this he raised his spear high in the name of his dead father, and rushed towards the river to stab the fisherman.

Now the fisherman was also annoyed, as well as surprised, finding the dead lizard in the basket. He also suspected the hunter for the accident. He murmured: 'I must fix the hunter up. He should know that I am able to outwit him, otherwise he'll continue to play the mischief and harrass me all the time to come.' Thus, the fisherman headed for the hunter, shaking the mud from his staff.

Both the hunter and the fisherman met half way. They looked at each other with stern eyes. The hunter raised his spear and the fisherman his staff and both cried: 'You wretched' in such a way that none of them understood what was said but simply boiled their blood and raised their hair. Words were exchanged. Swearing followed, and the staff and the spear met in the air to make noise. It was good that the lion roared from the grass, otherwise, both of them would have been wounded, according to their strength or weakness.
'Am I right?' said the giraffe, showing the hunter and the fisherman swearing to take revenge, but running away for fear of the lion.

Neither the buffalo nor the zebra said a word. All the three began to graze keeping their feelings to themselves.

## THE POISONER

This is the story of the time when the fish-eagle and the honey-bird were friends. Often they visited each other, exchanged gifts and never got tired of talking, even about their private life. They were also enjoying feasts of fish relished with honey. The ties of friendship between the heads of families covered warmly their mates and young ones.

This was envied by someone. He grew jealous of the good relations between the fish-eagle and the honey-bird. 'How is it that their relations have remained healthy for long,' he thought, 'while each of my friends has broken away from me in few, days' time?' He began to devise plans of making friends with one of the families. But, because of his own crookedness, he could not succeed in maintaining the friendship. So he grew cunning. Do you know who was he? A rabbit, you see. He thought and thought. At last he came to a decision that at least the friendship between the fish-eagle and the honey-bird be brought to an end. He thought of hundreds of ways of doing this. Then he watched those family members visiting one another. He selected a place on the side of the road, dug a burrow, and began to live in it.

One day, the rabbit saw the honey-bird heading for the fish-eagle's, with a comb of honey on his head. While he was on his way, it started raining. The honey-bird tried to seek shelter. Seeing him struggling for safety, the rabbit came out of the burrow and said: 'How can you save your honey from spoiling in this way?
'What else can I do?' asked the honey-bird in turn.
'Why? Come along and stay in my burrow until the rain has stopped. I pity you, poor bird!'

Though the honey-bird did not like the tone of the rabbit,
he accepted the invitation and entered the burrow.
Then the rabbit asked: 'Tell me, if you don't mind, where are you going?'
'To my friend, the fish-eagle. He is so nice!' replied the honey-bird.
'So nice? Who? The fish-eagle?' Asked the rabbit, and laughed.
'Why? Why do you say so? I know him since my early age.'
'I know that you know him but I also know him. It's a pity that you consider him as your fast friend, perhaps, because you are over-kind,' said the rabbit and looked at the honey-bird slyly.
'Please, don't use bad words about my friend. I pray you.'
'Yes. Because you haven't heard him saying bad words about you.
'What? I don't believe you!'
'How can you? You can't because you always look to the white side of the persons, you come in contact with. Do you know what he was telling me about you yesterday?'
'No!' The honey-bird felt weary.
'Listen, then. I seated him yesterday at the very spot you are sitting now, and just for the same reason-because it was raining.'
'What did he say?'
He said: 'I don't like the honey-bird at all, but how can I stop him paying visits? We receive him warmly out of courtesy, otherwise there is no genuine love for the honey-birds in my family.'
'Is that so?' shouted the honey-bird angrily.
'Well. I wish it was not so. I don't want to come in the way of friends. Friendship is such a precious thing!'
'He must have said something else also,' said the honeybird anxiously.

Of course, but as I said, I don't want to poison you against a person whom you know as your fast friend,' said the rabbit and turned aside his head.
'Now I don't think the wretched fish-eagle is my fast friend. Tell me the whole story-from beginning to end,' persuaded the honey-bird.
'Well.' The fish-eagle continued to say: 'We like honey, but you know, when the honey-bird brings the comb containing bees, they sting my children who weep and remain sore for days. I wish the combs are not brought to us any more.'
'Umph! Then why should I take the honey to the fisheagles? Let them eat fish and fish alone. I leave this honey for
you, brother rabbit, and as the rain has stopped now, I think I must return home. Goodbye,' said the honey-bird, and flew fast in the direction of his nest.

The rabbit breathed deep to his success.
Thus, the honey-birds stopped visiting the fish-eagles. One day the mother fish-eagle asked her husband: 'How is it that none of the honey-birds is seen for long?'
'I also wonder. This is unusual,' replied he.
'Can't you go and find out the reason? There must be something wrong, I'm afraid. Whether one of them is ill or all of them are killed, we don't know.'
'All right. I go just now. Thank god, that we have a good number of fish this morning. I shall take a load of them for the honey-birds,' said he, and set off.

This fish-eagle was also intercepted by the rabbit who told him about the complaint of the honey-bird for his young ones suffering from sore throat because of the bad fish the fisheagle took as gifts to his family.

So the fish-eagle also left the load of fish for the rabbit and returned home.

Thus, the rabbit broke the flourishing friendship between the fish-eagle and honey-bird families who fell apart for ever.


## THE THREE-YEAR NSHIMA

This is the story of how nshima (a dish of boiled and thick mealie-meal porridge) remained hot for three years.

There was a man who had a fanatic idea about having a wife. Whenever somebody reminded him of his attainment of marriage age he would say, 'Can you find a girl who knows how to cook nshima that would not become cold for three years?'

This was a strange question to answer. If a girl left her natural bashfulness, because of his prowess and handsomeness, he would ask: 'Can you cook nshima that would remain hot for three years?'

What would the girl say? Nothing.
Day after day, month after month and year after year went by. Yet he remained a bachelor as before. Some called him 'fool' and some called him 'silly', and some swore at him in his absence. Virtually this man was always the topic of conversation for the young and the old, men and women. The girls had so much love for him. The men had all praise for him. Nonetheless, the problem of his marriage remained unsolved.

In the neighbouring village lived a girl with her grandmother, who was known in the area for her wits. Her granddaughter loved the man of our story since she had seen him for the first time. She was anxious to marry him before any other girl could make him her own, but she did not know how to cook nshima that would last for three years without getting cold. So she was sad and sorry all the time.
'You are known for wits grandma! Can't you teach your grand-daughter how to cook such nshima?' asked the girl one day.
'As far as I am concerned, there is no one on this earth who can cook such a food, dear. And therefore my affectionate
advice is that you choose another boy of your age, marry him, and be happy,' replied the grandmother.
'Either I marry this man or remain a spinster all my life,' resolved the girl.
'The other young men will not let you live in peace. They'll give you a lot of trouble.
'Let them try, and face the consequences.'
'They will make you a mother without marriage with any man.'
'I'll turn their cunningness down. I'll prove a match for each of them if I were harrassed. But what about your fame as a witty woman? Can't you find a solution to the riddle of nshima?'

The grandmother was now between the horns of a dilemma. She thought and thought. After a long time she said to the girl: 'I think the man's statement must have another meaning. Can it be like this? Perhaps he wants to put all the girls to test, and select the most intelligent one for his wife.'

