

# Kadu's Magic Gourd

adapted from an African legend by Moira Andrew

This playscript is adapted from an African legend. As a legend it has a certain quality which makes it not quite as 'real' as, for instance, a play about school might be. Read the play carefully and try to decide what it is about the writing that makes the 'unreal' quality. What kind of messages does the legend carry?

You might be able to perform this play very well with very little setting and props. You could do it in a 'surreal' way, using pictures or very limited costumes, just giving each character one prop or piece of costume to show who they are meant to be.

## Things to talk about:

- What makes Kadu decide to do what he does? He is determined and has lots of 'motivation' – there is something that he badly wants to achieve. What is it?
- What do you learn from the incidents with the Grass-cutter and the Water-carrier, from Kadu's first meeting with them and then his second meetings?
- What do you like about the story itself?
- What do you like about the play?

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## Cast:

**Narrator**  
**Grandfather**  
**Kadu**  
**Grass-cutter**  
**Water-carrier**  
**Witch of the Deep Waters**

**Narrator:** Once upon a time, when the world was young, a boy called Kadu lived in a village in Africa. Kadu's grandfather was the village chief and a marvellous storyteller. The boys and girls of the village, Kadu among them, loved to listen to his stories. One night, by a flickering fire, Grandfather told them a story about a magic gourd which was filled with enough good food to feed the world.

**Grandfather:** Whoever owns the magic gourd will never again need to plant seeds, till the soil or cut corn. It is filled to the brim with all kinds of delicious food.

**Kadu:** Has this wonderful gourd ever been found, Grandfather?

**Grandfather:** It has never been found, nor ever will. The gourd is guarded by the Witch of the Deep Waters. She is very fierce and very dangerous and will never let it go.

**Narrator:** Kadu grew to be a young man. He looked after all the people of the village and saw that everybody had enough to eat. Then a terrible drought came to the land. There was no rain for a whole year. The corn withered, the animals died and still the rains did not come. Then Kadu had a wonderful idea. He went to talk with his grandfather, the wisest man in the village.

**Kadu:** Grandfather, do you know where the Witch of the Deep Waters lives?

**Grandfather:** It is said that she lives in a lake beyond the hills.

**Kadu:** If I could find her, I'd ask her for the magic gourd and bring it back. Then we would all have enough food to eat!

**Grandfather:** The Witch of the Deep Waters will most likely eat you for supper! But if you must go, try this path first. Someone is sure to know where the witch lives. Take great care and help everybody you meet as you go along. Good luck, my boy!

- Narrator:** Kadu set off with some food and a flask of water. He met a man cutting grass and stopped to help him.
- Kadu:** My name is Kadu. Is there anything I can do to help you?
- Grass-cutter:** Thank you, young man. I could do with some help. I'm getting very tired working in all this heat.
- Kadu:** What would you like me to do?
- Grass-cutter:** Please pick up the grass stalks as I cut them down. Then put them into bundles, like this.
- Narrator:** Kadu and the Grass-cutter worked together until the sun was high in the sky. They were very hungry and thirsty, so they had a drink and the Grass-cutter shared his food with Kadu. When they were rested, Kadu asked about the witch.
- Kadu:** Please can you tell me where the Witch of the Deep Waters lives?
- Grass-cutter:** That is quite a journey, Kadu! The Witch of the Deep Waters lives far beyond the high blue hills. Take this path down to the river until you meet the Water-carrier. She will tell you the way.
- Kadu:** Thank you, my friend.
- Grass-cutter:** Take great care, Kadu. The Witch of the Deep Waters is very fierce and very dangerous.
- Narrator:** So Kadu set off down a steep stony path towards the river. He went for a very long way. At last he heard the waters of the cool blue river splashing and gurgling among the rocks. When he stopped to rest, Kadu heard someone singing in a soft sweet voice. Then he saw a young girl carrying a jar of water on her head.
- Kadu:** Good-day. My name is Kadu. Is there anything I can do to help you?

- Water-carrier:** Yes please, Kadu. Before nightfall I have to carry a hundred jars of water all the way from the river to the market place. I don't think I can do it without help.
- Narrator:** Kadu and the Water-carrier trudged up and down the path from the river to the market place in the village.
- At last they counted the jars – one hundred and one! So they sat down to rest and drank some of the clear cool water.
- Water-carrier:** How can I thank you, Kadu?
- Kadu:** Please can you tell me where the Witch of the Deep Waters lives?
- Water-carrier:** You must go across the high blue hills until you come to a deep black lake. The Witch of the Deep Waters lives in a cave deep down in the lake.
- Kadu:** Thank you, my friend.
- Water-carrier:** Take great care, Kadu. The Witch of the Deep Waters is very fierce and very dangerous.
- Narrator:** Kadu waved good-bye to his friend, the Water-carrier, and set off across the high blue hills. Night was falling. Kadu got very tired indeed. Sometimes he had to stop and rest. Then he remembered the hungry people of his village and trudged on, up and up. At last he saw the deep black waters of the lake, shining and glittering in the moonlight. Kadu felt very frightened, but he gathered his courage, stood on the shores of the lake and shouted at the top of his voice.
- Kadu:** Witch of the Deep Waters! Witch of the Deep Waters!
- Narrator:** There was no reply, so Kadu tried again.
- Kadu:** Witch of the Deep Waters! Can you hear me?
- Narrator:** Suddenly there was a noise like a mountain waterfall gushing over rocks and, with a huge splash, a

