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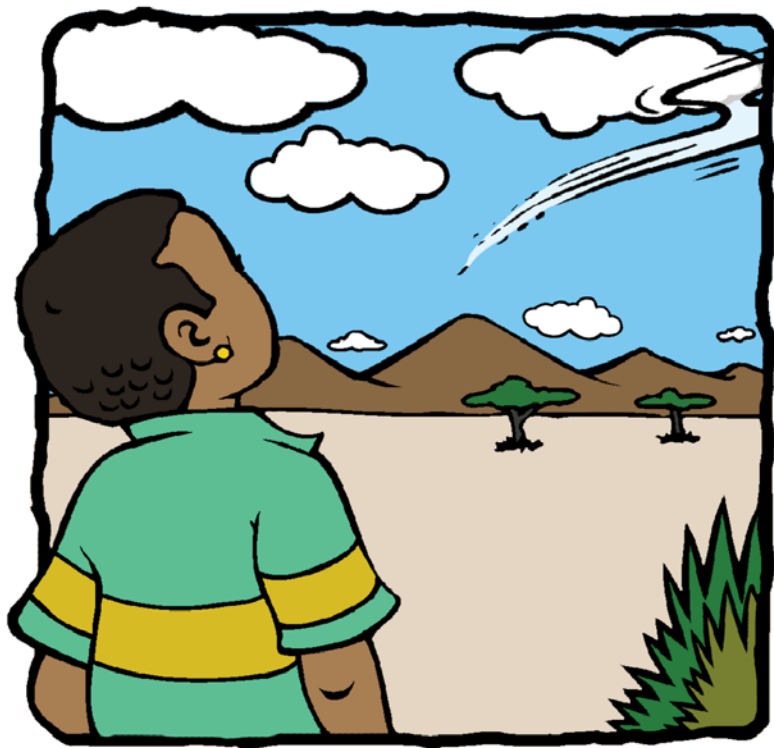
The Mystery **WIND**



Written by Cheryl Ryan
Illustrated by Hugh Armstrong

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Land of the Poor

The people of Togo were very poor. They struggled to put food on their tables, and they struggled to put clothing on their backs. Their roofs leaked, and cold winds blew through the weak walls of their houses.



One young villager tried to help.
Her name was Taba. She did what
she could to make things better,
but she was only one person.
And while her deeds were good,
they were never enough.

“If only I could do more to help my
people,” she said, “I would be the
happiest girl alive.”



One day Taba was tending goats high on a hillside above the village. A sudden wind came whistling through the valley.



A Talking Wind

The wind swirled around Taba. It was a warm wind, and it felt good against her skin. Then the wind began to speak to her in very hushed tones.



“Taba,” it whispered, “I have come to fulfill your wishes. For weeks, I have blown high over the countryside, and I have watched as you have helped your people. I know how you feel, and I know you want to do more. I can help you.”



Taba was startled and a little frightened. She heard the wind's presence, and she felt its presence. But she saw nothing. Was it her imagination? Was she losing her mind?

"Who are you?" Taba asked, with eyes reflecting the fear she felt.



“Don’t be frightened,” said the wind.
“I am not the wicked wind of the
West. I am not the evil wind of the
East. I am not the sly wind of the
South. Nor am I the nasty North
wind. Rather, I am the gentle wind
of charity. I am here to grant you
wishes, and I have the power to
deliver what you want.”



Taba could not believe her ears.
A talking wind? How ridiculous, she
thought. But what if it is true? What
if it can fulfill my wishes and help
my people? What have I got to lose
in asking for a wish or two?