I don't understand this, ma! Will you be precise, ma?' asked the girl with a hope to find a clue to the riddle.
'If you really want to marry this man, do as I say.'
'Be quick, and I promise to do that.'
'Then don't let any strangers pass through the village without offering each of them hot food.'
'That's what we do, ma! There's nothing new in this. It's our tradition.'
'Yes. It is our tradition but you be conscientious about it.'
'I don't understand how this hospitality can help me winning him over!'
'Well. You do as I have said and then wait for the result. Don't ask me any further questions,' the grandmother brought an end to the conversation in these words.

Though motive behind her grandmother's advice was not at all clear to her, her optimism grew stronger, and she began to watch the strangers passing through the village.
'Wait for a few moments, you the passer-by. Have some food and then go,' she would say to every traveller.

She was speaking in such polite and sweet words that no one dared reject the invitation, no matter how one was in a hurry. She also served the hot food in such a pleasing manner that each of the visitors carried sweet memories of his meeting with the girl.

Some of them would ask: 'Are you married?'
'No,' she would say and add, 'but I am going to marry someone who likes to see that his food does not become cold
for three years.
'Oh! That's not difficult. Send him to me,' each one would say, if not in these words, with the same feelings, 'and I will see that he never eats cold food.'
'Thank you,' she would say.
Thus, the services to the visitors continued. In the like manner, the visitors continued to promise her to feed her husband with fresh and hot dishes of food.

Fanatic as he was, the man suddenly disappeared from the village leaving a message for the girl that he would return home after three years, and that she should wait for him if at all she wished to marry him. Nevertheless, the girl continued to ${ }^{-}$ please the visitors with warm hospitality. In order to meet the requirements of the visitors coming from different environment, she had to work in the gardens and in the house for long hours of the days, often up to midnight.
'Will the gallant man marry me?' she would ask herself, if at all she found time to think of anything else but the visitors. And she herself would answer, 'Yes. He will. How can he neglect $m e$ and $m y$ love? If at all he ignores me and my struggle to marry him, I will try harder to be successful in the affair.'
'Have you seen a girl like this?' the men of the village would say when chatting. 'She has chosen to wait for three years to marry the man. Who knows whether he would marry another girl or not?'

The women folk would pray to their ancestors: 'Bless the girl who has been showing an unparalleled example of chastity and love for her future husband. Here is the test of both the manhood and the womanhood.'

Time flew fast. Not really, but because the girl had no spare time to kill. Thus, for her, days were shorter than the nights and nights were shorter than the days.

Now, wherever the man went he was received warmly and was offered hot food of his liking.
'Oh yes!' each of the hosts would say: 'Your future wife has served us hot food in any part of the day or the night. And therefore, we are obliged to serve you hot food at every mealhour. For you the food will never get cold anywhere.'

One morning the man gave a sudden appearance. He had brought variety of gifts for the girl. Without wasting a minute he approached his fiancée for whom he had developed ardent love, hearing about her from the people of the villages he passed through. The girl also was longing for him. When the four eyes met they went in a trance of love, and did not feel that they were two separate persons.

To the happiness and fanfare of all, the marriage took place. When the beer bowl was passing from one hand to another, a girl murmured: 'How silly I am. I failed to understand the riddle and lost the man whom I constantly loved as my husband!'

Another girl replied: 'And this girl got him.'


## THE LAST-BORN

There was a home in which five boys and no girls were born.
'When shall we have a daughter?' asked the mother to the father of the sons one day.
'Why? That's not in our hand,' replied the father.
'Apart from several other good things associated with the life of the daughter, I am anxious to nurse her in my way, added the wife.
'May your wish be fulfilled!' consoled the husband.
In due course the woman became pregnant. 'I wish it would be a girl,' expected the mother.
'I hope so,' the man pleased the woman.
However, a puppy was born of this human mother.
'Strange! Very strange!' whispered the village doctor. ' $A$ puppy is born!'
'What!' startled the mother.
'I don't believe this!' in rushed the father, hearing the whispers.
'Believe it or not. It's strange, but a fact!' clarified an attendant.

This fiction-like fact was horrifying for the whole village. People from outside began to pour in to satisfy their curiosity. The woman grieved at the incident. The man was upset. Nevertheless, neither of the two got prepared to neglect this last-born. Thus, the puppy got his place in the home of all boys and no girl. Yet the puppy continued to grow in this unhomely atmosphere.

In due course, the father got tired of hearing people talk about the puppy. He thought to get rid of the one that was born of him. The boys in the home began to discriminate
against their brother. The village lads never played with him. The womenfolk imaginatively got busy, spreading rumours and superstitions. All this became unbearable for the parents of the puppy.

Let's keep the pup in isolation,' proposed the father once, 'if not kill him.'
'I don't appreciate the idea, I'd prefer to keep my child alive. So suggest something else,' said the mother hesitatingly.

The man kept quiet out of mercy, and the puppy continued to grow big in the prejudicial atmosphere. After some time, the sons in the home approached the mother.
'May we go to find wives?' they asked.
'Why not? You're grown up enough, my sons. Take this dog also with you,' suggested she.
'How can this be? The very company of him will scare the girls. No one will marry us, the brothers of the dog,' disagreed one of the sons.
'At least he will be a good guard for you. He'll protect you in case . . .' argued the mother.

Okay. We don't mind, but if by mishap he dies, don't blame us,' explained another son.
'I can understand that,' agreed the mother.
So the dog accompanied the boys. They came to a village, singing, whistling and playing. There they came to know that in a house were six young girls of marriage age.
'Let's see if we get them,' proposed the eldest.
'But we are five and if their parents want to give all six girls in the marriage?' queried the middle one.
'Then, we'll choose the better ones and the last may be married to our brother dog,' suggested the youngest.
'There's no harm in trying,' agreed all and went to the house where the six young women lived.

In a short time, they won the love of the girls and their parents. The boys also liked the girls, but how to propose was a question. Bluntness was not in them at all. So they composed songs of love and sang them loudly. The parents of the girls understood what the songs meant.

They also saw their daughters expressing bashful joy on hearing the songs.
'Shall we give our daughters to them in marriage?' asked the father of the girls.
'But they are five. Don't you remember your promise to your mother before she died? All the six daughters should be married to the six young men of the same family,' reminded the mother.
'You talk to our daughters about this riddle. Let's see what they say. Until now we have failed to find such suitors, advised the father gloomily.

Then the mother called the six daughters and explained the situation.
'I'll marry the boy of my age,' replied the eldest one.
'Yes, yes. We'll marry the boys of our age,' the other four voiced their opinion.

Now the mother looked at the youngest daughter, with a sorrowful face.
'Don't be sorry, mother!' said she. 'I'm prepared to marry the dog who is, after all, the brother of the men. If someone has to sacrifice for the happiness of many, I would gladly do so.'

