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*Dramatic Publishing*

# THE PRINCESS WHO LOST HER HAIR



**BY JEREMY KISLING**  
**BASED ON THE STORY BY TOLOLWA MOLLEL**

# THE PRINCESS WHO LOST HER HAIR

**Folktale.** By Jeremy Kisling. Based on the story by Tololwa Mollel. Cast: 2m., 2w., 3 either gender. Muoma is a beggar. He begs to help other people lighten their worry and stress. One day he runs into Mutu, the princess' attendant, but Mutu cannot linger. She must get back to the princess to help her adorn her hair before she goes to the marketplace. While fixing Princess Kalendi's hair, a weaver bird approaches and asks for a strand to weave into his nest. Kalendi refuses, and the bird, who turns out to be powerful, brings a drought upon the earth and takes the princess' hair, a symbol of prosperity to her people, from her head. Kalendi is mortified and will not show herself to anyone. Muoma witnesses the loss and offers to help, but, when the princess refuses, he decides it is his duty to help her regain her dignity and kindness. Muoma sets out on a quest to find the bird and ask his pardon. Along the way, he meets and helps some ants find food, a flower find water, and a mouse her children. The bird witnesses all this and agrees to give Muoma a special seed that must be planted and nurtured in the princess' garden. If the princess can learn to care for the plant on her own, then all will be well again. Muoma does as told, and Kalendi sees the plant and begins to care for it. It is this selfless act that restores the land and her hair. Kalendi thanks Muoma, apologizes for being rude and asks Muoma to help her lead the Akamba people. *Area staging.* Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: PL7.

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By  
**JEREMY KISLING**

Based on the story by  
**TOLOLWA MOLLEL**



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*The Princess Who Lost Her Hair* Premiered at Lexington Children's Theatre in January 2011.

Cast:

Muoma .....	Joshua Gilyard
Bird .....	Clenton Hollinger
Mutu .....	Rosanna Hurt
Kalendi .....	Stephanie Radford
The Ants .....	Clenton Hollinger
Flower .....	Clenton Hollinger
The Mouse .....	Rosanna Hurt

Production:

Director .....	Octavia Biggs
Scenic Design .....	Jerome L. Wills
Light Design .....	Vanessa Janson
Costume Design .....	Eric Abele
Stage Manager .....	Sara Vazquez
Assistant Technical Director .....	Kenneth Foster

# **The Princess Who Lost Her Hair**

## **CHARACTERS**

Kalendi (Kah-lyn-dee): the princess.

Mutu (Mootoo): her servant

Muoma (Moo-OH-ma): a peasant boy

Bird: a weaver bird (a god in disguise)

Ants

Flower

Mouse

NOTE: All roles designed to be played by four actors.



## PRODUCTION NOTES

See the back of the book for phonetic pronunciation of Swahili vocabulary and sheet music.

SET: The set represents the African valley below Mt. Kenya, in which the story takes place, where the Akamba people live. Three trees play a prominent role in the story. They represent the green season, the dry season and the three trees atop the mountain (silver, gold and emerald).

TIME: This story occurs in a time when all things are possible.

MUSIC: In the original production, we used a combination of drums, finger piano and whistle to underscore and assist with the songs, musical moments and transitions. The drums were played by Kalendi and Mutu. Muoma played the finger piano and the Bird used the whistle. The whistle was also used as the Bird's chirp or call.

# The Princess Who Lost Her Hair

## Scene 1: A Beggar's Philosophy

*(The actors enter to a drum rhythm and dance. A magnificent weaver BIRD flies in and circles over the audience. He lands on a tree, smiles and begins. The BIRD is both the narrator of the story and a character within it. The actor should make them distinct and different.)*

BIRD *(a warm smile and with much warmth)*. Jambo! Welcome to the lands of the Akamba people. It pleases me to see you here in this great African land below Mt. Kenya.

Breathe the clean, fresh air. Look about you and see the glory of the African plains. Is it not splendid? Is it not beautiful? Many things are rich and beautiful here in Africa. It is a glorious place.

But here, like in so many places, we are dependent on the rains to help our plants grow. For it is the plants and animals who give us life. Africa is a land of bounty, but only when the rains come.

