



Ossiri and the Bala Mengro

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Best to start by reading the glossary, tucked at the bottom of the publisher's page, as to many, some words used in this book will be unfamiliar. (A bala mengro of the title is a hairy person.) Ossiri is a traveller girl, and with her extended family she collects old clothes, scrap iron and broken furniture, often mending latter before selling them on. Ossiri loves music, and when her family play she is enthralled, wanting to be able to play like them. Despite her father saying they can't afford to buy an instrument for her to learn, she clings to her dream. She decides to make herself an instrument. Using a branch from the wood she adds strings and jangles, and anything she can find around their camp which will make a sound. She names it her Tattin Django (recycling music). Devastated that everyone, including cows and birds, hates the raucous sounds she produces, she is warned by a new neighbour that if she makes that noise and wakes the fearful ogre, Bala Mengro, she will be in terrible trouble. The resolution of the tale is very cleverly told, with a lesson to be learnt ... let your music-making come from the heart and not for gain! With quirky pictures throughout, this book will illuminate a different way of life, while showing how determination and perseverance can pay off.

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