

A JOURNAL OF
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
AFFAIRS, IDEAS
AND THE ARTS

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VOL III NO. 1

BIKMAUS

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TAKING COMMUNICATION FOR GRANTED
Paul Brenman
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Rena Lederman
THE MAN TO BE HEIR
Albert Toro

REVIEWS
by Don Niles and Jill Grant
IMAGES
Photographs by Ross Stevens & Gail Carter
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SOCIAL CHANGE IN MT.
HAGEN AND PANGIA
Andrew Stralthern

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BIKMAUNTEN, a very high mountain, a peak, a mountain chain.

BIKMAUS, (E. big mouth)

1. A twelve gauge shotgun.

tumaus-a double barrelled shotgun.

2. The groper, a large salt water fish; also the cod.

3. To shout, to bark, to yell, to talk loudly.

Dok i bikmaus long mipela-The dog barked at us.

4. Shouting, yelling.

Yu harim bikmaus bilong ol?-Do you hear them yelling?

5. To be impudent, saucy.

You no bikmaus long mi!-Don't be saucy.

6. A loud speaker.

BIKMAUSIM, to shout at someone, to yell at someone or something.

BIKMONING, in the early morning, very early in the morning.

Mihailic

BIKMAUS

A JOURNAL OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA
AFFAIRS, IDEAS AND THE ARTS.

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THE MAN TO BE HEIR

ALBERT TORO

CHARACTERS:

TAIHO (Domba Galang)

MANAI (Markham Galut)

TUSEN (Norman Toru)

MAGERO (Justin Somi)

AMO (Ivan Kesa)

PATTY (Doreen Karpo)

RUDY (Arthur Jawodimburi)

TEA-BOY (Paul Geru)

LINDA (Domba Galang)

OLD MAN (Joe Mararos)

Manai's sister.

Her crippled brother.

Village boy.

Tusen's friend.

Manai's brother in the city.

Amo's secretary.

Amo's friend.

In the office.

The applicant.

Grandfather.

(While in press, "The Man To Be Heir" won first prize in a competition run by the Committee for the International Year of the Disabled. The play was produced by the National Theatre Company this year under the title of "A Step Further". Cast shown in parentheses)

ACT ONE:

SCENE ONE:

Lights up on a small falling-apart, sago — thatched roof house. Half the front wall is not there, and therefore the sleeping area is visible. A few props are on the floor and a big garden bilum is hanging just near the doorsteps.

Pigs can be heard, faintly in the background.

Under the house are a few disorganised belongings. Close to the fire place, under the house, TAIHO is peeling kaukau into a basket. There is a small pot next to her.

MANAI, Taiho's crippled brother is sitting in the doorway playing a tune from the movie 'Sound of Music'; "Climb Every Mountain", just a few bars on a flute.

TAIHO: There you go again, Manai. Is that all you can ever play? Since after your first birthday you've never had a new tune but 'Climb Every Mountain'.

MANAI: (*FLUTE SLOWLY LOWERED*) And you have never stopped talking about it; why? I told you time and time again that it is the only tune Amo taught me before he went to Port Moresby. It's a beautiful tune! I don't know where he learnt it.

TAIHO: He heard some Nuns singing it at the Mission Station, and that is about five years ago.

MANAI: I miss big brother Amo very much. Since he left the village he never writes to tell us, especially you, who can read and write, about the life in the big city.

TAIHO: And he sends no money to us too. I wonder why. Maybe the city life is too good. (*SUDDENLY*) Manai, play me the hunting chant, please.

MANAI: Which one? There are so many of them.

TAIHO: 'Gumasang', our tribe's chant.

MANAI: (*SADLY*) It's no use to me now, my sister. It might bring the taste of meat into our house. I hate to think about meat when I know I cannot even run six metres.

I am just a heavy load on you, Taiho. You

may as well forget the fishing and hunting tunes, (*SAD SMILE*) until one day when you get married.

TAIHO: (*SNEEZE*) Hooooo! Who's calling me? (*STRETCHES HER BODY*)

MANAI: Superstitions! I don't believe in that at all. When someone sneezes his or her name is being mentioned somewhere by some other silly people? (*LAUGH*) Funny, isn't it?

TAIHO: Is it?

MANAI: Yes, it is. Taiho, I think you should get married. (*CRAWLS DOWN ONE STEP*) It will stop you dreaming about your sneezes.

TAIHO: I don't think I am ready to be married yet. I'll let you know when I am ready and you're *NOT* old enough to be talking to me about that.

MANAI: (*MOVES DOWN ANOTHER STEP*) But by the same token I still think you should. You alone cannot bear to carry the weight — me, a burden. Find someone who can really be a perfect husband. Someone who will not want to hate my presence in your house.

TAIHO: Manai, without you my life would be very empty. For the last fourteen years you have been the only thing to think of. Yes, fourteen years ago this afternoon since our mother died.

MANAI: How old was I then? Eight? Nine?

TAIHO: Round about seven, I cannot remember.

MANAI: Well, let me see. You must have been a very patient girl. For those long seven years to now — I am fifteen; I mean going towards fifteen. It must really have been a hard time for you.

TAIHO: Not really, because papa lived the next two years after mama's death and he too passed away. We, our late papa and I, helped adopt you.

MANAI: What about Amo? Where was he all that time?

TAIHO: In school. His teacher, an Australian, never allowed him to come home. He was not even here when papa died, nor did he come for the burial.

MANAI: All first-born children are rather similar in their behaviour towards their parents. Yes, the only thing I can remember about mama is her coffin disappearing into the grave, and our old grandfather mumbling something that I couldn't understand.

TAIHO: (*RISES TO COLLECT SOME MORE KAUKAU*) That is enough, Manai. Talk about something else.

MANAI: (*TO TAIHO WALKING AWAY*) Can you write me a letter, Taiho? A letter to Amo, the idiot brother! I want to tell him something real nasty; that is if you can write.

TAIHO: (*EXITING*) Put your brain together, Manai.

(*FROM BACKSTAGE*) I did write to him once and never received a reply.

(*RETURNING WITH KAUKAU*) I've lost hope on everything I thought he would do for you and me.

MANAI: It might change his mind this time if the signature in the letter is mine.

TAIHO: He knows that you have not been to school and you can't suddenly try to say you can by putting your signature in the letter. I have to write it on your behalf — and the signature must be mine.

MANAI: But you are going to write what I will be telling you, Taiho.

TAIHO: Okay. Let me first finish what I am doing. (*SUDDENLY*) Can you get me some water, please?

MANAI: From where?

TAIHO: At the back of the house; where the box of kaukau is.

(MANAI DESCENDS THE LAST STEP AND PAINFULLY MAKES HIS WAY TO EXIT).

SFX: PIGS GRUNTING AS IN THE BEGINNING: RUN TAPE FOR TEN

SECONDS AND OUT:

MANAI: (*ENTERING WITH POT OF WATER*) Looks like we are running short of water, Taiho.

TAIHO: I know. Wish grandfather was here. I don't know what he hangs around in the village for when he has grandchildren

MANAI: Just recently he's not been seeing us as often as usual. He's probably found some old widow that's tired him down. (*STARTS PLAYING THE FLUTE*)

TAIHO: You're being very mean to the old man, Manai. Put that flute away and get the fire going. Our little heap of firewood is running out as well.

MANAI: (*MOVING TO FIREPLACE*) Get married, that's all.

TAIHO: Shut up! That's the last time I'll ever hear that comment from you.

MANAI: Thank you; but, did you feed the pigs? I heard them grunting twice as loud as usual. They must be hungry.

TAIHO: Yes, I know. They eat more than we do too. How's the fire?

MANAI: (*BLOWING THE FIRE*) Coming slowly. You ready with the pot?

TAIHO: Ready.

MANAI: Well, bring it before I change my mind about this damned fire.

TAIHO BRINGS THE POT OF KAUKAU TO MANAI WHO HANGS IT FROM A HOOK SUSPENDED FROM A BEAM UNDER THE HOUSE:

TAIHO: Watch it while I go down to feed the pigs. Be careful not to let the fire go too high or the whole house will go up in flames. (*MOVING AWAY TO EXIT*)

MANAI: I'll be extra careful, my sister. Just go and do what you can do to shut those swine up. And feed them well enough.

(TAIHO EXITS)

MANAI: (*CALLING*) They might be very useful for your wedding! (*ASIDE*) Bloody pigs.

SFX: AFTER A SLIGHT PAUSE WE
HEAR PIGS FIGHTING:

MANAI: (TO THE FIRE) There they go. I
should say we all live a similar life.

(MANAI LAUGHS)

FOR A WHILE THERE IS SILENCE.
MANAI IS THINKING. LIGHTS SLOWLY
DIM AND HIS THINKING BECOMES A
DANCE SEQUENCE DANCED TO A
SHORT POEM; ALL IN SILHOUETTE
AGAINST A PAINTED BACKDROP. ALL
THAT IS LIT IS MANAI TENDING THE
FIRE EVERY NOW AND AGAIN. POEM
AS FOLLOWS: ON REVERB.

VOICE:

Am I really an outcast in this world,
Outcast because I am disabled,
Disabled by some natural mishap?
I don't believe I am a wasted soul,
Neither do I think my smell is foul,
In a community that for fourteen years,
Has shared nothing with me and Taiho, ...

MANAI TURNS TAKING GLANCES AT
THE AUDIENCE AS IF ASSESSING
THEIR REACTION. VOICE CONTINUES.

I am quite happy being myself,
And don't feel disturbed,
Nor distressed, nor jealous,
Nor ashamed of myself.

SOUND EFFECT.

VOICE CONT.

My epitaph won't carry more than
Just my own names,
Engraved carelessly on a rough wooden
cross,
Where birds would glide and alight
And sing to my grave the last requiem.

