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Script Excerpt

HUMANS REMAIN

by

Robin Rice

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Humans Remain

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Humans Remain

By

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The White Cliff Kinfolk have isolated themselves on a mountain in northern New Jersey for over 200 years. Their peaceful lifestyle is threatened by disease, loss of leadership and a "foreigner" who wants to help.

WHEN ELEPHANTS FIGHT IT'S THE GRASS THAT SUFFERS. -ancient African proverb

For all those who were lost
For all those who were stolen
For all those who were left behind
For all those who are not forgotten.
-From the African Burial Ground National Monument

CHARACTERS**

ACTOR 1: IBANNI...19. Free spirit. Exotically beautiful. Fiercely independent.
ACTOR 2: PETER...22. Caucasian. Yuppie. Clean-cut.
ACTOR 3: CATALINA...102. Leader of Kinfolk. Majestic.
ACTOR 4: FERN... 50. Self-proclaimed caretaker. Controlling.
ACTOR 5: TINY... 23. Very large. Vulnerable. Poetic.
ACTOR 6: LACEY...15. Surging sexuality. All or nothing.
ACTOR 7: SIS...17. Salt of the earth. Ibanni's sister.
HARD HAT 1...New Yorker.
HARD HAT 2...New Yorker

DANCER: SPIRIT OF AFRICA...Mature female. Non-speaking.

TV ANNOUNCER voiceover.

TIME: April, 1991.
PLACE: A forest in the Ramapo Mountains in northern New Jersey.
**NOTES: Characters

- All except Peter are members of a mixed-race, extended family (African-American/Jamaican/Native American/ Caucasian). Skin color varies widely. Kinfolk accent reflects Jamaican rhythms more than southern U.S.

- Hard Hats may be played by additional actors if desired, in which case they may be any ethnicity. More African dancers may be added.

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STAGING

- Continuous action. Crossfade from scene to scene. No blackouts unless in the script. Intermission is optional.

- Suggested: Stage bare except for two platforms with ramps. A low platform may represent all interiors. An elevated platform with steep ramp may represent the cliff.

SCRIPT

- (( )) indicates a beat, transition, shift to a different gear where it may not be clear in the script.

- / is a point at which the next speaker overlaps.

- at the end of a line means next speaker interrupts.

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ACT I. Humans

Scene 1. Ibanni Offers Hope

AT RISE: Pre-dawn. Base of a mountain. SOUND: sports car speeds on a country road. IBANNI enters, barefoot, coming down the mountain for the first time in her life. She steps to the middle of the road. Simultaneously: HEADLIGHTS blind her; SQUEAL of brakes; HORN. Car swerves, barely misses her. MOTOR off; DOOR opens, slams shut. PETER enters.

PETER: Shit! Crap! Holy -- ! Get out of the -- ! (*a discovery*)
Christ. You've got the right idea. (*He sits in the middle of the road.*) Next thing plows around the corner -- splat! End it all. Beautiful.
IBANNI: Someting coming. Get out of the road.
PETER:A Mack truck with any luck.
IBANNI: Git! Over to the side.
PETER: Nah. This is perfect. I'm a perfect target.

> *(SOUND: car approaching. She drags him to the side of the road, narrowly escaping the car [HEADLIGHTS, HORN, MOTOR fades].)*

PETER: Jesus you're an Amazon!
IBANNI: Come wit me.
PETER: Now I'm indebted to you for saving my life? Thanks for nothing.
IBANNI: I am Ibanni. I will give you hope.

Scene 2. The Mountain

A clearing high on the mountain. Dawn. Circle of logs surrounds a fire pit. A high platform is a cliff rising to one side. A ramp is a path up the cliff to a lookout. Another platform represents a long building with sod roof. FERN, wearing slippers, stirs a pot over the fire. A string of shells and glass beads encircles ancient CATALINA's hips. On her feet are very old moccasins. She is finishing a bowl of oatmeal. A raven CAWS once.

FERN: Howdy, Granpa Raven. He say "howdy."
CATALINA: He say "caw."
FERN: "Howdy" the exact word out his beak.
CATALINA: You getting powers, fern?
FERN: I is. (*CATALINA slowly gets to her feet*.) Oatmeal done?
CATALINA: Sun up.

> (*Large, muscular TINY enters from the forest with split wood, axe, yellow violet, work boots caked with mud*.)

TINY: Ah-kobo, Miz Catalina!
CATALINA: Ah-kobo, Eustaba.
TINY: Ah-kobo, Auntie Fern!

