

NIGERLAND BOOKS

YOMI &
THE THREE THIEVES
& OTHER STORIES

BY
UDUAK NGWABA

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Yomi and the three thieves & other stories

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YOMI AND

THE THREE THIEVES

The inhabitants of the little village of Mbutu were sad. This was because thieves had been disturbing them for quite a long time. The thieves normally came in the morning hours when children had gone to school and parents had gone to either their farms or the market. The thieves had broken into many houses in the village, stealing money and other valuables such as pots, plates, jewelries and clothes. They sold these items in far away markets.

The village head of Mbutu was very sad, so sad that he had to call a meeting of all the inhabitants of the village. “We must find a way to catch these thieves!” he declared when all the villagers had gathered.

“Yes!!!” they shouted together.

When their voices had died down, the oldest man in the village rose to speak. “I think we have to employ watchmen to guard our village in the mornings,” he suggested.

The village head thought for a while before he nodded his head in agreement. “I think old Pa John has found the solution to our problem,” he said.

“We think so too,” the people replied. The meeting came to an end and the villagers dispersed in small groups.

Early the next morning, two huge men were introduced to the villagers as the watchmen. On seeing the two huge men with their bows and arrows, the villagers were very happy. Now they could

go about their businesses without fear of thieves.

While the villagers were busy finding ways to stop the thieves, Mrs Dabo was very unhappy. This was not only because of the thieves but also because of her eight year old daughter called Yomi. Yomi's teacher had reported to her that Yomi would come to school and during break time, she would disappear from school.

"It cannot be true," she had told the teacher.

"But madam, are you suggesting that I am lying against your daughter?" the teacher asked.

"Not that. It is just that Yomi comes back home with her schoolmates."

"Well I suggest you come to school tomorrow and see things for your self," the teacher told her before leaving.

Mrs Dabo had gone to school the next day after break time and discovered that Yomi's teacher was right. Yomi was not in class. She went home very worried. In the afternoon, Yomi returned home with her school mates but her mother did not beat her or ask her where she had gone to. Yomi was her only child and she did not want to hurt her. Rather she went to her school mates and asked them but they could not provide any useful clue. She decided to wait for Yomi's father who worked in a big town far from the village to come back at the end of the month. Surely he would know the best way to handle the situation. What surprised Mrs Dabo was that Yomi always came home cheerful. "Wherever she goes to must be making her very happy," she thought.

Actually, little Yomi had found a new friend in the woods. Her friend was a big brown Bear. While they were together, she would tell native stories to the bear. The big brown Bear liked stories. After the stories, they would go and play. After playing, they plucked fruits to eat. If Yomi saw the sun directly above their head she would run back to meet her schoolmates. "It is closing time and my schoolmates will be going home soon." She would tell the

Bear. The Bear would feel sad watching her go.

One day, Yomi ran happily to the Bear during break time and found him lying down looking pale. She put her little arms around the bear's neck and stroke its hairy neck with her fingers but it was still not happy. She read stories to the Bear but it was still not excited. She tried to make it play but it would rather lie. She decided to lie beside the Bear and off she dozed. She must have slept for a long time for when she woke up, the sun was about setting. She rose up lazily and picked up her school bag. She knew she was late for home and that her mother would be worried but all her attention was on the bear. It had woken up but was still lying down and Yomi was worried. She knew something was wrong but did not know what so she left for home crying.

On arriving home, her compound was filled with a lot of people. They were so many that she could not even see her mother. Then she saw someone pointing at her and all of a sudden all eyes turned towards her. From the crowd, her mother rushed out and held her crying. “Where have you been my daughter? Oh! Where have you been? We thought you were dead.”

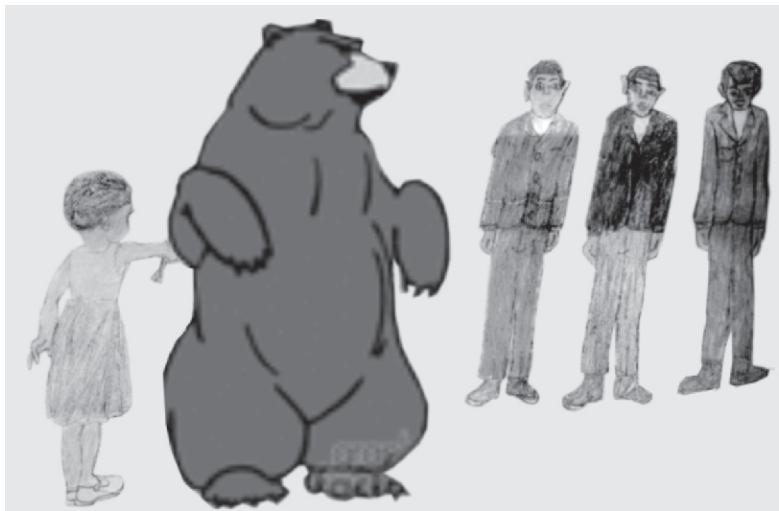
Yomi started crying too. She was sad not just because her mum was crying but also because big Bear was sick.

