





Nonkungu and the imbulu

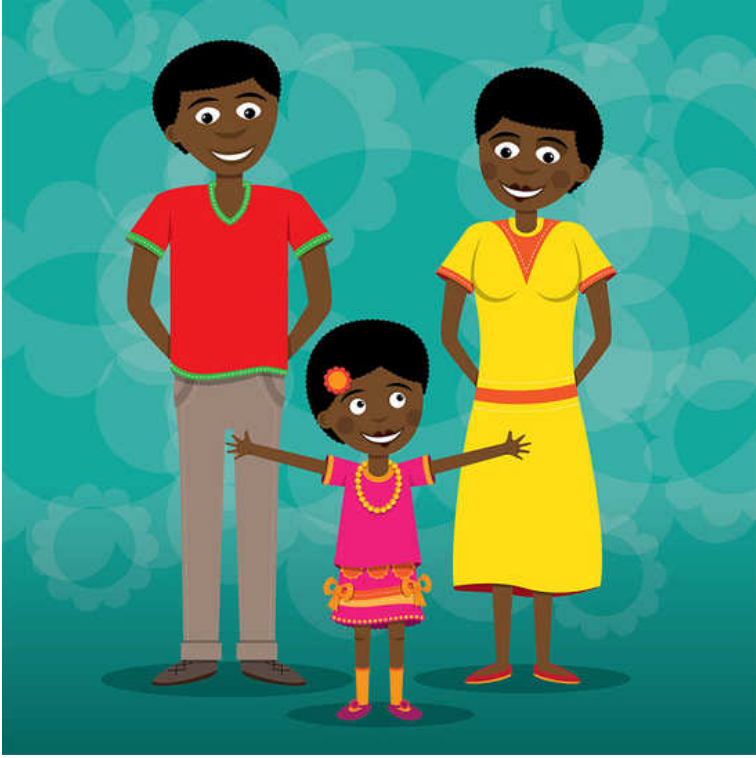
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 English

 Level 4





Once upon a time there was a poor man and his wife. They had only one child, a girl. The child's name was Nonkungu. Her parents loved Nonkungu very much.



One day her parents decided to send her to stay with her rich Uncle Mtonyama. Nonkungu's mother made a special skirt with ribbon, buttons and beads. She also made a beautiful bead necklace for Nonkungu. Then she sent her off to her uncle's village.



On the way Nonkungu came to a stream. She crossed the stream using the stepping stones. On the other side she met a young girl wearing rags.



“Where are you going?” asked the young girl. “I’m going to visit my Uncle Mtonyama,” said Nonkungu. “Well, Mtonyama is my uncle, too and I am also on my way to visit him,” said the young girl. So they walked on together.



Before they had gone very far, the young girl said, "Your skirt is so beautiful and your beads are so pretty. Please let me try them on." So Nonkungu took off her skirt and beads and gave them to the young girl.



When the girl took off her rags and changed into Nonkungu's clothes, Nonkungu saw that the young girl had a tail! Nonkungu was afraid. She knew now that the young girl was really an imbulu.



They walked on together. "Please give me back my skirt and my beads," asked Nonkungu. But the imbulu answered, "Let me wear them until we get to that tree." She pointed to a tree on the hill.



When they reached the tree, Nonkungu said to the imbulu, "Please give me back my skirt and beads." "Just let me wear them until we get to the next stream," said the imbulu. Nonkungu was afraid, so she agreed.



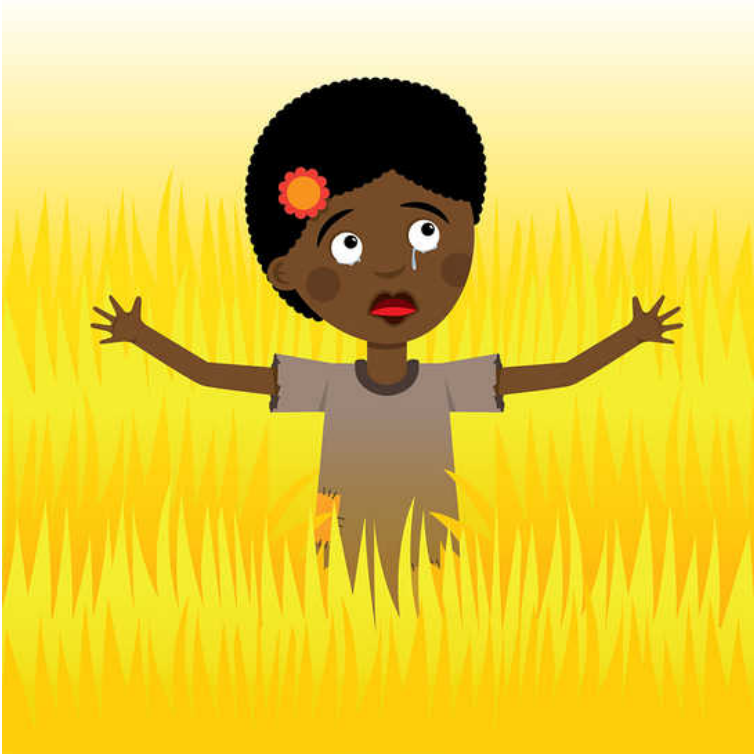
At last they reached the stream. Again Nonkungu asked the imbulu, "Please give me back my skirt and my beads." "Just let me wear them until we get to that hut where the women are sitting," said the imbulu. So they walked on.



When they reached the hut, the imbulu pushed Nonkungu back and called to the women sitting by the hut. "Look at this girl wearing rags. She has been following me all day. I wish she would go away," said the imbulu. Nonkungu was so ashamed and so frightened that she ran hid in the kraal.