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FERN: My haint we chipper.
TINY: (*joyous, playful whisper*:) Banni 'round?
FERN: Haint seen her.

(*CATALINA is slowly crossing to the path leading up the cliff to the lookout*.)

TINY: Got all-fire, super-dooper news.
FERN: You're gone tell me sure.
TINY: Jist now. Watching sprouts grow in the woods -- tinks I did. Lack of rain, sprouts fade. Too much, they flop over. Bear step on 'em. Groundhog nip they head off. Still brave sprouts stretch for the sun. Say to myself: Goldurnit, Tiny Oromeda! You lacking courage them little sprouts has got! Made a decision then and there. Tonight I's popping the question! *(clears throat*)

Gots to strike while fire's a'blazin -
Blazin like sun heats grape to raisin;
Blazin wit courage I haint afore got -
Don't ask tonight, I might's well rot.

That jist come to me. Banni say "yes" don't you tink?
FERN: She better.
CATALINA: (*calling over shoulder*:) She can be wife and Watcher too.
TINY: You's the Watcher.
CATALINA: Not forever.
FERN: I will take over when need be.
CATALINA: (*calls*) You haint got powers, Fern.
FERN: More than Ibanni. Tiny, you and Banni getting hitched first ting tomorrow guaranteed. Go hoist Miz Leena on your back, take her to the lookout.
CATALINA: Don't need no ride.
TINY: Haint trouble.
CATALINA: Haint dead yet.

(*CATALINA makes her way slowly toward the cliff. It will take a long time to climb to the lookout at the top. FERN hands a bowl of oatmeal to TINY.)*

FERN: It's hot. Don't wolf it down. I's tired of soaking your burnt tongue in potato peel water.

Scene 3. The Paper

At the base of the mountain.

IBANNI: Where is paper?
PETER: "Paper"?
IBANNI: (*pointing to his pocket*) There?

(*He pulls a wadded-up letter from his pocket, smooths it out. It's a medical school rejection.*)

IBANNI: You hold. I look.
PETER: Now you know. You saved a moron. You're offering hope to a lost cause.

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IBANNI: That not the paper.
PETER: What? The New York Times?
IBANNI: Where?
PETER: In my car.
IBANNI: Big?
PETER: Fat Sunday edition.
IBANNI: Wa-e-mo.
PETER: Excuse me?
IBANNI: Good.
PETER: What language was that?
IBANNI: Old Kinfolk. No tell where we go.
PETER: We go?
IBANNI: You. Me. The New York Times.
PETER: Maybe I've got stuff to do, y'know, like a life.
IBANNI: You were trying to get kilt.
PETER: Right. You're right. I have no life.
IBANNI: There is no life witout hope.
PETER: Will you tell me about that strange language?
IBANNI: You come?
PETER: What the hell. I go home I'll get worse than run over.
IBANNI: No tell where.
PETER: Where what?
IBANNI: My home.
PETER: Why not?
IBANNI: Serious.
PETER: Okay.
IBANNI: Say it.
PETER: I won't tell where it is that you live. Why would I?
IBANNI: Your name?
PETER: Peter.

(*PETER holds out his hand to shake. She doesn't shake it. He retracts it awkwardly*.)

IBANNI: Take weapons from pockets, Peter.
PETER: Weapons?
IBANNI: Kinfolk don't have weapons.
PETER: You're pacifists?
IBANNI: Empty pockets. (*He empties his pockets as she urges him on*.) That.
PETER: Tums?
IBANNI: Put down. What more?
PETER: Toothpick?
IBANNI: Put there.
PETER: You should get a job with airline security.
IBANNI: Weapons no joke.
PETER: Are you one of those hermit people who live on the mountain somewhere like in the middle of the forest?
IBANNI: Never come down this far afore. More?

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PETER: Nail clippers?
IBANNI: Put down.
PETER: That's it.
IBANNI: Get paper. Follow me. Hurry.
PETER: Can't we drive?
IBANNI: Walk.
PETER: Up the mountain?
IBANNI: Hope is atween us, yes? Get paper.

Scene 4. Shoes

The clearing. LACEY enters, plastic flip-flops on her feet.

LACEY: Oh, Tiny, you brung me a violet! It gorgeous!
FERN: (*to Tiny*:) Was there white violets?
LACEY: I love yellow. Love dogtooth yellow best.
FERN: White best for weddings.
LACEY: Say what?
TINY: Yup!
LACEY: No.
FERN: YUP.