The next day, Yomi did not even go to school. She went straight to her friend the Bear. On reaching the bear's place, she was shocked. The bear's eyes had sunk inside and the hairs on its body were no longer straight. They had fallen as if water had been poured on them. Yomi sat down and thought about what to do. Suddenly she remembered something. “Big Bear must be hungry,” she thought. Then, like a soldier, she jumped up and shouted on big bear. “Let's go to my house so that you can eat. My mother must have gone to the market by now.”

With its last remaining strength, the bear got up and followed Yomi home. They went through the forest so that no one would see them. On getting home, Yomi quickly took the Bear to her room before going to the kitchen to bring Banana's, soup and meat for Big Bear. The Bear quickly ate up all the food and began licking its lips signifying that it wanted more. She went back to the kitchen and returned with more. The Bear ate it all up and signified yet again that it wanted yet some more and Yomi happily ran off to get more food. It was clear that her friend was coming back to life.

When Big Bear had eaten as much as it wanted, it rested while Yomi read it stories. After sometime, they went to play at the back of Yomi's house. They had been playing for thirty minutes when they had running footsteps. Quickly they ran to the front of the house and peeped. What Yomi saw made her clutch to Big Bear in fright. The two huge watchmen were running away with their bows and arrows. The thieves had come with Dane guns.

"Thieves! Thieves! Those men are thieves," Yomi pointed at the thieves.



Big Bear released Yomi's hold and quickly went for the thieves. They were three in number. The first thief did not see the Bear before it reached him. It gave him a hard slap and he fell down. Quickly he went for the remaining two who were setting their gun to shoot at it. They were still cocking their guns when the Bear got to them and snatched the guns from them. With their guns, it hit them on their heads. They made to run but the Bear caught them and carried them to the first man who was still lying on the floor. Yomi seeing that her friend had overcome the thieves rushed to the scene with a big stick and began to hit the men on their heads. Big Bear was obviously enjoying the action and it became carried away with excitement. It started shooting gunshots into the air. The villagers on hearing the gunshots began to sneak back to the village. On seeing the Bear they were terrified. Yomi's mother started crying. She could not imagine her daughter being close to such wild animal. Yomi realized that the villagers were scared of the Bear and quickly spoke up. "Do not be afraid. The Bear is our friend. It has saved our village from the thieves."

The village head replied her, "Are you sure it will not hurt us?" "I am very sure." Yomi was obviously having the thrill of her life.

The villagers were all happy with Yomi and her Bear but they told her it was bad habit to miss school. She promised to attend her classes regularly henceforth. On its own part, Big Bear was taken to a nearby zoo so that it would no longer die of hunger. As for the thieves, they were handed over to the police and the village of Mbutu knew peace again.

QUESTIONS

1. Why were the villagers of Mbutu sad?
2. What did they think was the solution to their problem?
3. Why was Mrs Dabo sad?
4. Who was Yomi's new friend?
5. Why was the Bear looking pale?
6. What happened to the thieves?

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT WORDS

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Inhabitants: | Persons living in a place |
| 2. Pale: | (Of a persons face) having little colour, bloodless |
| 3. Clue: | Fact, idea that suggests a possible answer to a problem |
| 4. Cock: | Getting a gun ready for shooting |
| 5. Doze: | Sleep lightly, be half asleep |
| 6. Scene: | Place of an actual or imagined event |
| 7. Solution: | Process of finding an answer or explanation to a problem |
| 8. Valuable: | Of great worth, use or value |
| 9. Zoo: | A place where animals are kept for sight seeing |

THE CRIPPLE AND THE

STAMMERER

Many years ago in the village of Amankita lived two good friends. One was a cripple who moved around with his bare hands on the ground. The other was a stammerer who was stronger and more active.

Since he could not move around much, the cripple sat mostly in his compound to weave mats and other things. On the other hand, the stammerer earned his living by working for people in their farms.

The two friends frequently visited each other. They also ate freely in each others house. It happened that whenever the cripple visited and food was available the stammerer would give him water to wash his hands so that they could eat together.

One day, while working in someone's farm, the stammerer killed a rabbit. He then brought it home to his wife. The wife, being a good cook, prepared a very palatable dish with it but just as the stammerer was getting ready to eat, he heard a knock on his door.

