

The Magic Waterman

Everyone thinks that Mzee Marende is a witch because he always has enough water, even to spare, when other people do not have water to drink. Incensed at Mzee Marende's mysterious source of water, the people decide to attack him and his family accusing him of witchcraft. They set out to burn Mzee Marende's entire family. In this exciting story, you will witness the deadly conflict as one man confronts and defeats an entire township. It is one of those stories a reader cannot forget easily.



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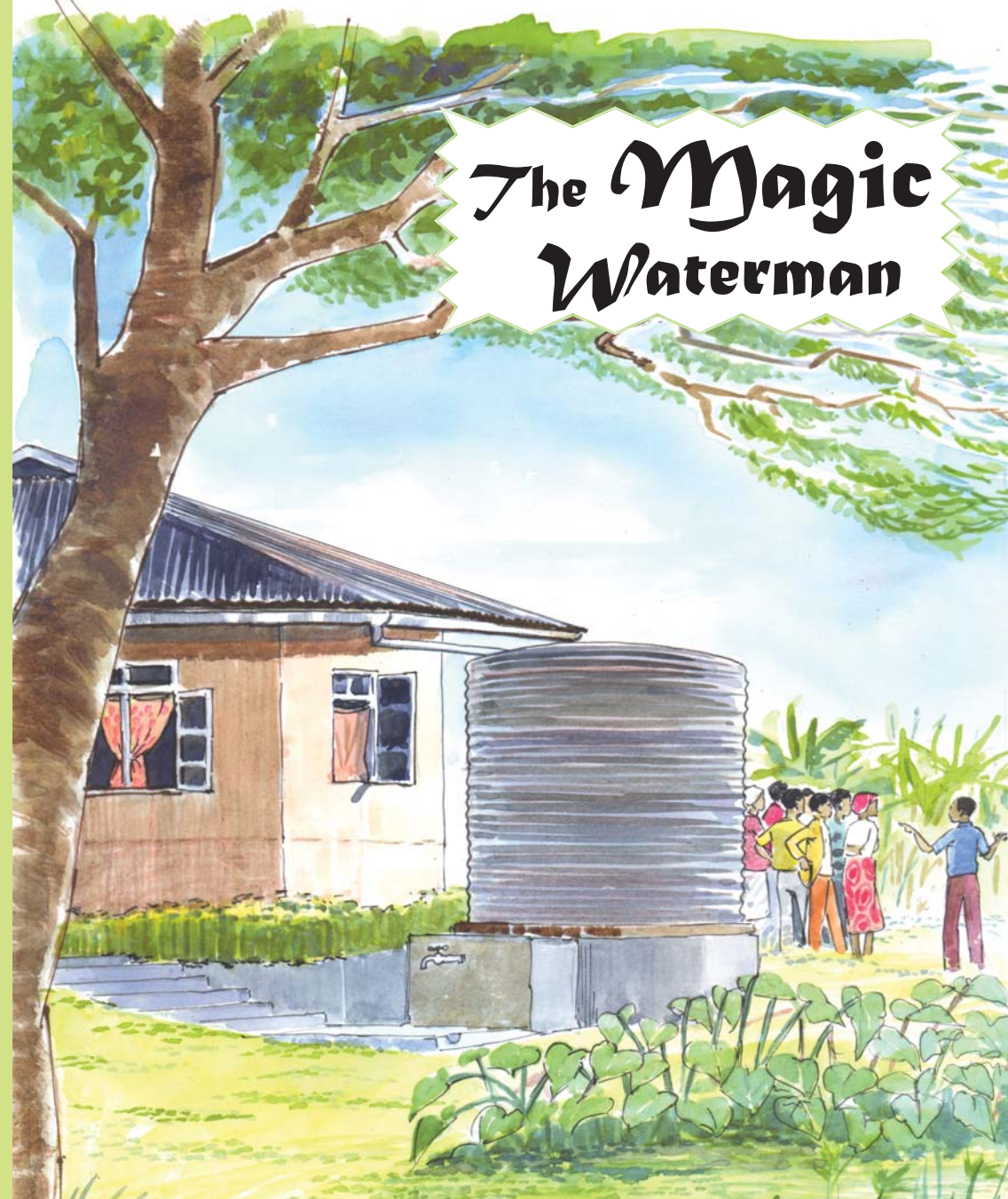
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The Magic Waterman

