KOKO'S STRANGE TWIST OF FATE
Children's Edition

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strange twist of fate

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story time

It was morning, a little distance from the village called Takai just west of River Lombe. A woman slowly walked out of her neatly-thatched house and stretched herself. Presently, she walked over to one side of her house and picked up a large water pot and straw ringlet with which to balance the water pot as she bore it on her head. The woman's name was Usha, and she now called loudly towards a distant hut not far from her own house.

Usha was going to fetch water from River Lombe, and always requested her friend and neighbour Fifi to watch over her only child Ada, who was five years old. She now came out of the house on hearing her mother talking to Fifi.

"Ada dear, I must go and fetch some water. Please be a good girl and run to Fifi's house until I return, alright?" Usha instructed, smiling at the little girl.

Ada was a very beautiful little girl with curly black hair, a very light complexion of soft skin and lovely dark eyes that shone when she smiled. She looked up at Usha's face and said, "It's alright mama. I will go there just now".

As Usha balanced her water pot on her head and proceeded to walk away slowly, memories of her past few years returned to her mind in fleeting images.

She was only twenty five years now and already a widow. She had barely settled down after giving birth to Ada when her beloved husband fell grievously ill and died. Usha's neighbours as well as her husband's friends had tried every possible treatment to halt the disease before his demise, but to no avail.

He had been laid to rest some distance away from the home Usha and her daughter now lived in. The house had actually been built by him before marrying Usha. He had also acquired three cows, a donkey and several goats as well. Life seemed to be smiling on their young family then, and they were truly happy before tragedy struck.

It had taken Usha great courage and resolve to continue life without her husband. She loved him dearly, and his presence in her life had been like a cold drink of water on a hot day. Usha herself was an only child, and her parents too had died when she was just a child. She had been brought up by an uncle and aunt before being married. They were now old, and both Usha and her late husband never stayed too long before going to see them.

She now approached River Lombe, and walked slowly down the sloping path that led to a beach. The river at this point was wide and flowed slowly, although the calmness with which it rippled by gave no indication to its depth.

From the beach of sand and pebbles residents from Takai and its environs came to fetch water, wash clothes, bathe and launch their fishing boats. A little distance downstream where the river widened, boys and sometimes girls, would often swim. On this particular stretch, the gradient of the beach into the river was gentle, with a large and shallow area of its waters accessible and ideal for swimming in.

The residents of Takai were mainly from the small Husa community. Across River Lombe, a different community was predominant, called the Pekele.

Besides the Husa and Pekele, smaller tribes co-existed with both and they were the Bilebi to the north, the Sipupu to the south and the Kolosho to the east of Takai village. They all lived with each other without conflict, and occasional inter-marriage was not unheard of.

With the exception of the Kolosho, who were predominantly hunters, these communities were fishermen and farmers, growing cereals like maize and millet, as well as different vegetables. Some even grew groundnuts a little further away from River Lombe. The common language spoken between these neighbours was Husa, and Usha was actually a Husa as well.

Not far from the path that Usha had taken, a tall young man bent over a whetting stone sharpening a pointed fishing knife. His complexion was dark, and his muscles rippled on his shoulders and back as he worked. His hair was short and shiny with beads of perspiration. His name was Koko and he was a very unusual Kolosho man.

Koko was both a hunter as well as a fisherman. Although his community were not fishermen, Koko had leant how to fish from an early age. His parents died when he was just attaining adolescence, and Koko had decided to learn as much as he could about fishing.

He owned a small boat and an open thatched structure by the bank of River Lombe, from which he could sort out his catch of fish, or carry out repairs on his boat. Koko's enthusiasm and likeable personality endeared him to both fishermen and residents around Takai village.

When not fishing, Koko spent much time in the bush and forest on the Takai side of River Lombe. Here, he would spend his time exploring these areas and admiring the beauty of nature. Once in a while, Koko would shoot antelopes with his bow and arrows.

