

# Neza

The second naming party



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# Neza

## The second naming party



Written by: **Martine Uwacu KAREKEZI**

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I am called Neza Happy. My family stays on an island called Kibibi in Lake Irebe. I was born blind but raised following the village customs and traditions.

Kibibi island is known for its big natural forest, Mugina. In the middle of that natural forest, there is a beautiful place where my family has built a Village; “Happy”. The people of Happy village are always happy. Happy Village has a mixture of traditions. They keep us always happy.

It’s a tradition to have two naming parties! Every child is called Happy from birth. Then, gets a second name on the eighth day and the third name on his or her fifth birthday. My story is about; my “second naming party”.





It was my fifth birthday, a very special day and the happiest of my life. It had to start late in the night. All happy children had to drink milk and dance, all happy men had to stay awake the whole night and drink sugar cane beer.

All the happy women had to decorate, sing and drink honey beer the whole night. It was a big and well-organized party but my parents were not to be seen from early morning. I was worried but “It is a tradition” I had to wait and went to sleep without them.





Early in the morning, all the children of the village were well dressed. I could hear voices of my friends repeating our song of joy. We had to put on traditional attires made from umuvumu barks by our family designer. I could feel the smoothness of my new clothing with my hands. This was my first experience since birth. Every girl covers her chest for the first time on her fifth bithday in my village. I was a bit shy and came out of the hut a bit late.





By the time my parents came back in the morning, I was excited to hear what my birthday gift was. “Happy Birthday!” They both said.

My gift was wrapped in banana leaves. I could feel how cold and smooth they were. My gift was very small; I couldn’t guess what it was by touching it.

I couldn’t even smell its perfume; it was not something I could know without opening it.





I started the main ritual of the day, “to unveil”. As I was removing the first banana leaf, the second and the third, all the children were singing louder our song of Joy:

“Piri, piri piri,  
dorodooo dororo dodooo,  
cici , cici , cici, cici,  
ciciridiri pipiii, piri, pipiri pipiii”

“Umuko” they all shouted! My gift was a seed of umuko plant. Then My mother said: “You have got your full name today: HAPPY NEZA MUKO,” because a child was named after the gift received on their fifth birthday.

- Thank you, I replied. My eyes were wet with joy.

My family made my day! This was a memorable event!  
A day to remember!





The following day, my best friend Gira Happy Buki escorted me to the garden and helped me to choose the best place to plant my seed.

- The seed needs to grow healthy. Let's choose a garden near the lake. I know how to recognize good soil for plants. And it has to be an open place to let the rain and sun reach it.

We used manure from the village compost, to help my seed grow faster.





My aunt Mucyo Happy Isimbi helped me to water it every evening for the first week.

- Your seed needs water to grow. At the moment it has no roots; that is why we need to water it every evening. The day leaves will come out, we shall start watering it twice a week till the day it will grow strong.

We used clay pots to fetch water from the lake.





My uncle Kabe Happy Nkongoro was the one who trained me how to measure its growth. You will know your plant is growing by counting the number of leaves it can add per month.





Cousin brother Gisa Happy Muheto made sure no one messed with my garden. With him around, I knew my plant's security was assured.





My umuko plant grew faster and I started visiting it alone.





After one year, my umuko plant was big and healthy.  
It had many leaves and branches.





My plant had red flowers which my Grandma, Kampe Happy Rugori, the village physician used to cure some diseases.





One sunny day, I went there and found my tree had no more flowers, and small pods started appearing where flowers were. I waited until it grew enough the way my elders told me. I went there in the morning and picked pods from my trees. Guess what I had to do with them!





It was a tradition, a Happy child had to deal with the nature and give back the gift he or she received on his or her fifth birthday. One evening, I surprised my Happy dad, in the middle of our weekly family gathering. I offered him a basket full of Umuko pods.

- Congratulations my brave Happy daughter. In front of the whole Happy family, he offered me the priceless gift of my life;

- Go, go, Happy girl! Your brother Kuru Happy will take you the other side of the lake, you will learn more knowledge and write stories to teach people around the World that living without sight does not mean you are unable!

We love you, we will support all your dreams. That was the happiest day of my life before coming to school! I hope you enjoyed reading my first story.







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