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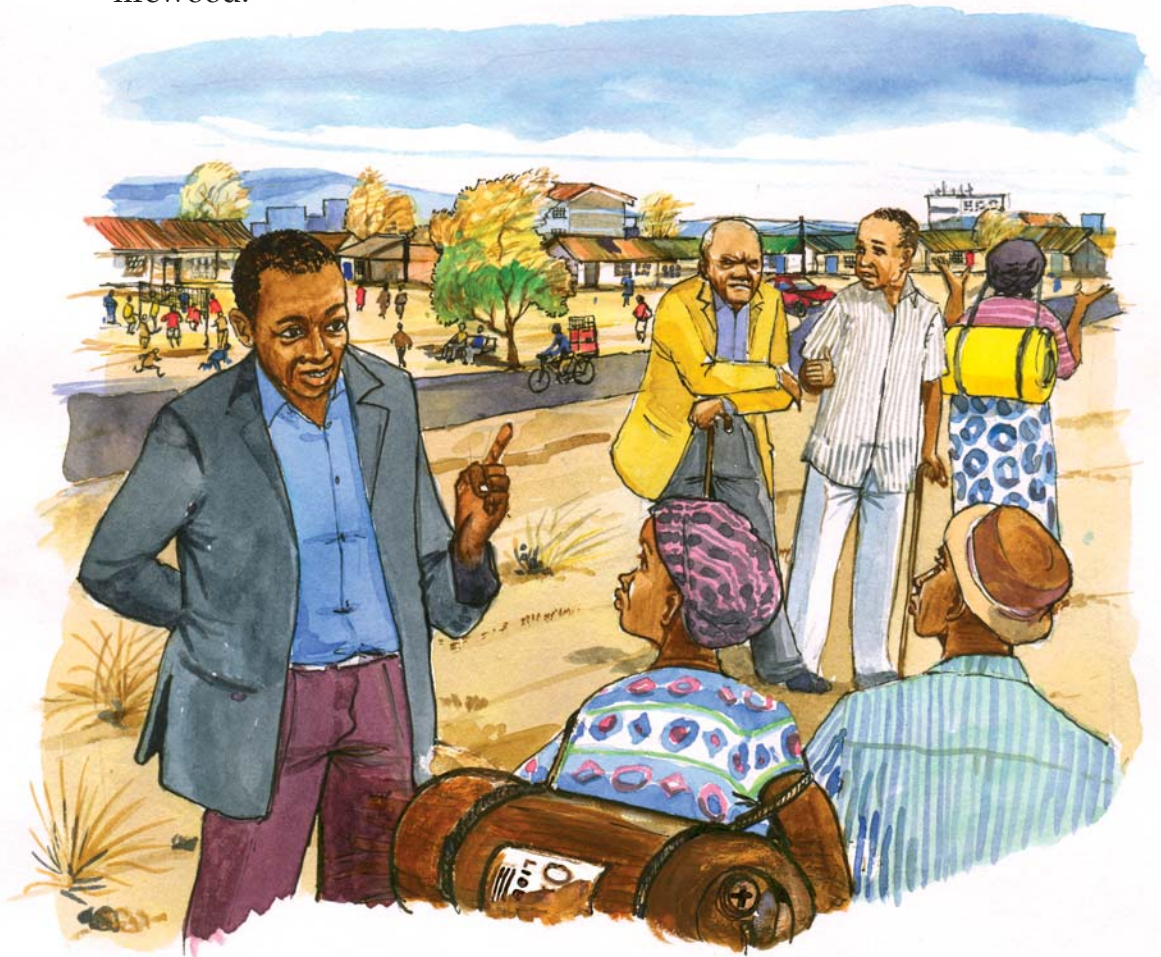
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For the first time, it was very dry in the small township of Mwamba. Rains had failed to come. It was also dreadfully windy and dusty because people had cut down all the trees to make charcoal and firewood.