He was an excellent archer and never failed to bring down any prey. People from the various communities around River Lombe knew Koko to be a hunter as well as fisherman, and often requested him to bring them game-meat. It is from the sale of fish and game-meat that Koko now led a comfortable life. He had bought a small piece of land near Takai and built himself a large hut of several rooms. He also had two cows and five goats, which he had employed a young relative to take care of.

As Koko finished sharpening his knife, he stood upright to stretch himself, and looked towards River Lombe. He was clothed only in a short waist-cloth secured tightly around his waist with a belt of neatly braided rope. This belt had a sheath secured to it to carry his fishing knife, and he had already put his sharpened knife into it.

As he casually looked at the various men and women busily engaged in their activities, Koko's eyes fell on a young woman at the edge of the river.

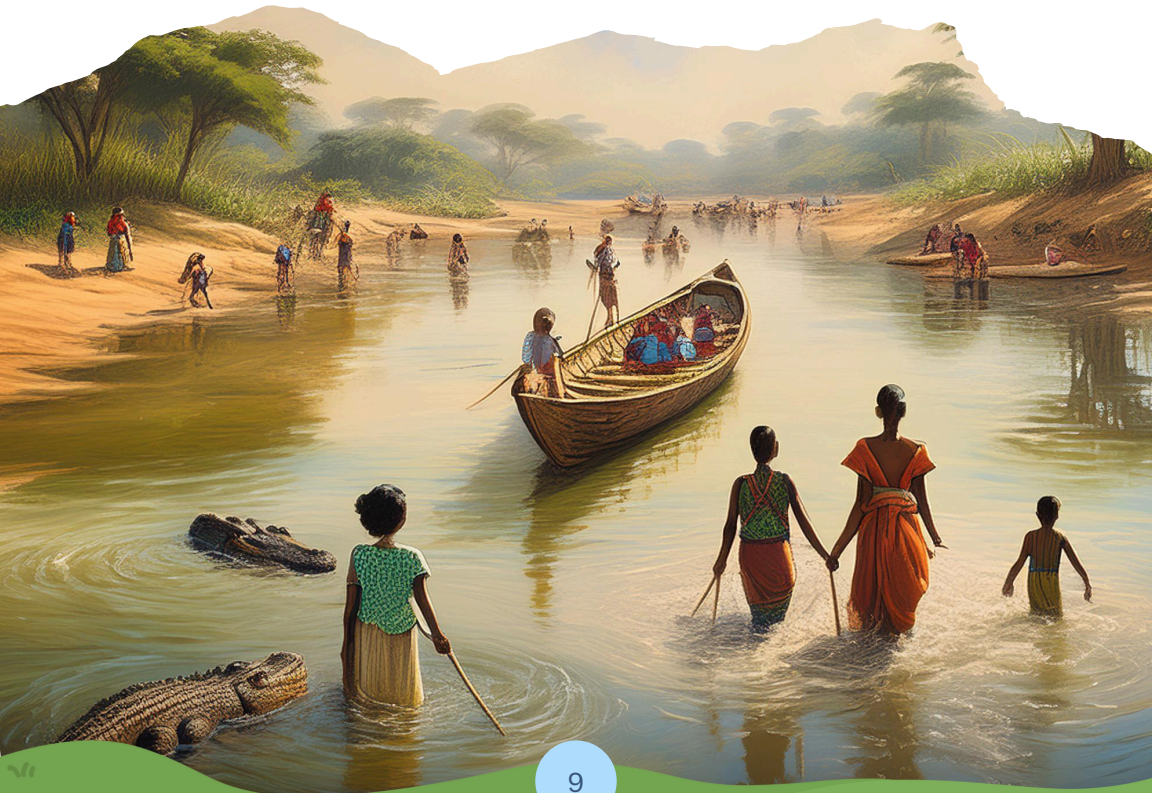
He had seen her before and remembered how different she was from the local Takai residents. She rarely came to the river accompanied, and she seemed to have no friends among the local girls. Koko had once taken a close look at her and noted the sad expression on her otherwise beautiful face. He now walked slowly to a shady area near his boat and sat on a fallen log to watch her.