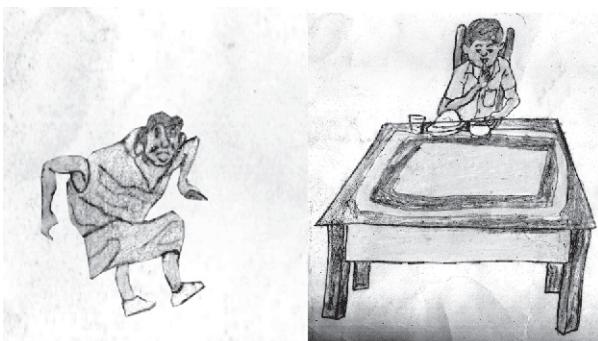
“Who is that?” he barked out angrily.

“It is me oh!” answered the cripple.

Recognizing the voice, the stammerer complained to himself “Oh my goodness! It is this busy body again. Well I know what to do.”

In those days people ate mainly with their bare hands and not with table cutlery so the stammerer shifted the washing bowl to the far end of the room before asking his friend to come in.

The cripple was very excited when he came in and saw his friend eating. Moreover the aroma from the food was very inviting. So like before he made to join his friend to eat. To his surprise his friend said, "No my friend, you cannot just join like that. You have to wash your hands first. Look, the washing bowl is over there."



He cripple was very hungry and the smell of the food very inviting so he grudgingly went to wash his hands. By the time he came back to where his friend was eating, his hands were already soiled and his friend asked him to go back to the washing bowl. Off he went again and again by the time he came back his hands were once again soiled and he had to go back to wash his hands. This happened another time and by the time he went and came back the stammerer had finished all the food. The cripple was very angry and he went home hungry and unhappy.

In those days our people counted time differently so about eight market days later, the stammerer paid his friend a visit. When he knocked and was let in, he could not resist the sweet smell of food in the sitting room. He made a sniffing sound through his nose and commented, "O----l--- d bo---y, it see---ms your wi---fe is giving you a r----eal treat tod---ay." As he said this he got ready to dip his

hands in the plate but the cripple stopped him saying, “Not so fast! Wait! If you want to eat this food you must perform the tradition that goes with it. You must say OKOKO MI OKOO correctly three times.”

To the stammerer that sounded simple enough so he began, “o-o-o-mi-mi-mi-o-oo”

The cripple left him to say this three times and at the end told him he must say it correctly. While the stammerer struggled to pronounce the word, the cripple continued to eat until he ate up all the food and called his wife to clear the plates. The stammerer went home angry and disappointed and with an empty stomach.

They later settled their differences and promised never to deny each other anything in future.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the names of the two friends?
2. What job did the cripple do?
3. Which animal did the stammerer kill?
4. Who was the first to hurt the other?
5. Which word did the cripple ask the stammerer to say?
6. What happened at the end?

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT WORDS

Palatable:	Agreeable to the taste or to the mind
Aroma:	Sweet smell, fragrance
Grudgingly:	Doing something unwillingly or reluctantly
Sniff:	Draw air in through the nose so that there is a sound
Cutlery:	Knives, forks, spoons etc for table use

RAUTA AND

HER PRETTY JEWEL

A long time ago in the middle belt region of Nigeria, there lived a man with his two wives. The first wife was called Fatima while the second was called Jemima. Fatima had a daughter called Rauta while Jemima's daughter was called Halima.

One day about midday, Fatima went to the nearby river to fetch water and on arrival, she met an old woman who was crying.

“Mama why are you crying,” She asked?

The old woman looked up and replied, “I have been sitting here since dawn pleading with people to fetch water for me to drink but all the people I pleaded with turned me down. I am on a long journey and the calabash I took with me for my journey broke yesterday.”

Fatima looked at her closely and discovered that she was looking very tattered. The woman could easily be mistaken for a mad woman. She was not therefore surprised that people treated her with disdain. Nevertheless she decided to help. “I shall fetch water for you Mama so wipe your tears.”

The old woman watched her as she made for the river and wondered what a kind woman she was.

In a short while Fatima returned with water in her Calabash which

the old woman gulped down. Fatima went back to fetch water she would take back home. By the time she came back to where the old woman was, she was already getting set to continue her journey. “Ah Mama, it seems as if you want to be going already. It is only midday so why don't you follow me to my home so that you can at least eat and rest a while before continuing your journey?”

The old woman smiled at her. “No my daughter, I cannot. My friends are waiting for me by dusk tomorrow and if I do not continue now I will be late. I have wasted half the day already.”

Fatima insisted. “But you look tired and faint even though you have drank water. I still insist you follow me to my house.”

The old woman appreciated her kindness but still shook her head. “It can not be so my child. Thank you for your offer but I must go on.”

Fatima shrugged, “Okay Mama if you insist then go in peace but take my calabash of water in case you are thirsty on the way.”

The old woman was excited. “Are you giving me your calabash of water?”

“Yes,” replied Fatima, “It is now yours. Go in peace.”