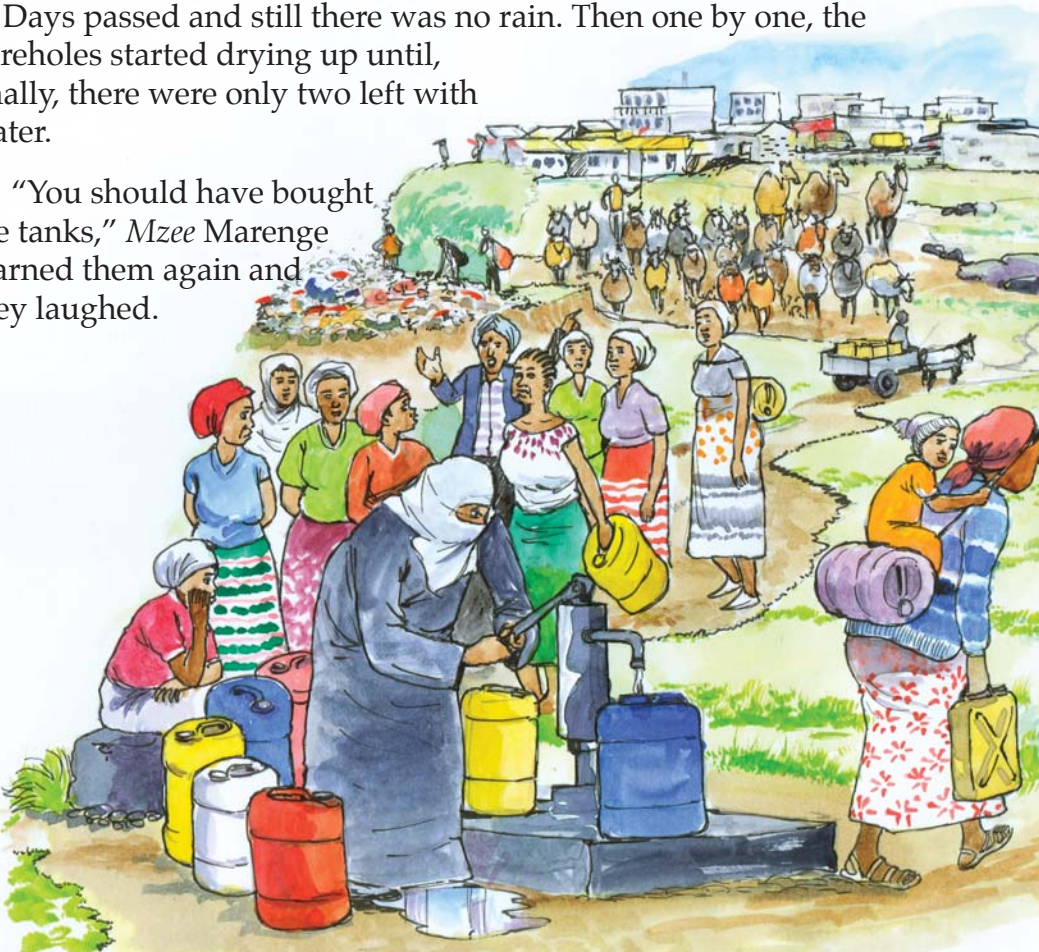
"You should have tanks to collect the rainwater," Mzee Marengé told the people but they laughed.

"Mzee Marengé, you wasted your money just to buy a silly tank when there are boreholes with all the water you need? That was not very clever," they told him.

The dry weather continued, but luckily, there were several boreholes in Mwamba, and water was in plenty. People used it in any way they wanted, because it was free.

Days passed and still there was no rain. Then one by one, the boreholes started drying up until, finally, there were only two left with water.

"You should have bought the tanks," Mzee Marengé warned them again and they laughed.