Usha was deep in thought when she reached the edge of the river. She slowly removed her leather sandals after laying her water pot on the ground beside her. She did not notice a dark shape slide into the water across the river opposite her.

Extensive hunting and fishing over the years had sharpened Koko’s perception and his eyes now fell on the movement across the river.

He instantly knew what it was, but was surprised because crocodiles were to be found much further downstream on River Lombe. There had been very few sightings of them on this stretch of river. Koko's instincts now gave warning of danger, as he realized where the beast was heading!

As Usha drew her dress higher and closer around her legs to keep from getting wet, she didn't see the dark shape midway in the river slowly submerge. She lifted her water pot and bent down a few feet into the water.



There was a sudden movement in the water next to her, and in a flash, a great gaping mouth opened and clamped shut over her left hand. She was too terrified to even scream but as the huge beast jerked her into the water with powerful

Koko was already sprinting when the crocodile grabbed Usha. As he pulled out his knife on nearing the struggling combatants, Usha lost her balance and fell forward into the river. There were screams from onlookers all around but Koko did not hear them. He held his knife in a stabbing position and dived into the river, oblivious of any danger to himself.

Inside River Lombe and in the midst of bubbles and swirling water, the crocodile was in its domain. Its powerful tail propelled it easily as it prepared to twist and rip off its victim's limb held tightly in its jaws. As it began to turn, Koko turned in the water above the crocodile and grabbed its neck with his left hand. He quickly wrapped both legs around its stomach and reached over its neck with his fishing knife held tightly. He rapidly began to stab, the sudden punctures to its throat turning the water red as it bled.

As Koko`s first few blows with the sharp knife punctured its throat, the shocked crocodile opened its mouth in desperation. Usha pulled her hand free and quickly swam upwards, gasping for air. She looked around and swam to

the river bank, where she lay coughing and trembling violently. As shocked and bewildered onlookers rushed to her aid, women screamed hysterically. Usha realized that someone had just saved her life, and she turned to look back in the direction she had come. Her heart was pounding and she ignored the cries around her as she sought to know the fate of her savior!

The battle inside the river was now in earnest. There was no question of two survivors, and Koko knew this as he

“Residents of Takai as well as my neighbours, I thank you very much for your appreciation. All the same, I feel your gratitude is a little misdirected. Let us all thank God, who has saved both this woman and I from certain disaster!” There was prolonged shouting in agreement.

Some moments later, after much consolation and empathy for Usha, as well as praise for Koko’s brave deed, both walked away slowly in the direction of Usha’s home. As they walked, Usha looked at Koko and said, “My name is Usha, and I am very thankful that you saved my life. I shall always be indebted to you, brave warrior!”

“I am Koko, and I am as happy as you are that I was nearby. I feel flattered that you call me a warrior, which I don’t deserve. I only did what was my duty at that moment, Usha.”

As they neared Usha’s home, Fifi came running, carrying Ada in her arms. She had heard about the tragic event and burst into tears on seeing Usha. Ada too was crying, and ran to her mother as soon as she was put down. Usha hugged Fifi and Ada, and couldn’t help the deluge of tears in her eyes. She shuddered to think how close she had come to leaving them.

Back in her house, Usha warmly welcomed Koko. Presently Koko spoke and asked, “Usha, where is your husband?” There was a look of sadness on Usha’s face, and Koko knew the reason before she even spoke. He wished he had not spoken.

“Koko, I am a widow. My husband left Ada and I three years ago, from a deadly illness. We have been as you see us now since then”

“I am deeply sorry to hear that Usha, and please forgive me for asking” Koko quietly said.

“You have done no wrong Koko, if anything; I would have felt strange had you not wondered about it.” Usha let out a whisper of pain as she spoke these last words, and Koko remembered the lacerated arm.

“Usha, I am bestowed with some knowledge concerning herbal medicine. May I have your consent to treat that arm?

“Please do anything you can Koko” Usha replied. “It is starting to hurt badly.”