(*SIS, very pregnant, wearing inexpensive sneakers with holes in the toes, enters from the house with Suley-May, two months*.)

LACEY No, no, no, no, NO!
SIS (*very worried*) She got the Evil Dark?
FERN: Wedding her problem. How's Suley?
TINY: Fever broke.
TINY: + **FERN:** Praise be!
SIS: What wedding? Tiny and Banni? Banni say "yes"?!
FERN: She will.
TINY: Asking tonight after supper.
FERN: Wedding tomorrow first ting.
SIS: Glory be! Caint hardly fit so much happiness in my mouf!
TINY: Don't spill the beans.
SIS: Caint I tell Pud?
TINY: Onliest him.
SIS: Where Banni?
LACEY: Seen her early, doing her usual. (*mimicking Ibanni*:)
Body caint breathe you all so close. I'm a go off this boring ole mountain. I'm a truck wit foreigners. I'm a git knowledge!
FERN: Wedding put a stop to that.
TINY: She gone down the mountain?
LACEY: Flew the coop -- yay!
TINY: Caint have got far barefoot.

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LACEY: She got tough feet. (*He quickly ties split wood in bundles*.) They got ribbons at the K-Mart?
TINY: Caint get you a ribbon.
LACEY: Man like you can get anyting he takes a mind to.
TINY: Ribbons haint necessaries.
LACEY: One little ribbon don't cost much.
TINY: Extra goes for a present for Banni.
LACEY: To make sure she say "yes"? (an idea:) Give her someting she wants awful but keeps secret. That you guessed shows you meant for each other. (another idea:) Shoes!
TINY: Shoes?
LACEY: SH. Don't say nutting. All women love shoes. She pretend she hate 'em so there more for the rest of us. That girl, always tinking on others afore herself.
TINY: Shoes how big?
LACEY: Same as me. Small and dainty.
TINY: What kind?
LACEY: Sparkly. Gobs of sparkles! Can I have a kiss for the road?
FERN: Put your lips back in your mouf, Lacey deVrees!
SIS: Fetch my sister back, Tiny!
TINY: I speedy. Don't worry you. (*TINY clears his throat*.)

Troutling on the barbecue!
Dandy-lions in a stew!
Shindig plans and shindig food!
I is in a marrying mood!
That jist come to me.

FERN: Easy on the poems. Don't want her not saying "yes" tonight.

(*TINY exits with the bundles of wood*.)

LACEY: Will Banni marry a man don't understand her? No.
SIS: Loves us and we need babies.
LACEY: I could of had 10 in the forever she taken to give him one word of encouragement.
SIS: Tiny being Oromeda is perfect. Not too close in the cousin line. Babies won't have a excess of finger webs.
LACEY: Cared for him she'd of said "yes" afore / this.
SIS: He haint asked afore / this.
FERN: (*out of patience*) Catpaws 'n' chicken-nuts, girls!
LACEY: THERE HAINT GONE BE NO WEDDING!
FERN + SIS: Yes they is!
FERN: (*to Sis*) You, feed the chickens. (*to Lacey*:) You, mend the wedding gown.
LACEY: Ruther rub my body wit swamp slime.
FERN: GIT!

(*SIS exits with Suley*.)

LACEY: Go, Lacey. Sew, Lacey. Fix the gown for Miz Wonderful. Anybody gone say: "Good work. You fixed that ole gown been used a gazillion times good as new"? No, it gone be: "No husband for Lacey. No babies for Lacey." I hope Banni meets the man what owns the whole of the K-Mart down where she at.
FERN: Bite your tongue!

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LACEY: I hope he give her so many glittery tings she never comes back!

(*LACEY enters the house. Door SLAMS*.)

FERN: First rule this new Watcher makes will be no door slam-ming.

(*LACEY opens door, SLAMS it again*.)

Scene 5. Ibanni's Dream

PETER and IBANNI climb the mountain on a steep, narrow path. She climbs nimbly despite bare feet. PETER now has a backpack.