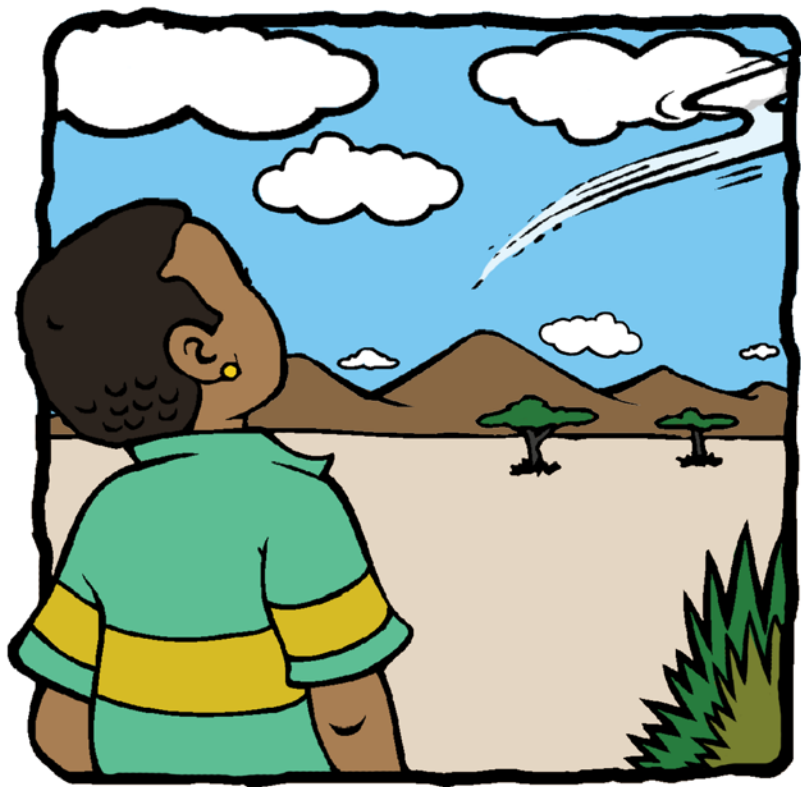


Taba Makes a Wish

So Taba paused for a moment. She sat and pondered as the wind swirled around her. The warm breeze brushed against her. It tickled and made her giggle, and the laughter put her more at ease.



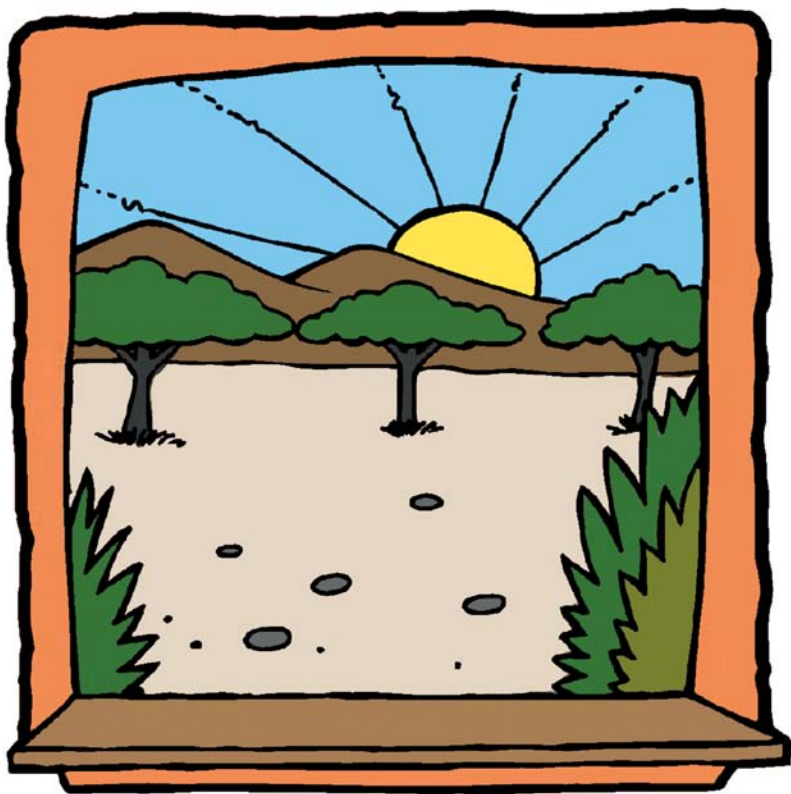
Then Taba stood up and spoke.
“Oh, kind and gentle wind of charity,
I hope you are real. I hope you are
not just in my imagination. Here
is my wish. I wish for crops to feed
my people. And I wish for warm
rains to help the crops to grow
and to bring water to the villages.”



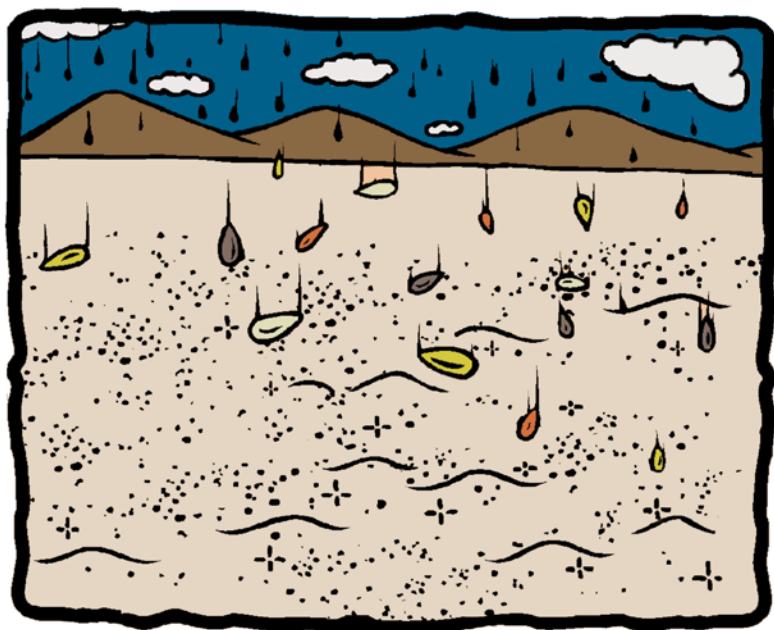
“That’s two wishes,” said the wind.
“I will be back in a day to grant
your first wish. Then I will grant
your second wish on the next day.”
With that, the wind blew away,
and the hills were quiet again.
Taba sat and wondered if the wind
would return as it said it would.