It took Koko an hour's excursion into nearby thickets before he returned with roots and leaves in his hands. As he washed them, he requested various items to enable him to crush selected parts. As he pounded them to a thick jelly, he asked Usha to prepare some water with which to clean her wounded arm. Usha asked Fifi and Ada to wait in a different room so that they wouldn't see her grievous injuries.

Koko washed Usha's arm with special herbs to disinfect the wounds. He then applied the herbal mixture on every open part, before tying her arm with a clean piece of cloth. As he finished, Koko smiled and said, "You are very brave, Usha. Ada has a courageous mother indeed!"

Usha could only smile. She had been impressed by Koko's concern for her, and his gentleness as he treated her arm briefly reminded her of her late husband. She was alarmed in her heart at the way she was thinking and quickly resolved to forget this whole incident as soon as possible.

After a meal cooked by Fifi, Koko sought leave from them all. He was surprised to note how well Ada liked him, and he gave her a hug as he left them all. Before disappearing, Koko assured Usha that he would return after a few days to check on her arm.

“Mama, Koko is back!” shouted Ada. It had only been three hours sine he left, and Usha didn’t believe Ada was speaking the truth as she came out of the house. She was happy to see that it was actually Koko.

“Sorry Usha,” he began. “I remembered that you had broken your water pot and returned home without any. I have brought you two water pots to keep you going.”

Usha was genuinely touched to see Koko’s kindness and continued concern. She thanked him and promised to return them as soon as she bought another pot.

Usha, you don’t understand. These are bought specifically for you. I have my own at home!” Koko spoke while leaving. He disappeared before she could find something else to say. Not only had he brought two pots but he had also brought fresh water in them!

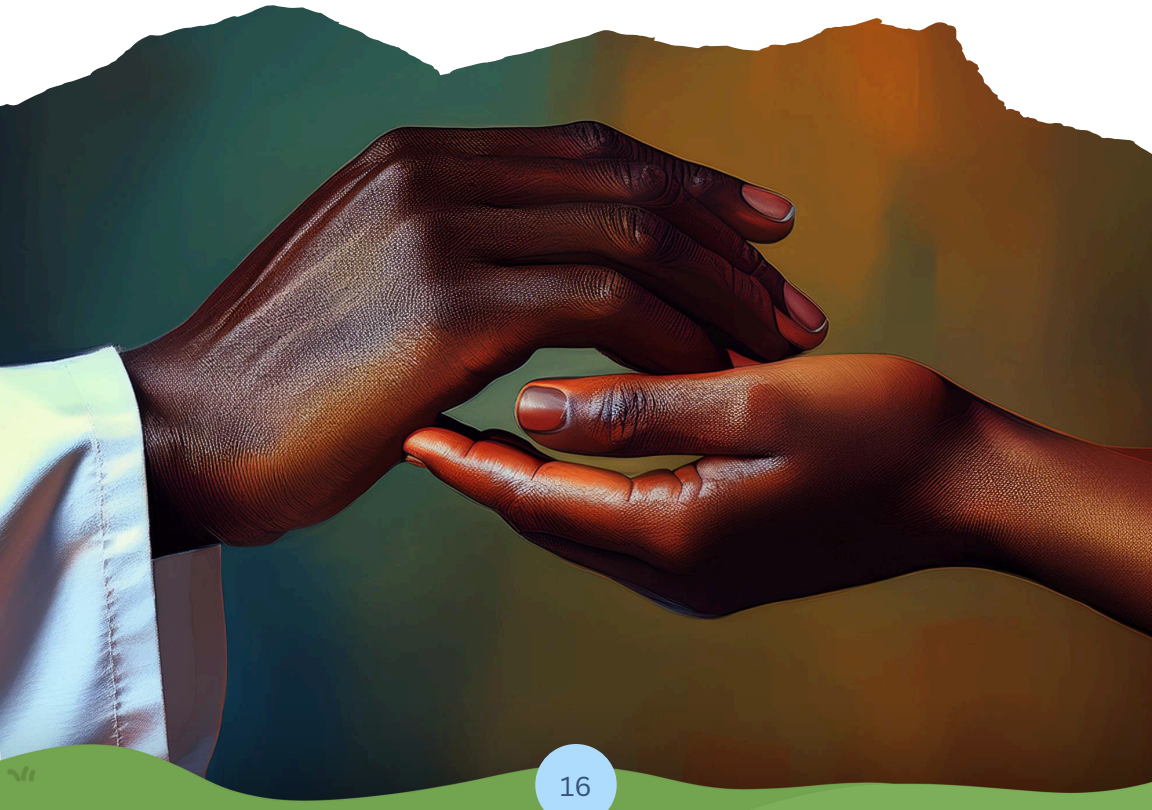
Four days after leaving Usha and her daughter, Koko returned. Ada saw him first from a distance and she ran and jumped into his arms. As he neared Usha, he put Ada down and proceeded to open a small parcel bearing fruits. Ada cried out in joy and looked at her mother as she thanked Koko.