They parted and after walking for a few paces the old woman turned back and called after Fatima. Instantly Fatima turned and started walking towards her. When they got to each other the old woman quickly brought a jewel from inside her wrapper and gave it to Fatima. “You have a pretty daughter at home. Give her this jewel and tell her to wear it always from now on. As long as she wears it, good things will come to her but any day it gets missing bad things will follow her. She should be careful about

the jewel and must not tell anyone how she got it.”

After speaking, she handed over the jewel to Fatima and continued her journey. Fatima was dumbfounded. She was even more surprised because the old woman knew she had a daughter. She thought the old woman must be a kind spirit going round the world helping kind people. She looked towards the path the old woman had followed but she had disappeared. Quickly, she tied the jewel in her wrapper and went straight home.

When she got home, she called Rauta into her hut and shut the door before telling her about her encounter with the old woman at the stream. Finally when she was through, she brought out the jewel, found a rope that went through the hole that pierced through the jewel and tied it on her neck.



The next day, Aladi a friend of Rauta brought her a cock as a present. Onche the son of Ochigbo the local goldsmith brought a pack of bangles for Rauta. By the time the week was over, Rauta had acquired so many new things.

After two months a prince from a neighbouring town came to ask

for Rauta's hand in marriage and Rauta's father and mother were excited. Apart from the prince, so many other suitors came to seek Rauta's hand in marriage.

Jemima and her daughter Halima saw all these good things happening to Rauta all of a sudden and were not happy. Jemima had sleepless nights as she thought and thought of how these good things were only happening to Rauta and nothing new was happening in Halima's life.

Finally she decided to find out the secret of Rauta's good fortunes. She knew it would not be easy but she was determined to find out. She thus became friendlier to Fatima and assisted her in a number of ways. When she felt they were now good friends she asked her about Rauta's sudden good fortunes and like a tap let loose, Fatima narrated everything about the old woman and the jewel to Jemima. Jemima pretended she was happy but inside her she began planning what she would do.

The next day Jemima and Halima went to a native doctor and told him to prepare a strong medicine that induces sleep. He did so and gave it to them and they paid him. They now went home and waited for their chance to come.

Their chance came two days later. Rauta had gone to the stream to fetch water and Fatima who had just finished cooking went to see off her friend. Quickly Jemima poured a portion of the sleeping medicine into the pot of yam porridge. Now anyone who ate the food would sleep till dawn without stirring.

Their plan worked perfectly well for about thirty minutes after they ate the food, Rauta and her Mother retired to sleep. After an hour Jemima came into their hut and cut off the jewel from Rauta's neck. All this while Halima was watching out for her mother incase her father came out of his hut. The effect of the

medicine had also caught up with him.

At last Jemima came out from the hut and she and her daughter Halima ran to the river and threw the jewel into it before returning home to sleep. They were now ready to watch bad things begin to happen to Rauta.

In the morning Rauta and her mother cried and cried over the missing jewel while Jemima and Halima comforted them. By evening Rauta fell sick and started dreaming that snakes, witches, monsters and spirits were pursuing her. Her father invited the best medicine men to cure her but they could not. Fatima went to the river day and night to cry to the old woman to appear but she did not.

Finally after seven days of sickness, Rauta died and the village gathered together and buried her.

QUESTIONS

1. Why was the old woman crying?
2. How did Fatima stop the old woman from crying?
3. What did Fatima offer the old woman before she left?
4. What warnings did the old woman give concerning the jewel?
5. What was Fatima's mistake?
6. Did she pay for her mistake?

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT WORDS

Tattered:	Unkempt, untidy
Disdain:	Contempt, scorn
Gulped:	Swallowed
Dusk:	Nightfall
Dumbfounded:	Astonished, surprised

AHMED AND

THE TRICKISH DWARFS

In the village of Denge Shuni near the big town of Sokoto in north western Nigeria once lived Ahmed with his mother. The village of Denge Shuni was peaceful and lovely. There was a stream far away from the village which was one of the numerous waterways that led to the great Rima River. It was hard to notice how big the stream was as there was a thick forest that appeared as if it divided it. After the thick forest the stream path widened as it journeyed towards the big Rima River. The stream is known as the Denge stream because of the wide belief that the first settlers in Denge Shuni settled around there. In the course of time and with the coming of the Jihadists and the introduction of Islamic civilization, the people were encouraged to build houses in other parts of Denge and leave the stream area for agriculture. To ease their water problems, the jihadists built ponds for the people. These ponds served their immediate water needs. Despite this, adventurous Denge children preferred going to bath at the stream every morning before going to school. As they ran to the stream in the morning they would play the game of hide and seek. The child seeking for the others would constantly be heard singing:

A ma biri biri
Wande be gudu ba
Nde na kama shi
Za ya zoma nama na
Nzo ko mberi?

And the ones hiding would reply saying, “Zoma na.” On hearing

this, the child seeking for the others would start looking for them and when he finds any of them would shout to inform the others. The others would immediately run out of hiding and together they would run some paces towards the stream before continuing their game.

