

# Udala tree

A story from Nigeria  
(Retold by Hugh Lupton)



A story, a story! Let it go, let it come!

There was a little girl and her name was Sia Jetta. She lived with her two big brothers in a hut, in a village in West Africa.

Every day she had to work, she had to work very hard.

She had to sweep the yard. She had to milk the goats. She had to hoe the field. She had to feed the chickens. She had to pound the yams. She had to run to the well for water. She had to cook the food.

And as for her two brothers – they did nothing. They sat in the sunshine and watched her working.

And when she put food on to the table at the end of the day those two brothers would grab the best of it, so that as often as not she went to bed hungry.

That was the way it was.

Then one time, as she was hoeing in the field, Sia Jatta found a seed. She found a little shiny seed lying on the ground. She picked it up between her finger and thumb.

'You belong to me,' she said, 'You belong to nobody but me.'

She put it into her pocket.

When she went to bed at the end of the day she put the seed under her pillow. That night she had a dream, she dreamed that a udala tree grew out of the seed and spread its branches and leaves high over her head.

So early the next morning she went out into the garden and planted it, she fetched water from the well and watered it.

Then Sia Jetta began to sing:

'Udala tree grow! (clap)  
Grow for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
Udala tree grow! (clap)  
Grow for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
This earth is a place of call, (clap)  
We stop here and go on.' (clap)

Straight away a little green shoot pushed up out of the soil. It grew and grew, it hardened and darkened, and soon a great tree-trunk

stretched high  
above her head.

'Udala tree  
branch! (clap)  
Branch for Sia  
Jetta! (clap)

Udala tree  
branch! (clap)  
Branch for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
This earth is a place of call, (clap)  
We stop here and go on.' (clap)

Boughs and branches pushed out of the trunk and spread themselves across the sky above her head.

'Udala tree leaf! (clap)  
Leaf for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
Udala tree leaf! (clap)  
Leaf for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
This earth is a place of call, (clap)  
We stop here and go on.' (clap)

Suddenly fresh green leaves rustled and whispered and threw a cool shade over her head and shoulders.

'Udala tree fruit! (clap)  
Fruit for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
Udala tree fruit! (clap)  
Fruit for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
This earth is a place of call, (clap)  
We stop here and go on.' (clap)

And the branches above her head were covered with yellowy pink udala fruit.

'Udala tree drop! (clap)  
Drop for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
Udala tree drop! (clap)  
Drop for Sia Jetta! (clap)  
This earth is a place of call, (clap)  
We stop here and go on.' (clap)

And plop, plop, plop... all around her the fruit