THE DANCERS BEGIN TO EXIT AND
LIGHTS SLOWLY COME UP. SUDDENLY
THERE IS A WOMAN'S VOICE:

WOMAN: My son, tell me, why are you so
worried?

MANAI: (TAKEN ABACK) Am I
worried? Who are you anyway?

WOMAN: Do you have to ask? Have I not

spent three years with you? Do not be afraid
my son. No, don't.

Why are you so concerned about Taiho?
Do you have to force her to get married?

MANAI: But how did you know all that
was happening?

WOMAN: From the day I passed away
did not leave you and your sister completely.
I have always been around to see that you live
natural life.

TAIHO ENTERS WITH THE EMPTY
BASKET IN HER HAND. SHE STOPS
SUDDENLY IN SURPRISE.

MANAI: And you don't suppose Taiho
should get married?

WOMAN: Of course, yes. But just not yet.

MANAI: But, the sooner the better. I am ...

TAIHO: Manai, who's that you're talking
to?

MANAI: Mama!

TAIHO: Crazy!

MANAI: Yes, you are! It was the voice of
mama. Oh, I wished she was still alive. I just
couldn't believe I was talking with her just
then; did you hear her?

TAIHO: Sure, I did.

MANAI: Now why ask? Oh, mama.
See, I've forgotten all about the fire!

MANAI ADDS MORE WOOD TO THE
FIRE:

MANAI: Are you going to write my letter?

TAIHO: I'll do that. I have to go to the
village first to see how the old man is. One of
the pigs has given birth.

MANAI: That's good news. How many
piglets in the litter?

TAIHO: Seven. Five males and two
females.

MANAI: You know what? I'll go to the
village while you do the writing for me.

TAIHO: Okay. You want to leave right now?

MANAI: You won't be needing me for the rest of the day, will you?

TAIHO: No.

MANAI: Then I shall go now.

WITH MUCH TROUBLE MANAI PUSHES HIMSELF TO EXIT, PUSHING AND PULLING. TAIHO WATCHES SADLY AS HER BROTHER LEAVES. DROPPING THE BASKET SHE SAYS,

TAIHO: Poor brother, how can you be so very helpful?

BLACKOUT. END OF SCENE.

SCENE TWO:

LIGHTS FADE UP SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH JUNGLE SOUNDS, ON TWO VILLAGE BOYS. ONE OF THEM IS LEANING AGAINST A DEAD STUMP. THE ATMOSPHERE IS VERY MUCH ALIVE.

TUSEN: (*LAUGHING*) She sort of knows that I've been after her, too! Just two days ago, in the garden, I had a short talk with her about what she thinks about me

MAGERO: And what was her reaction?

TUSEN: What do you mean?

MAGERO: I mean what she said to that?

TUSEN: Well, she mumbled something I did not quite understand. But presumably she ... well, she sort of ... I don't know.

MAGERO: You are hesitating a bit there, Tusen. I believe you are telling me lies, eh? LIES! Taiho is not that sort of a girl, really. I myself have been trying my luck on her but all in vain. I like her but she has more heart for her crippled brother.

TUSEN: Cripple. (*WITH HATRED*) Disgusting little pig. What do you suggest is the perfect way of getting rid of him, eh, Magero?

MAGERO: You must be crazy! Poor Manai does not even have the bone to stand up against a passing ant.

BOTH BOYS LAUGH.

MAGERO: No, he does not. But what would you want to get rid of him for? A harmless, simple son of a terrific hunter? No, you are very cruel.

TUSEN: You'll be better off in one of the newly introduced churches as a humble little missionary, Magero. You have humanity and love in you. People like Manai look a big mess in the community. They don't belong here and should therefore be either sent off somewhere or executed.

MAGERO: Just because of his physical inability to participate or perform as a normal being he should be done away with? Is that what you're trying to get at?

TUSEN: What else? That's exactly it! I mean people cannot waste part of their life having to worry about such idiotic characters. You would not want to yourself, would you?

MAGERO: Wouldn't you? What if it was one of your own brothers or sisters? What would you do?

TUSEN: What would you do yourself?

MAGERO: I am asking you, Tusen. What would you do?

TUSEN: I'd leave the village and decide I never had any. No parents and brothers and sisters, that's easy enough to do. You remember when we were young boys, running around in the village, naked? You remember how I used to kill dogs with dry battery acid? I must have been born a natural destroyer of life, what do you think?

MAGERO: I'm still thinking. You know, I admire Manai? See, we have three more people like him in the village, with different physical disabilities. They still surely try to survive.

TUSEN: But how hard is it for them?

MAGERO: Just listen, you fool! From today on I am not going to hang around with you any more.

TUSEN: We aren't married anyway.
(LAUGHS)

MANAI ENTERS UNSEEN BY THE TWO BOYS. HE LISTENS TO THE CONVERSATION FROM A DISTANCE, STILL UNDETECTED:

MAGERO: Forget it.

TUSEN: Forget what?

MAGERO: Manai, of course.

THERE IS A LOOK OF HORROR IN MANAI'S FACE.

TUSEN: Yes, for the time being. All I'm interested in now at this very moment is his sister.

MANAI: (MOVING TOWARDS THE TWO BOYS) And I'm interested in yours too, Tusen. Haven't you ever got anything else to talk about? Tell me, Tusen.

TUSEN: (SURPRISED) How come you suddenly dropped into our little conversation?

MANAI: How is your sister, anyway? Is she in the village? I'm going right there to see her and tell her that I have suddenly decided to have a date with her.

TUSEN: Better shut your gates before anything happens, Manai.

MANAI: That's exactly how I felt a couple of minutes ago. A lazy dog like you? Heh, my sister would laugh at you. You know? You are no match for her.

TUSEN: Well, I apologise

MANAI: There is no need to. You have already been forgiven the moment I heard you talking your head off about Taiho. You are a real animal, Tusen! Real animal!

TUSEN: Do not say any more, Manai. I'm getting impatient and you are no man to fight a man like me.

MAGERO: Cool it, Tusen. Let the poor boy go. (SUDDENLY) Manai, I guess you better make your way out of here fast, will you?

MANAI: This is my grandfather's land

and the jungle is his too. You haven't any right to tell me off around here. Your parents don't belong here either. And you, Magero, to tell the truth I am not a poor boy. Remember that. I own more than you do.

MAGERO: So what?

MANAI: Just a matter of fact that you too should know. Tusen, I thought you should have known better. Your father is the village Pastor, isn't he?

TUSEN: (ANGRY) What's that got to do with it?

MANAI: With what? With you talking dirty talk in the jungle? As a Pastor's son you ought to respect other people's lives. And that includes my sister.

TUSEN: (SCREAMS AT MANAI) Go away, you devil! — Go!

TUSEN LIFTS HIS RIGHT LEG TO KICK MANAI. MANAI CATCHES HIS LEG TWISTS IT AND TUSEN FALLS. HE IS HIT BY MANAI, SEVERAL TIMES.

MAGERO: (intervenes) Okay, Tusen. (PULLING TUSEN AWAY FROM MANAI.)

MANAI: (PANTING) Because I'm disabled you thought I would not retaliate, eh? Shame on you. You can now go home and tell your parents that someone crippled beat you. Pass the message to your sister as well. She'll be delighted.

TUSEN: (SHOUT) Piss Off! You little bastard!

MANAI: Thank you.

LAUGHING AT TUSEN, MANAI EXISTS

TUSEN: You should not have pulled me away from him. I could have murdered him.

MAGERO: Murdered him? You must be joking. He threw you to the ground.

TUSEN: He pulled me down. Not "threw me".

MAGERO: All the same

TUSEN: Yes, all the same! But if I had wanted to I could have finished him off!

What can you be saying now? Regret the whole thing, eh?

MAGERO: All I am trying to say is, he is crippled and yet he stood up against you. We cannot obviously underestimate such people.

TUSEN: He probably has not gone far. I'll catch up with him and show him what I can. Just wait here.

MAGERO: But that's not very fair, you know?

TUSEN STOPS TO LISTEN:

TUSEN: Not very fair, eh? Then I'll show how I would have done it.

TUSEN RUSHES FORWARD GRABS MAGERO BY THE NECK. MAGERO STRUGGLES TO RELEASE TUSEN'S GRIP, SCREAMING AT INTERVALS.

FAST BLACKOUT. END OF SCENE:

SCENE THREE:

TWO DAYS LATER IN TAIHO'S HOUSE: IT IS NIGHT. THE SMALL HURRICANE LAMP IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIGHT. THE FIRE IS STILL GLOWING AS IF THEY HAVE ONLY JUST BEEN COOKING. TAIHO AND MANAI ARE SEEN EATING ON THE PLATFORM. THERE IS NIGHT SOUNDS TO SUGGEST THE SCENE.

TAIHO: (*EATING*) Pass me the water-bottle, Manai. (*MANAI PASSES IT*) Tah.

MANAI: (*DRINKING SOUP FROM A METAL CUP*) Why didn't you add my favourite herb to the soup?

TAIHO: You should have reminded me. I forgot all about it. Next time. (*SUDDENLY*) You remember those banana sucklings you planted?

MANAI: Yes, what about them?

TAIHO: Well, the last time we went to the garden they were just sprouting their first leaves. You should see them now. They've grown four times as big since.

MANAI: My hands are blessed by our late mother's spirit. The words were said, "From the day I passed away I did not leave you and your sister completely".

TAIHO: She said that?

MANAI: Sort of. Yes, she did. (*TAKING A BITE OF KAUKAU*) And how are the taros doing?

TAIHO: They've grown too. We'll probably be the most well-off people when the dry season comes, and it is not that far off.

MANAI: When I went to see old grandfather he told me that some people are already starving. Quite surprising that! They depend on the trade-store which does not even have much apart from a few cartons of twist tobacco and twisties for the already malnourished children. Heh, heh ... can't believe that, really. Strong parents who cannot do better than me ... and you.

