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Cast of Characters

YOUNG MAN

YOUNG WOMAN

MAN

WOMAN

OLD MAN

OLD WOMAN

SINGERS, DANCERS, MUSICIANS, as desired.

The producers should feel free to interpret, cut, move sections about, and fill out this scenario of primitive poems. For this reason the poems are set forth here with the barest minimum of stage directions.

Time

The Past.

Place

A primitive landscape.

Scene

A space suggesting a primitive landscape. Shapes of wood against which actors can lean. Others they can sit on, stand on, climb, speak from, and so on.

Lighting that can vary a great deal and change quickly from scene to scene.

Music and dance, to support the primitive poems, created by poets who had no written language, and which were often danced to and sung. The music and the dancing should support the poems, and not overshadow the poets, who for the most part should speak their poems and act them out in the many small scenes that form their visions of human life.

The cast is composed of six basic actors, who cover the range from youth to old age. More actors, dancers, and musicians can be added.

The cast can be all Black, all White, all anything. But best of all, perhaps, would be a mixture of races.

Costumes and make up should be used sparingly. The work clothes of the poor will do, plus a few added pieces for special effects.

The actors will be playing primitive but now unsophisticated people, poets who knew what they were doing, and so should play them as simply as honestly as possible, yet with irony and wit.

Above the stage, or around it, or in a program, the sources for these poems may appear. They are:

Greenland, Canada, Alaska, Congo, North/South/East/West Africa, Borneo, Sumatra, Philippines, New Guinea, Madagascar, Bismark Archipelago, Solomon Islands, Fiji Islands, Australia, Polynesia, Samoa, Hawaii, New Zealand, Siberia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, India, China, Malay Peninsula, North/Central/South America.

Acknowledgment

Taken from *The Unwritten Song*:

“Poetry of the Primitive and Traditional Peoples of the World,”
edited and with an introduction by Williard R. Trask

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THE UNWRITTEN SONG

adapted by Romulus Linney

FROM THE BOOK BY WILLARD R. TRASK

1

Poets

(Darkness. Music. Spotlights pick out each of eight.)

MAN. O Sun

You are reborn out of darkness
You come out of deep places
You come out of terrible shadows
You were dead, you are alive again

O Sun

See me, help me
The word of power died in my heart
Let it be reborn again as you
Let it fill me with light as you
Let it soar above the shadows
Let it live!
So shall I be eloquent.

OLD WOMAN. We were born under an evil star, we poets,
When the jackals howl!

We were given thankless trade.
They who are marked with python's excrement,
They are born lucky.
They are the rich.

God created me ill. I had a desire.
I do not know, but if I had stayed
In my mother's belly, it would be over and done with.
Crafts are dealt out.

I was sounds asleep.
I woke—someone calls me:
"You're asleep, Mugala! Come out here and see
How the ground is ringing!"

YOUNG WOMAN. It is not for the meat
But for the sport of it that we hunt.
If you think we are out for the meat,
We will go back!
Meat is something you find at home or at the butcher's.

YOUNG MAN. In times past lute and drum
 were played together for dancing.
 Now only I can play the lute to my story-telling.
 I am a young man,
 my lute is beautiful,
 because of my lute I have planted no crop,
 because of my lute I have nothing to eat.

YOUNG WOMAN. (*Dancing:*) We are the end,
 We are meningitis,
 We are all the other illnesses,
 We own the bit of earth behind the hut,
 Laughing one, there is no cure for this illness,
 Reveller, there is no rejoicing without us.

WOMAN. In the time when Dendid created all things,
 He created the sun,
 And the sun is born, and dies, and comes again;
 He created the moon,
 And the moon is born, and dies, and comes again;
 He created the star,
 And the star is born, and dies, and comes again,
 He created man,
 And man is born, and dies, and never comes again.

OLD MAN. I'll think of a spirit boat,
 I'll go and dance,
 Where the waves break,
 Where the foam swirls,
 I'll gather the sea weed,
 And put it on my head;
 And my boat is a spirit boat
 Returned from the sea.
 I'll think of a spirit boat,
 I'll go and dance.

2

Dancers

(*Bright lights. Music.*)

MAN. The fish goes—

ALL. Hip!

