

Resthaven

Told by Aaron Shepard

Adapted by LHU Language Center

Characters:

Narrators 1 & 2, Rita, Tendai, Garikayi, Spirit Medium, (Old Woman), (Villagers)

NARRATOR 1: In the year 2194, in Harare, the sprawling capital of Zimbabwe, there is a special place called Resthaven.

NARRATOR 2: Surrounded by a huge wall that keeps out the city, the people of Resthaven choose to live as Africans lived for thousands of years—and following the ancient traditions.

NARRATOR 1: Into this haven stumble two children, Tendai and Rita, kidnapped on a trip.

NARRATOR 2: Now, while they wait for their chance to go home, they enjoy the beauty and idyllic life of Resthaven—or at least, Tendai does. Rita has a different view of it.

RITA: (upset) It's all right for you. You're a boy. You get to lie around listening to stories. It's so horrible! Can't you ask for the holophone so we can call Father? Nobody listens to me.

TENDAI: (in a low voice) They won't listen to me either. I've been trying for days.

RITA: They will so. I hear them talking. "Oh, the new boy's so clever. Oh, he's a wonderful story teller."

RITA: What about the second wife of Garikayi, the chief? Do you know how old Chipu is? Fourteen! And she's eight months' pregnant!

TENDAI: Keep your voice down.

RITA: I'll keep my voice down if you keep your ears open.
Garikayi's first wife hasn't had any children.

TENDAI: Shhh!

RITA: (lowering her voice) Garikayi married Chipu when she was only twelve, but she didn't get pregnant till now.

TENDAI: So what's the problem?

RITA: Who do you think they'll blame if something goes wrong with the birth?

NARRATOR 2: Tendai stared at her. He could tell that something worried her deeply.

RITA: (urgently) This is a village. No antibiotics. No doctors.

TENDAI: Women survived for thousands of years without them.

RITA: Some of the women, you stupid boy.

NARRATOR 1: The next morning at dawn, Tendai was wakened by two high ululating cries. Chipu's baby had been born, and it was a boy.

NARRATOR 2: Tendai got up and followed the other boys to a big camp fire where the villagers were gathering.

NARRATOR 1: An old woman emerged from a hut, carrying a bundle. She unwrapped the blanket, and an outraged yowl arose from the baby.

GARIKAYI: (pleased) He's strong!

NARRATOR 2: The Spirit Medium inspected the infant as the villagers looked on nervously. He frowned as he studied the wrinkled little face.

SPIRIT MEDIUM: (grudgingly) He's one of us.

NARRATOR 1: A sigh went around the crowd.

NARRATOR 2: The villagers all smiled, and the anxious feeling was gone.

GARIKAYI: (joyfully to all) I have a son!

NARRATOR 1: Suddenly a pot crashed. Someone screamed. Everyone froze.

NARRATOR 2: Tendai heard the wailing of a baby—another baby.

NARRATOR 1: A girl emerged from the same hut. It was Rita! And she, too, carried a bundle.

NARRATOR 2: Rita marched up to Garikayi.

GARIKAYI: (upset, waving her away) No! No!

RITA: (insisting) It's your daughter.

GARIKAYI: I do not accept her. She is an accursed twin.

RITA: (getting excited) She's perfectly healthy. The midwife was going to kill her.

GARIKAYI: It is a weak, unnatural child. It will die.

RITA: Listen to her! She's not weak! (close to tears) Oh, I won't let you kill a tiny baby!

SPIRIT MEDIUM: (dryly) Twins are evil. They are against God's order.

RITA: No baby is evil!

SPIRIT MEDIUM: One must die.

RITA: (screaming) So of course it's the girl who has to go! Let's throw the girl away. She's no good! She's worthless! You're all a bunch of vicious! . . . male! . . . chauvinist!

. . . PIGS!

NARRATOR 1: The Spirit Medium raised his walking stick to strike Rita. But Tendai wrenched it away.

SPIRIT MEDIUM: (pointing at Rita and Tendai) Grab them!

NARRATOR 1: The villagers pounced on the children and held them fast. Someone snatched away the infant.

SPIRIT MEDIUM: (dryly) Take these little hyenas to the punishment hut.

NARRATOR 1: Tendai and Rita were dragged along, then shoved through a door into darkness.

RITA: (shakily) Thank you for sticking up for me.

TENDAI: (gently) Tell me what happened.

RITA: I wasn't supposed to be there, but I just had to watch. Then she was born.

TENDAI: So he knew.

RITA: They all did, except they pretended not to. They don't like to kill babies.

TENDAI: Who would?

RITA: They think twins are caused by witchcraft. There's a good twin, and an evil one they have to get rid of.

TENDAI: But everyone knew.

RITA: Of course.

TENDAI: How did you save it?

RITA: They all went out except Chipu, who was too weak to stand, and one old woman. She got a handful of ashes to fill the baby's mouth.

TENDAI: How horrible!

RITA: But I bopped her on the head with a pot. Then I grabbed the baby and pinched her. She howled then all right. They couldn't pretend anymore she wasn't alive.

NARRATOR 1: Rita shivered violently and burst into sobs.

NARRATOR 2: Tendai hugged her. He was proud of Rita—and thoroughly sick of village ways.