PETER: My car phone was not a weapon.
IBANNI: Don't talk. Climb.
PETER: I don't like leaving the 'vette.
IBANNI: The what?
PETER: Car.
IBANNI: Don't hunch when you climb. Open your chest, breathe full.
PETER: I don't get the whole thing. (*He stops. She looks back*.) What will you profit, taking me to your home?
IBANNI: "Profit"?
PETER: The motor that drives the world.
IBANNI: I do not know this "profit." (*She returns to him, examines his hands*.) I am bringing you home 'cause of a dream. These fingers. These lines. These are the hands that held the paper in my dream last night.
PETER: So you got up at midnight and came barefoot all the way down the mountain and stood in the middle of the road when I just happened to be driving by. Some dream!
IBANNI: It was very strong.
PETER: So what's the deal with the paper?
IBANNI: All my life I look 'cross to your tall buildings...
PETER: New York City.
IBANNI: Smooth silver sides. Shining windows flashing light. Wonderful buildings! It's my heart's desire to come into the valley here, walk to the river, swim 'cross to the city, touch them wonderful buildings. Listen close up to people there. Many people with many stories I do not know. My heart hums tinking on all this waiting for me. But I am afraid. I would be a mouse going in the mountain lion den.
PETER: You're no mouse.
IBANNI: I need to find a connection of the spirit atween your people and my people. If there is none, I cannot go.
PETER: A spirit connection?
IBANNI: I dreamed your paper tells of it. You have the paper safe?
PETER: Right here in my pack.

(*IBANNI resumes climbing.*)

Scene 6. Powers

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Cliff lookout. Wind always blows there. Imagine: Manhattan skyline beyond a mountain range. CATALINA watches for danger, long-distance sight being a Watcher power. SPIRIT OF AFRICA, in tribal dress, stands beside her. Their motions mirror each other.

CATALINA:
O Ramapough lo-no [*O Great Spirit Ramapough]*
Fo-folana Ramapough [*Never-dying Ramapough*]
Lana folana tali-bae cotali [*Give another special power*]
Kunolana kaema-e lana wonaba quilumbo mucambu [*The Life Force to keep danger from*
Kobo mawah bae-no-no. [*My heart beats slow*.]
Catalina la. [I must rest.]

Scene 7. Non-Violence

On the path. IBANNI climbs. PETER struggles behind, swatting mosquitos.

PETER: I'm being eaten alive!
IBANNI: Don't swat 'em.
PETER: (*swat*) Shit!
IBANNI: Quit killing! Take. Leaf of pennyroyal. Rub it on. They hate pennyroyal. You got a wife?
PETER: No.
IBANNI: Do behind your ears.
PETER: You got a husband?
IBANNI: (*laughs*) Hurry. Far to go. Over Wanaque Stand. 'Round Suffern Dip.
PETER: Hey, wait. Slow down, Heidi!
IBANNI: We moving like possum.
PETER: (*holding his side*) I've got a stitch.
IBANNI: Hope, Peter. Hope is ahead.

Scene 8. Fern Lacks Powers

FERN huffs and puffs up the cliff path. CATALINA, on lookout, senses her approach, stands straighter. SPIRIT has dispersed.

FERN: I say they a wedding -- they a wedding. Whew. Need strong leader. Whew. Yes we do. Tell you -- whew -- true. Ah. Whew. Made it. (*to Catalina*) Brung water. (*squints toward the valley*) Well I'll be! Eyes got so sharp I can see 'cross the mountains -- what that? -- river yah -- can see all over to the tall buildings!
CATALINA: Ibanni Jane?
FERN: What?
CATALINA: See her?
FERN: Oh sure.
CATALINA: Over to Maple Swamp?
FERN: Yah. (*Without turning, CATALINA points in a different direction from where FERN is looking*.) Feel it now. Long-distance sight coming into my eyes.

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CATALINA: You looking at a tree.

(*FERN shifts her gaze, still doesn't look toward IBANNI, still sees nothing, but tries darn hard.*)

FERN: (*faking it*) Oooh yah. There she is.

Scene 9. People of Color

On the path.

PETER: Stop.
IBANNI: Again?
PETER: Blisters.
IBANNI: I hate shoes.

(*PETER sits, immediately jumps up*.)

PETER: Sonofabitch!
IBANNI: Say "sorry."
PETER: Excuse me?
IBANNI: Tell them.
PETER: The ants?
IBANNI: Yes.
PETER: They bit me!
IBANNI: You sat on them.
PETER: Don't I have a right to sit?
IBANNI: Not on them. You intel'gent, but you haint got smarts.

(*She smiles. She has a charming smile*.)