This solved the problem, and the marriage was celebrated, amidst feasting and dancing, amidst the surprise of the villagers, to the dismay of the parents of the daughters for their youngest one. After that the boys, their brother dog and their wives returned home. Seeing the girl married to the dog, the villagers were filled with mixed feelings. Soon the married men began to build houses for themselves. How could the dog do that? His wife was not late to understand this. She took an axe and went to the forest to cut poles for the house. Her husband the dog followed her. She found some tall straight trees and began to fell them for the poles, but the axe missed the aim and wounded her in the leg. So she left the axe and ran to the village for treatment. Near the axe, appeared a handsome youth from the dog and cut the best of the wood for poles. Before the girl returned from the village, the man entered the dog's skin. The girl saw the poles cut. She was amazed. She looked at the dog, her husband, who was breathing with his tongue out.

When the poles were brought to the village, the building work began. During the day the girl worked at it, and at night worked the man, coming out of the dog's body. Before the other five couples built their houses, the dog and his wife had begun to reside in theirs. All were astonished, but could not say anything. Even the wife of the dog was all in awe, because she did not understand who worked at nights in building the house. At the end of each day she was so tired that she had very sound sleep until morning.

Then came the time for fitemene (plural of citemene), to clear the fields for sowing. Again, the couples worked arm-inarm in a bid to clear a bigger area of the land. The youngest sister also took the axe, selected the spot and began to fell the trees and burn them. When the others found that this woman's work was very slow, at the end of the first day, they
made fun of her. However, she continued the work, with a hope that someone who built the house for her during nights would again help her.

And she was not wrong. Every morning she went with her husband the dog to the spot, she found some more trees felled. She could not understand this but rejoiced greatly at the secret help she was getting. One day, when the sun was high overhead, the girl became thirsty. She left the axe near her husband, and went to a distant pool to quench her thirst. The handsome man came out of the dog's body, and began to fell the trees.

Now the other couples had all the time wondered at the progress in the place of the dog's wife. So out of curiosity they all crept to the place where the handsome man was felling the trees. As soon as they saw the man in the place of their relative woman, they hid in the bush and watched him at work. In the meantime, the girl also returned from the pool. From the bush they made signs to her to join them and see who was working for her. She felt so happy at the sight. Her sisters felt equally jealous. They also saw the dog's skin lying on the side of the spot. One of the men crept near, took the dog's skin and slid it into the burning logs.

After some time, they all approached the man felling trees. The man, failing to find the dog's skin to enter, simply stood there laughing. The men and women, including the dog's wife, surrounded him.
'Who are you here?' asked one of them to the handsome man.
'I'm the one who married that girl,' said he and pointed out his wife.
'But she was married to a dog!' queried one of the sisters.
'I was dog so long as you did not burn the skin. It was god's wish that I was born dog though of human parents,' said
he.
'And now?' asked one of his brothers.
life as a human being.' he answ that I should live the rest of my e as a human being,' he answered.
Hearing this, his wife embraced him. Then the couple returned to the village with relatives. In few years he proved his manly prowess to such an extent that he was made a chief of the
village when the old chief died. And all lived hapaily village when the old chief died. And all lived happily ever after.

## NZIWA

A family of five had three children, all boys. Right from their infancy they were upset. What they did not like, rather worried, was this. Each time, their father returned from outside, their mother received from him a merciless hiding. Being small as well as scared of the atmosphere, they simply watched their mother suffering both physical and mental torture at the hands of their father. When this was too much to bear they wept loudly, simply to get beating from their father. So a sort of awful gloominess prevailed in the home. Every coming day was undoubtedly to be worse than the previous one.

One day their father seized his muzzle-loader to shoot their mother, but thank heavens, he was completely drunk. He could not balance his body and the shot missed the target. Nonetheless, this rashness horrified the three sons. Their faces grew red and black with a mixture of wrath and fear but how could they say anything to their father?
'How fast this woman is losing her natural appearance?' the men of the village would say.
'Her husband, the devil has been disfiguring her, day after day!' the women would say.

Naturally, the climax of this cruelty ended one day in her death. Ruthlessness always ends at that, you see! When he firmly got hold of her throat and senselessly pressed his thumbs on the Adam's apple, the woman's spirit left her body in no time.

Her death brought more misery on the sons. Though the relatives were there, and some of them were anxious to provide them their needs, for fear of their father's wildness, none of them could prove worth their existence. And the boys were too young to maintain themselves. Perhaps, the deceased knew their helplessness before she died. She knew that she
would certainly die at the hands of her husband. She equally imagined what aftermath would fall upon the children born of her. So she did not rest after her death. She haunted the house. She haunted her husband and his memory but nursed her children in their sleep. You would say, how? How can the dead do the work of the living? Well, she had not met a natural death, you know. So, during day, she transformed herself into a fabulous bird with big broad eyes and big broad feet and claws, and at night changed herself into a woman. Every night she managed to feed her sons in a miraculous way. Some nights she washed them too. So the boys, who felt hungry and exhausted at the end of the day, woke up fresh and fine every morning. They were nursed by their mother in their half-sleep. And they were too small to remember what happened to them, or who fed and washed them in such physical unawareness. If at all they remembered anything it was this, that they were ruthlessly disturbed in their sound slumbers.
'Go into the bush and bring some firewood,' asked their father one afternoon.

So the boys went to fetch the wood. While the eldest of them was leading the team in the bush, they saw an unusual bird with big and broad eyes and big and broad feet and claws. Such a bird they had never seen before.
'The eyes of the bird are like our mother's!' cried the youngest.
'And its feet are like the hands of our mother!' shouted the middle one.
'Shall we call the bird Nziwa, the mysterious bird?' wondered the eldest.

Before they finished their observations, the bird really took the form of their mother. She hugged them and kissed them one by one. Then she embraced the three together and said: 'I feel sorry for you, my sons. Little did I know when I bore you all that I would die an unnatural death and that, too, at the hands of your father, who was so loving and kind to me before he fell victim to the horrible habit of drinking. I am sorry for this all. However, I assure you that I shall continue to look after you in an invisible way until you grow old enough to be on your own for once. Nonetheless, I warn you, don't disclose to your father about our meeting, or my words. Otherwise you will be in trouble, which will trouble me also in turn.'

Then she helped them in collecting fuel, followed them home and then disappeared.

From that day, the boys began to look healthier than they were growing. If this amazed quite a few villagers, few were
surprised too at their growth.
'It seems you are looking after your sons very well now,' said a man to the father of the boys.
'Me? I have never thought of them, I have no time spared from drinking. How can I look after them?' replied the father.
'Maybe. A fish-eagle does not lack fish for food on a journey,' laughed the questioner.

These taunting remarks made the father anxious to go deep into the search of strange provision of the welfare of his sons.

One day he stood in the centre of the village and shouted at the villagers, fully drunk: 'Who gives food to my sons without my consent? . . . Come out, if you are bold, you the one who looks after the children born of me ... Do you think, I am dead? Aey?'

Then he beat the boys severely. He wanted to know from them who was the person that fed them and washed them so well. At first, the boys did not reveal anything, but when the beating and caning turned into whipping they could not bear the suffering. At last, the youngest boy spoke about the mystery. This did not satisfy the father, who went on to them one by one, swearing them for bluffing to him.
'Why don't you take the boys to the bush to make sure of what they say before you lose them as you've lost your wife?' advised an elder man.