MAN. The bird goes—

ALL. Viss!

MAN. The monkey goes—

ALL. Gnan!

YOUNG MAN. I jump to the left,
I jump to the right,
I'm being the fish
That slips through the water, that slips,
That twists, that springs!

ALL. Everything lives, everything dances, everything chirps.

MAN. The fish—

ALL. Hip!

MAN. The bird—

ALL. Viss!

MAN. The monkey—

ALL. Gnan!

YOUNG WOMAN. The bird flies away,
Flies, flies, flies,
Goes, comes back, passes,
Rises, floats, swoops,
I'm being the bird.

ALL. Everything lives, everything dances, everything chirps.

MAN. The fish—

ALL. Hip!

MAN. The bird—

ALL. Viss!

MAN. The monkey—

ALL. Gnan!

OLD MAN. The monkey—from branch to branch
He runs, hops, jumps,
With his wife and his brat,
His mouth stuffed full, his tail in the air.
Here's the monkey, here's the monkey!

ALL. Every thing lives, everything dances, everything chirps!

MAN. The fish—

ALL. Hip!

MAN. The bird—

ALL. Viss!

MAN. The monkey—

ALL. Gnan!

Everything lives! Everything dances! Everything chirps!

3

Slaves

(Pools of light. People moving about slowly, listlessly. Standing. Waiting.)

OLD MAN. The forest in vast, the wind is right.

Forward the tribe, bow on arm!

This way, that way, that way and this.

A pig! Who kills the pig?

The Pigmy. But who'll eat it? Poor Pigmy!

Still, cut it up: you'll get the entrails to chew on.

Wham! an elephant down!

Who killed it? The Pigmy.

Who'll get its fine tusks? Poor Pigmy!

Still, kill it: they'll leave you its tail.

Without a house, like the monkeys,

Who gathers honey? The pigmy.

And who guzzles it and gets fat? Poor Pigmy!

Still, bring it down: they'll leave you the wax.

The Whites have come here, kind Whites.

Who is dancing? The Pigmy.

But who'll smoke his tobacco? Poor Pigmy!

Still, sit down, and hold out your hand!

YOUNG MAN. Even if I am out in a pouring rain and get soaked,

I will not stop in at the missionary's house.

He is a liar—we have caught him at it:

He says: "I speak God's word." He lies.

OLD WOMAN. I will tell you a terrible truth, aaa!

I've seen a girl at Tamatava,

She had her mouth eaten.

It had been devoured by a vasaha,
Her white lover.
I've seen another girl at Fenerive,
With a big wound instead of a breast:
Her white lover had devoured her breast, aaa!

The vasaha does not make love like other men, aaa!
When he makes love,
He slavers and bites like a dog.
Go to him, Benachehina,
And return without a mouth!
Go to him, Rasoa,
And return without a breast!
D'you know why the vasaha has a golden tooth?
The dog barks before he bites,
The vasaha bites with his golden tooth
Before he makes love.
A calf sucks the milk of a cow,
The vasaha sucks blood from a girl's mouth!
Do you believe me, aaa?

MAN. The day they taught us *bonsoir*,
We got a hit on the jaw,
We got our bellyful of prisons and locks.

OLD MAN. They day they taught us *bonjour*,
We got a hit on the nose,
All blessings ended for us.

YOUNG MAN. The day they taught us *merci*,
We got a hit on the throat.
A sheep inspires more fear than we do.

OLD MAN. The day they taught us *cochon*,
A dog's honor stood higher than ours.
The peasant bought himself a mule.

YOUNG MAN. The day they taught us *le frere*,
We got a hit on the knee.
We walk in shame up to our necks.

MAN. The day they taught us *diable*,
We got a beating that drove us mad.
We have become carriers of shit.

4

Lovers

YOUNG MAN. Hola, pretty girl!
 Your silver ring is beautiful.
 You have beautiful arms and beautiful feet,
 You are pretty,
 And how I would like to idle with you in the field,
 At the spring, or anywhere!
 How I would enjoy it if I could catch you and hold you
 By your skirt or your tunic,
 So that I could talk with you!
 For you are pretty.
 Why are your breasts prettier than the breasts of other girls?
 Your back is flexible, your eyes are bright,
 How beautiful you are!
 May I meet you at a festival, so I can sleep with you!