TAIHO: Unbelievable, honestly. You want some more soup?

MANAI: No, thanks.

SFX: A NIGHT BIRD IN THE DISTANCE:

MANAI: (*ALARMED*) Sounds like trouble.

TAIHO: What?

MANAI: That bird. Probably disturbed by someone.

TAIHO: Someone, or other birds.

MANAI: Did you feed the pigs this afternoon?

TAIHO: They are getting fatter everyday. You know, I thought we should have one piglet one day. We haven't tasted meat for a long time.

MANAI: That's a good idea.

GRANDPA: (*FROM OUTSIDE CALLING.*) Taiho!

TAIHO: Who's that?

GRANDPA ENTERS. A BUTT OF WOOD, ON ONE END OF WHICH GLOWS FIRE. A WALKING STICK AND A SMALL

MAN'S BILUM SUSPENDED FROM HIS SHOULDER. HIS LAPLAP TIED IN OLD-MAN'S FASHION. HIS PIPE PROTRUDING FROM HIS HIP SUPPORTED BY HIS LAPLAP.

GRANDPA: Good night my grandchildren. What are you doing? Eating? Telling stories? Or what?

MANAI: Good night grandfather.

TAIHO: We've just finished eating. There is still some food left it

GRANDPA: Never mind. I'd rather see you eat and become strong to be a big man and woman. The dry season is coming soon, my children.

MANAI: We are aware of that, grandfather.

GRANDPA: You do, you always do.

TAIHO: That's why I had to send Manai to see how you were doing in the village. You know what, grandfather? Manai heard the night bird and he knew straight away that someone must have disturbed it.

GRANDPA: It gave a shock, that little animal. I was not expecting a silly scream at this time of the night.

THEY ALL LAUGH.

GRANDPA: Yeeess. (*AN ELDERLY COUGH*) It's getting very bad.

TAIHO: What is?

GRANDPA: This cough. I'm probably nearing my time. Anyway, it's what every man longs for; to die and be forgotten. Do you want to die, Manai?

MANAI: Not me, no I don't. There might be no-one to lower you down to your grave when you die. I want to be there to see that it is lowered properly.

GRANDPA: (*LAUGHING*) I thought you'd say just that, Manai.

MANAI: Grandfather, Taiho suggested that we have one of the small piglets.

GRANDPA: It is a marvelous suggestion! So when shall we slaughter it?

TAIHO: When the dry season begins. Only three of us.

MANAI: Right, only three of us. I don't know why all our uncles, aunties and whatnots don't come here at all to visit us. They believe that if they do we might ask them for food, don't they grandfather?

GRANDPA: I've talked to them many times but nothing ever eventuated. Now I've stopped worrying about them. I have only you two and myself to worry about. When your father and mother died they took everything except the house; this house. And since then they've never turned up here to see if they were needed.

MANAI: Yes, Taiho needs someone to help build a new house. Amo is in Moresby. The only people left are my three uncles, you grandfather, and myself. This doesn't worry me much because I know what to do if there is no one to do the job.

GRANDPA: What would you do (*LIGHTS HIS PIPE*)

MANAI: I would offer two pigs to whoever volunteered to build the house. The pigs aren't mine, but Taiho would let me do as I wish with her pigs.

TAIHO: Not a bad idea, Manai.

MANAI: (*SMILE*) There should always be alternatives. Let us just hope that Amo sends the money I asked for in the letter. If that does not come then the two pigs would be worth just as much.

GRANDPA: You're an asset to your sister, Manai. In all my life-time I have never known anyone of your age as intelligent as you are. For that I shall pass to you all the land and the rivers. You shall be the heir to all.

MANAI: It is usually a girl that becomes the heiress because her children would take on from her; her first-born child, whether boy or girl. I cannot because I am not the first in the family, and Amo cannot either because he's spent most of his years in the city. Taiho is the only one left.

GRANDPA: You do not see my point, Manai. You are just as good a decision-maker

as any of the elders around the entire district. You are wiser than some, in fact. Our clan owns a lot more land too and lots of rivers and creeks. Your uncles won't say anything because I am going to put a curse on their stupid little brains as from tomorrow morning, and I mean it.

TAIHO: That is very mean, grandfather.

GRANDPA: I have always been MEAN, my dear. Anyone who doesn't live up to my expectations shall be cursed from the moment he steps out of my door. I have waited a long time to see someone from the clan approach me and ask me to teach him all that is and always will be ours, whether on the land or in the rivers and creeks. Your aunties' sons and daughters are all avoiding me because of the rumour that I am a sorcerer.

MANAI: I'll take the responsibilities from you, grandfather.

GRANDPA: Very good. Then you shall spend five weeks with me; at least, sleeping in the jungle; orientate yourself with the rivers, creeks, trees and landscapes that mark the land that shall be yours. These I have just mentioned are the traditional land markings that cannot be confused with that of the lands department.

TAIHO: I heard they have been putting cement blocks into some peoples' land.

MANAI: Yes, but someone can dig that out and move it either out or in. Depends on what side of the land he owns.

GRANDPA: Exactly. We have a more conventional land marking system. And that is the only best sort available.

MANAI: You do not think I'll let you down because I am crippled, grandfather?

GRANDPA: Not in any way. In my days as a youth I used to know someone; my father used to know him, and he often came to our house for various reasons. He was blind. But although blind he used to go fishing, gardening; he even built houses. He could climb a coconut tree and choose the very right nuts. He knew everyone in the village by their voices.

MANAI: That is very funny.

GRANDPA: Very incredible you should say. (*LIGHTS HIS PIPE AGAIN*) You could probably do better than him, couldn't you?

MANAI: If I tried, grandfather, I might. Yes, I can.

TAIHO: Oh, sure you can, Manai.

GRANDPA: And you, Taiho, it is about time you started thinking seriously about getting yourself a husband. Someone has to inherit from Manai and this someone has to be one of your children.

TAIHO: I have been wanting to talk to you about one of the village boys, the pastor's son.

MANAI: (*SARCASTICALLY*) Tusen, grandpa. There is no other one.

GRANDPA: How do you know?

TAIHO: Yes grandfather, Tusen. He has been seeing me lately.

GRANDPA: You can't be that serious, Taiho.

TAIHO: I am. Five days ago we met again in the garden. We talked about getting married.

MANAI: (*SERIOUSLY*) And you never told me about it?

GRANDPA: Too young, Manai, too young. In any case you the tradition does not allow brothers and sisters to discuss such things openly unless the clan's head or parents have been told.

MANAI: I see.

GRANDPA: Yes, Taiho, how long ago since this began?

TAIHO: About six months now.

MANAI: Gee, it's a long time and

TAIHO: (*ANGRY*) Why don't you shut up and just listen, Manai? Whether you like it or not, just shut up. Grandfather will ask for your opinion if there is any reason to.

MANAI: (*HARSH*) But what was so important about this bloody garden meeting that you had never told me about? I mean

told our grandfather about it. Six months? I hope you are not pregnant after all the secret dirty meetings.

GRANDPA: But do you like Tusen, Manai?

MANAI: Well, that is not for me to answer. I am not going to marry the idiot. Ask her.

GRANDPA: Then shut up as you were asked. Let your sister speak her feelings out. A wise man in the tribe always listens and then talks. He listens for the tribe and talks on behalf of the tribe. Only the very best comes out of his mouth. And he is respected for his responsibilities to the tribe. You, Manai; you are very wise. All you have to learn to do now is to LISTEN.

MANAI: Thank you, grandfather.

GRANDPA: In the five weeks that we'll be out in the jungle, you'll have to learn a lot. You have to learn to discipline yourself. You'll have to learn to carry yourself through times of trouble, whether it be personal discontent, tribal conflicts on land matters and others or festivities; you'll be the sole negotiator for your tribe. We'll talk about it more some other time.

MANAI: I am not discounting your wisdom, grandfather, and I wholeheartedly promise I will carry all my responsibilities with the same pride and wisdom of a clan's leader.

TAIHO LIFTS HER HEAD TO LOOK AT HER BROTHER.

TAIHO: And I shall see to it that you get all the co-operation from me as from tonight.

(A DEEP SIGH) What shall I do with Tusen? Marry him or give up?

GRANDPA: There is no other alternative, is there? You have not been seeing another boy beside Tusen?

TAIHO: No.

GRANDPA: Which means there cannot be any argument about it, really.

MANAI BEGINS MOVING TOWARDS THE STEPS.

GRANDPA: The decision; I mean the biggest part of it now has to come from Tusen's parents and the extended family. I am all for it. I want to see a great grandchild before I die. It is my only wish. (PAUSE) Yes, it is my last wish.

MANAI HAS REACHED HIS DESTINATION, THE FIRE-PLACE; HE IS BLOWING TO GET THE FIRE INTO FLAME. HE SUCCEEDS; THE FLAME DISCLOSES HIS FACE.

MANAI: (CALLING) So you think she MUST marry Tusen?

GRANDFATHER AND TAIHO LOOK AT EACH OTHER: TAIHO NODS TO GRANDFATHER:

GRANDPA: I think so. What do you think about him?

MANAI: (HIS HANDS OVER THE FLAME) Well I do not want to bring discord into this house. It is already two against one so I'd rather go along with you two. (TO AUDIENCE) It's not time for me yet to make decision, anyway.

GRANDPA: Say either yes or no, as simple as that!

MANAI: I've said it. I'll go along with you two, and that means 'YES'. Isn't Taiho happy with that?

TAIHO: I am.

MANAI: 'I am' what? Happy or not happy?

TAIHO: Happy.

MANAI: You are. Not surprising. (MOVING CLOSER TO THE FIRE) I should have told you about what I encountered two days ago, on my way to see you, grandfather. Well, tonight I just could not believe it because I found Tusen and his friend, Magero, talking very SERIOUSLY about Taiho. So I think there really must have been something between Taiho and Tusen. (SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS) It does not worry me. (QUICKLY) Grandfather, I say Taiho should be betrothed to Tusen.