Hearing this, the father bid his sons to prove their statement. The boys helplessly took the way to the bush where their father hid behind a baobab tree while the sons cried Nziwa, the mysterious bird! Our mother! Come and kiss us. We are here,

At once Nziwa swooped down from the sky and changed into their mother, who hugged them, kissed them and embraced them with all the motherly love. Seeing his wife, the drunkard's fury grew furious. When he fired a shot at her, the womanly body fell on the ground, but her spirit took the form of Nziwa. So he shot Nziwa also, to the mournings of his sons and, not to leave anything to chance, he got ready to fire the third shot. As he could not keep balance of his alcoholic body, he shot himself instead.

Thus, the boys now became completely orphans but the villagers had now no fear of the drunkard. They provided the orphans with their needs until they grew big enough to maintain themselves. In due course they became very popular and lived a respectable life.

## APRON STRINGS

Once a mother died, immediately after giving birth to a girl. Now in the family there was no one else but the baby girl's grandmother. This grandmother was a witch who never allowed any family member to live happily. The villagers blamed her for the deaths in her family. However, the lot fell on the grandmother that she should nurse the grand-daughter until she grew into a young woman. Day and night she had to look after that small human creature in order to save herself from the social blame that she had enough of by now. Also she was out to see that this member of her family survived. This service to the growth of the girl created feelings of attachment in the heart and mind of the grandmother. She grew fond of the grand-daughter so much, that when the baby grew into a child and went to play with her mates the grandmother also went with her. Nevertheless, she grew jealous of her grand-daughter's mixing with others. She wished the girl did not part from her at all. She also took all measures to keep the girl with her. She played with her so that the girl did not go out. She behaved with her as if she was of her age, so that she did not ask to go out. Thus, the grandmother's attachment continued to increase day by day. Even when the girl was fast asleep at night, she patted her, kissed her, and spoke sweet words to her. The apron strings of the grandmother held the grand-daughter tight in the house

In due course, the girl grew up into a beautiful young woman. Yet the grandmother considered her to be a child. She never allowed the grand-daughter to mix with young men of her age. If such an occasion arose, the grandmother either tried to avoid it, or dissuaded the grand-daughter from going near them, let alone speaking to them. When the young men and
women of her age sang and danced, the grand-daughter very much liked to join them, but the grandmother, under the pretext of one thing or another, kept her by her side.

So the girl grew tired of her grandmother's strict supervision. 'What's all this?' she began to murmur in private. 'After all, I am grown up now. Why should I not be allowed to enjoy with others of my age?' The more the grandmother tried to keep her away from others the more she began to resent her. In all this cloudy atmosphere there was a ray of sun shining on the grand-daughter. There was a young handsome man in the village. He kept an eye on her because he thought she was a match for him. She also had seen him from a distance, several times, and was attracted towards him for his manly feats. Often, the four eyes played hide-and-seek. At last their age influenced each other and, one day, when she went to a stream to fetch a pail of water, he followed and both ran away, marrying in their mind, to a far off place.

When she got tired of waiting for her grand-daughter, the grandmother haunted every nook and corner, but in vain. So she began to mourn for the loss. Then a young mischiefmonger appeared and said, 'One thing I know. She has run away with a man and has formed a matching pair.'

Hearing this, the grandmother grew furious. She propitiated the spirits, witches and wizards of the place by offering them the flesh cut from her thigh, and rushed in the direction the woman and the man had disappeared. During the night she found them sitting in the high fork of a tree.
'Come down, my child! I've come to take you home,' said she in a softening voice, but breathing fast.
'I'm quite all right with this man,' the girl said pointing at her lover. 'I am no more your slave.
'I'll give you as much freedom as you want. I won't come in your way, that I promise, but come with me. You're the only kith and kin upon whom I count the happiness of my old age, entreated the grandmother.

The grand-daughter grew emotional. After all it was the grandmother to whom she owed her life and beauty. I may come back to you, ma, provided you agree to accept this man as your grandson-in-law,' she gave some hope.
'I agree by my ancestors,' she promised. 'He is already with my grand-daughter in the fork of the tree.

Both the young souls talked to each other with their eyes, not tongues, and descended to follow the wrinklebodied grandmother.

After their arrival to the village, the marriage was declared
official and the grandmother began to show all kindness and love to the couple. She cooked food for them, washed for them and even helped in building their house. It was in the winter that the couple went to live in the new house.

Do one thing, my child!' the grandmother addressed the grand-daughter. 'Don't lock the door at night.
'Why? Why do you say so?' suspected the granddaughter.
'Don't you know how sound a sleeper you are? This is winter, you know. When I wake in the middle of a long night I'd like to build up the fire to save you both from severe cold,' replied the grandmother.
'How about my husband?' questioned the newly married woman and looked at the man.
'Don't rely on me,' answered the husband to his wife. 'Don't you know how heavily I was sleeping even in the fork of the tree? It was good that you held me in your arms, otherwise . . ., ' and he smiled.
'But . . ' argued the wife.
'Let the but remain in its place. Grandmother is so kind. Don't you realise how she looks after both of us? Let her do her job to her satisfaction,' advised the husband.

And it was agreed that the door should not be locked from inside. Every night the grandmother began to enter the granddaughter's house and build the fire to warm the house. As this continued all nights, the couple got accustomed to it. Each night, after building the fire, the old woman looked at the young grandson-in-law, and praised his handsomeness made more handsome by the growing flames from the hearth. The sight gradually brewed a plot in the old woman's mind. The witchcraft she had practised assisted her in preparing for the dirty intention. One very cold winter night, when the couple was fast asleep and the old woman built the fire, the young man moved away from the girl in sleep. The witch was bewitched with the sight. She suddenly developed a long sharp tooth which pierced the neck of the youth at the Adam's apple and killed him instantly, before he could wake up from sound sleep and raise his voice. Then she carried the body away from the house and ate him up while the young wife got sounder sleep, to wake up in the late morning only, because of the building up of the fire in the cold. The witch buried the residue of the victim before sunrise and pretended nothing had happened. As soon as the grand-daughter woke up the following morning, not finding her husband by her side or by the fire, she rushed out to see him. Failing to find him outside, she entered her
grandmother's house where the witch had been yawning, for she had no time to sleep at night and her tummy was heavy with the man's flesh.

When the young woman asked the old one the whereabouts of the husband, the witch startled and baffled as if she did not know anything.
'Do you think that he was in my house at night?' the grandmother got angry at once. 'Isn't it shameful for you to come to my house to search for him and ask me about his whereabouts?'

The young woman had no reply to this. For the whole day she searched for him. She went into the deep bush. She waded through the mud on the banks of the stream. She asked every man, woman and child in the village. She tried to recognise his footprints. All this she did, hungry and thirsty, but to no information about her loving handsome husband. When she returned home late evening, her body was swollen with thorn-pricks, her dress was tattered and torn and her eyes were red with tears dripping down. As soon as she saw her grandmother she broke down completely.
'Let's wait for some time, my child! If he has gone to see his relatives he would come back or we would hear about him. Had he been carried away by a beast, I'm sorry, nothing we can do; he might have been dead and eaten away by this time,' said the grandmother coldly. The grand-daughter had no other alternative but to hear this and mourn over the loss.