PETER: Christ. All right. (*to the ants*) I'm sorry.
IBANNI: Sh. Listen. Deer giving birth down to Lower Crick.
PETER: You're kidding? Wow. You're incredible.
IBANNI: Haint intel'gent like you.
PETER: My old man calls me a Fountain of Crap in the Sea of Knowledge.
IBANNI: Knowledge. That is what I will get from the paper.
PETER: Money's better than knowledge. Money is power. People of color particularly need power.
IBANNI: "People of color"?
PETER: Power to the people!
IBANNI: Yona-no.
PETER: "Yoona-no"?
IBANNI: (*giggling at his pronunciation*) Stupid.
PETER: What is?
IBANNI: Money is for necessaries. Caint go to the K-Mart, buy two bags of salt and a bag of power.
PETER: "Yoona-no" means "stupid"?
IBANNI: "Yona-no." Old Kinfolk word.

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PETER: Peter scared of ants -- yona-no?
IBANNI: (*laughing*) FOUNTAIN OF CRAP -- YONA-NO!
PETER: (*laughing*) Med. school -- yona-no!
IBANNI: (*laughing*) Power from money -- yona-no!
PETER: Hold on a minute. I gotta write it down.

(*TINY enters*.)

TINY: GET BACK FROM HIM!
IBANNI: Haint nutting like you said they is. Wouldn't hurt a flea.
PETER: Or an ant.
IBANNI: This Cousin Tiny.
PETER: I'm non-violent through and through, pal. Peter.

(*TINY ignores the hand PETER holds out to shake*.)

TINY: Haint your pal.
IBANNI: Haint hurt me. Haint mean. Haint stinky. Smells good. Good looking too.
TINY: Puny and pale.
PETER: I know you. You sell firewood down by the road. I must have stopped at your stand to buy wood at least 10 --
TINY: Gimme your weapon.
IBANNI: Haint got none.
PETER: Shit, man --
IBANNI: Cusses a bunch but haint got weapons. (big announcement:) Got news 'bout the spirit connection.
TINY: News?
IBANNI: Yes or no they is one. I finally gone find out.
TINY: Who loves you? The Family. Where you belong? Wit the Family. Go up home. I'm a take him back where he belong.
PETER: I don't think the lady likes you giving her orders.
TINY: Git from my woman!
IBANNI: Shut you mouf!
PETER: Is he your leader?
IBANNI: Not hardly.
TINY: Neither is you.
IBANNI: Mayhaps will be.
TINY: You tole me "no."
IBANNI: I don't know! I don't know!
TINY: Didn't mean "my woman" how it sounded.
IBANNI: Make me talk mean. Don't like talking mean t'you.
TINY: How 'bout I take you to the K-Mart?
IBANNI: Now?
TINY: Such tings they got! Hats! Jewels! Picture books!
IBANNI: (to Peter:) He never would take me afore.
TINY: Pretty blinking blue lights! "Attention K-Mart Shoppers. Special today on toaster ovens."
IBANNI: What's toaster ovens?

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TINY: Come see. We'll hitch a ride in one them car tings.
IBANNI: They're called "the 'vette."
PETER: Corvette.
IBANNI: Corvette.
TINY: Let's go.
IBANNI: Too late.
TINY: Don't be scared. I'll protect you.
IBANNI: Step aside, Tiny.

(*IBANNI and PETER continue up the mountain. He has his pad and pen out.)*

PETER: How do you spell "yona-no"?
TINY: (hearing Peter say the word for "stupid," calls:) We got snakes up home, you. We got copperhead, bobcat and flesh-eating bear!

Scene 10. Bang the Alarm!

On the cliff

FERN: See her. I do.
CATALINA: She alone?
FERN: She haint?
CATALINA: Asking you.
FERN: Yah.
CATALINA: Yah?
FERN: (*it hurts to admit*) Haint sure.
CATALINA: Either you got extra sight, or you don't. You do, I say "hallelujah." Haint hanging onto this job for glory.
FERN: Caint you see her?
CATALINA: I's a hundred-two years old!
FERN: Give me the beadstring. Let me stand on the sacred spot so you can rest.

(*Raven CAWS once; IBANNI and CATALINA look up. Two louder CAWS, then three even louder CAWS*.)

CATALINA: Bang the alarm.
FERN: The alarm?
CATALINA: THE ALARM! THE ALARM!
FERN: WHERE?! WHERE?!

(*FERN is rattled, confused. CATALINA hobbles to bang a kettle. BANGING echoes; baby CRIES. In the clearing: SIS quickly douses the fire, carries Suley into the house. LACEY kicks logs around so they don't look "planned." FERN assists CATALINA down the cliff. When ALL but IBANNI, PETER and TINY are inside, door is shut: SLAM. Silence.*)

Scene 11. Introductions

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The clearing. IBANNI and PETER enter.