As early as six o'clock each morning they would already be at the stream swimming and at seven o'clock they would be running towards the village so as to be able dress and eat before going to school.

One fateful day while the children were bathing, two dwarfs came out from the bush near the stream. They were looking very dirty and it was clear that they were from a long journey. They nodded to each other and gradually crept on the grass towards the path the children would follow on their way home. When they got to a certain point they lay down as if dead. Thus when the kids were running home they stopped with fright on seeing the two men.



“They are dead!” one of the children shouted, “lets go home quick.”

“They are strangers,” another shouted.

“Who killed them?” queried a small girl in their midst.

“I don't think they are dead. We just passed this way not too long ago. I think they are worn out from a long journey and are only sleeping. I will wake them up.”

“Ahmed I tell you, do not wake them up,” the first speaker insisted.

Ahmed ignored his warning and immediately began to shake the two men who had overheard all the children had said. This was exactly what they wanted. Now they would wake up and the children would take them to their Emir. They woke with a start much to the surprise of the kids. As they woke, they started rubbing their eyes.

When they stood up one of the girls with the children exclaimed, “They are small boys! They are...”

Ahmed who was thirteen years old looked like a giant when compared to the men. With the wave of his hand, he stopped the girl from speaking further.

“Who are you and where are you coming from?” he asked.

“We are technicians from the great land of Illela. We were sent by the great Sultan to the Emir of this land.” They spoke together.

As the children took the dwarfs to the Emirs palace, scores of villagers followed them. They wondered where they had met such funny looking men.

“As-salam alaykum,” the two dwarfs unmindful of the crowd, greeted the Emir from a distance.

“Wa alaykum salam,” the Emir responded while gesturing on them to sit on a mat by his left hand side.

When they were seated the Emir asked, “Who are you and what is your mission here?”

“We are from the ancient town of Ilela and we are Islamic Technicians. We have come to electrify the entire Sokoto Caliphate. We were sent by the great Sultan.”

At the mention of the Sultan the Emir bowed to the ground, blew his flute and shouted, “Long live the Sultan!!! Please follow me and I will show you your room. You will bath and eat before telling us your good tidings from the Sultan.”

The dwarfs were happy. Their plan was working well. Now was the time to bath and eat. Since their flight from Talata Mafara they had not eaten well, bathed well or rested. Even though they had stolen the people's money they could not spend it since they had journeyed through the bush for fear of being caught.

They thus took their time and had a very refreshing bath. After the bath they ate a very good meal of tuo shinkafa and as they ate, the people waited patiently. They were anxious to hear the message from the great Sultan. The Emir had declared the day school free to honour the children that brought these messengers from the great Sultan.

At last they were ready and like before they spoke simultaneously. “Great people of Denge,” they began to speak, “the great Sultan has sent us to bring electricity to this great village. Electricity means light. With this light you will know no more darkness. He has sent us to do this great thing for you as a

mark of the love he has for you.”

The people shouted for joy. When the shouting died down, the Emir asked, “How then can this great thing be done?”

Again they replied simultaneously, “On your land are trees that will be felled and positioned to support the electric wires. In our bags are the electric wires with which we will connect the trees that will be positioned within Denge. But we still have to position other trees towards sokoto to enable us draw the light from Sokoto. This will cost some money and as such we suggest that that the people of Denge contribute five Maria Theresa coins each.”

The Emir and the people accepted and the dwarfs were happy. Within three days, everybody had contributed. The richer people contributed more. The dwarfs who had been feeding on the people's food told them that work would start on the fourth day after all the money had been collected and the required number of trees felled.

The kids could no longer wait for school to close before coming home to watch the trees being felled. Ahmed watched with keen interest as the dwarfs supervised the workers. He wondered how such small men could have more sense than bigger men. “Is it because their heads are very small?” he asked his mother on the night of the second day.

“My son, I am as surprised as you are. I don't know. Maybe they were sent by the great Prophet himself.”

Ahmed sighed. He decided within himself to check on the dwarfs the next night to find out what they did when they were alone. That way he might become wiser too.

The next night, after the villagers had eaten, they started talking

excitedly in groups. Tomorrow the process of bringing light to Denge Shuni would start and they were happy. On their own part, the dwarfs had retired for the day since they had much work to do the next day. Ahmed thus crept to the window of the room where they were staying and through a crack in the window saw them parking money into a bag. He waited patiently and after sometime they started parking their clothes. The shorter of the dwarfs said to his comrade, “they will have the shock of their lives when they wake up in the morning and find out that we are gone.” The taller dwarf nodded happily and went over to hug his partner.

