

“OH,” KOFI CRIED as he stumbled into Kendra, who dropped the Kwanzaa decorations that she had been holding. *Crash!* The fruit bowl for the celebration broke into many small pieces.

Scowling, Kendra picked up the straw mat and asked Kofi, “Now what will hold the fruit and fit between the ears of corn?”

Kofi looked sadly at the broken bowl and whispered to himself, “I’ll paint another bowl for tomorrow night’s celebration—in time for the first night of Kwanzaa.” He crept upstairs and pulled his crumpled dollar from the box under his bed.

Then Kofi raced to the festival market on Lenox Avenue where people sat on stools talking and laughing. Musicians strummed or pounded or shook their instruments. Artists painted a mural. Men and women wearing bright robes called out:

“Buy this beautiful *kinara!*”

“Sweet fried yams!”

“Candles! Hand-dipped candles!”

Sh-sh rattle-rattle, sh-sh rattle-rattle, whispered the rain sticks.

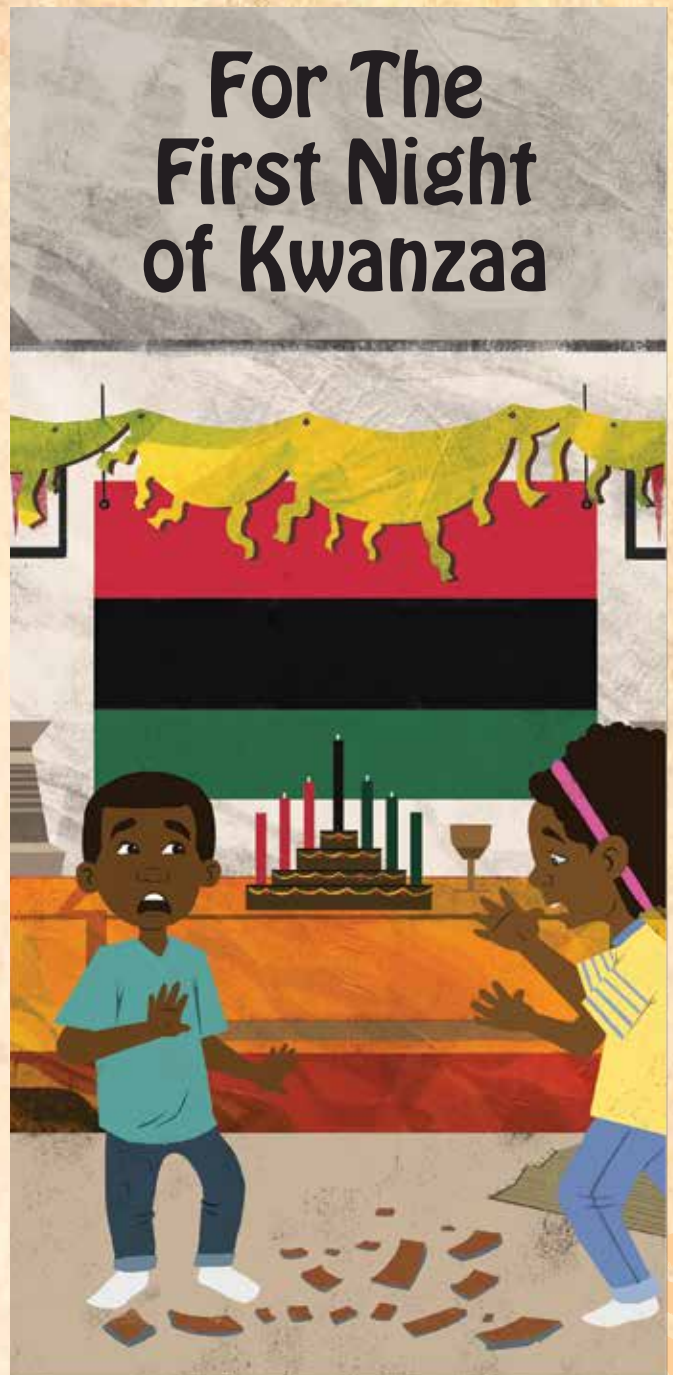
Kofi hurried over to a table filled with bowls big enough to hold basketballs and bowls small enough to hold a cricket and said, “I am looking for a bowl to paint for the first night of Kwanzaa.”

It’s for celebrating Kwanzaa—the American holiday based on African harvest festivals.

Yay! Even more holidays!

by **Debbie A. Taylor**
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For The First Night of Kwanzaa



“One of these may do for you, young man,” the potter said, pulling a box from under a table. Kofi searched until he found a sturdy bowl.