And yet, sometimes the rains do not come. Sometimes the feelings felt by people can also be felt by nature. Let me share a story of a time when the rains did not come. It is a story of when the land became dry, as one's heart struggled to remember what is important.

We begin at the marketplace, where a simple beggar boy named Muoma chooses to spend his time.

*(MUOMA enters humming a song.)*

MUOMA. *The day that dawns today*

*Let it be for the children*

*The day that dawns today*

*Let it be for the women*

*The day that dawns today*

*Let it be for the money*

*The day that dawns today*

*Let it produce a bounty*

*(MUTU enters opposite, rushing with the princess' barrettes.*

*The two run into each other and fall to the ground.)*

MUOMA (*cont'd*). Oh, excuse me, dear woman; please let me help you up.

MUTU. Oh, no, if I damaged these ...

MUOMA. Calm yourself and do not worry, they are fine.

MUTU. Thank you. I am sorry, but I am in a rush and the princess is impatient and somewhat difficult ...

MUOMA. You work for the princess?

*(Under the next beat, KALENDI is off to one side of the stage, mourning the loss of her father. She sings her song as MUOMA shares his philosophy.)*

MUTU. Yes.

MUOMA. You must learn to relax and breathe. These trinkets are not worth such concern?

MUTU. What do you know of my troubles? You are a beggar in the market.

MUOMA. You speak true. I am Muoma, the beggar. It is through begging that I make my contribution to the people of the village.

MUTU. Your contribution?

MUOMA. Yes. You see, I am a beggar. (*Bows.*) And proud to be one. All day long I watch; I watch as people busily go back and forth, to and fro. They are busy, in a hurry and they often do not stop to say greetings. They do not even notice that I am here. But I am! I am here to beg. For you see, I beg to relieve others. I beg to relieve people of their stress, by asking them to give some of their worldly goods to those who need it more than they.

MUTU. How does that relieve them from the stress of everyday life?

MUOMA. Look at these people, look at them hustle and bustle to feed their desires. The worldly possessions they think they need. They work because they desire more and more things. And the more they have, the more they want, and then they have to work even harder to keep what they have. It is a very demanding onerous life. The proverb says, "A man with too much ambition cannot sleep in peace."

As a beggar, I ask people to give up some of their worldly possessions. I ask them to part with some of the things that cause them stress and unhappiness. It is difficult for the poor man and the rich man to play together. I beg to help people. I live simply so others can simply live. He who wears only fine clothes may very well soon be in rags. So I ask them to give.

MUTU. What do you do with that which is given?

MUOMA (*smiles and laughs*). I give what I get to those who need it. (*Looks up at mountain.*) And if I have any money left over, I take it and climb the mountain. I stand at the summit, and I throw it off the side, and I listen. I listen to the sound of the coins falling down over the rocks. I listen to hear the coins ring out as they trickle and fall down the

mountainside: ching, ding, ching, chang, chung. I listen as the coins return to the earth from which they were mined. The sounds bring me such joy. Such pleasure. Stop and listen: *(He sings.)*

*The day that dawns today  
Let it be for the children*

*The day that dawns today  
Let it be for the women ...*

*(They stop and listen for a moment.)*

MUTU. You throw money away to benefit other people ...  
That does not make sense ...

*(She pauses, not sure what to say. This thought is deep and intriguing. She then realizes how much time has passed and snaps back to the task at hand.)*

MUTU *(cont'd)*. I must be going. I have already stayed too long. The princess will be very unhappy since I have not returned. She is going through ... I am sorry, I must go.

MUOMA. Yes, but before you do, please remember to breathe and relax. Listen to the birds, hear people laughing and take pleasure in life.

MUTU. Yes, yes I will. Kwa heri!

*(MUTU exits, and MUOMA shakes his head. MUTU re-enters and sings the song as she prepares the space for KALENDI. Once she has set the space she leaves to retrieve KALENDI.)*

MUTU *(cont'd)*. *Our land is full of bounty  
Our kingdom does not lack  
Our princess' hair is growing  
So long and precious black*

*She's a symbol of our kingdom  
Her beauty beyond compare  
She is our glamorous princess  
With the long and glorious hair.*

BIRD. You see, Akamba people are blessed to have a beautiful princess. But she is sad. This princess has recently gone through some difficult times. She has suffered a great loss and now is struggling to cope with the changes in her life.