GRANDPA: Good. Then now I should

start thinking about what to say to his parents.

MANAI: Six months is a long time. I bet they know.

SFX: ROOSTER TO SUGGEST MORNING, CROWS FROM A DISTANCE.

SFX: CROSS + FADE INTO NATURAL ENDING OF 'CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN'.

BLACK OUT; END OF SCENE.

ACT TWO:

SCENE ONE.

Amo's office. A TV set in the corner of the room, and four chairs facing the set. There is also a coffee table and a couple of posters on the wall.

Lights slowly come up on him sitting cross-legged in his office chair. A well-dressed member of the elite; ties and clean, checked shirt, tight shorts, pair of white socks and polished shoes. He is reading a newspaper.

AMO: (HAPPY) Good on you. It's about time too these bastards got a good whip. Bloody drug maniacs!

HE THROWS THE PAPER ONTO A SHELF, LOOKS AT HIS WATCH AND RELAXES BACK INTO HIS CHAIR. THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR AFTER A SLIGHT PAUSE.

AMO: (SINGS) Knock, knock who's there? .. hmmmmmmmm ... (SPOKEN) Yes, come in.

PATTY ENTERS.

PATTY: (SMILING) Someone from the Finance Department to see you, sir.

AMO: Where is he? (QUICKLY) Come right in, Patty, come.

PATTY: (CLOSING THE DOOR) Out at the enquiries counter.

AMO. Is it a she or he?

PATTY: She (SMILES).

AMO: Don't smile. You know, Patty? You enliven this office every time you walk in, and I do not understand why. Tell me, is there anything funny about the whole set-up in my office?

PATTY: Of course not. It's just a matter of being polite. Anyhow, shall I show her in?

AMO: Please do.

PATTY TURNS TO WALK OUT BUT IS STOPPED.

AMO: One moment, Patty. I want to ask you anyway, I'll see you after I've finished with her.

PATTY EXITS THEN RETURNS WITH LINDA. LINDA HAS A BROWN ENVELOPE.

AMO: (TO LINDA) Take a seat please. (WITH A WINK) Thank you, Patty. (PAUSE) You are

LINDA: Linda. I made an appointment three days ago to come and see you.

AMO: You did?

LINDA: Yes.

AMO: She must have forgotten to tell me about it, I'm sorry. But anyway, what's it about?

LINDA: About the job advertised in the paper.

AMO: Typist KBO Four. Is that the one?

LINDA: Yes.

AMO: Hmmmm. Yes. Have you got your papers with you?

LINDA: Yes.

SHE HANDS THE ENVELOPE TO HIM. HE PULLS SOME PAPERS OUT AND STUDIES THEM ONE AFTER ANOTHER.

AMO: Very well. How long have you been with the Finance Department, Linda?

LINDA: Three and a half years.

AMO: Three and a half years. Quite a long time. Your references are very good, Linda. Are you married?

LINDA: Widowed. My husband was killed down at Kila Kila last year, December.

AMO: How many children have you?

LINDA: We were married only two months when he died. None.

AMO: And you're not thinking of re-marrying?

LINDA: (A SAD SMILE) No. Not at the moment.

AMO: And where do you live?

LINDA: Gordons, with my sister and her husband.

AMO: How old are you? Sorry, but that's one of the questions when interviewing people without written applications.

LINDA: Twenty-three.

AMO: (SMILE) Not too old, are you?

LINDA: Sorry?

AMO: I said, 'not too old, are you'?

THEY SMILE AT EACH OTHER.

AMO: Hmmm And you are still with the Finance Department?

LINDA: Yes.

AMO: Very well. I'll give you a call first thing tomorrow morning to let you know. Thanks for coming.

LINDA: Thank you, Amo.

AMO: (SURPRISED) Oh, so you know me! That's interesting.

LINDA: Yes. I've heard many stories about you. A good sportsman.

AMO: (AN EXAGGERATED LAUGH) Not anymore.

AMO WALKS TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT FOR LINDA.

AMO: Okay. Thank once again for coming, Linda.

AMO CLOSES THE DOOR: AND WALKS BACK TO HIS SEAT.

AMO: (TO HIMSELF) Linda. (SUR-

PRISED) Boy, and she forgot her papers.

SFX: KNOCK, KNOCK. AND PHONE RINGS.

AMO: Come in. Hello?

VOICE: Rudy on the line.

AMO: Thank you, put him through. (PATY) Sit down please. I knew you

RUDY: Hello?

AMO: Yes, mate? Good morning, how are you?

RUDY: How are yourself?

AMO: Fine thanks. So you finally got the message?

RUDY: Ye ... eee ... sss.

AMO: Hmmm (PUTS HIS LEG ONTO TABLE) ... And you're still coming eh?

RUDY: Sure.

AMO: Good. Well Rudy, everything ready for the show. I've got someone here we have to talk to. So see you when you come.

RUDY: Right. Bye.

AMO: Bye. (HANGS PHONE ON HOOK)

PATY: Yes, what did you want to see me about?

AMO: (LEGS OFF THE TABLE) To ask you politely for a date. How about that? I'm being very straight in asking.

PATY: But how can it be possible? You're my boss, and for a boss to do that to his worker is very irresponsible!

AMO: But do want to? I mean ... he ... mean ... I can do or give you anything you might for ask. Promotion in your job, money, anything! Marry you if I have to go to the extreme.

PATY: Is it a date you're after or do you just want to have sex with me?

AMO: Both, I should say. I really am prepared to marry you, Patty. There's something in you that happens to always make me have bad dreams about you.

PATTY: Well, in that case let me think about it for some time. I've been having the same thoughts ... I don't know. It must be some kind of a very good co-incidence that we are in love. I didn't know it would come this far and end just as I hoped it would.

AMO RISES & WALKS TOWARDS PATTY. HE EMBRACES HER. THE PHONE RINGS BUT IS NOT ATTENDED TO.

AMO: Why don't you come and live with me in my flat? It could be much freer there to do what all lovers do.

PATTY: I'll move in tonight. Is that okay?

AMO: Fantastic! Just what I wanted to hear.

PATTY: But how would it affect our working relationship?

AMO: Our relationship at this very moment is better than anything.

DOOR OPENS AND THE TEABOY ENTER WITH A TRAY OF CUPS OF COFFEE. AMO, WITH GREAT SURPRISE PUSHES PATTY AND FALLS ONTO A CHAIR.

AMO: (*BRISK*) Now, Hoi'a. Just tell me what the time is, eh? You've so suddenly, for one day, lost your manner of knocking before you enter!

HOI'A: (*APOLOGETIC*) I ring phone, no answer. And I say you not in and me walk stret in. No knock. Me say sorry boss.

AMO: (*ONE HAND ON HIP AND THE OTHER POINTING AT HOI'A*) Well, you are forgiven, but, what you have just witnessed don't tell anyone.

HOI'A: No, I not tell. But, do you want your coffee, boss?

AMO: Put it on the table and come here.

HOI'A PUTS COFFEE ON THE TABLE WHILE AMO PULLS OUT TWENTY-KINA FROM HIS SHIRT POCKET.

AMO: Here, take it. (*PATS HOI'A ON SHOULDER*) Hoi'a, you are my friend. I'll give you big pay next year if you do not tell

anyone about what you saw, okay?

HOI'A: (*POCKETING HIS MONEY*) Okay boss. Boss, typist say you get one letter.

AMO: Letter?

HOI'A: Yes boss. Mail.

AMO: Thank you, Hoi'a. Leave now. I'll get it later on.

HOI'A EXITS.

PATTY: Amo. I'm very scared.

AMO: (*WALKING TOWARDS PATTY*) He is a good man. The twenty-kina would do him good. Why don't you leave now before anyone else comes in?

PATTY: I think I should.

AMO: (*PULLS HER UP*) I'm the boss around here. If Hoi'a fails to keep his word it's under my discretion to see that such people are terminated.

PATTY WALKS TO THE DOOR; OPENS IT.

AMO: One moment, Patty. Get that letter from the typist and bring it to my flat when you come tonight, will you?

PATTY: I will, darling.

BLACKOUT. END OF SCENE.

SCENE TWO:

Amo's flat. This scene is taking place out on the verandah. It is seven in the night. The room lights are on and can be seen through the curtain. Amo is sitting outside listening to the news. There is a small coffee-table on the verandah.

From outside, a car engine comes to a stop, idles for a while and then drives off; the car-door is closed.

SFX: KNOCKING (FOUR TIMES).

AMO RISES AND GOES INTO THE FLAT TO OPEN THE DOOR. FROM INSIDE THE FLAT WE CAN HEAR HIM TALKING TO PATTY.

AMO: Good evening, Patty. I lost hope of your coming. I thought you'd never come.

PATTY: What a big house, Amo.

AMO: Big all right. Just too big for me.

ENTER INTO VERANDAH.

AMO: Sit down. Do you want coffee?

PATTY: Some cold drink, please. I just had coffee with my aunty.

AMO GOES IN.

AMO: (*FROM INSIDE*) Have you heard this group before? It's a new local band from around here.

SFX: A LOCAL NUMBER (STRING BAND)

AMO ENTERS WITH A GLASS OF COLD DRINK.

AMO. (*HANDING THE DRINK TO PATTY*) I really like listening to local stringbands. (*BRISK*) Did you bring my letter?

PATTY: Oh, it's here in my bag. (*SEARCH BAG FOR LETTER*) Here you are.

AMO TEARS THE ENVELOPE AND OPENS THE CONTENT. LOOKS AT IT FOR A WHILE AND A FEW SMILES HERE AND THERE.

What's so interesting in there, Amo? Must be one of your girl-friends from the village.

