

# Why Old People Have Grey Hair

(as narrated by Naalabr in Chakping on 16/03/2022)

## Introduction

The following story, told by a child narrator, attempts to explain why people's hair turn grey once they advance in age. According to the story, a series of dumbfounding encounters between a man, his beans farm, his dog, and his ax on the one hand, and the man, an old woman, and a log on the other, leads to unplanned sprint events that culminate in the old woman falling into ashes that turn her hair grey.

To watch the Likpakpaln narration [click here](#).

## Story

'My story is as follows...' Naalabr announces to his audience and proceeds thus:

There lived a man who had a beans farm. After sowing the beans, he never visited the farm again. One day he decided to pay a visit to the farm. To his pleasant surprise, when he got to the farm, he discovered that the beans had yielded. The man remarked that his beans had yielded beyond expectations. On hearing this, the beans retorted: 'What did you expect? That, we wouldn't produce a high yield?'

Shocked, the man looked at his *ubɔja*, which only stared back at him in bewilderment. But for some strange reason, the man got mad at the *ubɔja* for staring at him and tried to hit it with his *kichɔk*. As he raised the *kichɔk*, the latter warned the man that it would have a bone to pick with him if *ubɔja* bit it in retaliation. At that point, the man decided that he had heard enough so he took off running.

As he was running, he chanced upon an *upininkpil* who was carrying a log. *Upininkpil* called him and asked why he was running as though something were in pursuit of him. In reply, the man told *upininkpil* that he cultivated beans but failed to visit the farm till that day. On arrival at the farm, he discovered that the beans had yielded beyond his expectations so he made a remark to that effect, whereupon the beans retorted: 'What did you expect? That, we wouldn't produce a high yield?' He added that his *ubɔja* started staring at him so he got angry and wanted to hit it with his *kichɔk* but the *kichɔk* warned him that if *ubɔja* bit it in retaliation, he would be held accountable.

After listening to the man, *upininkpil* told him that was no justifiable reason to run. The log she was carrying then replied, 'If you were in his shoes, wouldn't you have run?' On hearing this, *upininkpil* dropped the log and also took off running. Unfortunately, while running, she fell into some ashes. Her hair consequently turned grey - and has been the case for all bipininkpiib since.

‘So that’s why old people have grey hair,’ one adult from the audience explains further amid laughter and chatter by the other audience.

## **A Glossary of Likpakpaln Words**

### **kichok:**

Likpakpaln word for an ax. It is typically small in nature. It is used for digging and chopping wood.

### **ubɔja:**

Likpakpaln word for a male dog. In everyday usage, ubɔja is sometimes inappropriately used for a dog – male or female – instead of the correct gender-neutral noun, ubɔ. In the context of this story, therefore, when the storyteller uses ubɔja, he is not referring to a male dog but a dog in general terms. So the dog in this story could be either male or female. FYI, a female dog is called ubɔsal in Likpakpaln.

### **upininkpil:**

Likpakpaln word for an old lady or old woman. The plural form is bipininkpiib.