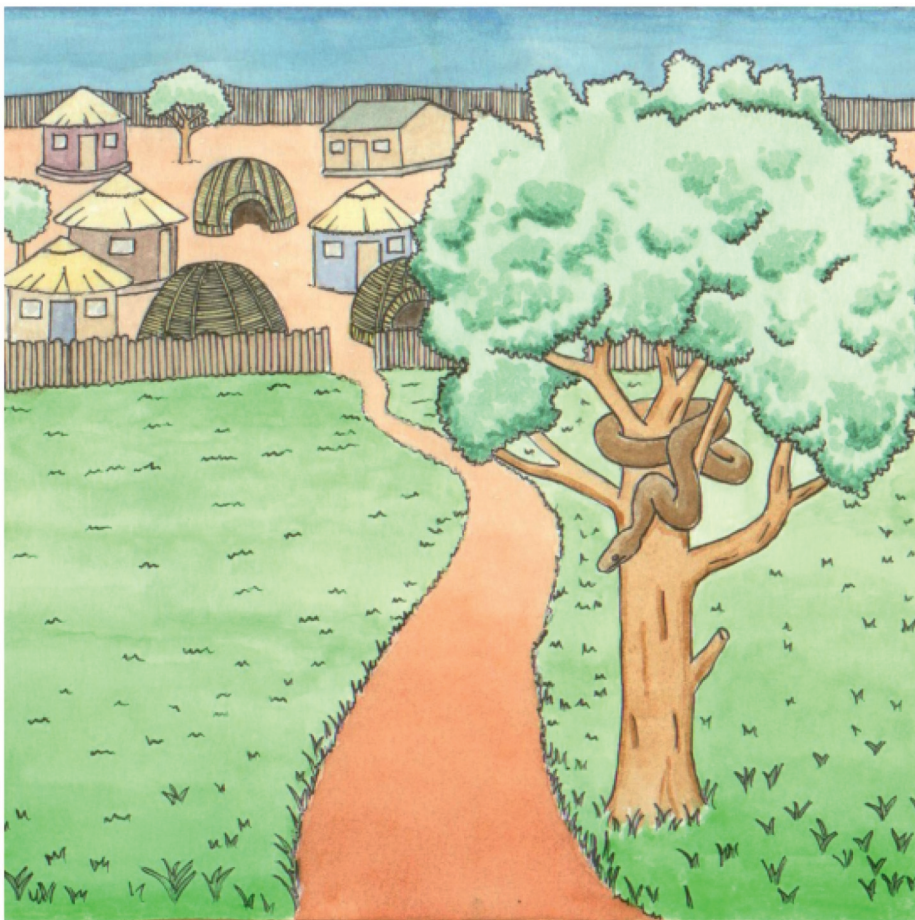




Phumelele was a young woman from a very poor family.
She lived with her family in a village called Celani.
There was only one road in and out of Celani.



Next to the village's road was a tree.

A large snake lived in that tree.