“Hello, brave mother,” he began.

“Hello, brave warrior,” Usha replied.

They both laughed and Usha invited Koko into the house. Presently, Koko unwrapped her hand gently. He brushed away fragments on the surface of the arm and they were both delighted to see the open lacerations closed and healing fast.

“I think you can leave it undressed now, Usha,” Koko said.



As he stood to leave, Usha quickly looked into his face and said, “Koko, you can’t leave just now. I want you to eat first. Besides, you haven’t even told me about yourself!”

“There is very little to know, Usha,” He replied. “My main concern is that I don’t want to create a wrong picture in your neighbourhood by overstaying.”

“You have been here twice, Koko. Do you honestly think you have overstayed? The neighbourhood hasn’t even learnt that you exist!”

Usha shook her head as if in disbelief as she said this. She proceeded to take Koko’s bundle which she placed in a corner, and ushered him to a seat. He dragged his feet laughing.

Over a delicious meal later, Usha told Koko about herself, her family and her late husband. Koko, in turn, told her of his own origins and present aspirations. They talked a long time, enjoying each other’s company without straining. As the evening drew near, Koko stood up again.

“I really must leave now. I hate walking in darkness!”

Usha allowed him to go finally, and Ada asked as he left, “When will you see us again, Koko?”

“Maybe after a week, Ada. But continue being the beautiful and good girl that you have been, alright?” Ada gleefully affirmed that she would as he left.

After Usha’s encounter with death, Koko had carefully skinned the huge carcass and dried the valuable crocodile hide. He had cut away a few areas before selling the main piece in exchange for four goats. From the few select pieces of the crocodile hide, Koko made a very stout leather belt and sheath for a large hunting knife. He also made a very stiff strap studded with large scales. He thought this strap could be a very good means of defense. Little did he know that this was to be proved sooner than later!

As he had promised Ada, a week elapsed before Koko remembered his visit to Usha. He had of late begun feeling even more lonely than ever before. He had become attached to Usha and her daughter in a very strange way, and he wondered what it could really mean.

As Koko now prepared to leave, he remembered the crocodile strap and wound it round his waist like a belt. He also took one of the four goats that he had acquired from the sale of the crocodile hide and walked away with it. He meant to present Usha with this goat, in memory of their survival of the crocodile attack.

A strange sight met Koko as he entered Usha's compound.

Four men stood outside her house. Two were very tall and very heavy-set. As they spoke, they shouted roughly and directed their verbal aggression at Usha. It appeared that these men were accusing her of murdering their brother. Usha stood at the doorway of her house in tears, trying to counter their accusations. As they moved towards her menacingly, Koko felt anger rise up in his heart.

Ever since childhood, Koko had grown up detesting bullies. He particularly hated men who beat or abused their wives. What he was witnessing these men now do brought this resentment for bullies roaring back. He knew he couldn't stand by and watch.

Koko tied his goat to a small tree and proceeded to the doorway where Usha stood. Without even greeting her, he gently pushed her behind him and stood with his hands on his hips.

“My dear brothers, I greet you”, he began. “I would like to know why you need to shout at this poor woman. Are you not able to come in and discuss the issue quietly?”