*(Enter KALENDI and MUTU. BIRD takes flight and exits. KALENDI has very long hair that reaches to the floor. MUTU carries the end of the hair and a grooming kit with brushes, barrettes, ribbons and a mirror. KALENDI is excited and in a hurry to get to the market.)*

KALENDI. Mutu, hurry, come comb, adorn and make ready my beautiful hair.

MUTU. As you wish. Sit. And let me tend to it.

KALENDI. Please use the new gold barrettes. I am excited to show my new jewelry to the people in the marketplace. I bet they have never seen anything as beautiful as these barrettes.

MUTU. Princess, you must hold still so I can detangle your hair.

KALENDI. Ouch! Be careful! Hurry! I want to go out before everyone disappears from the market.

MUTU. Give me some time. The proverb says, "The ocean isn't crossed simply by swimming."

KALENDI. Hurry up!

MUTU. Relax and breathe. Please be patient. Let me put the barrettes in.

*(BIRD enters and flies over to KALENDI and MUTU.)*

BIRD. Habari za asubuhi?

MUTU. Fine. And how is *your* morning, weaver bird? What brings you by here?

KALENDI. Finish, I say!

BIRD. I have heard so much about the princess' beautiful hair, and I had to see it for myself. It is as spectacular as described in the songs.

KALENDI. My hair is the finest around. It is very soft and well taken care of by my dutiful attendant. Are you ready to leave for the marketplace, Mutu?

BIRD. Oh yes, I can see how fine and soft your hair must be. Tended and revered by so many. Perhaps I could have a few strands of your princess' hair to line my nest?

KALENDI. My beautiful hair to line a bird's nest? How dare you suggest such a filthy idea?

BIRD. Certainly a few strands would not cause any harm? It would be an honor to weave such beauty into my home.

KALENDI. My hair is my prized possession, and you want me to just give it to you. I don't think so.

BIRD. You would do well to give me some, your highness.

MUTU. I think you could part with a few strands of hair, princess.

KALENDI. It is my hair, and I will not part with it.

BIRD. It is often said, "Greed loses what it has gained."

MUTU. But Kalendi, it is a modest request.

KALENDI. I said no! Now go away, you pesky little bird. Shoo!

BIRD. Is that your final choice?

KALENDI. Yes, now GO! Before I set the guards on you.

BIRD (*calmly*). I will go, but know this, one day very soon you will wish you'd been kinder to me. Beware of the coming dry season for as the leaves do fall, so shall your hair, princess.

KALENDI. I said shoo!

*(BIRD goes and passes MUOMA as he exits. MUOMA follows the bird in wonder and delight.)*

MUTU. I do not think that was wise, Kalendi.

KALENDI. What do you know? He was just a selfish bird. Jealous of my beautiful hair. Come, let us go into the market. I want the people to see my finery. I want to be showered with compliments after that horrible experience with that foolish bird. Sing the song, Mutu. Let them know we are coming.

*(As MUTU sings, KALENDI enters the marketplace dancing to show off her beautiful hair.)*

MUTU. *She's a symbol of our kingdom  
Her beauty beyond compare  
She is our glamorous princess  
With the long and glorious hair.*

*(They exit one way, and MUOMA enters the opposite side, still following BIRD.)*

MUOMA. What a great and glorious bird! I wonder where he builds his nest.

BIRD. Fly into the sunset, young man, follow and you will see.

MUOMA. Fly into the sunset? How is that possible?