- Narrator:** (cont.) terrible creature rose up from the deep black waters. Her face was thick with mud, her hair green with slime.
- Witch:** Who dares call my name?
- Kadu:** It is I, Kadu. I have travelled many miles to try and rescue my people. I hope you can help me.
- Witch:** And what makes you think that? I don't even know you – or your people!
- Kadu:** My grandfather tells me you have a magic gourd, full of delicious food.
- Witch:** And what if I have? It has nothing to do with you!
- Kadu:** There has been a terrible drought in the land. We have no food to eat and my people are dying. Please may we borrow the magic gourd?
- Witch:** Borrow the magic gourd! Indeed, you may not! Let me look at you, boy. You will make a tasty snack. I will eat you for supper!
- Narrator:** And with one enormous splash, the Witch of the Deep Waters jumped right out of the lake and grabbed poor Kadu between her thumb and forefinger. Then, still holding Kadu tight, she swam down, down to the very bottom of the deep black lake.
- Witch:** Take that, boy!
- Narrator:** And, like a gnawed chicken bone, the Witch threw Kadu into the back of a deep black cave. Then she prowled around, looking for something to eat.
- Witch:** It's hungry, I am. I'll have a bite to eat and keep that tasty-looking boy for afters!
- Narrator:** Kadu watched the witch from a dark corner of the cave. He kept very still and quiet. He saw the witch roll a great golden gourd across the floor. She tapped it

**Narrator:**  
(cont.)

once, twice, three times and, sure enough, out spilled enough yams and fruit and corn to feed all the people of Kadu's village for one whole week. Kadu could scarcely believe his eyes. The witch grabbed at the food, stuffing it all into her great wide mouth. She slurped and burped and gurgled. Then she rubbed her round fat stomach.



**Witch:**

That's better! I think I'll doze off for a minute or two before I eat that boy for supper.

**Narrator:**

The Witch of the Deep Waters fell into a sound sleep, snoring like a great whale. Kadu saw his chance. Carefully, he rolled the great golden gourd to the door of the cave. Then he sat astride it and bobbed like a cork to the top of the deep dark lake.

**Kadu:**

Come on magic gourd! Let's make for home!

**Narrator:**

Kadu rolled the gourd down the high blue hills, riding on it. Soon he came to the cool blue river. But the witch had wakened to find both Kadu and the magic gourd gone. She was very angry indeed. She roared like a thunderbolt and her eyes lit up the sky like a flash of lightning.

**Witch:** Stop thief! Stop thief! Wait till I catch you boy – then you'll be sorry!

**Narrator:** Kadu saw the Water-carrier waiting by the cool blue river. He felt the witch's hot breath on his neck.

**Kadu:** Help! Help! The Witch of the Deep Waters is chasing me.

**Water-carrier:** Don't worry, Kadu. I'll douse her in water from the river.



**Narrator:** And she did. The river became a torrent, gushing and roaring. The witch gasped and spluttered, but she shook the water from her eyes and kept on going until she almost caught up with Kadu and the gourd. Then Kadu saw the Grass-cutter waiting by the path.

**Kadu:** Help! Help! The Witch of the Deep Waters is chasing me.

**Grass-cutter:** Don't worry, Kadu. I'll soon put a stop to her.



**Narrator:** The Grass-cutter swirled up great tornadoes of cut grass. The pollen got up the witch's nose and made her sneeze. She sneezed and sneezed and sneezed until she could no longer see where she was going.

**Witch:** Atishoo! Atishoo! Atishoo!

**Kadu:** Keep going, Gourd! We are almost home!

**Narrator:** Kadu rode the great golden gourd along the path and into the village. Grandfather and all the people came out to welcome them.

**Grandfather:** Wonderful, my boy! You have been very brave. We are very proud of you and glad to see you home.

**Narrator:** Kadu rolled the great golden gourd to a clearing outside Grandfather's hut. He tapped it once, twice, three times, just as the witch had done. The gourd split open and out spilled fish and fruit, corn and spices and all kinds of delicious food. The villagers could hardly believe their eyes.

**Kadu:** Come along everyone, come and eat! Eat as much food as you like! As it says in Grandfather's story, never again will you have to plant seeds, till the soil or cut corn – and no-one need ever starve!