OLD MAN.

First, I admire you for your hair dressed like a rooster's tail.
 Second, I love you because you speak so charmingly.
 Third, I love you for your features, which are sweet to look at.
 Fourth, I love you for your clothes, which are all the same color.
 Fifth, I love you because you have pins in your hair, and a Chinese
 fan in your hand.
 Sixth, I love you because your hair is green.
 Seventh, I love you because your parents brought you into this world.
 Eighth, I love you because your Phoenix eyes look at me most lovingly.
 Ninth, I love you because we are going to be married and live together.
 Tenth, I love you because you will not marry anyone but me.

MAN.

Desire for a woman took hold of me in the night oo like madness
 Desire for a woman took hold of me in the night oo like madness
 Desire for a woman took hold of me in the night oo like madness
 Desire for a woman took hold of me in the night oo like madness

YOUNG GIRL. What you say to me comes from your lips,
 In your heart, I know, there is no love.

OLD WOMAN. You desire vainly,
 that I seek you
 the reason is
 I come
 to see your younger brother

WOMAN. I will not, I will not have him because he is too old.

His head and shoulders are good looking but
I will not have him anyway because he is too old.

* *

OLD WOMAN. Under the bushes
Which two are struggling?
The girl has caught his chest
The boy is holding her breasts
Boy and girl, they rock together.

YOUNG MAN. The first time
And she sobbed and sobbed
But in three days
She smiled and smiled

YOUNG WOMAN. Under a tree by the rock
We spread a cloth and loved each other
Boy, it may only be for now
It may only be today.

OLD WOMAN. Like a creeper falling
And water
Swilling from a cup
The friend went quickly away.

YOUNG WOMAN. Friend we have left going

YOUNG MAN. To the rice field in the jungle

YOUNG WOMAN. They have given you a wife
The have found for me a husband

YOUNG MAN. O my friend, when we meet now

YOUNG GIRL. We must never flutter our eyebrows

YOUNG MAN. Or show the teeth in our mouths.

* *

MAN.

O girl, let us live in sport and laughter, for you are my starling.

O girl, we will live to see many buffaloes killed,
We will see many a forest grow again, my starling.

O girl, you will go to catch crabs and fish while I lie on the sindobor
at ease, for you are my starling.

O girl, let us lie together on the great rocks Tumlaida, Tirada and
Usame, for you are my starling.

Let us go to the meeting place of the Sunadak and Bunadak and
 drinks its water from a single cup, for you are my starling.
 Let us go to Budingber, Pesangber, Pasangre, Talang and Marangre,
 where the rocks make music as of drums.
 Let us offer leaves on the runnukbor-sindibor, for you are my starling.
 Let us walk together on the paths Gugusing and Ogiksing, for you
 are my starling.
 O girl of Andra, Sisa and Sampe, you are my starling.
 Come, let me give you some rice-beer and tobacco
 And we will pass our time alone in the forest.
 Holding your shoulders, twisting your breasts,
 I will have you on my knees.
 I will have you in the forest where I can embrace you shamelessly

WOMAN. A heart to hate you
 Is as far away as the moon.
 A heart to love you
 Is as close by as the door.

* *

YOUNG WOMAN. You are no common or useless potion.
 You were given to me by Kumang and Lulong Bintang,
 By the mother of Abang and Sapantang Mayang,
 By Puyu, by Kechu.
 Now I smoke you with menyan, with coconut milk,
 With flowers, with scented things.
 Be not barren or impotent.
 Fly like a bird, like a mynah,
 Like the rhinoceros hornbill, like the black and white hornbill.
 Be quick as the lightning flashes before the face of night.
 Be swift as the bullet made of lead.
 Indeed you are no useless or common philtre,
 You are a philtre of direct aim, a philtre of the spirits.
 You are more deadly than the tuba root that has been dug up,
 You are more fatal than the upas poison taken from the topmost
 branch of a neighboring tree,
 You are more rancid than Kapayang fruit soaked for one morning.
 I am like this because I have become mad, and I am enamoured.
 My heart is distressed, sunk down and will not forget Jawa.
 He does not pity or love me,
 Because there are those who prevent and forbid him.
 I ask you to settle on and to sink into Jawa,
 Cause him to be unsettled, cause him to be in suspense,
 Cause him to be anxious, cause him to be restless,