When the day ended, Taba led the goats back to her village. She was afraid to tell anyone about the gentle wind of charity because they might think she had lost her mind.

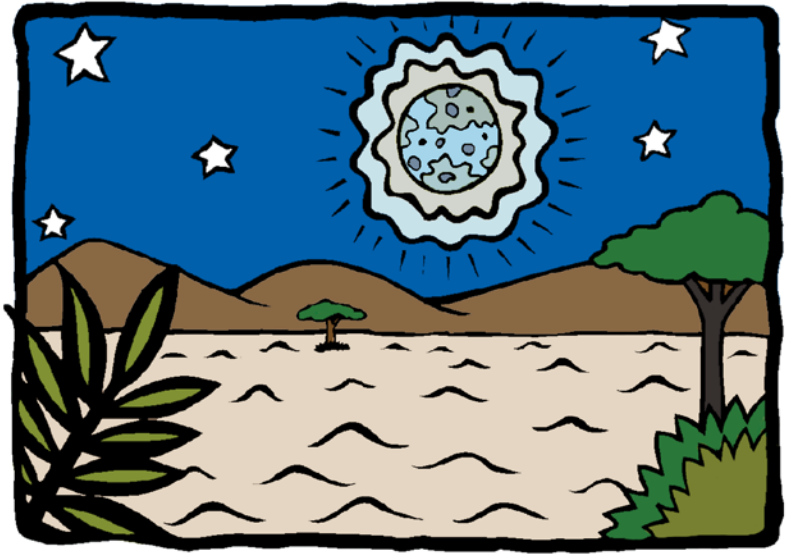


That night Taba tossed and turned and had a difficult time sleeping. She wanted to push the night into morning. Taba was delighted to see the morning sun lift over the trees in the East. She could not wait to see if the wind would grant her first wish.



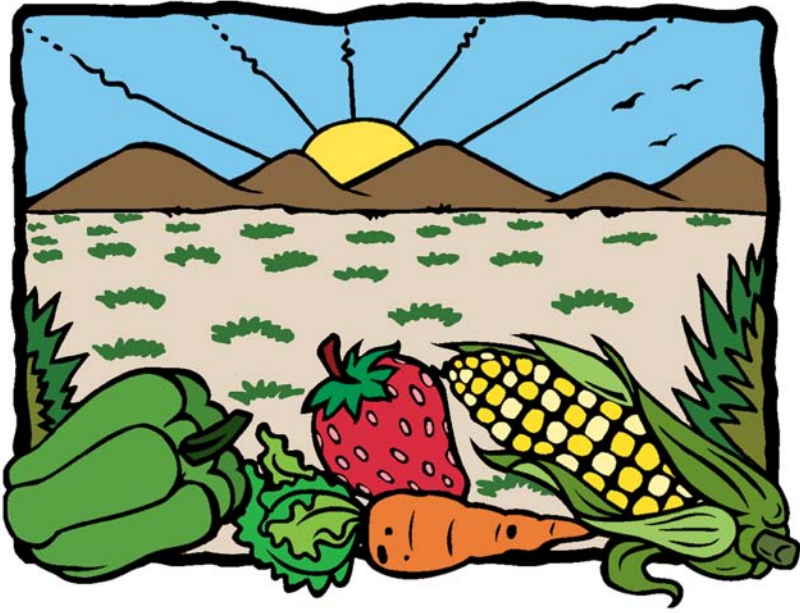
Taba's Wish Comes True

The morning passed, and nothing changed. Taba began to wonder if it was just a dream. But in the early afternoon, the dust began to stir, and the sky darkened. Within an hour, seeds rained from the sky. They fell throughout the country, and then the gentle wind covered them with a thin layer of dirt.



Taba could not believe her eyes. Who ever heard of such a thing as raining seeds? But it was really happening, and everyone was talking about it.

That night a strange ring formed around the moon, and thin clouds drifted in. By morning, when Taba awoke, a gentle rain had begun to fall. By midday, it soaked the land and fed the seeds.



As if by magic, within three weeks, crops were growing everywhere. There were corn and peas. There were sweet strawberries and lovely plums. There was wheat to make flour for bread. There were lettuce, carrots, peppers, and beans. Fruits and vegetables filled everyone's baskets, and everyone's stomach was full. Smiles returned to the villagers' faces.



As time went on, the gentle wind of charity granted Taba other wishes. But Taba never wished for anything for herself. She only wished for things to make others happy.



One day the wind of charity asked,
“Taba, my dear child, what about you?
What special wish can I grant you?”



Taba only smiled and said,
“Oh, but you have given me all
I could ever want. The people of
Togo are well cared for. They are
happier than ever, and that
makes me the happiest girl alive.”



And with that, she opened her arms wide and hugged the invisible wind of charity.

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Correlation

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The Mystery Wind

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