

Read the passage below and then answer questions 26 to 38.

"I wonder what Aoko is doing at home," Njeri said, looking at her friend Cherono. "Why don't we go and find out?"

The three were close friends, in fact inseparable. They spent most of the day together, especially during the school holidays like now. Nine o'clock always found the girls together, and they would not part till evening. Strangely today, Aoko was nowhere to be seen yet it was already 10 o'clock.

The two girls walked to Aoko's home. As they neared the house, Njeri called out, "Aoko, you have visitors!" There was no response. Obviously, their friend was not in.

Outside the house was seated an old lady the two girls had never seen before. They went up to her and Cherono greeted her in Aoko's mother tongue. Cherono spoke the language fluently, one could not tell she was from a different community. The old lady responded and smiled broadly, exposing toothless gums. Njeri guessed the old lady was probably a hundred years old. Cherono then asked her where Aoko was.

I sent her to the shops to buy something, just get in and wait. I'm sure she's on her way back," said the lady.

Njeri did not understand a word. She just followed her friend into the house.

Half an hour later, the girls were still waiting. Impatience got the better of Njeri. She suggested that they go away and return later. Cherono on the other hand had a different idea. She was curious about the old lady seated outside.

"Why don't we go out and chat with the lady, you know these old people usually have fascinating stories to tell," she said.

"But I won't understand a thing. For you, the language is not a problem, so you'll probably enjoy the stories," grumbled Njeri.

After a little persuasion, Njeri gave in on condition that Cherono would translate everything into English or Kiswahili. They went out and found the lady humming a tune. She was in a world of her own, her face a picture of happiness. She did not seem to notice the two girls, who also did not want to break in on her bliss.

"Oh!" she exclaimed when she realized she was being watched. "I really love singing. It is good for the soul. Do you also sing?" She asked.

Njeri looked at Cherono expecting her to translate what the lady had just said. And she did.

"I see your friend does not understand our language. The lady commented in English. The two girls were taken aback. "I just wanted to find out whether you two also love to sing," she said, looking at Njeri.

"Yes," replied Njeri, "but I did not know you spoke English."

The lady let out a hearty laugh, once again exposing her toothless gums. She then went on to explain that she was a retired teacher of English, having taught for forty years.

"I was taught the language by its owners," she boasted.

"Just as I learnt your language from its owners," Cherono remarked proudly. It was the lady's turn to be astonished. "You mean you do not come from our community yet you speak our language so well?"

Aoko arrived to find the three deep in conversation. She was holding a newspaper. She explained that she had had to walk all the way to the shopping centre for it. "My great grandma loves reading and as soon as she arrived here this morning she asked for a newspaper."

Soon afterwards the three girls skipped away leaving the old lady buried in the paper.