Days and months went by. There was no news about the handsome man whatsoever. Time is the best medicine for healing mental pains. With the passing of the time, the young woman did not continue remembering her late husband. And she was still young, very young. So when she heard her grandmother discussing the arrangements of her marriage with a young man named Nsinyeulu, she took the meeting bashfully.
'What do you say, my child?' asked the grandmother after talking to Nsinyeulu. 'Don't you think, this young man of our village can be my good grandson-in-law?'

She glanced at Nsinyeulu from an angle of love, smiled shyly and began to stir the porridge that was boiling on the fire close by.

This was taken as a consent and the grand-daughter was married to Nsinyeulu. The young woman was happy that she would start her married life again. Nsinyeulu was happy that he had been bachelor out of marriage-age but at last when he was married, he was married to the nicest woman of the
village. The grandmother was happy that she would have another chance of eating human flesh, for which she was now longing more than ever. Once the human flesh is tasted, the cannibals never stop killing human beings to feast upon Cannibals are just like tigers, you see, not like lions who kill only when they are hungry. Lions are not blood-thirsty, bu the tigers and cannibals are.

At the first night of their wedding the couple did not sleep. The grandmother entered their house and went out but they went on talking for the whole night. While talking over the matters of mutual interest, the woman told Nsinyeulu how her late husband had disappeared one night, how she searched for him, and what her grandmother told her about the mishap.

Nsinyeulu simply sympathised with his wife's sad episode, but became cautious and watched the old woman's movements because he had heard about her performances of witchcraft from his parents. After three or four nights, the witch could not control herself. She grew anxious to kill the man and devour him. One midnight when she was convinced that both her grand-daughter and Nsinyeulu had been fast asleep and Nsinyeulu was lying far away from his wife, near the fire, the witch stretched her front tooth to push into the gullet to make him to fail to breathe and then feast upon his body.

In fact, Nsinyeulu had not been sleeping, but lying as if he had been in heavy sleep. As soon as the witch came near her grandson-in-law's head, he got hold of her long-pointed tooth pulled it out and thrushed it into her gullet, then pulled it out and pushed it into her liver. As the witch yelled out of suffering, the woman woke up and tried to stop her husband from killing her grandmother, but it was too late to bring her to life

Not only the couple, but also the whole village and the population in the surrounding area, lived happily after this death.

## A FRAIL WOMAN

There was a young beautiful woman. She was so beautiful that even the Chief, who boasted to have been keeping the most beautiful wives around him, felt ashamed of not having this one as his own. Do you know, why? Well, the Chief had asked for her several times, and her parents also were happy to marry their daughter to him but Beauty, every time, placed a condition before the Chief. Tell me, what an awful condition could it be that even the Chief could not fulfil it?
'If you kill your mother, I'll marry you,' said Beauty, whenever an offer was made.

How could one kill one's mother and marry her? What an odd condition? Neither the Chief nor any suitor conceded to kill his mother and Beauty remained a spinster. Gradually, she began to overgrow her marriage age. Yet she retained her beauty. Several suitors waited for her with a hope she would change her mind, and her physical wants would win over her obstinacy. But this was not to be.

Some of the men went mad longing for her hand. Some met premature death and some remained bachelors, not finding later on any other girls to marry them. Out of all these, the eldest son of the Chief became equally obstinate to marry Beauty.

When the news reached his mother, she was startled. She began to fear her son. She became suspicious of his movements. She thought her son was growing mad after the beauty. She feared the son might kill her in order to marry the beautiful woman. So she requested her husband, the Chief, to drive Beauty out of their village, if not kill her.
'Let her remain amidst us. She is a pleasant sight to each of our men,' consoled the Chief. 'After all, our village has
become known all over the country because of her presence here.

On the other hand, the attachment of the Chief's son for Beauty began to grow stronger and stronger. He started to act like a madman on occasions. He began to follow Beauty wherever she went. Sometimes he chased her with lust.
'Why don't you kill your mother if you really love me?' Beauty used to ask him.
'Suppose I kill her and you don't marry me?' asked the Chief's son in return.
'That I promise.'
'But why do you insist on that rash action?'
'Woman knows woman. She won't let me live with you in peace if she is alive.
'But we will live separate from her.'
'Even then.'
'So you want me to kill my mother.'
'That's right,' said Beauty and turned away.
The Chief's son spent most of his time in thinking of Beauty. While awake he hoped to have her. While asleep he dreamt he had already had her. All this kept him uneasy, angry, insolent and what not. He planned in every way to marry Beauty without killing his mother. One day, while hunting he killed a wild buffalo. This made his spear blood-stained. With it he rushed to the beautiful woman, who was washing at the nearby stream.
'I've killed my mother, you someone's daughter,' he shouted. 'Now be satisfied and marry me.'

The woman smiled sarcastically and said,'Don't tell a lie. The blood on the spear is not of your mother, but of a buffalo.' And she got busy washing.

This startled the Chief's son, who went away. The next day he killed a domestic cow, smeared its blood on the spear and approached Beauty.
'What do you say now, you someone's daughter?' he asked the woman who was grinding the corn. 'Do you dare say that I've not killed my mother? Look at the spear.'

The woman stopped grinding, looked at the spear and said, 'Am I wrong if I say the blood is not of your mother but of a domestic cow?' She gave a shy look, grinding the corn, and added, 'Don't waste your time in this way.'

The chief's son wondered how she could distinguish the animal's blood from that of a human being. And the people in the village thought he had gone mad. They had never seen such a man acting in this way before.

If you think of a thing, good or bad, for a long time, even at intervals, you begin to expose your thinking in words which force you to act in the same direction. The Chief's son was also a victim of his thinking about Beauty. The more he failed to have her as his wife, the more did he long for her. This made him behave wildly.

One day he asked the blonde, 'I am prepared to lose the life of my mother to have you as my wife, but only if you also kill your mother.'
'That l'll do. First you kill yours,' replied the woman cunningly.

Being mad after the beauty of the woman, the Chief's son killed his mother that very night. Then he took Beauty to show the body to her. She, in turn, helped the man to bury his mother's body secretly before dawn. The next morning, the murderer approached his father to tell him falsely that his mother had a dispute with him over his efforts to marry the beauty of the village, and at midnight she left the village and had not returned yet. The Chief had no reason not to believe him, because often he had heard the mother and the son exchanging hot words over the same issue. After searching and waiting for the old woman to return for some days, the Chief's son was married to Beauty who also had promised to kill her mother.
'Did you kill your mother, my honey?' asked the husband.
'Don't you trust me? I did my work and kept my word, replied the beauty.
'When? When was that? You didn't show me her body as I did!'
'Men are ever suspicious, more so of their wives.'
'I don't agree with you. It's not a question of suspicion, it's a matter of proof. Men can easily be satisfied by producing a proof of truthfulness and honesty.'

I did not know that you would doubt my truthfulness, my honesty,' said the wife and began to shed tears. Tears and sobs created a very gloomy atmosphere. So the husband wooed the wife in every possible way. He also believed, rather certified, that his mother-in-law was positively killed. But was she really killed? No. Definitely not. Then? Beauty had done this. First she scared her mother talking about her intention. Then she asked her to agree to what she would want her to do if she wished to live longer. Then she had taken her mother to a cave in the forest, and asked her to live a solitary life. She consoled her with a promise that every day she would bring food for her, and her mother was declared to have been drowned in the river. Thus, the poor mother shut herself in
the cave and the frail beauty played on the emotions of her husband who believed, rather certified, that his mother-in-law met the fate of his own mother and did not ask his wife for the proof of her death any more.