Ahmed could not believe what he had just heard. As fast as his legs could carry him, he went round to the entrance of the Emir's house and luckily saw the Emir still discussing with the elders. He quickly narrated what he had noticed as fast as he could and together they ran to the dwarf's room. The room was locked so they ran round the compound to the window at the back. By the time they got there the window was open but the dwarfs were gone. Stretching their eyes in the darkness towards the grassland they saw the two short men running away. Since they were too short, they could not run fast enough and it was not long before the villagers caught up with them. When asked what they were doing they replied together, “In the name of Allah we were only jogging.”

“Jogging with bags?” The Emir who had arrived at the spot questioned.

“Yes,” they replied, ‘It makes us stronger. You know we are small and weak.”

“Shut up you thieves!” shouted the Emir. “By the time I finish with you dupes you will hate yourselves.”

Just as the other villagers were arriving at the scene, a group of men arrived from Talata Mafara. Immediately they saw the dwarfs they shouted, “Look at them!! Alas look at the thieves!!! Allah has caught them!!!!”

It was then that the true story came out. The dwarfs were thoroughly beaten and thrown into the local prison. The people of Talata Mafara got back their money likewise the people of Denge Shuni.

As for Ahmed, he was given a scholarship by the great Sultan at Sokoto who was told of the incident and the village of Denge Shuni lived happily ever after.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the name of Ahmed's village?
2. What game did the children play as they ran to the stream?
3. How many dwarfs did the children see as they were returning from the stream?
4. What message did the dwarfs claim they brought from the great Sultan?
5. How were the dwarfs caught?
6. How much did the dwarfs ask the people of Denge to Contribute?

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT WORDS

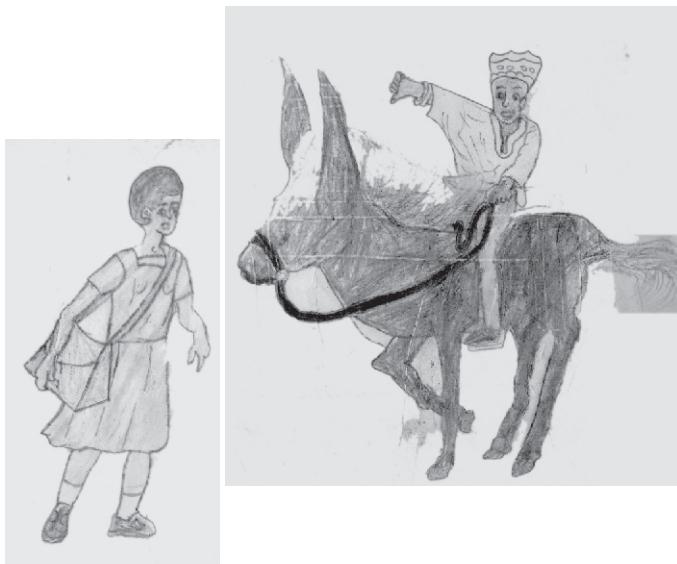
Salam Alaykum:	Peace be unto you
Query:	To ask questions about something
Technician:	One with special skills in building, fittings etc
Mission:	A specific task with which a person or a group is charged
Caliphate:	The office or dominion of a caliph
Tuo Shinkafa:	A meal made from mashed rice
Scholarship:	A grant in aid to a student

THE EMIR

AND THE CHIEF

A long, long time ago in a part of the present area called Kebbi State lived a young Emir. He was the Emir of Argungu. This young Emir loved hunting and as such often went out with his guards on his hunting sprees.

One sunny day, the Emir went with his guards to hunt in the woods. There he saw a beautiful maiden. At once the hunting party stopped and the young Emir asked his guards, "Who is that fair maiden?" One by one they all shook their heads, a sign that signified that they did not know who she was.



Quickly he rode up to her and spoke to her. “Young maiden who are you?”

The maiden replied, “I am Wasilatu, the daughter of the Chief of Zuru.”

“Ah,” the Emir put in, “Are you the Chief’s daughter? I am glad to meet you. My name is Ibrahim and I am the new Emir of Argungu.”

Together they talked for a long time without realizing how fast time flew. When it was almost getting to dusk they parted and the Emir went back to his guards who had been waiting for him all this while.

Emir Ibrahim and Wasilatu continued meeting in the woods thereafter until one day they decided to get married. They arranged a day when the Emir would come to see Wasilatu’s parents and inform them of his intention.

Finally the day came and the Emir happily went to Zuru with his guards. On getting to the Chiefs palace, the old Chief was surprised that the new Emir of Argungu had come to visit him. He had heard of the death of the former Emir who was Ibrahim’s father some months back and since he was buried he had not met Ibrahim.

After they exchanged pleasantries the Emir rose to speak. “Great Chief, I have come to seek the hand of your daughter Wasilatu in marriage.”

The chief thought for a while before he burst out laughing. “Ha ha ha,” he laughed. “Why do you want to marry my daughter?”

The young Emir was calm, “because I love her very much.”