BIRD. Follow me, into the blood red sun, over the dark blue mountains and persevere along the lonely brown barren path of the plains ... Come follow ... *(He is gone.)*

MUOMA. Follow you? I cannot for my duty lies here. Tutaonana, grand bird, farewell. *(Waves after BIRD and exits.)*

## **Scene 2: The Princess Who Lost Her Hair**

*(The BIRD enters. As the BIRD talks, a dance or a movement piece with possible music and drums is created to switch the once fertile land to now barren land, dry without the richness that was there before.)*



BIRD. Months passed, and a terrible drought settled upon the land. The rain stopped falling. The plants withered, dried and died. Rivers became streams; streams became creeks, and creeks became nothing but puddles. Then no water could be found. The ground broke and cracked. The winds blew hot and dry. They battered and scoured the earth. Soil began to blow and fill the air, and raising crops became hopeless. Leaves shrank, shriveled and crumbled, leaving the trees naked and bare. All was desolate, and people began to feel alarm and panic.

*(MUTU sings half-heartedly in the heat. KALENDI dances her dance.)*

MUTU. *She's a symbol of our kingdom*

*Her beauty beyond compare*

*She is our glamorous princess*

*With the long and glorious hair.*

Kalendi, must we come out here in the heat? It is too hot!

KALENDI. My daily routine provides comfort for our people.

It lets them know all is well. I must continue my daily walk to remind them that life is not as desperate as it may seem.

Soon the rain will come and all will be as it should be.

MUTU. But the wind is dry and hot, and the sand in the air hurts my eyes.

KALENDI. Do not concern yourself with your needs, Mutu. I am the people's princess. Now do as I say!

BIRD. Vanity is the mirage of beauty.

*(A loud crack and the wind rises. Its intensity builds through speech, and the action is as described.)*

BIRD *(cont'd)*. Suddenly, there blew a wind, which raised a cloud of dust. The wind grew and grew and the dust rose and began to circle the princess. The wind increased to form a

whirlwind. It spun and spun, and turned and turned. Until the whirlwind totally consumed the princess. It twisted and turned and shrouded the princess in huge veil of dust and debris.

*(KALENDI's hair has been taken by the wind.)*

BIRD *(cont'd)*. Then, slowly, it began to fade, and the dust settled, and the princess became visible once again.

MUTU. YOUR HAIR!!

KALENDI. It must be a mess! What a wind storm! Fix it before anyone sees me. I cannot be seen looking like a mess ...

MUTU. No, you don't understand! It's gone!! Your hair is gone!

KALENDI. What?!

MUTU. The wind. It has taken your hair.

*(The BIRD flies over KALENDI and MUTU. KALENDI does not notice, but MUTU does. Enter MUOMA, staring at the sky, looking for the BIRD. KALENDI sees MUOMA and panics.)*

KALENDI. What do you mean? *(Feels her head.)* Mutu! How can this be? Why would this happen? Oh! I cannot be seen like this! Do not let the people see me like this! Cover me. Why do awful things keep happening to me? First my father, then the drought and now this! Why me?

MUTU. Remember the words of the bird, princess, "As the leaves fall, so shall your hair ..." Remember his warning ...

KALENDI *(moving off)*. Do not quote that ridiculous bird! Birds do not ... Get me out of here! My HAIR!

*(MUOMA sees KALENDI, but she is hiding her head as she exits.)*

MUTU *(looking back)*. I fear that we are paying the price for a rudeness done. A phrase once uttered can never be taken back.

*(MUTU exits.)*

MUOMA. Bird! I see you. Why did you take the princess's hair?

BIRD *(harshly)*. What concern do you have for this vain princess?

Her heart is black, and she cares for no one except herself.

Crops have dried. Water is scarce. The Akamba people suffer.

MUOMA. She is still the Akamba princess ...

BIRD. A princess? You say. She is the reason the Akamba are suffering. The princess is conceited and does not deserve the love of her people.

MUOMA. Surely she has not caused this suffering, she would not want this ...

BIRD. You shall see, young one, you shall see. Go and speak to her. See if you do not find her heart to be an arrogant one. See if I am right. And if that be the truth, then you benevolent beggar, Muoma, must return her to modesty and humility. For I see no reason to take back that which has been done. I am going to the clearing on the mountain to rest on the summit of the three trees. Best of luck, Muoma.

*(BIRD sails in a valiant circle and then exits.)*

*MUOMA goes to KALENDI's hut and knocks on the door. MUTU and KALENDI are inside. KALENDI wears a colorful head scarf—no hair is visible. The head scarf will remain until her hair is restored later in the play.)*