In due course, the marriage blessed the couple with the birth of a son. The villagers accepted everything as usual and their life went on. As days, months and years went on, the husband noticed that there was something mysterious about the movements of his beautiful wife. One day, while the husband returned from hunting, he grew angry and asked several questions of her, but she did not show even courtesy to reply. So the husband beat her severely. Her body was sore and bled. When the sores began to burn at midnight, the beautiful wife took her son in her lap and began to sing a mourning song: I tricked him; I tricked him.
I tricked him to kill his mother,
But mine is alive over there.
I tricked him; I tricked him.
The husband woke up at this. He lay quiet, trying to put the song into its context. Several doubts rose in his mind and went down, but he did not say a word to her. The following day, he did not go out, but stayed home. As the sun began to descend in the west he went to sleep. Late afternoon, assuming that her husband was sleeping, Beauty took some food and went stealthily to the cave. Her husband followed her more stealthily. All the way, Beauty sang the song:

I tricked him; I tricked him.
I tricked him to kill his mother,
But mine is alive over there.
I tricked him; I tricked him.
As she approached the cave, her husband hid behind a huge tree and watched her movements.
'Where are you, ma! I, I've come,' she called. 'Come out and enjoy this food.'

And again she began to sing the same song, while her mother appeared. She served the food to the old woman, who ravenously ate it. Over the food, the conversation was centred round her husband's mishandling her. Hearing this, the old woman felt sorry, but what could she do?

The whole conversation was heard by the Chief's son, whose hair had grown straight out of anger. After an hour or so, when Beauty returned home, her husband remained behind. He then dragged his mother-in-law out of the cave and asked her to go with him to the village. Seeing her mother and the Chief's son approaching, Beauty's body became blue and
black. Finding no other way to save her life, she ran straight to the river, jumped into it and got drowned. The same course was followed by her mother. Now the Chief's son realised the frailty of the woman. He sat down, on earth, with great sorrow, stretched both of his hands towards the river and cried: 'Have the women any character? If they have, perhaps, it is as slim as their waist,' and added, 'if the woman is deceiving who on earth would be honest?'

Then he left the place. Where? No one knows up to today.


## THE ANTHILLS SWALLOW THE YOUNG GIRLS

It was in the middle of a rainy season that the mushrooms were shooting forth in abundance. Never before this vegetation was yielded by the earth in such a fabulous way. Not only the mushrooms were seen everywhere and around, but were making the most delicious relish ever tasted on earth, by any of the paramount chiefs even.
'How fortunate we are that God has endowed upon us the rarest food to enjoy in this area!' the people thanked the creator for the gift.

The more they found, for better mushrooms did they search because they had already reached the saturation point in a short time. All-the young and the old, the children, their parents-were going out every morning to get the best of the mushrooms. Even then they were able to return home, with their baskets full of shining mushrooms, before the sun went overhead.

One day, six girls of the same age set out for mushrooms. It was not that the mushrooms were growing scarce, but because when some of them plucked the best of the mushroom umbrellas, one of them pointed at a better one. This made the girls to throw away the gathered mushrooms and walk to a long distance. Temptation of getting the mushrooms of better quality led them to a remote area where there were more anthills than the mushrooms of their imagination; anthills big and small, evenly-shaped and oddly-shaped, barren, and covered with elephant grass. If some of them were shaped like wild beasts, some looked like human figures standing still.
'Well. Mushrooms are many, and mushrooms we have eaten enough. Let's examine the anthills of all shapes and sizes never seen in our area,' said one of the girls, growing
curious.
'Quite right. We've never crossed over to such a strange country of hills before. And see, how strange the hills look!' said the other.
'I agree with you. There's no harm in spending some of our time on this adventurous trip. What do you say?' another voice emphasised the importance of observation of the hills.
'I don't agree with you,' came the serious voice from the smallest girl. 'We've left our village to gather mushrooms and not to observe anthills. The sun is already overhead and our parents must be expecting us at home.'
'How clever! Tell us, you aged person, why do you worry so much?' asked the oldest of the girls.
'This seems to be a strange land. As my grandmother says: 'We are never safe in a strange land,' replied the smallest, but sober girl.
'All right. Go home if you wish. We are getting more and more interested in these hills. Will you? And don't forget to inform our parents about our adventure,' shouted the girls, and laughed.

Though the smallest girl neither dared run a risk of returning home alone, nor could she enjoy the company, now she continued to follow her friends quite worriedly, but without showing any fear.

The girls, then, began to play amidst as well as with the hills. They called them with bad names, they spat on some of them one by one. Also they defaced some of them. Doing this, they came across a hill looking perfectly like an old woman, so crooked, so wrinkled all over. It's top looked like an oblong but toothless wrinkled face of an old woman. Under the square forehead there were diamond-shaped holes like the eyes. There were eyelids covering the eyeballs indicating that the old woman was blind too.

At first the girls looked at the hill. Then wondered about its life-like shape. Then they pricked the eyes with wild thorns that they got hold of. When they pushed the pointed thorns into the eyelike holes of the hill, blood ran down the cheeks of the hill shaped like a granny. At first they laughed at the strange happening, but then they threw soil into the holes from where the blood was flowing. No sooner did the blood stop flowing than a hurricane surrounded the girls, the hills and all. The dust blew into the girl's eyes. It blew and blew until it made the girls blind. So they smeared their eyes with their fingers. At that moment the hurricane died down but when they opened their eyes the girls saw that the hills had
arranged themselves in a circle besieging them. They stood so close to one another in such a way that the girls could not escape. Around them was a fort, a gateless fort built of the hills, yet retaining their shapes but growing bigger and broader than before in size.

Thus, the girls were placed in a precarious position. They began to fear the hills now. As they stared at the hills with bewilderment, the hills gave a horrible laugh, roaring like witches and wizards, about whom the girls had heard several times. When the hills continued to laugh at intervals, the girls were terrified. They were upset. They screamed. They wept and fell on the ground

At last the oldest of them tried to climb one of the hills When she got half way, the hill shook itself so hard that the girl fell flat near her mates. And the hills laughed as the girls had laughed at them before
'What shall we do now?' sobbed one.
'How shall we find our way home?' mourned another.
'Did I not tell you that the strange land could not be safe?' interrogated the smallest one.
'Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma!' cried all the girls.
'And you did not hear that small girl, aye?' retorted the hill looking like the granny.
'Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!' laughed all the hills together.
'Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma!' yelled the girls, clinging to one another and closing their eyes with teardrops.

At this stage, the oldest hill that was forced to suffer thorn pricks took human body, as living and moving as any granny.

Amidst the screams, shouts and running of the girls in every direction, the old woman said, 'So you're in the prime of your youth, so arrogant, so insolent, and that's why you hurt me to bleed!'
'Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!' laughed the hills breathlessly.
'Forgive us, granny! Forgive us! I beg of you on behalf of all my friends!' entreated the smallest girl kneeling down at the granny's feet.
'There's no forgiveness on earth, child,' replied the granny.
'The elders always forgive the youngers, granny!' the girl argued pitiably.
'True, but not always; at least not them who are proud, indifferent or rude!' said the granny. 'Yes. You're not proud, not indifferent, not rude. So you can go home if you wish but not your mates. They'll be a sweet dinner for me and my
associates!'
'Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!' shouted the hills terribly
And really that small girl only was let go home to inform her and her mates' parents of the misfortune.