The old Chief laughed even the more as he shook his head vigorously, “You cannot marry my daughter because you are a Muslim.”

The Emir became sad, so sad that he felt like crying. “But great Chief, marriage has nothing to do with religion.”

“Who said?” asked the Chief who was now getting angry, “If you marry my daughter will you allow her to practice Christianity under your roof?”

“Yes of course,” the young Emir replied.

The chief was not convinced. “Young Emir, go and look for a Muslim girl to marry. I will not give you my daughters hand in marriage.”

The young Emir left in shame. All his guards felt sorry for him. They had not seen him so sad before. As they rode slowly home, they heard hooves of a horse and turning to see who was coming, they saw Wasilatu.

“Please do not feel dejected,” Wasilatu told him. “I have promised to marry you or no one else,” she said.

Ibrahim shook his head in acceptance and held her hands. It was clear her presence had cheered him up a bit. They scheduled to meet the next day before they parted.

Meanwhile the Chief of Zuru was very annoyed with his daughter for bringing a Muslim to his house to ask for her hand in marriage. As soon as Wasilatu returned to the palace the chief asked her angrily, “Are you crazy?”

“No my father,” she replied.

“Then why do you want to leave the religion I brought you up with? Why do you want to marry a Muslim?”

“It is not my fault father,” she cried. “It is just that I love him.”

“Shut up your mouth. What do you know about love?”

Wasilatu's mother interrupted. “It is okay Baba. Please calm down. You know she is still a small girl. Very soon the fantasy will wane?”

The Chief now turned his attention to his wife. “Woman you are largely responsible for this. To think that your daughter has been seeing the Emir and you knew nothing about it?”

“I am sorry my husband. I promise that this whole thing will soon be a thing of the past.” She started pulling Wasilatu, who was already sobbing, from the Chiefs presence.

“It had better be over soon!!” the Chief barked after them, “or I will break somebody's head. From now on a guard will follow Wasilatu around. She must not see that Emir again.”

The next day the Chief sent for one of his trusted advisers called Danladi. He wanted to seek his advice on what to do with Wasilatu.

“Danladi,” he called as the adviser came into the palace.

“Yes my lord,” Danladi replied and made for a nearby seat.

The Chief went straight to the point. “Tell me what I should do about Wasilatu and her Emir.”

“My lord,” Danladi began, “why don't you marry Wasilatu to Rabiu the son of Usman?”

The Chief thought for a while before he nodded in agreement. Rabiu was a handsome, rich and powerful man. He was also a Christian. "Danladi, I think you are right. Begin the marriage preparations at once."

As Danladi was preparing for the marriage between Rabiu and Wasilatu, the Emir of Argungu also began sending gifts to the Chief of Zuru. He sent herds of cattle but the Chief rejected them. He sent a beautiful horse which was also rejected. Finally he sent some ornaments to the Chief's wife but these too were rejected. The Emir was convinced that the Chief disliked him.

After two weeks, Danladi had nearly concluded preparations for the marriage and Rabiu was extremely excited. Wasilatu was the girl every eligible bachelor in Zuru wanted to marry. Wasilatu knew she had to do something fast to stop the marriage so she decided to run away on the wedding day.

Finally, the day of the marriage between Rabiu and Wasilatu came and the entire town of Zuru trooped to their Chief's house only to find out that there was no bride. The Chief was highly embarrassed. He vowed to deal with the guard that was assigned to her.

At first everyone thought she had ran to the Emir's palace but the Emir truthfully told them she was not in his house. A search party was set up by the Chief to look for her everywhere.

The Emir also sent his guards to search for Wasilatu. He did not want any harm to befall her.

After three days search, one of the Chief's guards found her lying in the bush and quickly carried her home. She had grown so lean and faint. On seeing her, the whole family became happy again for they thought she had died. Even the Chief was happy to see his

daughter back and did not dare to beat her.

A week later, the Chief of Zuru was invited to a wedding feast at a far away town called Kamba. He decided to go with his wife and daughter. They would be gone for two days and the whole house geared up to prepare for the journey. They did not know that Adamu, one of the Chief's gatemen had arranged with his friends to steal from the palace when the Chief was away. Now his opportunity had come. They were to strike the next day when the chief was away but unfortunately Adamu was not on duty. So on the second day when the Chief was due back, Adamu let the thieves in. Entering the palace the thieves stole almost everything they saw as they turned the palace upside down.

As the thieves were leaving, the Chief of Zuru, who had just returned from his journey, met them at his palace gate. "Stop in God's name!!" he shouted.

The thieves refused to stop so the chief ordered his guards to attack them. As the guards shot arrows on the thieves, the thieves equally shot back at them and unfortunately for the Chief, one of the arrows hit his shoulders. At once he fell to the floor and his wife and daughter rushed to attend to him. Two of the Chiefs guards equally fell as the thieves arrows hit them and the thieves easily escaped.