AMO: It's from my brother. And my sister wrote it on his behalf. Money, money. They think living in town is as cheap as it is in the village. Actually he is cripple. He cannot walk but he I cannot believe it. He has taught himself how to.

PATTY: How?

AMO: He walks on his knees. In his previous letters he told me how useful he is to our sister. I don't know how old he is now.

PATTY: You mean to tell me that you have never been home?

AMO: Exactly. I left home at about the age of five, with my Australian teacher. And I don't even know how old he was when I left

them.

PATTY: That's very cruel, Amo. And your family, I mean your parents, what do they think of your attitude towards them.

AMO: That is the other reason why I have never bothered going home.

PATTY: What is?

AMO: I was not home when both my dad and mama died. You will not believe it, but I have been away from the village for nearly ... say roughly ... twenty-two years.

PATTY: Holy cow! That long?

AMO: Hmmmmmmm. Quite long, isn't it?

PATTY: Amo, as a well-off public servant, you should be really involved in bringing up your brother and sister. Especially your brother.

AMO: Yeah! What would you do if you were me?

PATTY: I'd help financially. I think you're earning four times what I earn a fortnight. Anyhow, it's all up to you, Amo.

AMO: For the last five years I have been saving up to buy this house off the Urban Development. Right now I do not have surplus cash to hand out, even to my brother. He has to learn how to cope with his condition. I cannot encourage him to be dependent upon me or anyone, including you.

PATTY: But how can you be so mean?

AMO: I'm not being mean. I am just saying what I think is right. He is a cripple, and that is good enough for him. I did not cause his being disabled. Nature caused it, and therefore he has to face nature, to make use of what nature can provide him so he may live. We are getting married shortly and

PATTY: Since when did I agree to marry you? I am not getting married to a man who is selfish, no. From this very moment I renounce you.

AMO: What has my crippled brother got to do with our private life? You are not upset about my attitudes towards my brother and sister, are you?

PATTY: As will soon become apparent I am not a woman that has petty responsibilities when it comes to talking about family talks. My mother is the head of her clan, and I am the only child in the family. There are many cousins for whom I am going to be responsible when my mother dies.

AMO: I see.

PATTY: No, I don't think you understand yet. You have been away too long from your village. That means you hardly know anything about the traditional and customary laws and their values

AMO: You know?

PATTY: Hang on, Amo. I haven't finished yet.

AMO: Sorry.

PATTY: Why don't you go home for a week or two just to re-orient yourself with the village. It is good, as it will make you aware of how much land and whatnots your late parents left when they died.

AMO: Unfortunately I do not know how much property they left behind. I hope our old grandfather is still alive. He would know more about that.

PATTY: There you are. If he dies too, there would be none like him. You may be the only one they're waiting for to inherit everything.

AMO LOOKS AT THE LETTER ONCE MORE AND TEARS IT AND THROWS IT ON THE TABLE.

AMO: It is of no use to me anymore. They can all go to hell. Because of the crippled bastard you think I have to go home and be there should he need any help ... carry him around? A full-grown son of a village man, on my back? Heh! NO WAY! He is not the only one. There may be more like him around this country. They ought to be all collected and dumped into one institution and call that the Institute of Collected Disabled, and the government can be their foster father.

PATTY: Do you really want to marry me?

AMO: Sorry?

PATTY: Do you really want to marry me, I said?

AMO: Well hell, I do. I very much want to.

PATTY: I have to think about it. You know, my mother will not very much appreciate your kind of negative attitudes and your manners.

AMO: But I am not going to marry two of you, am I ? (LAUGH)

PATTY: Of course not, but she is the last in making decisions. (RISES) So, this is where we end our relationship. Good night. If you can't respect my mother, you won't respect me either.

AMO: Hang on. What do you think you are doing?

PATTY: I'm going back to my Aunt's house.

AMO: But I thought you were to spend the night here — with me. (RISES) Patty, please. I promise I will go home or send some money to my brother.

PATTY: Do so, Amo. Good night.

PATTY WALKS TOWARDS THE DOOR AND EXITS.

AMO: Patty, sorry about Bugger it, she's gone and I (SMILES) What a tragic ending to what I believed was perfect as from this afternoon.

RUDY BURSTS IN, HIS SHIRT HANGING FROM HIS SHOULDER. A HALF CARTON OF SAN MIG BEING NURSED IN HIS HAND. A HALF BOTTLE IN HIS OTHER HAND.

RUDY: (DRUNK) A 'Never Ending Song of Love', eh? Who was that I met down your stairs, Amo?

AMO: My secretary.

RUDY: Do you have to extend your hour of business to your home? She was sobbing; what happened? Too big for her?

AMO: Rudy, don't be stupid. It was nothing like that.

RUDY: Why don't you have something

like this then? Cool it off. We all face bad winds here and there.

AMO: (*OPENING A BOTTLE*) She just got upset about don't know. Whether it was about the letter or her mother ...

RUDY: (*LAUGHS FLATTERINGLY*) Oh, so her mother was here as well? What a story! You still haven't changed, have you?

AMO: Actually it was a letter from my brother, who is crippled. He asked for some money.

RUDY: Money, yes

AMO: She's got a very strong personality. Very straight too. I only told her that I cannot encourage my brother to be dependent. Of course he is physically disabled and needs my help — financially and oh, forget it. I don't want to go over it all again.

RUDY: (*drinks*) Hmmmmmm ... I wouldn't encourage such people either. We all live in a world full pain and punishment and, you name it. Who cares! I can't waste my life nursing bloody disableds. It's the only life I have, and I must make use of every bit of it before I die.

AMO: Bloody right too. Anyway, where did you get this?

RUDY: This what, beer?

AMO: Yes.

RUDY: Where else? Store.

AMO: Rudy, Patty's words must have really found a place in my heart.

RUDY: Whose words?

AMO: Patty. The bitch you saw just then. I think I'll have to go home and see for myself what the village looks like since I last saw it.

RUDY: About time too.

AMO: Really, it hurts to think I should, but I have to. I have to do it to earn my marriage with Patty.

RUDY: So you reckon Patty is more important than your crippled brother. You're going to go home not because of your brother but to guarantee Patty's tears, aren't you?

What a stupid idea!

AMO: I don't know. I just have to go, probably by the end of this year.

RUDY: We shall drink on that before you leave. I don't think they'll accept you. It's been such a long time since you left home, you know?

AMO: Well, all the same, it sounds a bit gruesome to me what you've just said, Rudy, but I can't help it.

RUDY: Physically retarded or disabled people should really be forgotten although they are entitled to a percentage of equal rights. Well, that's how some politicians put it.

AMO: A good lot of hypocrites they are. All they do is talk and talk and nothing ever really eventuates. Equal-rights, equal-participation, equal-everything! Why don't they go on to say that everyone, countless of how much he does, is *equal* — no boss. And we all receive equal *salaries*!

RUDY: Everyone's perspective is not the same. Politicians look at it differently to us.

AMO: Why talk about it? (*QUICKLY*) I'll just put some music on. You want me to put these in the freezer? (*POINTING AT THE CARTON*)

RUDY: Before they get hot, yes.

AMO GOES IN WITH THE CARTON. HE PUTS ON A RECORD (OR TAPE) OF 'THE EAGLES' "LIVING NEXT DOOR TO ALICE". THE MUSIC PLAYS ON FOR AWHILE THEN LIGHTS GO OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE THREE.

MANAI AND TAIHO ON THEIR HOUSE'S PLATFORM. IT IS LATE IN THE AFTER-NOON. THE HOUSE LOOKS WORSE THAN IN THE BEGINNING. ONE OF ITS SIDES IS ON THE GROUND. THERE IS A POT OVER THE FIRE-PLACE BUT NO FIRE.

MANAI: (*FROM INSIDE*) Taiho, where did you put my flute?

TAIHO: It's under your bag. Better put it away properly everytime you're finished with it.

MANAI: Where else can we put things? This house is almost on the ground. Why don't you ask your husband to try and build a new one, eh?

TAIHO: Manai, I've asked you twice now not to talk about Tusen. Why don't you respect him as your brother-in-law? (*ALMOST IN A WHISPER*) Here he comes.

(*BACK TO MANAI*) Why don't you take the refuse to the pigs, eh?

MANAI: I'll do that, sister.

TUSEN ARRIVES ON THE SCENE ALL DRESSED UP. HE CLIMBS THE STEPS TO WHERE TAIHO SITS. HE PASSES MANAI WHO IS DESPERATELY TRYING TO MAKE HIS WAY TO THE GROUND.

TUSEN: Where is Manai going?

TAIHO: To feed the pigs. That's what I asked you to do and you wouldn't do it.

TUSEN: They're not my pigs, haven't I told you that? Manai does nothing. Every now and then he should be doing that so we can have all the time we want.

MANAI CARRIES THE REFUSE TO THE PIGS.

TUSEN: Look at him. Why don't we build him something next to the pigs' fence? That'll save him coming and going.

TAIHO: (*SADLY*) Tusen, you have been very cruel to my brother since you moved in. Why is that? Why don't you treat him as nicely as much as possible?

TUSEN: I don't know.

SFX: PIGS FIGHTING OVER FOOD.

TAIHO: (*LOOKS AT TUSEN FOR A WHILE*) Tusen, from now on I want you to be good to Manai. I just can't stand it anymore. We still haven't gotten over the death of our grandfather.

TUSEN: What more can I do? I've done

everything I could possibly do. Our wedding is just a week away and I have been helping my parents with all the hard work like breaking firewood and putting up the platform for food.

MANAI ENTERS.

TAIHO: Oh well, that I understand. I'm not going to watch it go on.

MANAI: (*FROM THE FIREPLACE*) What don't you want to see go on, Taiho?

TAIHO: Mind your own business down there. When will you ever stop intruding into conversations?

MANAI: Taiho, you'd better write another letter to Amo and tell him about our grandfather's death.