Cause him to be mad, cause him to be enamoured,
Cause him not to sit down, cause him not to sleep,
Cause him not to eat, cause him not to cook,
Cause him to be dispirited, cause him to be anxious,
Cause him to be vexed, cause him to blame himself,
Cause him not to work on his farm, cause him not to weed it,
Cause him to be stupid, cause him to be foolish,
Cause him to weep, cause him to cry out loud.
Now from seven days from this cause him to come to my room and
wed me.

* *

WOMAN. It is all over
what we did in the bush together as lovers.

MAN. It was only once
that you came to me.

WOMAN. No one must know that we are lovers.

MAN. We will not tell it!

WOMAN. Lower your voice
My lover, lower your voice,
watch my lips,
then I will tell you the thoughts I had
when I was little.

MAN. My lover
I will do as you wish
then it will be well.

WOMAN. Kiss me!
He will not know,
if he know he would go to the officials!
Then they will come and beat you beside me.
Let us separate.
Only when the bell
rings there
is our time for meeting.
And when it rings in my thoughts
I go mad.
My leg is in his hand,
it is held fast there,
and he keeps me by talking,
and I know you are in the grass-field,
at the meeting place.

MAN. One day in the morning
I will come from the west
to the grass-field,
to the head of the brook.
I will climb down, I will climb up.

WOMAN. It is impossible now that I should leave you.
And I seek,
seek, seek,
around our meeting place
and I hear the click of your footsteps.
I beg you,
lie with me, pour out your semen.

MAN. You stay, you are waiting!
If I could send you
a go-between!

WOMAN. I stay, I am tired.
I am waiting.
But you have not come yet and I stand up
and I think of what you have said to me.

* *

(*YOUNG WOMAN dances. OLD MAN watches.*)

OLD MAN. She burst into the dance.
None of us knows her name.
A silver amulet
Swings between her breasts.
She sprang into the dance,
Rings tinkling at her ankles,
Silver bracelets.
For her I sold
An apple orchard.
She burst into the dance
Her hair streamed loose.
For her I sold
A field of olive trees.
She sprang into the dance,
Her necklace of pearls glittered.
For her I sold
My grove of fig trees.
She sprang into the dance,
With a flower of a smile.
For her I sold
All my orange-trees.

* *

YOUNG WOMAN. Shall I fish?
Shall I not fish?
Yes, I will fish,
Will have fish to cook.

YOUNG MAN. Shall I till a field?
Shall I not till a field?
Yes, I will work.
Then I will have a field to cultivate.

YOUNG WOMAN. Shall I marry?
Shall I not marry?
Yes, I will marry.
Then I will have a son to carry.

YOUNG MAN. Shall I marry?
Shall I not marry?
Yes, I will marry.
Then I will have a daughter to carry.

YOUNG WOMAN. To carry around on my back,
To take around on my shoulder,
I will rock a son in my arms,
So that his father will laugh, too.

YOUNG MAN. To carry around on my back,
To take around on my shoulder,
I will rock a daughter in my arms
So that her mother will laugh, too.

* *

WOMAN. I thought you loved me,
Yet I am wasting my time on you.
I thought we would be parted only by death,
But today you have disappointed me.
You will never be anything.
You are a disgrace, worthless and unreliable.
Bring my things. I will put them in my pillow.
You take yours and put them under your armpit.
You deceived me.

5

Hunters

(Darkness. Single light on YOUNG MAN, with canoe paddle.)

