

Once upon a time a famine came upon a village and the people could find no food. Men got into their canoes and went away to make sago. A village woman worried that she and her children were without food, so she said to her daughter, "Go to your auntie and tell her that your mother asked for green bananas. We will bake them, eat and then sleep." But when that girl arrived, her auntie said, "I have no green bananas for you to bake and eat." So the daughter had to return and tell her mother that the aunt had no bananas. They slept that night, hungry.

Early the next morning they still had had nothing to eat. They went out to the garden. There was a *mofi* tree on the way. Now this *mofi* tree belonged to an old man. Some people had stolen fruit from his tree, so he washed the rest with medicines. The woman and her children saw the tree and noticed the ripe fruit. The mother climbed the tree while the children waited below. Starting from the top of the tree, she picked and threw down the ripe *mofi* fruit for the children to eat. She worked her way down the tree, picking the fruit as she went. When she dropped down to the lowest branch she tried to jump to the ground but found her hand was stuck fast to the tree branch. She just hung there. Her children stood underneath calling, "Mummy, come down. Let's go." But how could she get down? Her hand stuck tightly to that branch and she just had to hang there. Her children pleaded, "Mummy, come down!" They called and called as the day passed. The sun was going down, so their mother said, "My children, you can see that my hands are stuck here. Gather younger children and return home. It is getting dark." And so they had to leave their mother. They returned home and slept by themselves in the house.

When dawn came, they returned to their mother. They found her still hanging from the branch. They called out so many times, "Mummy, come down!" but their mother remained stuck through the day and again the sun was going down. She called down, "It is getting dark. Gather the little children and go home to sleep." This went on and on until the two youngest children died. Now only the eldest came to their mother. Every night she returned home and every morning she came back to the tree. One day she found her mother had died. She saw that she had fallen from the tree and was lying on the ground, dead. She returned to the village that night and fell asleep.

Her father landed his canoe on the beach in front of their house in the middle of the night. He came up into the house, intending to waken his wife and children. "Get up!" he called out. "Open the door! I'm coming up." He grew impatient he was calling so much. So he climbed up and pulled on the door. He found the door partially open and came in. The house was very dark and he had to feel around the floor. He came to the hearth to make a fire and there he felt his daughter, lying on top of the ashes. "Why are you lying here?", he asked her. She told him the sad news about her mother and the younger children. He listened to her. Afterwards he climbed down from the house, got some fire for the hearth and blew on it until the house was bright with light. He then went down to the canoe to get his things. But now he was alone, so he threw the sago he had gathered upon the ground. He lived alone.

This translation: June 22, 1995

Notes:

*eyoso*: to be washed, bathed.

- washed the tree *mofi* with magic - not whole tree but special part.

*fafowe: fafo* if the beach in front of one's house.

*jeri:* place where one can leave canoe - not pulled up.

*Frederick's comments:*

People were stealing is old man's mofi, so he made magic. When the lady and her daughters were going to the garden, they saw this tree. Her children asked for the fruit so she went in and climbed up. It was the last branch that she was stuck on. She spoke to the older daughter to take her younger brother and sisters home. They did that until two younger died.

The man went to wake his wife and children to bring the things up. The door wasn't properly closed. He found the daughter sleeping on the ashes when he tried to make fire. He was by himself so he threw all the sago on the ground.

At the beginning, the men went off to make sago and left the women and children alone.

-hadn't heard of this story or of this kind of magic.

In the old days people would make magic on betel and coconut trees - mostly betel nut. Anyone can climb betel nut tree, woman or boy - so more open to theft. (abeeta). Women will not climb tall coconut trees, a few will climb short ones. Not very many climb betel nuts. Magic might cause legs to swell up (*ke buusi*) or man's testicles might swell (*rabuu bejji*), or they might have a scratch that becomes a big sore. There are others too. Doesn't know of cases of it happening. Now finished.