

THE SINGING MONSTER

A tale from Kenya

Adapted by Carole L. Cooney

Setting: A small village hut and corn field

Characters:

Narrator

Witch

Firefly / Monster

Widow Mother

Daughter: Ajuma

Prince Modiba

Poor young man: Lelo

Narrator: Once upon a time, near a small village, there lived a witch who was jealous of the light of a firefly.

Witch: (Putting the firefly in a jar) Now I've got you, you beastly beauty. (cackling) I'll cast a spell upon you so that no one will see your lovely light again!

Firefly: Oh! Please, Miss Witch, do let me go. I'm such a small little fly. I do no harm.

Witch: Hold still! (Waving her hands over the jar, the Witch casts a spell.)
Make the voice sing and bellow
Make the shape a horrible fright
Make the light glow ghostly yellow
Make it be seen in the dark of night

Narrator: The Witch lifted the lid off of the jar and a huge glowing monster slowly swayed into the air.

Witch: (cackling laughter) Now let's see who will think you're a pretty little thing!

Narrator: In the village there lived a rich widow and her, daughter, Ajuma. One night strange things began to happen in the widow's corn field.

Monster: I'm so sad that I have to do this, for what I'm about to do is part of the spell.
(Singing) I must shake each stalk, and beat it
I must break off corn and eat it

Narrator: All night long, the Monster moved through the corn field destroying the corn; and each night, the Widow and Ajuma watched, peeking out the window.

Widow: This must stop! We will have nothing to eat and nothing to sell.

Ajuma: What shall we do, mother?

Widow: I shall offer a reward to whoever can rid us of this Monster.

Narrator: The next day Prince Modiba came to the door offering his services.

Modiba: I shall get rid of this Monster with my spear and knife.

Narrator: Prince Modiba set up a fire at the edge of the corn field and waited.

Monster: Must I do this again? (Singing) I must shake each stalk, and beat it
I must break off corn and eat it

Narrator: As the Monster swayed closer, Prince Modiba grabbed his spear and knife and ran back to the village.

Ajuma: Mother! Mother! Prince Modiba ran away. Perhaps the reward is not great enough.

Widow: All right! I shall triple the reward with a larger pile of gold coins. Surely a brave prince will come.

Narrator: But the next night, another Prince came, waited and ran away at the sight of the Monster.

Ajuma: Mother, I have an idea. Let's promise that the young man who gets rid of the monster can have me as his wife.

Narrator: And so the reward was announced all over the village. The next day, Lelo, a poor young man, who had neither sword nor knife, came to the Widow's door.

Lelo: May I get rid of the Monster?

Widow: (laughing) YOU? If the Princes could not do the job, how can you?

Ajuma: Please let him try, Mother.

Narrator: That night Lelo waited. Suddenly the Monster approached, bellowing his song.

Monster: When will I be able to stop? I am so tired of destroying the corn field.
(Spooky singing) I must shake each stalk, and beat it
I must break off corn and eat it

Narrator: Suddenly Lelo tore off his shirt as he ran toward the monster. Quickly, he threw it over the monster and tied it tight like a bag. Then he peeked inside.

Young Man: Why, it's a little firefly. You're not a monster. What happened to you?

Firefly: I am so glad you finally caught me! A Witch cast a spell on me because she was jealous of my lovely light. She turned me into a monster. You are so brave, you broke the spell.

Lelo: Let me bring you to the village to show everyone who the Monster really is.

Narrator: All of the people of the village gathered around as Lelo showed them the Monster.

Modiba: That's just a fly. That's not the glowing Monster!

Lelo: (touching the firefly's tail) See the glow! See the sparkle!

Modiba: Let's squash it!

Young Man: No! (lifting the firefly into the air) Let us let the firefly return to its home in the forest.

Narrator: A few days later, Lelo and Ajuma were married. They lived in the village close to the corn field that grew the best corn in the land.