



# The Resilience of Zola: An African Folktale

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In a sun-drenched village nestled beneath the sprawling branches of ancient baobab trees, young Zola lived a life of simple joy with her father. Her laughter echoed through the red-earth paths, and her spirit was as bright as the colorful beads woven into her hair.



After years of quiet life, Zola's father brought home a new wife who promised to bring warmth back to their hearth. While she smiled brightly in the father's presence, a cold and envious shadow lurked behind her eyes whenever he turned away.



As soon as the father departed for the distant fields, the stepmother's mask slipped, and her kindness vanished like mist. She burdened Zola with heavy clay pots and endless chores, forcing the young girl to work from the first light of dawn until the moon rose high in the sky.



Zola's only comfort was a magnificent, leafy tree that grew near her mother's resting place, where she went to sing songs of old. Miraculously, the tree would sway its branches to drop sweet, ripe fruits and cool water whenever Zola's heart was heavy with hunger and exhaustion.



Spying from behind the tall grasses, the wicked stepmother discovered the secret of the magical tree and grew wild with spite. She summoned the village woodcutters and ordered them to chop it down, hoping to break Zola's spirit by destroying her only source of peace.



Heartbroken by the loss of her beloved tree, Zola was then commanded to perform an impossible task: she had to wash a soot-covered cooking pot until it turned as white as fresh milk. She sat by the rushing river and wept, her tears falling into the water as she scrubbed the stubborn black stains.



A wise old woman with silver hair and glowing skin appeared from the river reeds, moved by Zola's gentle nature and perseverance. She handed Zola a golden whisk and whispered that she should brush the pot while singing songs of love and forgiveness instead of sorrow.



To the stepmother's absolute horror, the pot did not just turn white; it transformed into shimmering solid gold filled with precious jewels and silk. Zola stood tall as her tattered rags turned into the finest kente cloth that glowed with the colors of a thousand sunsets.



When the greedy stepmother tried to replicate the miracle for her own daughter, her heart full of malice led her to find only swarms of angry bees and stinging nettles. Her true nature was finally exposed to the entire village, including Zola's father who had returned from his journey.



Justice and peace returned to the household as the father asked for Zola's forgiveness and banished the wicked woman from their lands. Zola became a beloved figure in the village, a living reminder that kindness and a pure heart will always find their way to the light.