“Yes, this is a fine bowl,” said Kofi, pulling out the crumpled dollar.

“Ah,” said the potter. “That is not enough money for even a tiny bowl. But if you help me stack these bowls, I will give you one.”

So Kofi stacked the small teak bowls into the deep pine ones. Then he tucked a bowl under his arm and hurried on through the market, squeezing the crumpled dollar.

“What is your hurry, young brother?” asked an artist sitting on a stool.

“I am going to paint this bowl for the first night of Kwanzaa,” replied Kofi.

“Surely,” said the artist, “you will paint this bowl with colors that shimmer like palm leaves and colors that blush like ripe mango.”

“Yes,” said Kofi, “these will do.” He pulled out the crumpled dollar.

Shaking his head, the artist said, “That is not enough money for even a smudge of paint. But if you will mix

Nice kinara!



Thanks. It's carved of teak—hard, yellowish brown wood. Oops, but it's a bit dusty.

these paints, you may have the leftover paint in those tubes.

“Mix the yellow and blue. Now stir some blue into the red.”

Cradling his paints and thanking the artist, Kofi hurried on through the market, squeezing the crumpled dollar.

“What is your hurry, young brother?” asked a merchant.

“I am going to paint a bowl for the first night of Kwanzaa. I found the bowl and I mixed the paint.”

“Surely you will paint this bowl with a special brush. Buy a brush of soft camel’s hair or stiff horsehair,” said the merchant.

“Yes, this one will do,” Kofi said, choosing one. And he pulled out the crumpled dollar.

“Ah, that is not enough money for two bristles on a brush. But if you clean these dusty brush handles, you may take one.” Kofi polished the brush handles and laid them carefully on a cloth. Then he chose a thin brush and hurried on through the market, squeezing the crumpled dollar.

“What is your hurry, young brother?” asked a dancer tying a scarf around her head as her drummer thumped his drum. *Boom, boomity, boom-boom. Boom, boomity, boom-boom.*





“I am going to paint a bowl for the first night of Kwanzaa. I found the bowl, I mixed the paint, and I chose the brush.”

“Surely you must feel rhythm as you paint. Dance until your heart races like a leopard in the jungle or a zebra on the savanna. Take my hand.”

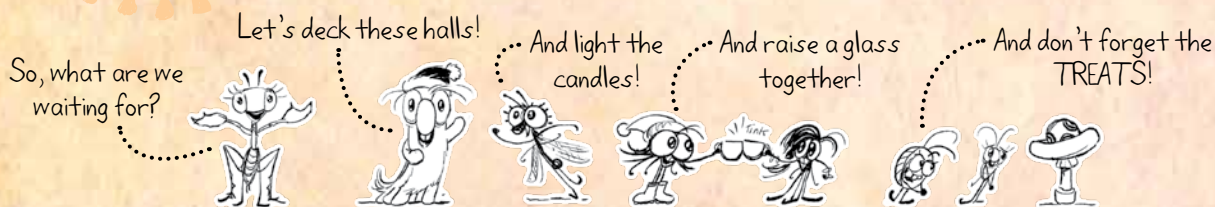
Kofi danced and danced until he was out of breath. Then he smoothed out the dollar and dropped it into the dancer’s money basket. Panting and wiping his forehead, he hurried home. “Boom, boomity, boom-boom. Boom,

boomity, boom-boom,” he chanted.

In his room, he began to paint. He painted a picture of the fried yams and he painted the dancer’s scarf. Leaves of jungle trees and dust from the plains sprang from his brush. Animals chased each other around the bowl. *Sh-sh rattle-rattle, sh-sh rattle-rattle.* All the next day, Kofi’s bedroom door stayed shut.

“I hear a growling beast,” said Kendra as she polished the kinara.

“Is Kofi dancing in there?” asked Mom, unfolding the straw mat.





“Do I hear drums?” asked Dad as he placed two ears of corn—one for Kendra and one for Kofi—on the mat.

Soon it was time to light the first candle of Kwanzaa. Just then, Kofi’s bedroom door opened.

“Let’s open this before we light the candle,” said Kofi, gently dropping a box into Mom’s lap. She untied the string, pulled off the top, and reached into the box.

Kofi took a deep, deep breath.

“Oh!” Mom and Dad exclaimed together.

“It will hold the fruit,” said Mom.

“And sit next to the kinara,” said Kendra.

“Between the ears of corn,” said Dad.

“And just in time,” said Kofi, “for the first night of Kwanzaa!” ✨

