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Forest of snakes

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Sinyaire village was surrounded by hills. Many snakes lived in the forest on those hills.

The biggest snake was called Unyalego by the villagers. Unyalego scared many people. It swallowed whole goats and sheep.



One day, three sisters, Apiyo, Ajoh and Atieno went to the forest to fetch firewood.

The girls' grandmother warned, "Beware of Unyalego the big snake. Do not take anything from the forest except the wood."

Only Ajoh did not pay attention to her grandmother.



The girls packed milk, bananas, sweet potatoes and water.

They took ropes for tying firewood and a sharp machete for chopping the wood. Then they left for the forest.

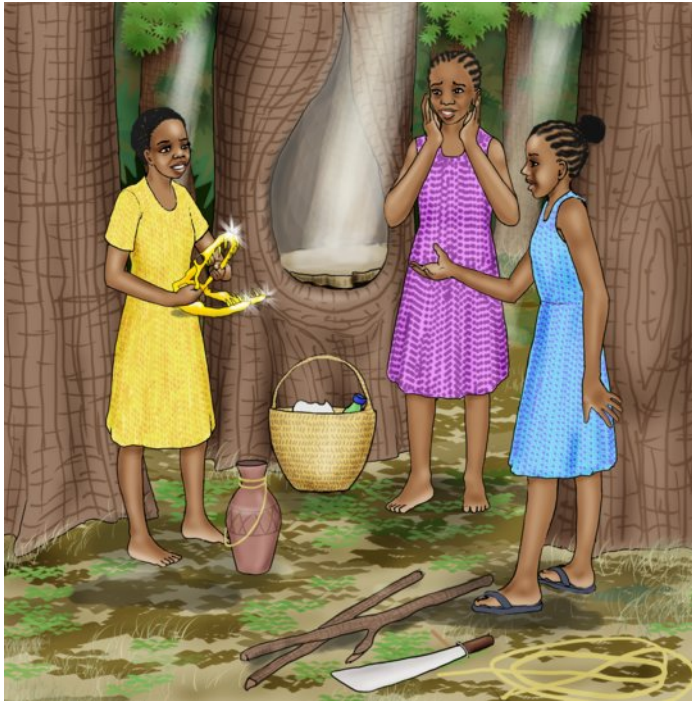


On the way, the sisters chatted and laughed. Suddenly, Apiyo, the eldest of them, said, "Be quiet. We are coming to where Unyalego the snake lives."



Atieno called to the others, "Look, here are Unyalego's golden teeth. Let us take them."

Apiyo reminded them, "Don't forget grandmother's warning. We must not take anything from the forest except firewood."



Ajoh said, "I don't trust grandmother. She said that to stop us having what we want. I want the golden teeth."

Her sisters were worried. "Ajoh, we warned you," they said. But Ajoh did not care.



At that moment Unyalego came looking for his golden teeth. He was furious when he could not find the teeth.

Then Unyalego heard the girls chatting and laughing. He hid under a rock next to the road where the girls would pass on their way back.



The sisters were going home carrying their firewood.

Suddenly, they heard, "Hssssss!" There was Unyalego with his mouth wide open, ready to bite. The girls were terrified.



Unyalego asked the girls, "Who took my golden teeth?" No one answered.

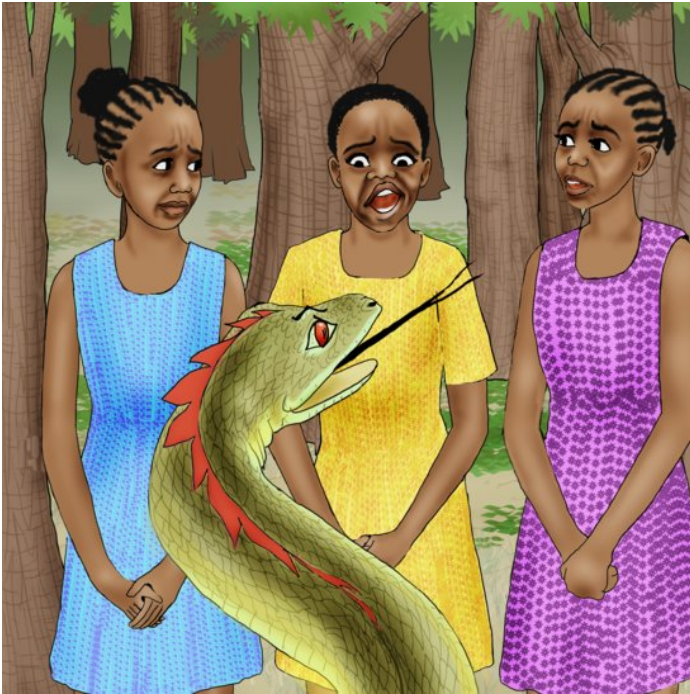
The snake decided to test the girls. "Whoever is innocent, will be able to sing well. She will go home with her wood. But the guilty one will sing badly. And I will eat her!"



Apiyo started to sing with a clear voice:

It was not me,
It was not me who took the teeth.
The one who took is still behind.

Then Atieno sang the song. She also sang well.



Lastly, it was Ajoh's turn. She was scared. She started singing. It sounded terrible and the words were wrong.

Unyalego shouted, "Can't you sing properly like the others?" The snake knew that Ajoh took his golden teeth.



Unyalego opened his huge jaws and swallowed Ajoh. Her sisters ran back to the village. They told everyone the story of what happened.

"I warned her, if only she had listened," the girls' grandmother said sadly.

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