

Anna Hibiscus

By Atinuke

One day Anna Hibiscus was so bored she decided not to listen to her grandfather. She decided to sell oranges anyway.

Anna found a big basket. She climbed one of the orange trees and filled it full of fruit. Then she slipped out of the gate with her basket on her head.

“Orrrr-enge! Orrrr-enge!”

Anna Hibiscus shouted just like the other girls. They all looked at her with surprised and worried eyes.

Anna Hibiscus’s oranges were bright and clean and shiny. They were fresh off the tree. The other girls’ oranges were dusty and soft. Their oranges had travelled in lorries along bumpy dry roads all the way from the plantations to the city. Their oranges had sat in the sun in dirty markets. Their oranges had been carried in open baskets along smelly polluted roads. Their oranges were small and orange-brown.

The girls’ dresses were faded and torn. Anna Hibiscus was as bright and clean and shiny as her oranges. All the people who stopped wanted the big bright oranges from the smart little girl. Anna sold all her oranges.

She filled up her basket again and again and sold them all. The other girls sold almost none that day.

Anna Hibiscus was so excited. As evening fell she rushed back through the gate and into the house. The money was in her pocket and her smile was bright and shining.

But when Anna’s father and uncles came home from work they looked worried.

“Something happen for those girls at the gate today. Some kind of trouble,” the eldest uncle said. “That Angelina, she with no mother, no father, only sick brother at home. Angelina always smile. Today she cry.”

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“Is true,” said Uncle Tunde. “And that small one with polio shrivel leg, who has to work morning and night for food. She crying too.”

“Yes,” said Anna’s father. “And that one with twelve brother-sister, who father done die, why she so sad today?”

The big bright smile fell off Anna Hibiscus’s face.