TAIHO: I don't think he will take that seriously. It is now almost three months since the last letter. And what have we received?

BOTH: Nothing.

MANAI: Yes, nothing. I wonder what he thinks about two of us. He does not know how much we have grown, neither does he know you're married nor do we know what he looks like.

TAIHO: And we don't know whether he is still at the same address.

MANAI: He is very strange. He could be dead, who knows?

TUSEN: Could be. A man always tries to be in contact with his or her family no matter what distance there is between the two parties. My brother at the Univeristy still writes to us every month.

MANAI: It's probably because you still have your parents.

TUSAN: I think so. The fact is, your parents died when you were only small children, and Amo can't be that stubborn after being through mission school. Surely he ... Why talk about it? We can all survive without him.

TAIHO: The only letter he ever wrote us was when he graduated from the university, and that was that; no more.

MANAI: Forget it.
MAGERO ENTERS.

MAGERO: Manai, is Tusen home?

MANAI: Up in the house.

TUSEN: Who's that? Magero! What brings you here at this time of the day?

MAGERO: Your father said for you and Taiho and Manai to go to the village early tomorrow. Taiho has to help with the cooking.

TAIHO: The unveiling ceremony. I almost forgot all about it.

TUSEN: Unveiling what?

TAIHO: The old women from the death of my grandfather. The hair has to be trimmed so as to allow them to participate freely in their daily chores.

TUSEN: I see. Is that all you have to come here for?

MAGERO: That's all.

TUSEN: Go back and tell him that we'll be there at first light. What is there to be cooked anyway?

TAIHO: A lot, Tusen. You will have to help with it too.

TUSEN: That is why they want us all there, isn't it?

MANAI: Probably so.

MAGERO EXITS.

TAIHO: Tusen, we have to go to the garden first. I know it's against tradition but we have to. There is practically nothing to take with us to the village.

TUSEN: All right, but not for too long.

We have to leave very early if we are to be at the village before everything starts. (SUD-DENLY) Magero?

MANAI: He is gone.

TUSEN: Too late. I was going to tell him ... never mind, there could still be time to get to the village. I'll go now myself and

TAIHO: Where?

TUSEN: To the village. I will be back tonight.

TUSEN EXITS.

MANAI: Taiho, it too late to do anything. You cannot go to the garden in the morning as that is very, very much against the rules of our tradition. If you don't listen to me something very drastic is going to happen to one of us, and that includes Amo if he is still alive.

TAIHO: In that case I really do not know what else we can take.

MANAI: Take ourselves. Our body is more important than food. We have aunties whom you can help with the cooking. I am the head of everything as you heard our grandfather say before he died and when he was dying. All our uncles heard that too, and Aunt Posari heard that too.

TAIHO: I know.

MANAI: Whatever anyone does, I am still the head. It is with me, a cripple, that the responsibility lies. And although crippled I have the same authority just like any other blooming soul. Taiho, my sister, the old man's words are fulfilled. As from today, I AM THE BOSS.

QUICK BLACK OUT. END:

THE DEATH OF A MURUK

Bernard Narokobi

CHARACTERS: Sok, a village man
Nais, his wife
Hab, their son
Song, a hunter
Nin, a hunter
Villagers
Cassowaries
She, a human cassowary
Sok's eldest son
Village Girl
Children of Hab and She

SCENE I, EVENING IN THE VILLAGE

SOK CALLING: Nais! Nais! Na-a-a-a-is
ou-u-u-u-u!

NAIS, FROM AFAR: Ohi! Why do you
call me? I am tired. My bones ache. The
gardening day was long; the sun was too
strong. You sit there calling while I cook food
and nurse your sons. Do you need me to nurse
you? Yes, indeed! Whenever Sok calls, Nais
is to attend. You silly old fool! Who fathered
you?

SOK, CALMLY: Nais, please come over
with the baby in your arms. I'll nurse him.
Send the older children away; let them play in
the square.

SHE COMES OVER, SQUATS DOWN,
BUT BEFORE SHE DOES SO, SHE
HANDS THE BABY TO HER HUSBAND.
HE TAKES IT AND NURSES IT.

NAIS, TENDERLY: Now, what is it you
wish to speak with me about?

SOK: Our son, Hab.

NAIS: What about him? Such a strong
and handsome man; still out hunting. What
about him?

SOK: What has a woman to worry about
except her gardens, pots, bags and food. I am
concerned about our son, Hab. He is of
marriageable age. Whom shall we choose for
him?

NAIS, ANNOYED: What a thing to say,
Sok. Taking away the woman's softness! Hab
is a strong, handsome man; he can hunt; he
can make gardens and he can build houses.
Isn't.....?

SOK, CUTTING IN: So you think he is
qualified to marry?

NAIS: Yes, indeed!

SOK: But whom? What woman?

NAIS, ANGERED: Oh, I'm damned. Let
him marry a cassowary; or a frog. Why
worry? The sun and the moon have given him
his spears; all he needs to do is to fish. There
are plenty of fish to catch.

SOK, LOSING PATIENCE: Listen here,
daughter of a serpent! Isn't he your flesh and
blood? Don't you care?

NAIS, EMBARRASSED: Care, indeed!
It's late; I am sorry. Oh, the holy spirits look
with kindness upon our dear son. Hab is his
name; he is in the forest, hunting with two
others.

SCENE 2

FOREST SCENE. THREE HUNTERS
MOVING THROUGH THE FOREST,
CARRYING BOWS AND ARROWS,
PEERING INTO TREE-TOP AND OB-
SERVING THE GROUND FOR ANIMAL
SCENTS AND FOOTPRINTS.

SONG: Stop! I hear dogs barking. (*CUPS HIS EAR AND LISTENS. OTHER TWO DO THE SAME*).

NIN: Where? Could it be a boar?

SONG: Hab, stand still. Keep your arms closed. Nin, go after the dogs; I'll follow you.

NIN: Hab?

HAB: Yes?

NIN: Climb this tree; sit and wait. Song and I will round the animal this way. When it fords the creek, shoot your arrow.

SONG: Make haste; shoot its neck. Stay out of its reach; avoid us and the dogs.

(*NIN AND SONG VANISH. HAB SITS IN THE TREE. THROUGH THE TREES, HE HEARS DOGS BARKING AND HIS HUNTING ASSOCIATES ENCOURAGING THE DOGS TO CHASE THE ANIMAL*).

NIN, SHARPLY: Yeibon! Yeibon! Yeibon! Hunt the animal down.

SONG: This way, this way! Cassowary over here!

(*AFTER A LONG WHILE, NEITHER THE DOGS NOR THE HUNTERS ARE HEARD*).

HAB: Nin! Nini! Nin-e-e-e? Where are you? (*NO REPLY. STILLNESS*). Song? Song? Song-e-e-e? How are you? Where is the dog, Yeibon? Yeibon, Yeibon, Yeibon-e-e-e! (*SILENCE*) Not a sound? Yes, there is; a stray dog, far away. I'll fire an arrow that way. (*HE FIRES AN ARROW*). Yeibon-e-e-e? I am here!

(*A LONELY STRAY-DOG'S HOWL COMES CLOSER, AMIDST THE SOUND OF THOUSANDS OF INSECTS. HE LISTENS IN LONESOME YEARNING*).

HAB: Aune nabuh maigan, aune nabuh maigan, wo nabuh gani Watogig, wo nabuh Ogmatai.

* Sun sinks where, sun sinks where; Oh sinks yonder in Watogik; Oh, sinks yonder in Ogmatai.

SCENE 3

(*IN THE DARK FOREST; HAB IS ALONE*).

HAB: I need two sticks of wood; I must light a fire. There, (*HE BREAKS ONE*), that's one. Now, another. There! That will do. (*HE SITS AND RUBS; SMOKE RISES AND FIRE IGNITES; HE HEARS MOVEMENTS AND STOPS. STANDS UP AND LOOKS AROUND*). Arrow! Bow! No, (*GASPS*); it's my dog. (*THE DOG COMES, WET WITH BLOOD AND WATER*). Sit here. Sleep beside me. (*THEY SLEEP BY THE FIRE, SURROUNDED BY THE JUNGLE AND ITS LIFE. IN THE DISTANCE, DOWNHILL THE SOUND OF RUNNING WATER IS HEARD. THEN, DAWN: WILD FOWL CROW*).

HAB: Get up, Yeibon. Take me to the place where you fought the cassowary. What's become of Nin and Song?

THE DOG WAGS ITS TAIL AND HOWLING, LEADS HAB ON.

HAB SEES BLOOD AND FLIES: Oh, my eyes, my sorrowful eyes; oh, dear Nin; oh, my my Song. (*CRIES THEN PICKS SOME LEAVES AND COVERS THEIR DEAD BODIES*).

HAB TO HIS DOG: Oh, Yeibon, my dog, let's go home; such a sad, sad sight!

THEY MOVE ON IN THE JUNGLE. Suddenly the dog becomes agitated. HAB HOLDS HIM FIRMLY AND LISTENS. NOT FAR OFF IN A SWIMMING HOLE, WOMEN'S VOICES ARE HEARD LAUGHING.

HAB TO HIS DOG: Go and observe. If they are village women, come back and tell me. If not, bark! (*THE DOG GOES OFF THEN RETURNS AGITATED*).

HAB: Oh, hoi, it's Hab! I was lost last night. Who are you? Can I come?

VOICES: It's us! We are we.

AS HAB AND HIS DOG APPROACH THE SCENE, CASSOWARY FIGURES VANISH INTO THE BUSHES, WATER SPLASHING AND FEET DRUMMING.

HAB: Cassowaries! I smell them!

THE DOG BARKS THEN RUNS AFTER THEM FOR A SHORT WHILE. HAB FIRES AN ARROW IN THE SAME DIRECTION AND DISAPPEARS.