"Relax, Mzee Marengi. You're just nervous. The rain is coming soon. You wait and see."

But there was no rain to be seen anywhere.

Then one of the boreholes dried up, and there was only one left. The Chief called an urgent meeting.

"We must make sure our last borehole does not dry up before the rains come. From today, no household is allowed to draw more than five jerrycans of water per day," he announced.

"Only *five* jerrycans?" the people protested. "But that is hardly enough for bathing and cooking!"

"Only five jerrycans, full stop," the Chief repeated firmly. "If this borehole dries up, you will have to trek many kilometres to look for water. Don't forget I warned you a long time ago not to cut down trees. Now the land is bare, children are sick because of the dust, and the rain is even embarrassed to come visiting us!"

Nobody laughed. Things were beginning to look very serious.

More weeks passed. Still no rain came. The last borehole was beginning to take long to fill up. The Chief called yet another urgent meeting.

"From now on, no household is allowed more than three jerrycans per day," he announced.

The people stared at one another horrified. By now, they knew the Chief was right.

"Then, why do you allow some people to get more water than the rest of us?" Mzee Pandika accused the Chief.

"Mzee Pandika," the Chief said looking offended, "You know that is not true."

"We all know someone is getting more water than the rest of us," Mzee Pandika insisted.

"Then tell us who it is," the Chief demanded, looking angry now.

"I can name him, but I don't want to make enemies," said Mzee Pandika stubbornly.

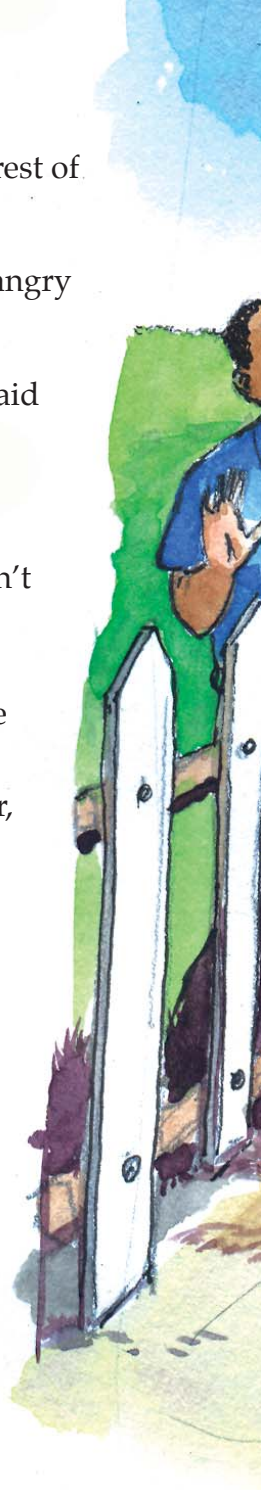
Everyone looked at everyone else suspiciously.

"Mzee Pandika," the Chief said firmly, "you know I don't allow anyone to draw more water than the rest, not even my beloved wife. But if you happen to see her or anyone else doing so, let us know. Otherwise, don't accuse people of taking more water than is allowed if you cannot prove it. You have already made us all suspicious of one another, which is bad for our peace."

Mzee Ponga passed by Mzee Marenge's house later, walking rather fast. Mzee Marenge waved and shouted greetings but Mzee Ponga walked on as if he had gone suddenly deaf and blind.

"Ayo-weh!" Mzee Marenge whispered. What was wrong with his friend? Then some ten minutes later, Mzee Pandika passed by, also walking unusually fast. Mzee Pandika was his best friend. Mzee Marenge waved at him cheerfully, asking how his family was.

Mzee Pandika walked on as if he too had become suddenly deaf and blind.





“Aiyewe, mama yoooh! What is going on?” Mzee Marengé asked himself loudly, “No one wants to speak to me, or even look at me!”

Still wondering, he took a *panga* and walked towards his neat little *shamba* on which he grew some crops. Seeing his nice crops helped him to forget his troubles and feel more cheerful.

He walked around checking the crops. The

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