## THE INVALUABLE MILK

In the whole of a particular area, all the young men were married to their chosen girls, because the girls outnumbered the boys in that particular land. Among them was a boy named Chalo, meaning earth; who had married a girl called Wululani, which means 'reveal'. If Chalo was as good as the earth,Wululani was ever revealing her innate wealth of beauty, manners and love. In this way, the couple were a matchless one in the whole area. All the maturing boys and girls were jealous of their happiness.

Chalo thought to himself one day, while drinking Wululani's eyes with his, 'How fortunate I am to get such a beautiful, mannerful and loving wife!'

Wululani, as if she had known her husband's mind, said to herself, 'May my ancestors help me! I wish my husband is not enticed away by any of the girls of my age in this land.'

Smiles on both of their faces yielded their own heavenly atmosphere. The couple remained actively engaged to see that their love did never decrease, if at all it did not increase, for each other.

After the enjoyment of the sweet warmth of his wife's body during night, Chalo said to her one morning: 'Wulu! You've discovered my true colour, I mean my likes and dislikes, but I must apologise for failing to know your mind. Can't you reveal it to me?'
'Have the womenfolk their minds?' said the astonished Wulu.
'Of course they have. Why?'
'I thought they act upon the messages received from the minds of their husbands,' Wulu laughed. 'At least I do that, don't I?'
'I very well know that. Nevertheless it's my duty as well to see that you are satisfied in every respect. Therefore, you will add to my joy if you ask from me a rarest, rarer or rare gift. Will you?

After much persuasion and sweet quarrel as well as reproaches, Wulu asked, 'All right. Then get me the invaluable milk. I'm very fond of the best milk, as you know.'
'What do you mean thereby? Milk is always the wholesome food, and you're always having that, each day from a different cow. Am I wrong?'
'Never were, but now I want a change. I don't like cow milk. I'm tired of it.'
'I see. So you want the milk of a strange animal. All right. I'll not rest until I get it for you. I promise,' Chalo said and began to think of the solution.

He consulted all the elderly persons in the area. He explored all the ways and means, but failed to find that 'invaluable milk' that his dear Wulu desired to taste. And yet that unavailable milk, find he must. So he travelled longer distance than his feet could carry. He did not stop at that. He crossed the rivers and went across the hills of his country. At last he came to a diviner who taught him some witchcraft. It was the following song that Chalo was required to sing:

Nkazi wangu ndelendele nkazi wangu okonda mkaka ndelendele okonda mkaka.
Soziwa kuti mkaka uyu ufumila kwachimbwi.
Neo nine chimbwi-ndelendele neo nine chimbwi.
(My dear wife! You like milk very much, but you do not know this milk comes from the hyena. I'm a hyena.)
'When you sing this,' said the diviner, 'you will change yourself into a hyena. Not only that but the container that you'd have will be full with the hyena milk.'
'Shall I try the magic here?' Chalo requested.
'Try twice if you wish,' was the reply.
Chalo rejoiced at this and sang the song holding the diviner's earthen mug in his hand. As the words ran into tunes Chalo began to change into hyena and the mug stood on the earth, full of milk.
'Now?' asked Chalo.
'Now wait. In few moments you will wear human body again,' the diviner amazed Chalo.

And this happened. As soon as he regained his original human body, Chalo thanked the diviner and began to take his way home.
'Stop!' cried the diviner. 'Remember, don't perform this
magic before anyone. If anyone else sings the song, you'll never find your human body, and shall have to live as the hyena for the rest of your life.'

The young lover was not to forget this warning. He borrowed an earthen pot from a friend living at the outskirt of his village, on his arrival, and Chalo went far away, sang the song and then carried the hyena milk home.
'How heavenly the milk is! Where does it come from?' asked Wulu madly drinking it.
'Is it heavenly?'
'Yes. Where does it come from?'
'D'you want milk or to know its source?'
'Milk, no doubt.'
'Then you'll have it everyday, provided you don't continue questioning about it.'

The milk supply, heavenly milk supply, continued day after day, month after month and year after year. Whosoever visited Chalo's home had the privilege of drinking this invaluable milk. Because it was sweeter and entirely different from the milk of the cow or the goat or the donkey and because nobody knew the name of the animal that gave it, the milk was known in the area as the 'Chalo's milk'. If anything that was found sweeter than it should usually be known, it was compared with the 'Chalo's milk'.

However, Wulu herself was growing desperate to know the animal that gave this milk. Her curiosity was increased by other women in the neighbourhood. 'Haven't you any right over your husband? Surely you ought to know what creature gives this milk, sweeter than any sweet drink,' they often taunted her. So she grew anxious to know the source of her husband's treasure.

One morning, when Chalo left for the milk, his wife followed him secretly. When he was in the centre of the thick forest, Chalo began to sing.

Nkazi wangu ndelendele nkazi wangu okonda mkaka ndelendele okonda mkaka.
Soziwa kuti mkaka uyu ufumila kwachimbwi.
Neo nine chimbwi-ndelendele neo nine chimbwi.
With the running of the song, the body of Chalo began to turn into that of the hyena and the pot began to be filled with milk. Wulu also saw that the milk was pouring from the body of Chalo transformed into hyena. She remained wonderstruck for some time, but then hastily ran home before her husband could catch her sight.

When Chalo presented the pot of milk to Wulu, she
suddenly said, 'Does the milk not come from the hyena?'
'How do you say that?' Chalo said little frightened.
'It smells like that. Doesn't it?' she said and smelt it herself and asked Chalo to smell it for himself and give his ruling.

Chalo kept quiet, while Wulu emptied the pot into her mouth gradually.

The following morning also Wulu saw Chalo performing the trick to get the invaluable milk, hiding behind the huge stump of a tree. And the third morning, in order to surprise Chalo, when he finished the song and waited to become man again Wulu repeated the song loudly from behind the stump, without showing herself up.
'Stop that! I'll never become man, Wulu!' cried Chalo.
But this did not disturb Wulu. On the contrary she got delighted that her husband had discovered her, and that she was able to sing the song of that magic, that yielded that invaluable milk. Thus, doubly encouraged she continued the song, finished it and then appeared before her husband Chalo, who had not worn human body yet. She waited for long beside her husband, who had become hyena just to remain hyena for all his life.

Yet Chalo, the earth, continued to provide milk to Wulu, who did not stop revealing her beauty, manners and love for her husband. Strange enough, when they both died at the same time on the same spot, they were buried together by the villagers. The people in the area do not get tired of either telling or hearing this tale.


## THE END OF ZIMWEZIMWE

There was a hunter, an expert hunter indeed. He had four dogs who did most of the hunting for him. Their names were: Chimthiko (a stick used in stirring boiling food), Chinthalo (an earthen cooking pot), Chinkhombe (an earthen pot for preparing relish) and Chimbale (a plate for serving the food). There was an amazing intimacy between the master and the dogs. They were his friends, servants and all. During the day they caught game and carried out their master's order and at night guarded the kraal, each of them remaining alert like sentries. They also scared the monkeys and jackals away from his garden.