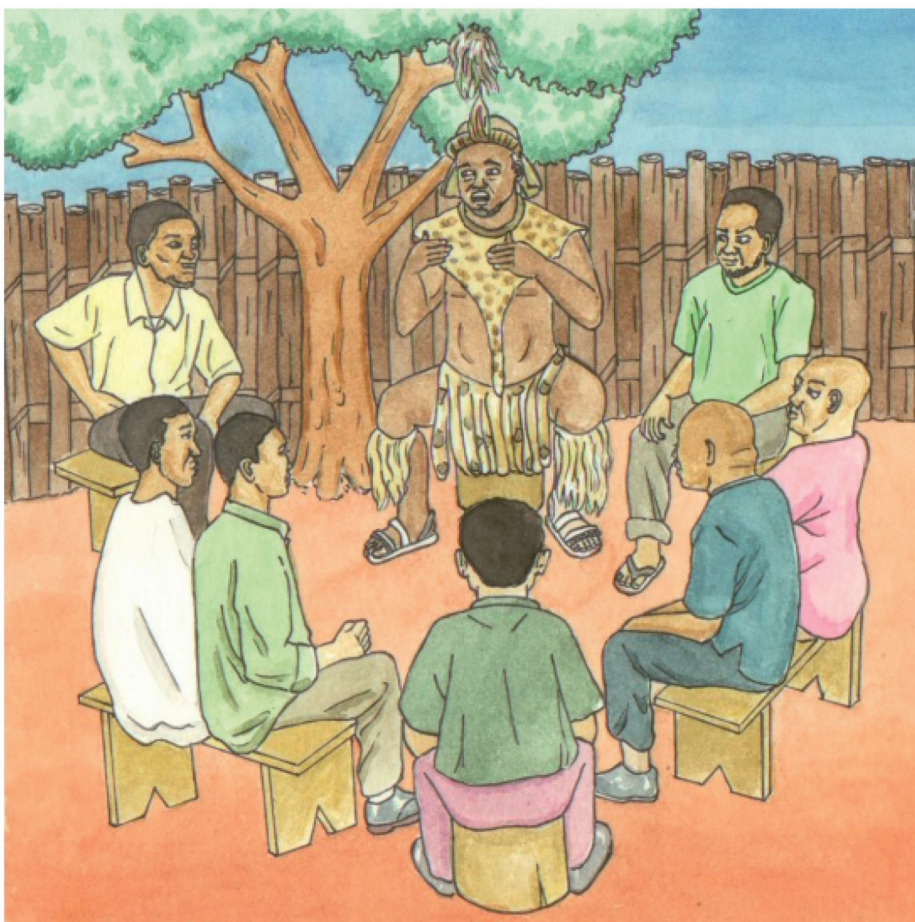
People had to pass the tree to go to the clinic, shops, and to school.



Whenever the snake heard footsteps, it would drop from a branch onto the road.

The snake made it very difficult for anyone to pass.

The villagers tried to catch the snake, but they failed.



No one was able to catch the snake.

The chief offered a reward to anyone who caught the snake.

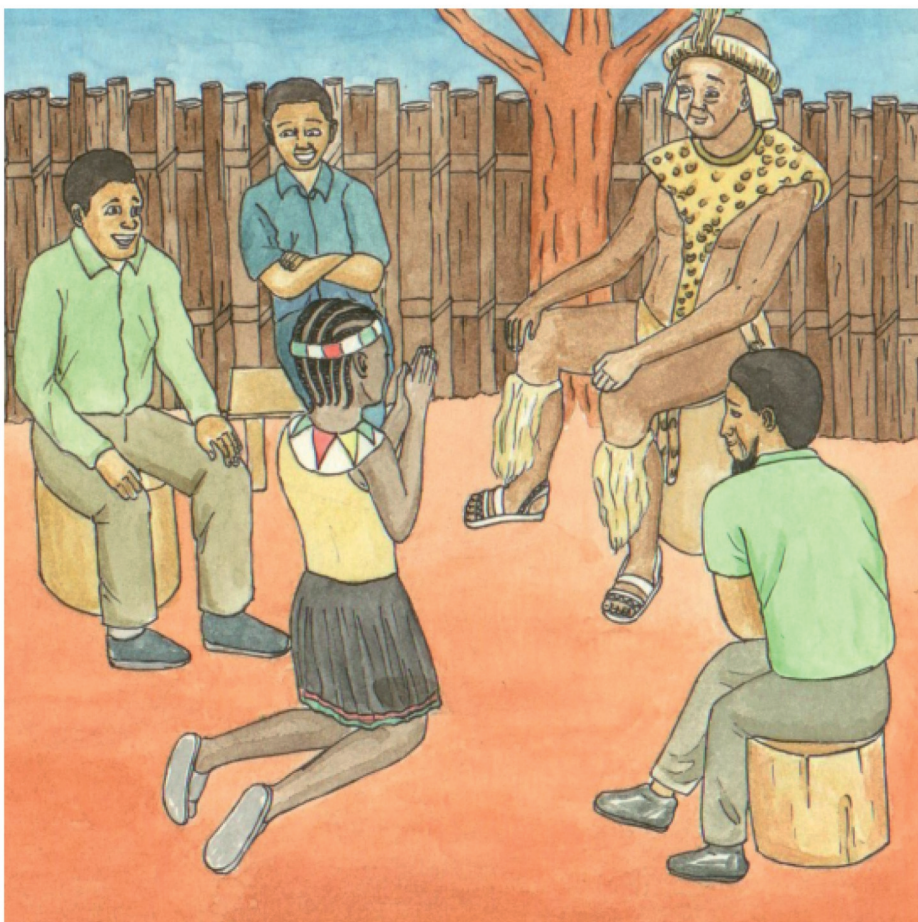
Only men were allowed to take part in the challenge.