The Emir of Argungu was at that time riding towards the woods to hunt when he saw men running. "Stop there at once!!" he called out but the men continued into the bush path that led to the woods. The Emir and his men decided to find out what they were up to. The thieves were tired so the Emir and his men easily caught up with them and overpowered them.

"Who are you and where are you coming from?" The Emir inquired.

Their leader was breathless as he replied, “Please mighty Emir, let us go. We are travelers on a long journey and we are already late.”

The Emir was not convinced. “If you are travelers then why did you not stop when I asked you to and why were you running?”

Again their leader replied, “Mighty Emir, true we did not know you were the one stopping us.”

Again the Emir was not convinced. “We shall all go back to the town to find out why you are carrying all these things and why you are running away.”

So together they went and on reaching Zuru the Emir and his guards learnt of all that had happened. The Emir returned all the things the thieves stole from the palace and he handed over the thieves to the Chiefs main guard. The Emir did not meet with the Chief as he was still receiving treatment.

Some days later, the Chief recovered and was told of all the Emir had done for him, his family and his people. Quickly he sent for the young Emir. When the Emir arrived the Chief apologized for the way he had treated him in the past and handed Wasilatu to the Emir as wife.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Chief not want the Emir to marry his daughter?
2. What did the Chief do to prevent Wasilatu from seeing the Emir?
3. What did Wasilatu do to prevent her marriage to Rabiu?
4. Who helped the thieves to enter the palace?
5. Who caught the thieves?
6. What did the Chief do to show his gratitude to the Emir?

EXPLANATION OF HARD WORDS

Vigorously:	Active strength
Hooves:	The horny part of the feet of certain animals as horses
Scheduled:	Planned, appointed, arranged
Fantasy:	Imagination
Wane:	Diminish
Irresponsible:	Carefree
Monitoring:	Checking
Valuables:	Having value or worth
Apologized:	To express regret for a fault

THE POOR BOY

In the village of Amasaa there lived a boy called Udona. His mothers name was Oduagu.

Like most children in those days, Udo came from a polygamous home. A polygamous home is a home where the man marries more than one wife. Adiele Udo's father had three of them.

The other two wives had four children each while Udo's mother had only him. Whatever peace that existed in the family never lasted for too long. This was because the wives and their children often had reasons to disagree among themselves

Udo's father was a good man. He was a successful farmer, hunter and native doctor. In everything he did, he followed the tradition of the people. So in sharing things to his wives he gave every woman based on the number of children she had. This formular did not favour Oduagu and she was very unhappy.

Though Oduagu had only Udo she did not pamper him. She trained him to be obedient, respectful, hardworking and always good. She also encouraged him to work hard in school.

Udo loved his mother so he did everything to make her happy. He was very intelligent and always came tops in class. His teacher always told him that he could become a known person in future if he continued the way he was going.

However at home, the other wives and their children were not too happy with Udo's progress in school. So it happened that after

primary school, Udo passed very well and was given admission to study in any of the three best colleges in the land. His mother's co-wives did all in their power to stop Udo from going as they kept bringing up problem after problem for their husband to solve.

One early morning, Adiele called out, “Oduagu! Oduagu!!”

Udo's mother answered from within the house, “Nna anyi I am coming.”

When she entered his room Adiele said, “Oduagu you know how things are in this family. I have to cater for everyone equally. Your son Udo has passed to go to college but I do not have money to train him. I suggest he finds a job to do.”

When Udo heard this from his mother, he cried bitterly. He knew his father could have afforded his fees if not for the other wives.



In those days someone could start teaching with his standard six certificate. This was what Udo did to earn some money. Within three years he was able to train himself in a teacher training college with the little money he saved.

As luck would have it, Udo applied for overseas scholarship and was lucky to get one to study in Britain. Some years later Udo returned from Britain, a qualified medical Doctor.

The day he returned to the village was the happiest day in Oduagu's life. She instantly became known as Mama Dokinta. Her co-wives were ashamed and were filled with remorse.

Being a good person, Udo forgave every one of them and even helped them when they had problems. Adiele was very proud of his son and thanked his ancestors for blessing him. The whole family lived in peace and harmony for many years thereafter.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of Udona's village?
2. What are the names of his father and mother?
3. How many wives did Udo's father have?
4. What did Udo's father tell his mother?
5. How did Udo go to Britain?
6. What did Udo do to his step mothers?

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT WORDS

Tradition:	Beliefs and practices of a people
Formular:	Statement of a rule, fact etc
Certificate:	Written or printed statement made by somebody in authority showing proof of performance
Scholarship:	Payment of money to a student so that he may continue his studies
Remorse:	Deep, bitter regret for wrong doing
Ancestor:	Any one of those persons from whom one's father or mother was born.
Harmony:	Agreement (of feeling, interest, opinions etc)

