

Short Story: The Old Witch and the Wish

Level: A1-A2

I am not afraid of the old woman who greets me each time I meet her when I am on my way to school. Most of my friends are. I don't know why. She always smiles at me when she sees me. I think she is very friendly and I would like to know where she lives.

"Good morning my son," she says.

"Good morning *agogo*. How are you today?"

"I am fine; I am fine, thank you. What a lovely boy you are...now hurry up, my son. You don't want to miss your bus, do you?"

My friends say I should never talk to her. Rumour has it that she is a witch. She is said to fly at night. I don't know if anybody has ever seen her do that. Limbani, my best friend, says I should avoid her at all costs.

"That woman is childless. She has no family and she always talks to strangers. Sometimes she insults them without any reason at all. There is something wrong with her. Charles, you should never talk to anyone who is shunned by everybody. It brings bad luck. I wish you would just listen to me."

Maybe my friends are right. I should choose another route. There are many buses I can take to school. Maybe she is all nice and lovely to me because she would like to eat me one day. I wouldn't want to be anybody's dish.

I just wish she would stop being kind to me. It is difficult to be rude to people that show you goodwill, isn't it? Anyway, I will try...

Today is the day. I decide to leave earlier than usual. I want to catch the 7:30 bus that stops near the supermarket where we buy snacks at breaktime. I walk faster than usual. I am feeling tense. If only I could be in my classroom right now. I am just confused.

There many people in the street already. Some of the faces are familiar. I shout out '*Sharp!*' from time to time. My curt greeting is returned with a '*Bho, bho* my friend!' None of this gives me pleasure. I feel extremely tense. Each step I take draws me closer to the bus stop. I think I will make it. I want to make it.

"It looks like you want to take a different bus today."

The voice is familiar. I hear it every day when I am going to school. I wish I had never heard that voice before. It sounds nice but today it carries a different meaning. Without looking back, I start running. I run as fast as my heels can carry me. My limbs are light and they do not betray me. I arrive safely at school. I recount the story of my survival. My classmates are stunned.

"We told you!" they finally say.

The next day, I go to school with Limbani. We take yet another route. We do not meet the old lady. Gradually, I start forgetting her.

"She must be dead by now," Limbani says. "We can try the old route just to see if she is still around."

Unfortunately, she is. She smiles at us when she sees us.

"Good morning my sons," she says.

"Good morning ...*ago...go*," I stutter.

"Good morning old witch," Limbani shouts. "Leave us alone or my father will deal with you. Do you want to see what shaved the guinea fowl?"

I am shocked by Limbani's words. It is not good to talk to elderly people in such a way. No one has seen the old witch at her 'job' after all. It is not a crime to be childless, I think. I come to my senses.

"Don't mind him *agogo*. My friend didn't sleep well last night."

She is crying. You can read the hurt in her eyes.

"Crocodile tears!" Limbani blurts out jagged words.

"I wish you were kinder to me. I am just a lonely woman. I don't know what wrong I have done to you or your friends, but please forgive me."

"Goodbye *agogo*," I say. "I am afraid we will miss our bus. Take good care of yourself and don't mind us."

"Oh, I am sorry my sons for keeping you for so long. Your teachers won't be happy. What lovely boys you are...now hurry up, my sons. You don't want to miss your bus, do you?"



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