The men gaped with mouths wide open. They couldn’t believe their ears! Presently, the biggest and eldest spoke. His name was Harim.

“Young man, we don’t know you. We also wish you no harm. Kindly mind what is yours and leave us alone. We shall not warn you again!”

“I am minding what is mine, in case you don’t know,” Koko replied.

“I would ask you all to leave now while I am in a pleasant mood. Anything you do or say after this might have serious consequences. Do I make myself clear?”

There was an audible gasp from the men!

“Ewoooh! Have you ever seen anything like this Shaki?” Harim asked his brother.

He was a little taller than Koko and he now attempted to pull Koko out by the neck. There was a cry of pain as Harim's fingers were gripped in Koko's hand and twisted back savagely. Koko pushed Harim backwards and asked Usha to stay inside with Ada and close the door. They were worried and afraid as they did so.

As Koko stepped outside, he threw off his upper garment and removed his stiff crocodile strap. This he held ready as Harim, Shaki and their two friends menacingly surrounded him. Shaki and Harim drew out knives. Koko's expression hardly changed, but he spread his legs slightly.

As Harim lunged at Koko with his wicked-looking knife, Koko moved slightly and flicked his strap downwards. It landed on Harim's wrist and raked off pieces of skin and flesh. Harim dropped his knife and screamed looking at his mangled and bloody hand. Shaki immediately charged at Koko from the side and the strap again flicked. This time, it tore bits of skin from Shaki's face, and blood flew. As he screamed in pain and walked away holding his bloodied face, Koko now leapt at the two remaining men growling.

They did not wait but sprinted off into some thickets, and as Koko came back at Harim and raised his strap, Harim raised his good hand in surrender. Koko now spoke in a stern tone.

"Brothers, you have only yourselves to blame. Please leave this place if you know what is good for you. Am I clear?"

Harim and Shaki nodded and started to walk away.

"We go but watch out young man! We shall be back!" Shaki spoke in pain through clenched teeth.

"You will find me right here when you come!" Koko said as they disappeared.

Moments after this disturbing development, Usha and Ada hugged Koko affectionately. They were overjoyed to see Koko without a scratch after such a fierce brush with peril. Usha spoke first and asked, “My brave warrior, how could you challenge four horrible opponents to a fight single handed? Were you actually serious?”

“Not really, Usha”, Koko replied laughing.

I really apologize for getting rather angry. As you should know by now, I hate violence. I can’t stand hurting anybody, and you are my witnesses that I warned them to leave before I got angry.”

“I never cease to wonder at you, Koko!” was all that Usha could say finally.

Koko then went and untied the goat and brought it to Usha and Ada.

“This goat is for you. I sold the huge crocodile hide, and bought it from the proceeds as a memorial of our survival. Please accept it Usha,” Koko quietly spoke as he looked at her.

“Gladly, brave warrior!” she said smiling. She had a strong urge to hug Koko but just managed to control it.

Later, Usha and Ada decided to see Koko off as he returned home. The three walked away with Ada holding Koko's hand on one side and her mother's hand on the other. They laughed and shared jokes as they walked, and for the first time after a long period of mourning her husband, Usha was genuinely happy and carefree.

Usha and Ada's contentment was shattered very early three days later. The men who had caused them so much pain had been her late husband's relatives.

While he was alive, they had seemingly loved Usha and her daughter. Now they had transformed into ugly enemies who could not be appeased. They had returned in great fury. They broke every single structure in the compound as they attacked this second time, calling Usha out loudly.

"Evil witch and murderer! Come out with that hateful daughter of yours. We're taking you far away where you will not harm anyone else! Throw out of the witch's house every item in it Shaki and Jibiri!" Harim shouted in anger.

As Harim, Shaki and Jibiri flung out Usha's possessions, she hugged Ada and they both cried in great fear. Usha wished Koko were around but had no way of alerting him. She realized these evil men meant her harm and that she might never see Koko again. This last thought seemed too painful for Usha, and her tears flowed down in torrents.

