

Name _____

African Folktales

The following folktale was told by storytellers Hadjia Rahamu and Hadjia Angele from Niger. The tales were told in Hausa on Niger's national radio station and then written down and translated into English.

Gizo and the Lizard

This tale is about Gizo and the Lizard. One day in an isolated town there lived a king who had a beautiful daughter. They tried and tried to find a suitable husband for her but failed. They could not find a man she liked.

One day she announced that she would marry the man who could go to the fields and work from morning until night without drinking the juice of the dimniya. This was a difficult task because the juice of the dimniya is sweet and irresistible.

People heard the news of the king's daughter, but all those who came failed to marry her. People even came from faraway towns but were unsuccessful in their attempts to marry her. There were several men from the town who went to the fields and worked all day. But just as they finished their work they drank the juice of the dimniya. When they returned to the town they said they had not drunk any. Then someone looked in their mouths and saw that they had drunk some.

One day Gizo heard the news of the king's daughter. If you know Gizo and that he heard about the king's daughter then you know how this tale will end. The quarrelsome and argumentative Gizo thought about how he could marry the king's daughter. He went home and prepared to go to the fields.

The next day Gizo went to the fields with a full water bottle and a stick and began to work. After he had worked for some time he went to the dimniya tree and picked some fruit. He drank and drank the juice until his thirst was quenched. Then he took his water bottle and rinsed his mouth out with water. He was careful to thoroughly rinse out his mouth. Then Gizo returned to town but forgot his water bottle in the fields. Although Gizo did not know, Lizard was watching everything he did. When Gizo returned to town he went to the king's court and they looked carefully inside his mouth. They announced that he had not drunk any juice of the dimniya, and he was married to the king's beautiful daughter.

After the wedding the king's daughter was taken to Gizo's house. After some time Lizard came and said, "Gizo, Gizo, you forgot your water bottle at the place where you drank the juice of the dimniya." Gizo said, "Oh Lizard, I didn't know you were close by, Lizard you have ruined the celebration this year."

Then a man from the king's court came and said, "We've heard what Lizard said." Lizard repeated, "Gizo, Gizo, you forgot your water bottle at the place where you drank the juice of the dimniya." Gizo said, "Oh Lizard, I didn't know you were close by, Lizard you have ruined the celebration this year." The people went to the fields and saw that Gizo had indeed left his water bottle there. Then they returned home and the marriage was annulled. **

**Gizo: spider, or trickster

**Annulled: ended, or divorced

The Man and the Lioness

One day there was a hunter whose wife was about to give birth. The man said that if it was God's will, his wife would only give birth on a lion skin. The other men said, "You're lying," and they chatted for some time about it.

The man went home and lay down until the sun came up. Then he took his bow and quiver full of arrows and went into the bush. While in the bush he searched everywhere until he came to a place where Lioness had given birth and left her children to go and find food for them. The man grabbed one of Lioness's children, slaughtered it and left the flesh, taking the skin home.

As he arrived home, his wife went into labor. He dried the skin of the Lioness's cub, and a short time later his wife gave birth on it.

When she returned Lioness looked everywhere for her missing cub. She followed the man's footprints until she saw them leading into the town. Lioness transformed herself into a beautiful divorcee and stuck an arrow in her head.

Many men asked to marry her but she said, "I don't have a bride price. I'll marry the one who can pull this arrow out of my head." A man came forward and pulled with all his might, but the

arrow did not budge. A man said, "Someone is going to pull her head off. That arrow is stuck." Many men attempted and failed. When the hunter heard the news he said, "Let me try and see what happens." The man went and easily pulled the arrow out of her head and was married to the beautiful woman.

One day she said, "I heard you're the man whose wife only gives birth on a lioness's skin." "Yes, that's me," he replied, "I'm the one." She asked him, "If Lioness sees you in the bush what will you do?"

"If she tries to catch me, I'll run around until I lose her," he told her. Lioness learned all of his secrets. Time passed and one day she said, "There's something I want to do. I've seen your town, but you haven't seen mine. I want you to accompany me to visit my parents. After our visit we can return here." The hunter agreed to go.

They traveled and traveled when suddenly his wife turned back into a lioness and tried to catch him. The hunter repeatedly dodged her but could not escape. He did not know what was going to happen to him. She told him, "I'm the lioness whose cub you slaughtered." He begged her to let him go, but she refused. Then the man, who was in so much trouble, was saved by the grace of God and ran away.



Follow-up Questions for “Gizo and the Lizard”

1. Folktales are often told to children to teach them lessons. What lessons might a listener learn from Gizo and the Lizard?
2. What type of man does the king's daughter want to marry?
3. How does Gizo trick the king and his daughter?
4. How does the Lizard reveal Gizo's dishonesty?
5. When the people learn of Gizo's trick, what happens to the marriage?
6. Is this folklore similar to any children's stories that you have heard before?

Questions for “The Man and the Lioness”

1. Why does the hunter kill the lion cub?
2. How does the lioness trick the hunter into marrying her?
3. What secrets does the lioness learn from the man when she is disguised as his wife?
4. According to the story, why is the hunter saved at the end of the tale?
5. What folktales does this remind you of?
6. What are the morals to this story?