SCENE 4

HAB AND DOG APPROACH THE VILLAGE, HAB CRYING, THE DOG HOWLING AS PEOPLE GATHER.

HAB: Nin and Song; both are dead!

VILLAGER: How, Hab, how?

HAB: Cassowaries! (*ALL CRY*)

HAB: This way! (*HE BEATS DRUM OF SORROW*). Follow me! (*HE FIRES AN ARROW IN THE DIRECTION. MEN FOLLOW HIM WHILE WOMEN AND CHILDREN PURSUE CRYING*).

HAB: There! (*POINTING*).

VILLAGERS IN TEARS: Sad, very sad.

A VILLAGER: Collect them. No! Bury them here; it's too sad, too sad.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARRIVE. THEY CRY AND DIG A HOLE AND BURY NIN AND SONG, AS THEY CHANT SONGS OF SORROW.

SCENE 5

HAB, ALONE IN THE JUNGLE: The cassowaries; the pool! HE RUSHES TO THE POOL, CLIMBS A RED BERRY TREE, SITS IN THE BRANCHES AND COVERS HIMSELF WITH THE LEAVES. BY MID-DAY, THERE IS MOVEMENT IN THE BUSHES BELOW AS THE CASSOWARIES APPEAR.

FIRST CASSOWARY TO OTHERS: Here, the fountain of strength! Strip off your skirts; dive in gently.

SECOND CASSOWARY: Those touched by the moon, that side; those untouched, this side.

ALL CASSOWARIES BUT ONE, PU THEIR FEATHER TOGETHER. THE MOST ELEGANT ONE, 'SHE' STILL UNTOUCHED BY THE MOON, LEAVE HER PERFECTLY-TRIMMED SKIRT ALONE, ON ONE SIDE.

FIRST CASSOWARY TO SHE: Take yours further, near that tree trunk, lest it's mixed with ours. Now, dive tenderly.

ALL THE CASSOWARIES DIVE INTO THE POOL, ONE AFTER THE OTHER AND THEY SWIM.

HAB EXCITED: Oh, that unmooned cassowary; her feathers! I must take her feathers.

SWIFTLY AND SILENTLY, HE CLIMBS DOWN, PICKS UP HER FEATHERS AND CLIMBS INTO THE TREE.

THE OLDEST CASSOWARY: Oh, we've refreshed for a long time; it's time to go.

A CASSOWARY: Here's my skirt! (*SHE PUTS IT ON*).

ANOTHER: There's mine! (*PUTS IT ON*).

SHE: Where's mine?

ALL THE CASSOWARIES: Near the tree trunk.

SHE, GOES AND LOOKS: No!

ALL: Look hard! Oh, it's dark, we must go. When you find it, put it on and come.

ALL BUT SHE IN FEMALE FORM VANISH.

SHE, CRYING: Oh my skirt, my lovely skirt; oh, my skirt, my..... (*A RED BERRY HITS HER: SHE LOOKS AROUND BUT CAN SEE NOBODY*). It was here; I put it here. (*ANOTHER BERRY HITS HER SHOULDER. SHE LOOKS UP AND HER EYES MEET HAB'S. HE CLIMBS DOWN AND, FRIGHTENED, SHE STARTS TO RUN*).

HAB: What are you looking for?

SHE IN TEARS: My grass skirt, my precious grass-skirt.

HAB: Who are you?

SHE: I am She.

HAB: Are you alone?

SHE: No! But all my friends are gone.

HAB: What are you, a human being?

SHE: Yes; who are you? A human being?

HAB: Yes. It's dark. Come home with me.

HE STARTS OFF.

SHE: Oh, I can't walk.

HAB: Wait; I'll teach you.

HE SHOWS HER HOW TO WALK AND
THEY GO INTO THE VILLAGE.

HAB FINDING A THICK BUSH: Stay
here and hide; I'll come for you.

HE WALKS INTO THE VILLAGE
SQUARE.

SCENE 6

HAB CARRIES A BURNING TORCH OF
COCONUT LEAVES AS HE GOES INTO
THE HOUSE. HIS MOTHER NAIS AND
HIS FATHER SOK ARE SITTING BY THE
FIRE.

NAIS, ANGRY: Why are you so late?
Aren't you shaken by the recent tragedy?
Now you are late again.

SOK, CALMLY: Now, sit down son. You
must eat some food.

HAB, COLLAPSING: Mother dear, I am
so hungry. When you cook sago, I want two
dishes and when you cook taro, I want two
dishes.

NAIS, SURPRISED: How strange, how
strange! You normally eat so little.

HAB: Yes, indeed, Mum, but now I am
starving. I need to eat a dish and take the
other to bed and eat it before I fall asleep.

HAB EATS A BOWFUL OF SAGO AND
TAKES THE OTHER OUTSIDE. SOON,
HE RETURN WITH IT EMPTY.

NAIS: Hab, my son! An old woman like
me knows a lot about life. There is someone
you take food to. Who is she? Bring her here.

SOK: Yes, indeed son. Fear not; do not be
shy. What's her source?

HAB: Thankyou mother dear; thankyou
father dear.

HE GOES TO THE EDGE OF THE
VILLAGE SQUARE, TAKES SHE BY
THE HANDS AND DANCES BACK TO
THE CENTRAL AREA.

NAIS: Oh, such glorious plumage.

SOK: And makes you a perfect match.

SOK'S ELDEST SON: Let us speedily
decorate her and get her to wed Hab.

NAIS: Here's a necklace; your thin long
neck I decorate. (*THROWS IT OVER HER*)

A GIRL: Here's a grass skirt. Girdle your
thin waist-line. (*SHE FASTENS IT
AROUND HER*).

A BUNCH OF FLOWERS, A DYE, AN
EAR-RING, AN ARMLET, ALL THESE
DECORATIONS ARE ELEGANTLY PUT
ON HER.

SHE STANDING GRACEFULLY: A
complete stranger am I, lost in the jungle.
This good man found me. I thank you for the
honour.

NAIS TO HAB: Who is she? What's her
name?

HAB: Oh, we'll call her Muruk, for in
anger you did say that I could marry a muruk.

NAIS: Fine, fine! Just as beautiful as any
old name.

SOK, CALMLY: Certainly, certainly!
You are now wedded as husband and wife.
Hab my son, take her by your arm to your
house; make her gardens; plant her yams,
and give to us all, children.

NAIS: Stranger indeed she is; teach her
gently all our ways; make her a woman.

SCENE 7.
IN THE VILLAGE.

HAB: You've been with us a long time. Now you have two handsome sons born to you. Stay home with your two sons. I'll be away for sometime. See that the boys are fed.

SHE: Yes, my husband, yes.

HE VANISHES.

SHE: Come here, son. Bring me a broom; I must clean this house.

FIRST SON: Here's the broom mother dear. **HE GIVES IT TO HER; SHE SWEEPS THE FLOOR, WHISTLING AWAY. SHE STOPS SUDDENLY AS SHE SEES SOMETHING ON THE FLOOR; SHE PICKS IT UP AND EXAMINES IT.**

SHE: Oh, cassowary feathers! Oh, my skirt! (*EXCITED*). Come here sons. (*BOTH COME*) You, the younger. Now, see the platform above? Stand on my shoulders. Go into it. Throw down all the parcels you see there.

HE CLIMBS UP AND THROWS ALL THE PARCELS DOWN. SHE OPENS EACH WITH EXCITEMENT. SOME ARE SMOKED-FISH, SOME TOBACCO, SOME FEATHERS OF BIRDS, LIZARD SKINS, ETC. THEN SUDDENLY SHE COMES UPON SOME CASSOWARY FEATHERS,

SHE: Here, here! My skirt! My Spirit Soul! **SHE SMELLS IT. WITH RAPID MOVEMENTS, SHE SNAPS THE ROPES FREE. SHE KISSES HER SKIRT AND PRESSES IT AGAINST HER BOSOM. SHE TRIES IT ON AND AT ONCE TRANSFORMS INTO A CASSOWARY AND RUNS UP AND DOWN THE VILLAGE SQUARE.**

FIRST SON SPINNING A TOP OUTSIDE:
Mother, mother! A cassowary!
HE RUNS INTO THE HOUSE.
SHE COMING INTO THE HOUSE IN HUMAN FORM: Where is the cassowary?

BOTH SONS: It was outside. We saw it indeed.

SCENE 8.
FATHER HAB RETURNS FROM HIS JOURNEY.

SHE: Welcome back, my man. Tell us where you went and what you did.

HAB: I went far away; I attended a feast. Tell me what you did.

SHE: Not much, father. I did a lot of cleaning. The boys spun coconut tops.

TWO SONS: Oh, father dear, we saw a cassowary.

HAB, WORRIED: What? A cassowary? What did it do? Did you see it, Muruk?

SHE: No!

HAB CLIMBS INTO THE ROOF; THE BUNDLE OF CASSOWARY FEATHERS IS GONE. HE COMES DOWN VERY EXCITED.

HAB: Now, Muruk, my wife, what did you do to a bundle of dancing feathers in the roof?

SHE UNDISTURBED: Your dirty house, I cleaned it out; your sons threw dirty bundles down and we burned them

HAB: I'll cane you three; tell the truth! Where is the bundle of feathers?
HE GETS THE CANE AND BEATS THE THREE.

SHE, SOBBING: I tell you the truth; we burned it all as rubbish.
HE BEATS HIS WIFE AGAIN.

HAB: No, you hid it! Show me, show me!
HE CHASES HER OUT.

SCENE 9.
YEARS LATER. MURUK HAS NOW BORNE FOUR MORE CHILDREN FROM HAB. THE WHOLE FAMILY SIT AROUND THE FIRE.

SHE: This mourning feast, when is it to be held?

HAB: Soon. We must prepare food and pigs.

SHE: Can I and the four little ones come too?

HAB: Most certainly not! The two oldest boys and I alone shall go.

SHE: Oh, please.