The commotion of Harim and his henchmen together with their shouts in anger woke up Usha's friend, Fifi. She knew who they were, having learnt of their first visit from Usha herself. She got up and quietly dressed. She decided clearly in her mind that unless she acted fast, Usha and her daughter would face grievous danger, perhaps harm even to themselves. She also knew the only person who could save the situation was Koko, and she sneaked away into the thickets with one thought, find Koko!

Before this visit by Harim, Fifi had learnt the direction to Koko's home from her friend Usha. Fifi suspected Usha of being in love with the strange young Kolosho man. How else could she have found out his home if Koko himself had not even taken her there? As she sped along the winding trail, Fifi tried to focus on the direction to take. After rejoining a bigger path, it took Fifi a full hour to reach the area she had been directed to and, before long, she knocked at Koko's door.

Koko was shocked to see Fifi so early. He was even more shocked to hear her brief tale of the early raid on Usha by her estranged relatives. He hurriedly dressed and again wound his new weapon, the thick studded crocodile strap around his waist. He slung his bow and arrows over his shoulders and ensured that his hunting knife was in its sheath. It took a relatively short time to reach Usha's compound. As Koko approached Usha's house, he motioned to Fifi to stay far away, as he stealthily crept forward.

Harim and his men had just finished unfettering Usha's cows and goats, intending to carry them away. Usha's house itself had been beaten to the ground and was in flames. As Harim's men hurriedly gathered every possession of Usha's, they could lay their hands on, Shaki dragged Usha and Ada towards the front of the loaded animals. The two were in tears, and did not resist. It was at this point that they all saw Koko.

In the clear morning light, Koko's appearance shook Harim's men to the bone. He was bare-chested, with a bow slung across his back. A quiver full of brightly tufted arrows was visible too. The long hunting knife at his side in its sheath was clearly visible too. What, however filled the men with fear was what Koko held in his hand - the studded crocodile strap!

His eyes, filled with anger, did not help to quell their fear as he slowly approached. Shaki's face, after the recent encounter with Koko, had hardly healed. It promised to retain ugly scars, too, long after eventually getting healed. As Koko approached him, a tremor of dread shook him visibly and he started walking backwards trembling.

As Harim appeared to check the progress of Shaki, he too was shocked to see the fearless young man who had done so much damage to his wrist. It had not even healed properly, like Shaki's face. He wondered where the man had been hiding. He also wondered what to do or say now.

“Good morning my brothers,” Koko spoke as he still moved nearer.

There was no reply and Koko now smiled at Usha and Ada, asking them in whispers to walk away to one side.

“Like I told you gentlemen last time, I am here to receive you. Is there anything in particular you want to say? I am not in a very happy state right now, as you can understand. I will give you only one minute to speak!”

Shaki quickly looked at Harim, expecting him to say something. As the silence prevailed, Koko unslung his long bow from around his shoulders. He only meant to fill them with fear, but succeeded beyond his expectations!

Two men helping Shaki and Harim pack away Usha’s belongings now dropped everything they carried and bolted into the bushes. They could still be heard crashing loudly through bushes for almost three minutes!

Harim now spoke in a strange trembling tone as Koko pulled out an arrow from his quiver.

“Please, brother, put down your bow. We can talk over this matter. We- we didn’t actually m-mean any harm. Forgive us and we shall go away v-very f-fast. We s-shall n-not bother these w-wonderful people again!”

Harim's face was shiny with perspiration as he spoke. He fully believed the young man would shoot him with an arrow. Shaki, too, believed his life was in grave danger and he now stood behind his big brother.

As the drama unfolded, Usha and Ada could hardly believe their eyes. How one man could cause two giants to tremble, and send two of their allies fleeing through the bush, was beyond her comprehension. Usha almost laughed with glee as her tormentor Harim blurted out his plea for forgiveness. Ada, too was smiling as she clung to her mother. Their shock increased as they heard Koko's next words!

"I have forgiven you, but the ones whose house you have burned down and whose hearts you have troubled, have not yet forgiven you. You will now go and kneel before the lady and her daughter requiring their pardon. If they forgive you, I will let you go immediately. If they don't.....,''Koko walked still closer as he talked. The bow already had an arrow fitted to its string as he approached, and Harim clearly knew there was no alternative.

