
A Candle in the Night

~ Chinyelu Kunz

Long, long ago in a faraway land there were two sisters and three brothers who lived with their mother and father at the edge of a forest. A dirt pathway went deep into the forest, all the way to the other side where there were other houses and children to visit and play with. Chickens pecked in the red earth and a goat roamed the backyard eating grass and leaves. And there was Suzi, a furry little brown dog who loved to run and play chase with the children in the ankle high grass. They loved Suzi and she loved them. Every day, big sister and little sister with their two little brothers played under the blue skies and bright sunshine. The littlest brother, who was still a baby, sat on a blanket in the grass and watched them, laughing and giggling, waiting for the day when he could join in too. When they were tired and hot from running and playing, big sister picked up baby brother and carried him on her hip to the shade of the mango tree where they all rested. Sometimes, to cool down, they went for walks in the forest to where the crystal-clear stream flowed through. They always stopped to see the little bright blue fish swimming and darting in the cool water. They often talked about catching a few fish and taking them home to put in their little fishbowl, but they never did. They loved watching them swim freely in the stream.

One day, as they were playing outside, dark clouds slowly moved across the sky, blocking the sun's shining rays. The winds began to blow, but in a strange way, for it had never blown that way before. Mother appeared at the back door calling the children to come in and from the look on her face, they knew they had to listen so she wouldn't have to call them again. By now, the winds were swirling around them, and thundering sounds could be heard overhead, but they couldn't see where it was coming from. Big sister's arms swooped down as she picked up baby brother. When they reached the back door, Mother pulled them in close and gave them a big hug. In her arms, they felt safe and loved.

The thundering grew louder and louder. Mother quickly shut the door and closed the curtains. She guided them under the stone staircase which felt like a cave, and they all huddled together. "This is a safe

place to be until the storm passes," she said. Mother found a candle which she safely lit, and everyone stared into the candle light. Deep sighs and breathing could be heard as she said this verse:

*Candle light
Candle bright
Make me brave day and night*

*Keep me safe when I play
Keep me safe night and day*

*I am kind, good and true
I will be a helper too.*

*Candle light
Candle bright
Make me brave day and night*

As the candle flame danced about, the children began to giggle and laugh as they played charades with their hands in the glow of the candlelight. They laughed at the funny shapes on the wall of their "cave."

Then Mother extinguished the candle and announced that the storm had passed and they could leave the shelter of the "cave." She called everyone to the kitchen table for tea and bread with butter and honey. As they ate, Mother said, "Dear children, I want to tell you that there will be many more storms. There will even be surprise storms. To be safe, just like today I want you to run to our safe 'cave' whenever you hear thundering in the sky and dark clouds appear. Then wait there for me to bring the candle."

Many more storms came just as Mother said, more than they could count. Storm after storm after storm came and with each one the children knew just what to do. Big sister scooped up baby brother and called her younger sister and brothers to follow her into the house. Together they ran to their safe "cave." Then Mother would bring the candle, light it, and they would say the verse.

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One night, when it was dark and the air was still, big sister picked up baby brother, called her sister and brothers to her bed to celebrate her birthday. Because of the storms, she couldn't have a birthday party with friends. Once they were all sitting comfortably on her bed, with a spot for Suzi too, she said, "We must all pray for the storms to stop." They all held hands and prayed, then they said the verse that Mother had taught them.

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When Mother found all her children huddled together on big sister's bed she smiled. "It's time for bed," she softly said. Carrying the lit candle, their only source of light, she led them to a big, soft cozy bed she had made for them to share in the "cave," just in case a storm came in the night. They snuggled together, comforted that they could sleep next to each other. She tucked each one in and gave them each a kiss goodnight. Deep sighs and deep breaths could be heard as their bodies relaxed, ready to fall asleep. Mother sat in a chair with the candlelight glowing and as they drifted to sleep, the candle's light grew brighter and brighter and brighter, which made them feel safe and cared for. ♦

Chinyelu Kunz lived most of her childhood in her birth country of Nigeria, West Africa. She attended university in the US, earning her BA and MA in architecture. After discovering Waldorf education, she taught parent-child and pre-kindergarten classes in California, Vancouver, and finally 16 years at Kimberton Waldorf School. In 2020, Chinyelu launched her website, wenurturecollective.com, with resources for parenting support and mentoring for early childhood educators.