FOUR LITTLE ONES, HUGGING THEIR FATHER: Oh do father, please!

HAB, REACHING FOR STICK: I said No!! SHE DETERMINED TO SAY THE LAST WORD: Oh Hab, you grey old man, all the mothers and their children will go. They'll all feast and eat. Why should we stay and starve?

HAB: It's time to go. Goodbye! Either I or the boys will bring you sago and pork from time to time.
THEY GO.

SCENE 10

MOTHER AND FOUR YOUNG CHILDREN.

TWO LITTLE GIRLS CRYING: Mother we are hungry.

TWO LITTLE BOYS: Mother, we want pork.

SHE, HOLDING HER BELLY: Yes, I am hungry too. We have had no food for days. Father will come soon. Do I hear him sing?

ASON: Yes, there he is.

FATHER DANCES AS HE COMES.

HAB: Oh, such weary days. No food! No sago! No pigs! Time to go.

SHE: Oh father, but you look fat; you came dancing. Where's our food?

HAB: Wet days, wet days; no food; no pigs.

CHILDREN: But oh, dear father, it was dry, very dry.

HAB: Such dry days; no food; no pigs.

SHE: Oh, I hear drums beat; I hear songs sung.

HAB, LEAVING: Oh, drumming! Oh, singing! I must go.

SHE, AS THOUGHT HITS HER: Listen my children; stay here. When you see a cassowary, do not run away. I shall return with yams.

SHE DISAPPEARS BEHIND THE BUSHES, PUTS ON THE CASSOWARY FEATHERS SHE HAS HIDDEN AND VANISHES INTO THE FOREST. SHE DIGS SOME FOREST YAMS AND TAKES THEM HOME.

SHE: Yams, precious yams. I shall cook them in a pot for you.

SHE COOKS THEM AND CHILDREN BEGIN TO EAT THEM WHEN THEY HEAR FATHER COMING.

HAB, RETURNING: And how are you my tender ones?

CHILDREN: Oh, we eat yams, sweet, sweet yams.

HAB: Who digs my tender yams?

SHE: Dear Hab, they are not your garden yams. We dug them, wild ones from the jungle.

HAB, ANGRY: You dug my young and tender yams. How sad, how sad, I shall go and leave you to eat your forest yams. (GOES)

SHE: Come here, my sons. Go after your father. Discover what he is doing. Return and tell me.

SONS: Yes, mother dear; we cannot stay and starve.

THEY GO AFTER THEIR FATHER AND HIDE BEHIND A TREE.

FIRST SON: Oh, my brother, my brother, see your father? Behind two fat women going into a house.

SECOND SON CRYING: Oh, my brother; hear them feast! And father says 'No food! No food!'

THEY RETURN TO THEIR MOTHER IN THE VILLAGE.

SHE RAISING EYEBROWS: Yes?

BOTH SONS SOBBING: Oh, mother dear, such a cruel, cruel father. He feasts in plenty, both in food and flesh.

THE FIVE PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER AND CRY.

SCENE 11.

SHE IN TEARS: Listen my children. We cannot stay and starve; we shall become birds and fly away. Here, hold these feathers. When a breeze blows into your eyes, stick feathers into your hair and fly away.

SISTERS: Oh mother, no!

TWO SONS REASSURINGLY: Fear not, sisters, fear not! It's better to be birds and eat than to stay and starve at the cruelty of a father.

TWO GIRLS: But what of you, mother? Will you be our mother bird?

SHE: Yes, indeed, but not in your form. You shall be beautiful starlings. I shall be your mother cassowary.

SONS: But shall we meet?

MOTHER: Yes, always when we eat the fruits of the trees.

A BREEZE BLOWS AND THEY TRANSFORM THEMSELVES.

SCENE 12.

FATHER AND TWO SONS, BUSY MAKING SAGO, SOMEWHERE NEAR THE FEASTING VILLAGE. THEY SEE FOUR SWALLOWS FLY VERY LOW.

HAB: Oh, my sons, kill those swallows. ONE SON PICKS UP A STICK AND THROWS IT AT A SWALLOW BUT IT AVOIDS THE STICK AND THE FOUR FLY AROUND THE FATHER AND TWO ELDEST SONS' HEADS.

HAB: Oh, cassowary, there!

THE CASSOWARY STOPS, LIFTS ITS NECK, SEES THE FATHER AND TWO ELDEST SONS, SHAKES ITS HEAD AND VANISHES.

A SON: Oh, cassowary!

SECOND SON: Yes, the same one we saw years ago.

HAB: Why didn't you tell me? Now it's too late. Hurry along; go to the village; see what has happened.

SONS: Yes, father.

THEY PICK UP THEIR BOWS AND ARROWS AND SEARCH THE VILLAGE.

FIRST SON: Yes, she is gone, our mother.

SECOND SON: And our brothers and sisters too!

AS THEY HUNT AROUND FOR ANY SIGNS, A BREEZE BLOWS. THEY SEE FOUR SWALLOWS FLYING VERY LOW AND THEY SMELL CASSOWARY SCENT HANGING IN THE AIR.

FIRST SON: Hurry! Beat the garamut; tell father in sounds that both mother and the four children have changed into birds.

SECOND SON BEATS THE DRUM, CALLS AND CRIES TOO AS HE DOES SO. FATHER COMES HOME, THROWS ALL HIS SPEARS AND TOOLS DOWN AND CRIES.

HAB: I should have burned the feathers; it's all my fault. I feasted and did not care for the mother and the little ones.

FIRST SON: Why did our mother become a cassowary?

HAB: It's a tale of joy and sadness; I found your mother a cassowary; I hid her feathers. She became a woman and married me. Now she has found her feathers and by her powers, she transformed her children too. I was waiting for a day when you'd be old enough so I could tell you; now it's too late; too late!

SCENE 13

SOME DAYS LATER.

A VILLAGER: What became of your wife and the four young children?

HAB: Oh, it's a sad, sad tale. The two boys and the two girls became swallows and my wife became a cassowary. She returned to her own people.

ANOTHER VILLAGER: Oh, the cassowary! Capture her by the tree trunk; cassowaries possess the secrets of yams.

HAB: My sons, will you bring your mother back?

FIRST SON: Yes, father, we shall be back with mother before the sun sinks.

SECOND SON: We shall go before sunrise and by sunset we shall return.

HAB: See that dead tree?

SONS: Yes, father.

FATHER: Cut logs and burn them; carry them in search.

SONS: Yes, father.

HAB: You see that berry tree? Cut the bunches. Throw fruits to your mother to eat; catch her when she does so.

SONS: Yes father.

THEY CUT THE BERRY BUNCHES.

HAB: Now take a kundu and your bamboo flutes; when you are on a hilltop, beat the drum and blow the flutes; call your mother to you.

SCENE 14.

THE TWO BROTHERS MOVE RAPIDLY THROUGH THE FOREST, CALLING, CRYING AND SINGING AS THEY GO. ON A HILLTOP, THE ELDEST BROTHER BEATS THE DRUM AND THE YOUNGER SOUNDS THE FLUTES.

SONS: Mother, mother, muruk, muruk, we are the sons of your flesh, searching for

you; come to us.

FURTHER ON DARKNESS FALLS.

FIRST SON: I am tired.

SECOND SON: Let us rest here. This place is as good as any.

THEY PUT THEIR LOADS DOWN. EACH BROTHER FIRES AN ARROW IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS AND PREPARE TO SLEEP. WHEN THEY ARE SOUND ASLEEP, BOTH DREAM AND SHE COMES TO THEM IN THEIR DREAM AND SPEAKS.

SHE: Beloved sons, you seek me. I didn't have to disappear but for the cruelty of your father. I have come back to my people of the animal kingdom. You cannot get me back in cassowary or in human form. But I shall come to you as yams. Now, go to the bank of a stream. There you will find a berry tree where I eat and live. As for your little brothers and sisters, they too cannot return to you. But they shall be with you as sparrows. They shall sing for you in the mornings and in the evenings.

SHE VANISHES. IT BECOMES COLD, EARLY MORNING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

FIRST SON: Oh, it's cold; blow the fire.

SECOND SON, SITTING UP AND BLOWING THE FIRE: Oh, my dear brother, mother came to us in a dream. Did you see her?

FIRST SON: Yes, she stood there, elegant and beautiful. I wanted to touch her but my hands were heavy.

SECOND SON: Yes, let's go to the river bank to see if we can catch her.

EACH DAY THEY WAIT BUT SHE DOES NOT TURN UP. WHEN THEY ARE GONE, SHE COMES AND EATS THE BERRIES.

FIRST SON: Let's set a trap; it's the only way to catch her.

SECOND SON, SHAKING HEAD: So cruel, my brother, so cruel.

FIRST SON: But remember the dream?

She will come to us as yams; I interpret that as bones. We shall set a trap and capture her, gather her bones and take them home as strength for growing yams.

SECOND SON: Perhaps she will die a natural death? No, set the trap.

THEY DO SO. SEVERAL DAYS GO BY AND THEY FIND THEIR MOTHER-CASSOWARY HAS BEEN TRAPPED.

FIRST SON CRYING: Oh, mother dear, it's not our thought. Now you are caught.

SECOND SON: Build a stretcher out of sticks. We should carry her home and give her a full scale singsing and bury her in dignity.

THE BOYS BUILD A STRETCHER AND TAKE THE BODY OF THEIR MOTHER HOME. AFTER THE TRADITIONAL CEREMONIES, SHE IS BURIED.

HAB: I shall go to my wife's grave and deposit some flowers.

HE GOES THEN CALLS: Oh, yam shoots.

FIRST SON: Yes, indeed, and there shall be more.

HAB: Nurse them till they are grown up. Dig them and give them to all the region that all shall remember it does not pay to be greedy; but still, out of greed, grew yams of such quality for all of us to share. CURTAIN.

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