YOUNG MAN. Behold my paddle!
 It is laid by the canoe-side,
 Held close to the canoe-side.
 Now, it's raised on high—the paddle!
 Poised for the plunge—the paddle!
 Now, we spring forward!
 Now, it leaps and flashes—the paddle!
 It quivers like a bird's wing,
 This paddle of mine!
 Ha! The quick thrust in,
 The backward sweep!
 See! I raise on high
 The handle of my paddle!
 The swishing, the swirling eddies,
 The boiling white wake
 And the spray that flies from my paddle!
 Lift up
 The paddle to the sky above,
 To the great expanse above.
 There before us lies our ocean-path,
 The path of strife and tumult,
 The pathway of our chief,
 The danger-road of this crew,
 Tis the road of the Great-Sky-Above-Us!
 Here is my paddle,
 To the heavens I raise it!

**

(Wind. Waves. Slow morning light.)

MAN. And I thought over again
 My small adventures
 As with a shore-wind I drifted out
 In my kayak
 And though I was in danger.
 My fears,
 Those small ones
 That I thought so big

For all the vital things
I had to get and reach.

And yet
There is only
One great thing.
The only thing:
To live to see in huts and on journeys
The great day that dawns
And the light that fills the world.

**

(Drums. Light fades.)

YOUNG MAN. On the weeping forest, under the evening wind,
Black night has lain down joyfully.

(MAN enters, with spear, hunting.)

MAN. In the sky the stars have fled, trembling,
Fireflies that shine vaguely, and go out.

OLD MAN. Up there, the moon is dark,
Its white light has gone out.
Its spirits are wandering.
Elephant hunter, take your spear!

ALL. Elephant hunter, take your spear!

YOUNG MAN. In the frightened forest the tree sleeps, leaves are dead,
Monkey's have shut their eyes, hanging high in the branches

MAN. Antelopes slip along with silent steps,
Crop the fresh grass, prick up their ears, intent.

OLD MAN. Raise their heads and listen, startled.
The cicada falls silent, shutting in its rasping song.
Elephant hunter, take your spear!

ALL. Elephant hunter, take your spear!

YOUNG MAN. In the forest lashed by a great rain,
Father Elephant, walks heavily, *bau, bau,*

MAN. At ease and fearless, sure of his strength,
Father Elephant, whom none can overcome

OLD MAN. Breaking through the forest, he stops, starts off again.
He eats, trumpets, knocks down trees, and seeks his mate.
Elephant hunter, take your bow!

ALL. Elephant hunter, take your bow!

YOUNG MAN. In the forest through which no man except you goes,
Hunter, lift up your heart, slip, run, jump, walk!

MAN. Meat is before you, the huge mass of meat,
The meat that walks like a hill

OLD MAN. The meat that makes the heart glad,
The meat that will roast at your fire

YOUNG MAN. The meat into which your teeth sink

OLD MAN. The fire red meat and the blood that is drunk smoking!
Elephant hunter, take your bow!

ALL. *Yo-ye*, elephant hunter, take your bow!
Yo-ye, elephant hunter, take your bow!

6

Paupers

MAN. In summer they even make the dust rise;
In winter they even trample the mud!
Poverty is a terrible disease.
It penetrates the sides,
It bends the vertebrae,
it dresses one in rags,
It makes people stupid;
It makes every desire remain in the breast;
Those who are long, it shortens;
Those who are short it destroys wholly.
Not even the mother that has borne the poor man loves him any
longer!
Not even the father who has begotten him any longer esteems him!

7

Beggars

YOUNG MAN. Fear was about me
In my little house
Remaining was intolerable.

Hungry and starving
I staggered over land
For ever stumbling forwards.

At "the little musk-ox lake"
The trout made fun of me.
I got no bite.

Onward then I toiled
To "the young man's broad"
I had caught salmon there once.

I did so wish to see
Swimming caribou or fish in a lake.
That joy was my one wish.

My thought ended in nothing.
It was like a line
That all runs out.

Would I ever, I wondered,
Have firm ground to stand on?
Magic words I mumbled all the way.

8

Drunks

MAN. Let us sing the song of the bottle, aaa!
Its belly is clear like water,
But you can't see its heart.
Its mouth is on top of its head, aaa!
Listen, listen, o men!
When put in water, a bottle breathes quickly,
Like a drowning man.
The vasahas fill it with rum
Up to its shoulders
And then bring it to us.
This is the song of the bottle, aaa!