Men of all ages tried to catch the snake, but they didn't succeed.

They even tried working in teams. Still, they could not catch the snake.

It was dangerous to move in and out of the village.



Phumelele went to the chief and said, "Allow me to take part in the challenge."

People laughed at her because she was a woman. "She must be joking," they said.

The chief thought about Phumelele's request.



The chief thought to himself, "The men of the village have failed to catch the snake. There is nothing to lose."

He gave Phumelele a chance. But he did not believe that she would succeed where men had failed.



Phumelele had a wise plan.

She wove a very large basket. She added drawstrings so that the basket could close.

She put the basket on her head and headed towards the tree.



As usual, the snake heard footsteps. It got ready to drop and block the way.

Phumelele was also ready for the big moment!

"Today is the day," she thought as she approached the tree.



When the snake dropped from the tree, it landed in the woven basket.

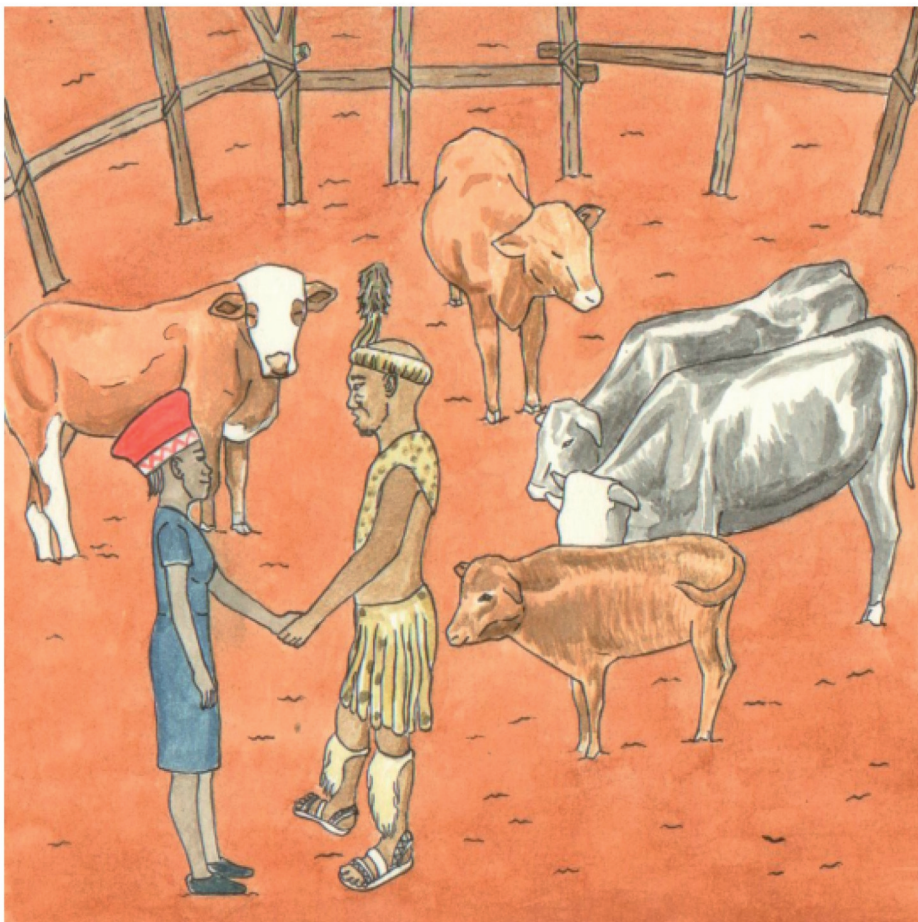
Phumelele quickly drew the strings to close the basket. The snake was trapped inside.



Phumelele carried the basket with the snake to the village.

Everybody cheered as she entered the gates of the chief's kraal.

"Phumelele is clever and brave. The chief must keep his promise," the people said.



The chief rewarded Phumelele with a big piece of land and a kraal full of cattle.

She became a leader of that land. People went to her for advice.

The snake was taken to a snake park, and the villagers were able to move freely.