One day he met a girl on the bank of a stream in the forest. He was so bewitched with her age, beauty and bashfulness that he proposed his marriage with her.
'Sooner or later I shall be married!' replied the girl hiding her face in her palms.
'I'm prepared,' the hunter offered himself.
'What sort of food will you earn for me?' she asked.
'Whatever you like: nshima, kapenta, meat, grain, vegetables
'And . . . ?'
'That's what the human beings eat.'
'Nothing else? I'm fond of something else.'
'Suggest!'
'You guess.
'I don't know what to guess.'
'I'm fond of honey. Can you provide it for me?'
'I'll try. As for me, I don't like it and therefore I've never searched for it. However, tell me why you are so much fond of honey?'
'It's honey that has given me this slenderness, delicacy and . . .'
'I see . . . then l'll get you honey, if you want, just now!'
'Please do,' said she and sat down under a tree nearby.
The hunter whistled at his dogs and set out for the honey. Nevertheless, the dogs were accustomed to catch game. So they ran into different directions in the forest without waiting to know what their master wanted to have. In a trice all the four were out of sight. Their master simply laughed at this and began to look for honeycomb in the high branches of the trees around him. Failing to find any, and trusting his dogs to return to him soon, he began to explore the thick forest for honeycombs, thinking of the stings of the bees and the sweetness of the honey. Brooding and walking, he went far from the stream, all alone. When he was in the heart of the bush he saw the huge head of an approaching animal.
'I see. It's Zimwezimwe, the big-headed,' he murmured and stood still.
'What are you searching for, high and low, in the sky and down the earth?' asked Zimwezimwe approaching.
'Remove yourself from here, you fool, or I'll spear your huge head and large tummy at once. You useless stuff!' cried the hunter.
'Even a useless stuff is useful sometime. It will be an honour if I'm of any service to a renowned hunter of this land. After all, I live here,' pleaded Zimwezimwe.
'You're simply a man-eater who has always failed to eat me,' the hunter laughed.
'Correct, but l've never slept hungry also,' laughed Zimwezimwe.
'So what?'
'So I want to make a truce with you. I want to show my readiness to assist you in this place! '

The hunter thought over Zimwezimwe's words for a while. He realised that he had ever proved a match for Zimwezimwe.
'There's no harm if I temporarily trust you!' said the hunter, 'because I know how to handle or mishandle you. Anyway, can you find me some honeycombs?'
'I've seen one, yonder, in the trunk of a big tree,' Zimwezimwe replied encouragingly.
'I'll be grateful if you take me there!'
'Why not? Follow me,' said Zimwezimwe, turned his face in the direction he had come from, and led the hunter to the tree.
'How far is it?' asked the hunter.
'Here it is,' replied Zimwezimwe, and with these words he pushed his head in the hollow of the big trunk of the tree close to them.

Though Zimwezimwe appeared to be friendly, he was an evil animal after all. Truly speaking, he had not seen any honeycomb in any part of the world, let alone the tree at which they had arrived. Zimwezimwe had kept a black comb-shaped container in the hollow of this tree. As soon as they arrived, Zimwezimwe had placed some faeces in it, pretending to make sure whether the comb was still there. The faeces drew flies from far and wide. They made the humming while swarming over the faeces.

After chatting for sometime, Zimwezimwe asked the hunter, 'Do you hear the hum of the bees?'
'Yes, I do,' replied the hunter.
'Listen then. When you extend your arm to the honeycomb in the hollow, you shall have to see with your eyes in the darkness of the hollow so that you don't push your fingers into the honey or it will run out,' Zimwezimwe began to instruct the hunter.

At this, the hunter rushed towards the trunk of the tree.
'Wait,' cried Zimwezimwe. 'Don't be so much in a hurry, dear hunter. First you tear your loin cloth into four pieces.'

Obeying this the hunter replied, 'I've done. Now ... ?'
'Now let me blind-fold you with one of the pieces. Then I'll wrap the other two over your wrist, palm and fingers. If you touch the honeycomb without this preparation, you'll have the taste of the bee-stings alone to recollect for all your life you know, warned Zimwezimwe laughingly while blindfolding the hunter.

This convinced the hunter. He placed his spear down and surrendered himself to Zimwezimwe who after doing as he wished said, 'Now delay not my hunter. Get your gift and be happy.'
'How can I do that in this condition? Now you'll have to take me to the hollow of the trunk,' the hunter expressed his helplessness, rejoicingly though. 'You've been so kind to me.'
'And I shall prove kinder soon,' said Zimwezimwe tauntingly, but the hunter took these words on their audibility value, having not been able to see his facial expressions.

Then Zimwezimwe took him to the hollow and made him to touch its mouth with his hands. No sooner did the hunter place his hands and head in the hollow than Zimwezimwe pushed him further down and tied his legs with the remaining piece of cloth. At this, the hunter cried desperately. Fortunately, the
hollow had a hole on one side. Through it the hunter's voice went out and captured a good distance around. Hearing the mournful cry, the dogs followed the direction and appeared to see what Zimwezimwe was doing to their master. Instantly, Chimthiko and Chinthalo jumped upon Zimwezimwe but he speared both of them at a time with his one paw while holding the hunter's legs (his head and hands still in the hollow) with the other. Then Chinkhombe and Chimbale sprang upon the enemy but to meet death only. Making sure that all the dogs were dead Zimwezimwe busied himself to know whether the strength of the hunter was growing weaker. Feeling the grip loosen, the hunter gave a long jerk to his body with his hands. His tied legs pushed Zimwezimwe away and the hunter was out of the hollow but panting and sweating. Yet Zimwezimwe was not defeated at all. He sprang upon the hunter, caught his hands and tied them as he had done with his legs. Realising that his end was near, the hunter sang sobbing:
'Chimthiko, imbwa yangu izontandize natamana,
Chinthalo izonthandize natamana,
Chinkhombe izonthandize natamana,
Chimbale izonthandize natamana
Chimbale izonthandize natamana'
(This song mainly mentions the names of the dogs and asks them to come and help their master)
As the names were sung, one by one, the dogs became alive. They at once attacked Zimwezimwe so fiercely from all directions that his body was torn into pieces in few moments. They also nursed their master. Thus, the hunter was saved and Zimwezimwe, who had finished more than half the population in the area by that time, was killed. Rejoicing at the faithfulness of the dogs, the hunter seated them in his lap for sometime. Then he gathered some wood and made fire. After that, he asked Chinthalo to turn itself into the pot, Chimthiko into the stick, Chimbale into the plate, and Chimkhombe into the relish pot. Finding the kits ready, the hunter selected the best limbs of Zimwezimwe's body for food. He put Chinthalo on the fire. Chinthiko stirred the boiling broth that was then served in Chimbale, with the relish cooked in Chinkhombe. This was the first time in the life of the hunter that he had such a delicious food to eat. When his tummy was full he chanted something and the four dogs coming to life began to feast upon the residue of Zimwezimwe.

Needless to say that, hearing the story, the girl at once offered herself to the hunter and became his wife, giving up the obstinacy of having honey for food.