OLD MAN. If I had money
I should but drinks to drink,
Let all of you hear—O.
To have a pleasant thought,
Yes, yes, yes.
He who has money

And hoards all for the future
 Of him I do not think well.
 In the coffers of the houses of the dead are many drinks.
 Had he for whom this was bought drunk of it?
 No, no, no, no.
 Seller of drinks, give me drinks to drink
 For today my head is turning.
 I see it: There is no pleasure for the dead.
 I say: What you eat in this world, the pleasure of it foes with you.
 I say: The wives you had, the pleasure you had of them goes with
 you.
 I say: The meat you ate, the pleasure of it goes with you
 I say: The pipe you smoked, the pleasure of it goes with you.
 I say: The drinks you drank, the pleasure of them goes with you.

MAN. May the days kill me, that I perish!
 May the years kill me, that I perish!
 I call out, "Woe!"
 I call the days!
 Years—I do not believe that I shall live them.
 Days—I do not believe that I shall live them.
 Any measure of time—I do not believe that I shall live it.

(Enter YOUNG MAN. He is laughing, and cannot stop.)

YOUNG MAN. Ha ha ha ha!
 Listen to this!
 If I could be an ox—
 A big ox, a beautiful ox—
 Beautiful but stubborn,
 Well, the merchant would buy me,
 He would buy me and then slaughter me,
 He would spread my skin
 Ha ha ha ha
 And he would bring me to market.
 Coarse women would bargain for me.
 But a beautiful girl I know would buy me.
 She would take me home,
 To a beautiful room in her beautiful house.
 Ha ha ha ha
 She would crush perfumes for me,
 I would spend the morning rolled up around her,
 I would spend the afternoon rolled up around her,
 Ha ha ha ha
 I would spend the night rolled up around her.
 And when her husband would say,
 "It's only a dead skin!"

How I would love her!
Ha ha ha ha
How I would love her!

9

Musicians

(YOUNG MAN again, sober, smiling. He listens to the sound of a violin.)

YOUNG MAN. I humbly adore the acts of the Most High
Who has given the violin more than a soul
So that when it plays, men fall silent
And their hands reach for their veils
To draw them down and hide their emotion.
The griefs of love would soon have put me in the grave,
But by the power of the violin
God has restored me to life.

10

Brides & Grooms

(Brightly colored light. People standing in formal patterns.)

YOUNG GIRL. *A lalla ia lalla! a lalla buiani!*

I will never forgive my mother, who painted me for this wedding!

I will never forgive my father, who married me to this husband.

He married me to a widower, so that it is sin for me to be with a
young man.

He is giving me to an old man, whose neck-veins stand out like
knotted strings.

His beard is like a handful of alfalfa.

His belly is like the bottom of a grain sack.

YOUNG MAN. The words began as if a cannon had been fired.

The people are hurrying by as if driven by the devil.

Be content with your lot.

Do no fear, do not draw back—

The word is spoken as if a cannon had been fired.

OLD MAN. Two smoothly voluptuous and comely bodies

Have been united in wedlock upon this day,

To be bedded together this first night,
 Now tightly intertwined, like a warrior's topknot
 Pierced by a thorn.
 The rounded cheeks of your buttocks, O fortunate wife,
 Have been tattooed red, red as the ripe mountain apple,
 And you hair is deeply waved.
 Your teeth are as white as the heron.
 Your whole body is covered with dotted designs.
 How rapturous are the joys of marriage!

MAN. Do not trample down the furrows, little gazelle.
 I am ready now to show you
 The path you do not know.

WOMAN. At the core of my being, in the pale light of early dawn,
 Your spear advanced in flaming ardor.
 Now it has withdrawn.
 Our bodies are like tiny leaved mint in fragrance.
 They have been anointed with the sweet scented sap of the wild
 ginger root.
 Deep is our rapture in our secret retreat.

YOUNG WOMAN. Mother, your daughter is sad,
 You have been gone for three days;
 Mother, come back, come back,
 Mother, I think of you.

Mother, your daughter is sad;
 The tree dies, the root lives.
 The root dies, the leaf withers:
 Mother, your daughter is sad.

My father, marrying his daughter,
 Obtained a jar of wine
 Of which I shall not taste;
 Your daughter is always sad.

