

[Signposts for research listed below the story text.]

The Beautiful Daughter: told by Harriet Kushemererwa

Translated from Runyankore by Rwangyezi Hellen

There lived a man and his wife, and they had 5 children. The first child was 8 years old while the last born was 2 years old and was the most beautiful of them all.

After a while, their father died and shortly after that their mother died. The children stayed in their home alone. They looked for their own food, looked after themselves with no help from relatives or friends. They had no choice but to grow up through those hard conditions.

When the eldest girl was of age, she got married. This meant she had to leave her younger siblings behind. Shortly after getting married, she too died.

As catastrophe would have it, the younger children also started dying off one at a time and only the youngest was left. The young girl was so beautiful that the whole village admired her. She grew up alone and looked after herself.

When she was of age, suitors started coming to her house to ask for her hand in marriage. The first man that came to marry her had a bicycle. He made his intentions clear, but the girl was not sure. She went to her room and began to weep in sadness. She felt alone as she had no one to help her make this decision.

A voice came to her and told her to go to her mother's grave and call upon her to give her advice.

She snuck out of the house and went to the mother's grave and began a song of lament:

Girl: *"What shall I do?
Beauty is making me cry.
I have no maternal aunt
Beauty is making me cry
I have no siblings
Beauty is making me cry
I have no paternal uncle
Beauty is making me cry*

*I have no parents
Beauty is making me cry
What shall I do?
Beauty is making me cry.*

She wept and cried at her mother's grave hoping to get an answer from her but still no voice came. She tried singing again and still no voice came. She decided to sit next to the grave and wait. As she waited, she heard a song coming from the grave. It was her mother's voice

Mother: *"Why do you cry my child?
The suitors are here.
What are they wearing?"*

The beautiful girl explained to her mother what the man on the bicycle was wearing. The mother told the beautiful girl to go back and tell the suitor that the beautiful girl will not be getting married to him. The girl went back and told him, and he left.

Next came a suitor with a motorcycle and yet again the mother said no.

Next came a suitor with a car and he too was rejected. The next man that came, came with a plane.

The girl went back again and called upon the mother's spirit in the same lament song.

The mother asked her the same questions as she did with the previous suitors. The girl responded and told her about how wealthy the man was.

Mother: Do you want to go with him?
Daughter: Yes, I want to go with him.

The mother then instructed the daughter to go and look through her clothes that she left behind when she died and find a beautifully wrapped cloth clean herself up, wear it and go with the man. The daughter did as she was told.

The man was happy, and he took the daughter with him and they lived happily ever after.

Signposts for research embedded within the story:

Psychology: “After a while, their father died and shortly after that their mother died. The children stayed in their home alone.; As catastrophe would have it, the younger children also started dying off one at a time and only the youngest was left.”

- Musisi, S., Kinyanda, E., Nakasujja, N., & Nakigudde, J. (2007). A comparison of the behavioral and emotional disorders of primary school-going orphans and non-orphans in Uganda. *African health sciences*, 7(4).

Religion/Spirituality: “A voice came to her and told her to go to her mother’s grave and call upon her to give her advice.”

- Sekagya, Y. H. K., Muchunguzi, C., Unnikrishnan, P., & Mulogo, E. M. (2024). A grounded theory study of beliefs underlying use of ancestral spirits for healing among Baganda traditional spiritual healers in Central Uganda. *medRxiv*, 2024-04.

Fashion: “find a beautifully wrapped cloth clean herself up, wear it and go with the man.”

- Isiko, A. P., & Isabirye, J. M. (2023). Fluidity and Hybridity of Customary Marriage Traditions in Contemporary Uganda