

Karikiriki the witch-tamer

Written by Robert Muponde | Illustrated by Elizabeth Sparg



There was an old woman who lived alone in a hut on the slope of a hill. Witches would visit her every night. They visited her on the backs of hyenas. Owls lit the path for the witches with their big, bright eyes.

They always made an awful lot of noise and banged on her door until dawn. The hyenas laughed all night and the owls scratched at the thatch of her roof. The witches shouted: "It's been long since we rode on the back of an old lady. Come out!"

The old woman started crying and calling on her ancestors to protect her. The witches threw a wild party in her yard. They tore off most of their clothes and danced on her doorstep. They only left just before dawn. What a lot of wild, wild witches!

Then something nibbled at the old woman's toe.

It was the rat, the one who always came in through a hole in the wall. Many times, the old woman had tried to poison him, but he would not die. What a rat!

She reached for her shoe, but before she could attack him, the rat spoke. “Old lady dearest, I come to bite your toe in peace. For many nights, you have not slept. Now, you cannot even go to work in your fields. You shall starve and die unless I help you. Old lady dearest, I have an idea!”

Desperate for help, she asked the rat to explain.



“One day I wandered into a cave and I saw the big footprints that belong to Karikiriki, the mysterious slayer of witches,” said the rat.

He told the old woman, “You must enter the cave at night, alone and barefoot, shout the name Karikiriki three times, and dance your way out.”



So the old woman visited the cave and did exactly what the rat said. She shouted, “Karikiriki! Karikiriki! Karikiriki!”

As she was leaving, she heard the sound of feet walking behind her. She started running. The feet started running too. When she looked behind her, the old woman saw a huge pair of feet following her!

The big feet stopped outside her hut where the rat was waiting for her. “Feet only? That’s Karikiriki,” the rat explained.

Night came. The witches shouted: “It’s been long since we rode on the back of an old lady!” They started banging on the door.

Suddenly, Karikiriki came running out from hiding in the shadows. Karikiriki kicked the witches’ heads and they fell to the ground, unconscious.

“Don’t kill them yet!” shouted the old woman. She wanted the witches to slave in her fields since they were the reason weeds were now choking her crops. “But kill them if they refuse,” she ordered.

The captured witches agreed to work in the fields. What else could they do? But at night only. Daytime was not good for them; it was when they needed to sleep. Also, they had that habit of taking off their clothes, so night-time was preferable for everyone.

The old lady was happy. “Rat,” she said, “since you saved my life, I shall not try to poison you again. When the crop is harvested, you shall have a bag of maize to eat.”

Rat squeaked with delight. “I shall only visit to bite your toe for good old times’ sake, old lady dearest!”

Karikiriki’s feet danced with joy. The unhappy witches grabbed hoes and Karikiriki herded the shrieking lot straight to the long fields. And the sullen hyenas and owls? They went back to the forest where they belonged.



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Ideas to talk about

Do you think that the witches' punishment was fair? Why/why not?
 What are your thoughts about the illustrations used by the author?
 Who do you think the hero of the story is? Why did you choose this character?



Visual

What part of the story do you find the scariest? Write this text in the middle of a large sheet of paper. Draw pictures around the text that illustrate it.



Reading

What other stories have you read that have witches, monsters, hyenas and/or owls in them? You can find more Nalibali stories here: www.nalibali.org.story-resources. Choose a new story to read. In what ways is this story the same and different to *Karikiriki, the witch-tamer*?



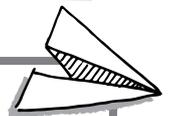
Writing

Write a review of the story. Include a short summary and say why you would or wouldn't recommend it for other readers of your age and younger than you.



Craft

Use paper plates or cardboard, paint and string to create masks of the characters in the story.



Performance

Act out the story using the masks that you made.