My mother, marrying her daughter,
 Obtained a basket of rice
 Of which I shall not eat;
 Your daughter is always sad.

Mother, your daughter is sad,
 Sad, I go to the fields.
 In the fields there is grass;
 Grass has grass for company.

Mother, your daughter is sad,
 Your daughter has no friend;

Always thinking,
Her heart is sad.

11

Critics

OLD WOMAN. That man came shouting, "I am a chief!"
Certainly he looks lazy enough for the title.
He also has the appetite of a king's son,
And a very royal waddle.
But he shouts, "I am a chief!"
Therefore I know he is not one.

12

Warriors

(Drums. Harsh light.)

YOUNG MAN. We are poured on the enemy like a mighty torrent:
We are poured like a river flooding when rain is in the mountains.
The water hisses down the sands, swirling, exultant, and the tree
that stood in its path is torn up quivering.
We are poured on the enemy and they are bewildered.
They look this way and that seeking escape, but out spears fall
thickly about them.

**

MAN. O the saltness of my mouth
In drinking the liquid brains of Nuku
Whence welled up his wrath!
His ears which heard deliberations!
Headlong into my stomach he goes!
My teeth shall devour him!
His whole tribe shall be
My sweet morsel to finish with! E!

**

YOUNG MAN. They look this way and that for deliverance
 But they cannot escape us.
 The avengers, the great killers.
 God of our fathers, guide our spears,
 Our spears which thy lilac has touched.

**

OLD MAN. (*Holding up an enemy's head:*) Farewell e koro,
 Where are you friends?
 Let them all see you
 Standing over Waiwhetu.

Bare your lips, koro.
 Well may you grin,
 But be careful, lest your feet
 Bring you back too soon.

I have no more blood
 For you to drink.
 I am done, I can no longer
 Honor your great name.

Who will mourn,
 Who will sing your fame now
 To the world?

Perhaps the mist that sits
 On Tironhanga,
 Perhaps the mist
 Gathering on Kaihinu.
 Yes.

Better leave it at that, koro.

YOUNG MAN. Help us, high Spirit. Slay with us!
 Let death come to their ranks,
 Let their villages be desolate,
 Let us return rejoicing.
 God of our fathers, guide our spears!
 Our spears which thy lilac has touched!

13

Mothers

(Soft light. Gentle music.)

WOMAN. My heart is joyful,
My heart flies away, singing,
Under the trees of the forest,
Forest our home and our mother,
In my net I have caught
A little bird.
My heart is caught in the net,
In the net with the bird.

YOUNG GIRL. O Mother, do not again give me a woman's birth
From the beginning there is great suffering for women
The first month is over, Mother
The blood gathers drop by drop
The second month is over, Mother
In the shadow of the third month
My body is yellow as haldi
And I long for buttermilk
My hands and feet are heavy as earth
I cannot bear the sun
O Mother, do not again give me a woman's birth!

OLD WOMAN. Slowly the unborn babe distends life's pathway,
torn by the child's head;
Now the living child,
long cherished by the mother beneath her heart,
Fills the gate way of life.

There is room to pass safely through;
The child slips downward,
It becomes visible,
It bursts into the light of day,
The waters of childbirth flow away.

WOMAN. Speak to me, child of my heart.
Speak to me with your eyes, your round, laughing-eyes,
Wet and shining as Lupeyo's bull-calf.
Speak to me, little one,
Clutching my breast with your hand,
So strong and firm for all its littleness.
It will be the hand of a warrior, my son,
A hand that will gladden your father.

See how eagerly it fastens on me:
 It thinks already of a spear:
 It quivers as at the throwing of a spear.
 O son, you will have a warrior's name and be a leader of men.
 And your sons, and your sons' sons, will remember you long after
 you have slipped into the darkness.
 But I, I shall always remember your hand clutching me so.
 I shall recall how you lay in my arms,
 And looked at me so, and so,
 And how your tiny hands played with my bosom.
 And when they name you great warrior, then will my eyes be wet
 with remembering.