Then the imbulu went to Uncle Mtonyama's hut. She said sweetly, "I am your niece, Nonkungu. My parents sent me to stay with you." Mtonyama welcomed the young girl. He and his family were very kind to the imbulu. But poor Nonkungu had to sleep in the kraal and share the dog's food.



During the day Nonkungu went to the fields, hid in the corn, and sang: "Oh misery me, misery me. I was sent by my father and mother to stay with my Uncle Mtonyama. On the way I met an imbulu and she took my skirt and my beads. Oh misery me, misery me."



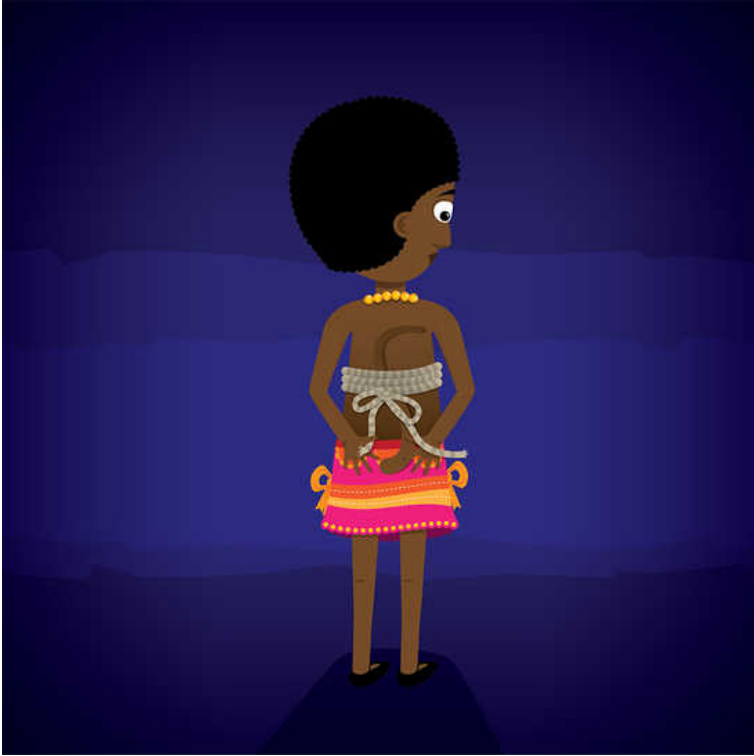
One day, one of Mtonyama's brothers was walking in the fields. He heard the strange and beautiful song. He didn't know who was singing, but when he got home, he told Mtonyama the words. Mtonyama went into the fields. He heard the song, and looked until he found Nonkungu.



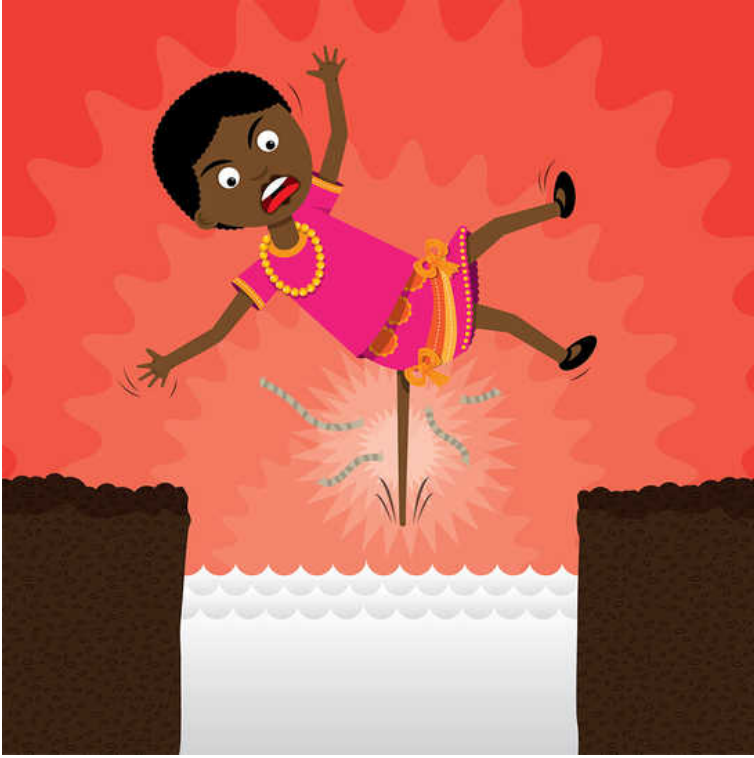
Nonkungu told him what had happened, how the imbulu had taken her beautiful clothes. Mtonyama took her back to his place and hid her in a hut. Mtonyama knew what he was going to do to catch the imbulu.



Mtonyama had heard that an imbulu's tail loves milk and that it can't go past milk without drinking some. So he told his men to dig a deep ditch and to fill the ditch with sour milk. Then he called all the girls of the village to take part in a jumping competition.



The imbulu was worried. She did not want to jump over the ditch. She knew that her tail would be thirsty for the sour milk. So she went into a hut and tied her tail to her body as tightly as she could. Then she took her place with the other girls.



One girl after another jumped over the ditch. At last it was the imbulu's turn. She tried to jump high over the ditch, but her tail broke loose. The imbulu's tail pulled her down, down, down into the sour milk.



As the imbulu struggled in the sour milk, the men quickly filled the ditch with sand and buried her. That was the end of the imbulu. Nonkungu stayed happily with her uncle for a long, long time. And that is the end of the story.



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