



## Mama Panya's Pancakes

Mama Panya sang as she kicked sand with her bare feet, dousing the breakfast fire.

"Adika, hurry up," she called cheerfully. "Today, we go to market."

"Surprise! I am one step ahead of you, Mama." Adika stood in the doorway, dressed in his finest shirt and cleanest shorts. "I'm ready."

Now Mama Panya had to hurry.

After storing her pots, gathering her bag and slipping her feet into her sandals, Mama Panya called, "I am ready too, Adika. Where are you?"

"Here I am, Mama—two steps ahead of you." He sat under the baobab tree, Mama Panya's walking stick in hand.

"Why, yes you are." She accepted the stick and led them down the road.

"What will you get at the market, Mama?"

"Oh, a little bit and a little bit more."

"Are you making pancakes today, Mama?"

"You are a smart one. I guess I can't surprise you."

"Yay! How many pancakes will you make?"

Mama fingered two coins folded in the cloth tied around her waist. "A little bit and a little bit more."

Rounding the corner, they saw Mzee Odolo sitting by the river. "Habari za asubuhi?" Mama asked softly, so she wouldn't chase away the fish.

Adika blurted out, "We're having pancakes tonight, please come."

"Adika," Mama whispered in his ear.

Mzee Odolo waved back, saying, "Asante sana —I'll be there."

Mama quickened her pace.

"We had to invite Mzee," Adika said, "he's our oldest friend."

"Hurry up, you're a few steps behind," Mama replied.

"Look, Mama, it's Sawandi and Naiman." Adika's friends tapped long reeds against the thighs of their cattle, moving them along. "I'll be just a few steps ahead."

"Wait, Adika!" Mama called.

Mama hadn't gone too far before he returned.

"They'd be happy to come," Adika panted.

Mama Panya frowned, thinking about the coins in her wrap.

"Ohhh! How many people will that be?"

"Let's see. Sawandi, Naiman, you and me", Adika counted. "And Mzee Odolo, that's only five."

"Aiiii. How many pancakes do you think I can make today, son?"

"I'm one step ahead of you, Mama. You'll have a little bit and a little bit more. That's enough."

At the market, there were many buyers and sellers trading fruits, spices and vegetables.

Adika spotted his schoolfriend Gamila at her plantain stand. "Mama, pancakes are her favourite."

"Now, now —don't you..." and before she could finish, he ran to greet her.

Mama tried to catch up, arriving just in time to hear, "You will come, won't you?"

"Of course," Gamila replied.

Mama shot a stare at Adika and quickly grabbed his hand, whisking him away.

"Mama, we'll be able to stretch the flour."

"Ai-Yi! How much do you think I can stretch flour, son?"

Adika waved his hand in the air. "Oh, a little bit and a little bit more."

At the flour stand Mama said, "Adika, you sit here."

After greeting Bibi and Bwana Zawenna, Mama asked, "What can you give me for my money?" She offered the larger of the two coins to Bibi Zawenna, who scooped a cup of flour onto a piece of brown paper.

Adika popped up. "Mama's making pancakes today. Can you come?"



"Oh, how wonderful! I think we can give a little more for that coin." Bwana Zawenna put a second cup on to the paper, then tied it up with string. "We'll see you later."

Mama tucked the package into her bag. "Ai-Yi-Yi! You and I will be lucky to share half a pancake. "

"But Mama, we have a little bit and a little bit more."

"Come, Adika, keep up with me. We may have just enough left for a small chili pepper."

"Leave it to me, Mama; I'll get a good one."

"No, Adika!" she cried out, but he ran ahead to Rafiqui Kaya's spice table.

Mama got there just in time to hear, "Mama's making pancakes tonight, can you come?"



"I'd love to," Kaya exclaimed. She grabbed the coin from Mama's hand and replaced it with the plumpest pepper. "That's just enough! Thanks for inviting me."

Mama just sighed.

They headed home. "How many people did we invite for pancakes tonight?"

Adika, skipping two steps ahead, sang his reply:

"All of our friends, Mama!"

Mama piled small twigs and sticks into the firepit. Adika ran to fetch a pail of water.

Mama crushed the chili pepper in a pot, while Adika added some water. She stirred in all the flour, seeing there would be none to save. Mama poured a dollop into the oiled pan on the fire.

Sawandi and Naiman were the first to arrive shouting, "Hodi!"

Adika called, "Karibu" to welcome them. They carried two leather drinking-gourds filled with milk and a small pail of butter. "Mama Panya, we have extra from our cattle."

Mzee Odolo came soon after. "Old-man river has given us three fish today."

Gamila arrived with plantain bunch perched on her head. "They go very well with pancakes."

Bibi and Bwana Zawenna brought a package filled with more flour and handed it to Adika. "Store this away for later."

When Rafiki Kaya arrived, she brought handfuls of salt and cardamom spice, along with her thumb piano.



And the feast began, as they sat under the baobab tree to eat Mama Panya's pancakes.

Afterwards, Kaya played the thumb piano and Mzee sang slightly off key.

Adika whispered with a gleam in his eyes and a smile on his face, "I know you will make pancakes again soon, Mama."

She smiled. "Yes, Adika, you're one step ahead of me."