

Lila and the Secret of the Rain

For weeks and weeks the sun beat down on the Kenyan village where Lila lived. It was very hot, so hot that Lila, her mama and brother, and all the other villagers stayed in their houses to keep away from the burning sun. It was too hot to gather firewood, too hot to weed the village garden, and even too hot to milk the cow.

One night Lila overheard her mama talking about the well that had dried up and the crops that were failing. "Without water there can be no life," Lila heard her mama say. Lila wanted so much for the sun to stop shining and for the rain to come. But the sun did not stop shining and rain did not come.

One evening Lila's grandfather told her a story about a man that he'd met once when he was a boy- a man who had told him the secret of the rain. "You must climb the highest mountain," said the man to Lila's grandfather, "and tell the sky the saddest thing you know."

Lila listened very carefully to what her grandfather said. The following morning when the sun was still asleep, Lila left the village and set off to find the highest mountain she could. Lila walked and walked and walked, and at last she found herself at the foot of a very tall mountain. Lila began to climb, higher and higher and higher. When Lila reached the top of the mountain she began to tell the sky the saddest things she knew.

First, she told of the time her brother cut his leg while chasing a chicken in the village. Then she told of the time she burned her fingers while helping mama to cook. On and on Lila went, telling the sky the saddest

things she knew. At the end of each one she looked to the sky for a sign of rain, but the sky remained blue and the sky still shone very brightly.

Lila began to cry. "What can I do?" she said to the sky. "It's too hot to collect firewood, too hot to weed the village garden, and too hot to milk the cow. The well is dry and the crops are failing. Without crops there will be no food, without food the people in the village will become sick and without water there can be no life." Everything on the mountain top was silent. Nothing could be heard except the sound of Lila weeping.

Then a breeze began to blow and the dust around Lila's feet started to dance. Clouds began to fill the sky like flocks of white birds, slowly blocking out the sun's scorching rays. The clouds grew darker and darker, filling with Lila's sadness...until the sky was ebony with emotion. Suddenly a flash of lightning tore across the sky and a loud roar of thunder echoed around the mountain. Lila felt the gentle touch of a raindrop on her foot...then another and another and another until the ground was awash with tears of rain. Lila joyfully lifted her hands to the crying sky, for each rain drop felt like one of her mama's kisses.

As fast as she could, Lila ran down the mountain. By the time she reached home, all the villagers were celebrating the rain with music and dancing. Lila's mama was very relieved to see her home again safe and sound. She hugged her close while Lila's grandfather gave her a knowing smile...for only Lila and her grandfather knew that she had saved the village with the secret of the rain.