**How Frog Went to Heaven
A Tale of Angola**

**Told by Aaron Shepard**

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PREVIEW: Frog helps a young man who wants to marry the Sky Maiden.

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| GENRE: Folktales, myths CULTURE: African, Angolan THEME: Inventiveness, determination |   | AGES: 3–9 LENGTH: 1000 words |

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There was a young man named Kimana. He wanted to marry the Sky Maiden. He wrote a letter to her father, the Sun Chief.

Kimana went to Rabbit. “Will you take this letter?”

Rabbit said, “I cannot go to Heaven.”

Kimana went to Antelope. “Will you take this letter?”

Antelope said, “I cannot go to Heaven.”

Kimana went to Hawk. “Will you take this letter?”

Hawk said, “I can go halfway. But I cannot go to Heaven.”

Then Frog came to Kimana. “Why do you not take the letter yourself?”

Kimana said, “This I cannot do.”

Frog said, “Then I will take it for you.”

Kimana laughed. “Can a frog take a letter to Heaven?”

Frog said, “Whatever it is, I can do it. But only if I try.”

Now, Frog lived by a well. Every day, the girls who served the Sun Chief came to this well. They climbed down from Heaven on a web made by Spider. Then they filled their water jugs and went home.

Frog put the letter in his mouth and hid in the well. The girls from Heaven came for water, singing their song.

*Good day to you, my sister.
Good day to you.*

They lowered their jugs into the well, and Frog jumped into one. The girls did not see.

Then the girls climbed back up the web of Spider. They went into the house of the Sun Chief and left the jugs in a room.

Frog was alone. He jumped out of the jug and spit the letter out on a bench. Then he hid in a corner.

The Sun Chief came for a drink of water. He saw the letter and opened it. He read, “I, Kimana, a man of earth, wish to marry the Sky Maiden, your daughter.”

The Sun Chief said, “How can this be?”

He went to the girls who fetched water. “Did you bring this letter?”

The girls said, “We did not.”

He went to his wife, the Moon Lady, and read it to her. “What should we do?”

The Moon Lady said, “Don’t ask me! Ask your daughter!”

He went to his daughter. The Sky Maiden said, “Let us see if he can bring a wedding gift.”

So the Sun Chief wrote a letter and set it on the bench. Then he went away.

Frog came out and put the letter in his mouth. Then he climbed into an empty jug.

The next day, the girls took the jugs and climbed down to earth, singing their song.

*Good day to you, my sister.
Good day to you.*

They lowered their jugs into the well, and Frog jumped out. The girls did not see.

Then the girls went back to Heaven.

Frog took the letter to Kimana, and Kimana read it. “You may marry my daughter if you bring a purse of money.”

Kimana said, “This I cannot do.”

Frog said, “Then I will bring it for you.”

Kimana laughed. “You took a letter to Heaven. But can you bring a purse of money?”

Frog said, “Whatever it is, I can do it. But only if I try.”

Kimana gave Frog a purse of money. Frog took hold of it with his mouth and carried it to the well. He climbed in and waited.

The girls from Heaven came to the well.

*Good day to you, my sister.
Good day to you.*

Frog got into one of the jugs. The girls returned to Heaven and left him in the room.

Frog set the money on the bench. Then he hid.

The Sun Chief came and found the purse. “How can this be?”

He went to the girls. “Did you bring this money?”

The girls said, “We did not.”

He went to his wife. The Moon Lady said, “Don’t ask me! Ask your daughter!”

He went to his daughter. The Sky Maiden said, “Let us see if he can come fetch me.”

So the Sun Chief wrote a letter and left it on the bench.

Frog put the letter in his mouth and climbed into an empty jug. The next day, the girls carried him to earth.

*Good day to you, my sister.
Good day to you.*

He jumped back into the well, and the girls went back to Heaven.

Frog brought the letter to Kimana, and Kimana read it. “You may marry my daughter if you come and fetch her.”

Kimana said, “This I cannot do.”

Frog said, “Then I will fetch her for you.”

Kimana laughed. “You took a letter to Heaven. You brought a purse of money. But can you fetch a bride?”

Frog said, “Whatever it is, I can do it. But only if I try.”

Frog climbed back into the well. The girls came with their jugs.

*Good day to you, my sister.
Good day to you.*

They carried him to Heaven.

Frog jumped out. He spit in all the jugs of water. *Ptui. Ptui. Ptui.* Then he hid in an empty jug.

The people of the house came and drank the water. They all got sick.

The Sun Chief called for the spirit doctor. The doctor told him, “You promised your daughter to a man of earth, but she has not gone. He has sent an evil spirit with a sickness. The evil spirit is in the shape of a frog.”

The Sun Chief went to his wife. The Moon Lady said, “Don’t ask me! Ask your daughter!”

He went to his daughter. The Sky Maiden said, “I will go.”

The next day, the Sky Maiden went with the girls down to the well.

*Good day to you, my sister.
Good day to you.*

The girls filled their jugs, and Frog jumped out. Then the girls left the Sky Maiden and went home.

Frog jumped out of the well. “I will lead you to your husband.”

The Sky Maiden laughed. “Can a frog lead a woman?”

Frog said, “I took a letter to Heaven. I brought a purse of money. I fetched a bride. Whatever it was, I could do it. But only since I tried.”

The Sky Maiden said, “Then it is you I will marry.”

She took Frog back to Heaven and married him. They lived on and on.

And Kimana is still waiting for his bride.

**About the Story**

This tale comes from the Mbaka tribe, part of the Ambundu people of northwest Angola. Kimanaueze—shortened here to “Kimana”—is a common figure in Ambundu stories.

In most of Africa—and in many other cultures worldwide—it is the custom for a groom to send a wedding gift to the bride’s family. Names for this include “wooing present,” “bride-price,” and “bride-wealth.”

The tale is retold from #13, “The Son of Kimanaueze and the Daughter of Sun and Moon,” in *Folk-Tales of Angola,* collected and edited by Heli Chatelain, Houghton Mifflin, Boston and New York, 1894 (Vol. 1 of the *Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society.*) I have tried to retain the rhythm of the original language.

**How to Say the Name**

Kimana ~ kee-MAH-nah

**How to Sing the Song**

Good Day to You
Traditional

Good day to you, my sister. Good day to you.

The song in my retelling, sung by the girls from Heaven, is a traditional greeting and farewell song of Angola. The lyrics are my own rendering of a common version in mixed Bantu and Portuguese: *“O desayo, menina. O desayo.”* The Portuguese *menina* actually means “little girl,” but variation is part of this musical tradition, so you can substitute whatever you like—“my sister,” “my brother,” “my mother,” “my father,” “my teacher,” and so on. And of course, the music can repeat with these variations until everyone is properly greeted.

Like most traditional African songs, this one has a syncopation that can be tricky. The rhythm of eight beats is accented on the one, the four, and the seven. To get the feel of it, clap along in the following pattern: *ONE, two, three, ONE, two, three, ONE, two.* Except for the *sis* in “sister,” each syllable of the lyrics falls on an accented beat.

The song can be found with additional lyrics and music in full arrangement in *Echoes of Africa in Folk Songs of the Americas,* by Beatrice Landeck, David McKay Company, New York, 1961. My thanks to Lois Sprengnether for calling it to my attention.