



Mayele

(A story from the Democratic Republic of Congo)

The day had been too long. The man's bones were tired. In a couple of minutes, the day would end without finding a single forest fruit in this dark jungle. It was time to go back home.

His wife was lying down because of the heat of the day. She opened her eyes like a little blonde cat that had seen a mouse.

'Did you find my forest fruit?' she asked.

'No I didn't.'

'Why? You know I can't sleep without eating my favourite fruit.'


'Yes, I know, my wife. This pregnancy has brought us problems. I walked all day and looked everywhere, but I couldn't find your favourite fruit because, after bringing them to you for eight months, they are all finished.'


'What are you talking about?' she said, 'In a big jungle, the fruits are never finished. But it's alright, my husband. I know you are making sacrifices for me. So, just bring me a cup of water.'

But, once he was in the kitchen, the wife locked the door behind him and said, 'Now I'm going to the jungle to find my forest fruit.'

'No, please don't go there. It is too late for a woman to go into the jungle.'

But his wife paid no heed. She went to the forest with a small cloth tight around her chest and a big bag to collect the fruit. When she got deep into the forest, she heard a huge voice saying, 'Hey, you! Balloon lady! What are you doing searching my house? This is the time for Evil to dance. Your life is over. I will eat you now.'





'Oh please, show yourself before you eat me.'

'Humm!' the Evil One said. 'I've eaten many of you before and no one has made such a request.'

He appeared, a monster, tall and fat with a huge mouth and eyes. The woman fell down almost unable to breathe. 'Please,' she said, 'I'm searching your forest, because I can't sleep without eating your lovely fruits since my pregnancy started. If you give me your red forest fruit, after the birth of my child, I will give you the baby. If it is a girl, she will be your wife. If it is a boy, he will be your slave.'

The Evil One was very happy with this offer. 'Tell me when I can expect my baby,' he said, 'and then you can go with my forest fruit.'

'In one month,' said the woman.


At home, her husband wasn't sleeping well. Suddenly he was surprised when the door opened and his wife came in with a big bag full of forest fruit. He asked her how she managed to find it, and she told him the full story.


'What! You made a bargain with an Evil One?'

'I hadn't a choice,' said his wife, 'But I know what to do.'

A month later, the wife gave birth to a baby boy. Two days later, the Evil One came to her house. 'The time is up' he said in a huge voice. 'Where is my child?'

'Could you leave him with me for a couple of months?' said his wife to let him grow a bit. Then you can take him. He is a baby boy and he will be your slave.





A month later, the Evil One came again, this time in a different form, because he can take many shapes. 'Where is my child?' he said.

'Over there, playing with his friends,' said the woman.

'How will I know him?'

'He is wearing a red t-shirt and blue shorts. You can take him and go.'

He went to where they were playing and he saw more than ten children playing and laughing, all wearing red t-shirts and blue shorts. The Evil One was angry and so he went back to the mother. 'Tell me the boy's name,' he said.

'His name is Mayele.'


The Evil One went back to the children and now there were more than twenty, all playing and wearing red t-shirts and blue shorts. He called out, 'Mayele! Your mum wants you to come home now! It is late. Where is Mayele?'


Then, one after another, the children stood up and said, 'I'm Mayele.'

The Evil One was very angry. But there was nothing he could do. He went back to the mother again and said, 'I am tired now. I am going back to the forest. But tomorrow morning you will see me again before you wake up.'

So, early in the morning, he returned and said, 'Where is my child?'

'Oh, take it easy,' said the mother. 'He is at school. You will recognise him easily. He is wearing a blue shirt and he has a short haircut.'





The Evil One jumped up and went to the school. But he found that he couldn't identify Mayele because all the schoolchildren had blue shirts and they all had short haircuts.

The Evil One went back to the mother and said, 'I should eat you now! All the children are the same!'

So, days, weeks, months, years went passed and the Evil One could never get his hands on Mayele. Till, one day he said, 'this is your last chance.'

So, the mother said, 'come tomorrow and you will get him. I will lock him up and keep him at home.'


But Mayele was very intelligent. When he was in his mother's womb, he had heard the Evil One and he knew what he had to do.


Early in the morning, the Evil One came out of the forest with all the other Evil Creatures with him. They surrounded Mayele's house and said, 'Open the door! There will be no excuse this time!'

'Oh yes, thank you for coming,' said the mother. 'I promised you my child and today I will give him up. He is in the bedroom waiting for you. Mayele! Mayele!'

'Yes, mum,' said Mayele, 'I am waiting for you.'

The mother said to the Evil One, 'go in with your friends and you will catch him.'





Once they went inside, the mother locked the door so they couldn't get out. Mayele wasn't there. With his mother and father he had dug a tunnel under his bed and through to the outside of the house. All the people of the village came and threw fire on to the house and burned it down and destroyed all the Evils from the forest.

After that the whole village had a huge celebration.

Since that day, all the Evils of the forest were banished and people could go into the forest without fear.

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