As Shaki and Karim knelt at Usha's feet a moment later, mumbling for forgiveness, Koko spoke sternly and said "You will have to do better than this, friends. If I can hardly hear you, how can the ladies hear? Usha and Ada, can you hear their mumbling?"

Usha was enjoying herself, and Ada laughed to see the men who had violently mishandled them minutes ago now kneeling before them! They also looked quite dejected now, Shaki decided to do this whole thing right.

Usha my sister," he began loudly, ''.....and Ada my daughter, please find it in your hearts to forgive Harim and I for being very cruel to you. We shall leave and never bother you again if you forgive us. Harim, is that so or not?" Harim nodded, still looking dejected.

'We forgive you for everything Harim and Shaki, but please leave knowing that I am innocent of my late husband's blood!" Usha presently said.

The two stood to leave, but not before the little girl Ada had hugged each of them. She had learnt of late that they were uncles, and couldn't understand why they had become so cruel. Their apology, to Ada's innocent mind, merited re-instatement as uncles. She couldn't bear to see their dejected faces.

Usha and Koko, being adults knew only too well that these people had only stopped their cruel intent, on pain of harm to themselves.

Harim and Shaki collected their belongings in silence and presently left. They truly meant to leave Usha and her daughter alone henceforth.

As soon as the two were out of sight, Usha and Ada ran to Koko and hugged him unashamedly! He had saved them yet again, and, with tears running down their eyes, they thanked him profusely. He was too filled with mixed emotions to say much, but pulled himself together to ask, “Beloved friends, would you accept to lodge in my humble house until I build your house again?”

There was a loud, “yes!”

After this, Koko took Usha, Ada and all their packed belongings home to his home. He quickly made arrangements for the relative that he lived in the same compound with to relocate temporarily. He moved his own things to the smaller hut now available, and settled Usha and her daughter into the main house.

As they settled down, Koko sent for Fifi. As she arrived, Fifi could smell roast meat as well as a wide variety of dishes cooking. There was a celebration taking place!

“Usha and Ada, please appreciate Fifi as we eat. It is she who ran all the way here to fetch me. We all owe her much!” Koko spoke as the small feast continued.

There were cheers and hugs for Fifi from everybody! It was a wonderful day and gradually the ugly memories of their recent past were erased from their minds.

Koko watched over Usha and Ada until they were fully recovered from their ordeal. He made sure they lived comfortably, and he always assured them of his close presence when they went to bed.

One day, he called Usha aside and asked, “Please don’t feel like I am rushing you Usha. Are you ready to allow me to rebuild your burnt house now?”

Unknown to Koko, Usha had spent long hours fighting within herself. She had come to love Koko, and felt very secure around him. At the same time, she felt like she was betraying her late husband by loving another man. Koko’s question now had a painful effect and Usha’s tears ran down her lovely face.

Koko was worried. He wondered what he had done wrong. As he took Usha in his arms to comfort her, apologizing for hurting her, she put her own arms around him and tearfully asked, “beloved warrior, are you already tired of us? We have never been happier since my late husband left. We have also never felt safer or more cared about. It’s very difficult for me to say that you may go ahead and rebuild our house. We shall nevertheless leave if you want us to!”

Usha’s words and actions only confirmed what Koko had felt all along. He now smiled and asked, “Usha, do you love me as I love you?”

As she nodded, he continued, ‘Will you accept to marry me, so soon after your heartfelt loss of a beloved husband?”

“Koko my love, I have lost the struggle against it now,” Usha replied. “I will marry you, as much as I love him. I have a daughter to raise and can only do this well with the kind of love and protection you have given us, Koko.”

As Koko and Usha stood moments afterwards, still in a loving embrace, they smiled and laughed gently saying very little. They knew that life would never be the same for either of them. There lay many challenges ahead, but their love and consequent devotion to each other hereafter was assurance enough that they would overcome every obstacle!

THE END