



Hunger and Beard

(A story from the Democratic Republic of Congo)

Once upon a time, Hunger and Beard were good friends and lived on the same farm. Beard had a field in which he grew peanuts, maize and cassava, which he forbade his children to touch.

One day, when Beard went out, Hunger entered his field and stole his crops. When Beard asked him who had been in the field, Hunger replied, 'It was your eldest son.'

Without getting any evidence, Beard broke his son's leg, even though he cried, 'Papa, I'm innocent.'

For a second time, Beard went out and again hunger entered his field and stole the crops. Again Beard asked Hunger who had been in his field, and this time Hunger replied, 'It was your second son.'

Once again, Beard acted without getting any evidence. He broke his second son's arm, even though he cried, 'Papa, I'm innocent.'

Then Beard decided, to be certain about who was stealing his crops, he would lay a trap. Pretending to go away for the morning, he hid nearby where he could watch his field. After a little while, he saw someone entering his field. It was Hunger. Then he saw him pulling up the peanuts and the cassava and the maize. Beard came out of hiding and confronted Hunger.

'You told me it was my sons who stole my crops. But today I saw it was you. Now I am going to cut your head off!'

With Beard right behind him, Hunger fled. He ran and ran along the road until he saw an old man who was having an argument with his wife. Without stopping, Hunger dived into the old man's mouth and hid in his stomach.

Beard stopped just below the mouth and waited.

This is why Hunger always stays in the stomach: he is frightened to go out because he knows Beard is waiting to grab him.