So how shall we name you, little one?
 Are you your father's father, or his brother, or yet another?
 Whose spirit is it that is in you, little warrior?
 Whose spear-hand tightens round my breast?
 Who lives in you and quickens to life, like last year's melon seed?
 Are you silent, then?
 But your eyes are thinking, thinking, and glowing like the eyes of a
 leopard in a thicket.
 Well, let be.
 At the day of naming you will tell us.

O my child, now indeed I am happy.
 Now indeed I am a wife.
 No more a bride, but a Mother-of-one.
 Be splendid and magnificent, child of desire.
 Be proud, as I am proud.
 Be happy, as I am happy.
 Be loved, as now I am loved.
 Child, child, child, love I have had from my man.
 But now, only now, have I the fullness of love.
 Now, only now, am I his wife and the mother of his first-born.
 His soul is safe in your keeping, my child, and it was I, I, I, who have
 made you.
 Therefore am I loved.
 Therefore am I happy.
 Therefore am I a wife.
 Therefore have I great honour.

You will tend his shrine when he is gone.
 With sacrifice and oblation you will recall his name year by year
 He will live in your prayers, my child,
 And there will be no more death for him, but everlasting life spring-
 ing from your loins.

You are his shield and spear, his hope and redemption from the dead.
Through you he will be reborn, as the saplings in the Spring.
And I, I am the mother of his first-born.
Sleep, child of beauty and courage and fulfillment, sleep.
I am content.

14

Winds

(Flashing light. Dancers, one with mask.)

MAN. Trees with weak roots

ALL. I will strike, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

OLD WOMAN. Haycocks built today

ALL. I will scatter, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

YOUNG MAN. Stacks of leaves

ALL. I will soak through, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

WOMAN. Houses badly roofed

ALL. I will destroy, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

YOUNG WOMAN. Hay piled in sheds

ALL. I will tear apart, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

OLD MAN. Fires in the road

ALL. I will set flaring, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

OLD WOMAN. The worthless slug-a-bed

ALL. I will wake, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

MAN. The farmer who does not think

ALL. I will make to think, I the wind.
I will roar, I will whistle.

15

Suicides

(Candlelight. One drum, very slowly.)

(Enter YOUNG MAN and YOUNG GIRL together, calm, very formal.)

YOUNG MAN. We have come a long way.
 Our feet are aching.
 Here at the alpine meadow we have arrived.
 We two.
 I myself,
 Who was born in that home,
 The golden threshold of my home
 Over it I stepped when I came out.
 I myself,
 My hand I put upon my heart,
 And once more I ponder
 My father who brought me up:
 His heart is hard and stern.
 My mother who brought me up:
 Her heart is soft and kind.
 I myself,
 Golden tears I shed,
 And they dropped on the ground,
 The ground alone saw them.
 My mother who gave me birth
 She did not see them.
 I indeed am he
 Whose heart was filled with sadness.
 We two,
 This time indeed
 We cannot retract our steps.
 Our tears made a road
 And let us up on high.
 I love you dearly girl.
 In your golden heart,
 Whatever you wish to say,
 You must tell me now.

YOUNG WOMAN. I love you my dear boy
 Why,
 You were born in that home
 Of your mother who gave you birth.
 You said her heart was kind,

You thought of your mother,
And your heart was it not sad?
Die all must, there is no escape.
So in your heart you must not be sad.
We two,
We will always walk together,
Holding our hands,
The boy's foot raised,
The girl's foot put down,
This we can do.
In death, in life, one road we travel,
We two.
If we quickly die,
We will be earlier reborn.
If we are early reborn.
We will the earlier die.
You are not the only man,
I am not the only girl
Under all the heavens.
Such rule there is,
You, my passionate boy, You must not be sad at heart,
This golden evening.
My boy you were born in that small village,
Those people do not like us,
Will search for you my boy,
As they will search for me,
This golden evening.
I love you my boy,
Do not show remorse
Think neither left nor right,
Do not be worried.
The yellow poison, the poison oil,
Come, let us drink a little.
To sleep, come, let us sleep.
My boy, why do you ponder?
Tell me?

YOUNG MAN. I indeed
Think left and right.
But of such I am not thinking now.
In winter the owl is calling,
It is not the custom,
But let us call it custom to commit *yu-vu*,
There would still be lots to say,
Of words there is no end.

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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