



The Dancing Palm Tree: And Other Nigerian Folktales

Barbara K. Walker

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Imagine yourself for a moment in Western Nigeria on a moonlit evening. The day's work has been done, and friends and neighbors have gathered. Suddenly one among the group turns to an older man sitting at the edge of the piazza. "Tell us a story," he begs. And he knows what he is asking. Many in the group can tell stories and very well indeed, for storytelling has been a tradition in Nigeria for hundreds of years. The old man rises and usually begins, "Far away and long ago in a small village..." Somewhat in each story there is likely to be a moral, a human truth that is taught through what happens in the story, for an important purpose of storytelling in Nigeria has always been to teach as well as to entertain. But you will find that the truths taught in these stories prevail not only in Nigeria but all over the world, truths that people must learn to live by, no matter what country they call home. Earlier versions of these eleven tales were told to Barbara K. Walker by Olawale Idewu, a Nigerian student in a midwestern American college who was lonesome for his homeland and its culture and who was willing to share some of the tales from that culture. Now, young Americans can enjoy a sampling of the tales still told on moonlit evenings in Nigeria.

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