TALK ABOUT TEXTS

The Calabash Children

A Folktale from East Africa



Retold by Melaina Faranda

Illustrated by Luisa Gioffre-Suzuki

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For Review Only

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macmillan education

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Chapter 1

A Good Life



Shindo and her husband lived a good life in their little thatched hut in the banana grove. There was always enough to eat, and always time for a smile and a song.

Although they had longed for a family, Shindo and her husband did not have any children. People in the village said the couple were unlucky and they kept their distance from them. They were worried that Shindo and her husband would bring them bad luck, too.

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During the day, Shindo collected firewood. She got water from the stream for cooking. She swept the dirt floor of their home and traded yams, beans and peas from her garden at the market. She herded the goats and tended to the chickens.

Her husband dug canals to collect water for their crops. He worked in the fields and fixed the hut when the roof needed thatching with new banana leaves. There was no one else to help and they needed each other. They lived happily this way for a long time.

One day, Shindo's husband died. It was very hard for Shindo. She missed him so much but had no time for tears. There were no children to comfort her and now she had to do all the chores herself. Each day, she was up before the rooster crowed, and she did not return to her little thatched hut until the first stars shone out overhead.

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When she did come home, she was so tired that sometimes she would simply go straight to sleep on her mat, without making a fire to heat her food and keep her warm from the cold mountain air.

This continued for many days and weeks. Shindo became thinner and thinner, and more and more weary. One day, tired from trying to lead the goats to higher ground for more feed, she tripped and fell hard against the earth.



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