PETER: Wow. The New York skyline! This is one prime piece of real estate. Worth a fortune. Man if I was a developer... Except it's State forest. And nobody knows you're here. And... Oh. Got it. My lips are sealed.

(CATALINA emerges from the house, then FERN.)

CATALINA: Why you brung a foreigner to quilumbo mucambu, Ibanni Jane Anglola?
IBANNI: Had a dream.
FERN: Pah! She dream dangerous nonsense.

(*CATALINA crosses to PETER, looks him up and down. LACEY and SIS emerge -- curious but hesitant.*)

CATALINA: Misery in his eye. Lack of spiritual aspect.
Speak.
PETER: I --
CATALINA: Not what you tink I want to hear.
PETER: I wasn't going to --
CATALINA: What do they call you?
PETER: Peter Cooper.
ALL: KINFOLK COOPER!

(*CATALINA doesn't shake PETER'S offered hand*.)

FERN: (to Ibanni:) You want git us killed?!
IBANNI: Not that Cooper. Caint be.
PETER: (*proud*) Yup. That one. My ancestor founded Cooper Union College.
FERN: He gone scare the baby out Sis afore it ripe.
LACEY: Make him stop saying "Cooper."
PETER: (*to Ibanni*) What's wrong?
IBANNI: Got a story tells how our Family started. They's a bad man in the story --
LACEY:

Steps down, grass goes brown.
Under his eye, flowers die.
Breath kills birds.
Evil his words.

FERN: Name of Cooper.
IBANNI: General Cooper.
PETER: He's my ancestor too! In the Revolutionary War. On the English side, but still -- a big-time general.
SIS: He got a wicked ancestor!
PETER: For your information I also happen to have an African-American ancestor. Black. Like you. I naturally don't advertise it, but -- Look, if a situation came up where it would be advantageous to have black blood, you can bet I'd be first in line. I'd have used it to get into med. school except Dad... He's the

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snob. Not me. Nobody's more politically correct than me, but... Hey, when you're at the table and something good's being passed, you help yourself. Anybody with half a brain checks out the situation and the angles and picks what works best for him.
FERN: He so full hot air he gone float clean away.
CATALINA: Actions what count. What he do here and now. (*to Peter*) We need a doctor.
PETER: What for?
CATALINA: I ask the questions.
PETER: I'm sort of a doctor.
FERN: Need a real one.
CATALINA: Need a cure.
PETER: For what?
SIS: My Puddy.
PETER: What's he got?
FERN: New Watcher wit invigorated powers will figure the cure.
PETER: (*to Ibanni*) You didn't tell me --
IBANNI: Evil Dark weren't in my dream. Can you really help with it?
LACEY: It haint jist Pud. We's dying out.
FERN: Don't need no foreign cure!
PETER: What are the symptoms? I can probably figure out what's wrong. Shit knows I've studied enough. Plus, my mother, father and brother are all doctors. Conversation at our house is hot and cold running carotid plaque and breast implants.
LACEY: What that?
FERN: Nutting you need.
LACEY: What is it?
FERN: I dunno, but he said "breast" clear as day and he haint gettin near yours!
CATALINA: Chopped holes in the lake to lay four to rest this win-ter. Three the season afore. Two the season afore that. Time was we numbered 48. Seven now. Evil Dark plays Kinfolk life like a wee frog on a stick in a swelled stream.
FERN: Mayhaps Evil Dark is the will of Ramapough.
IBANNI: Ramapough don't will evil.
FERN: Mayhaps --
CATALINA: Mayhaps 'nuf mayhaps.
PETER: Please let me stay.
IBANNI: He cain't go to his own home.
SIS: Give him a test. A danger/danger-not test.
IBANNI: (*to Peter*) Tink afore you speak.
CATALINA: You know tent caterpillars?
PETER: Not personally.
CATALINA: Not funny.
PETER: No, ma'm.
CATALINA: Caterpillars eat tree leaves. Trees that are weak, die. Some say this for the best. Weed out the weak. What do you say, Peter Cooper?
PETER: Bomb the creepie-crawlers with Raid.
FERN: WRONG!
PETER: Disease is caused by bug-type things that shouldn't be allowed to live.
FERN: Failed wit flying colors!
CATALINA: (*to Peter*) Not your place to say what lives and dies.

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PETER: Hey, I'm putting my life on the line. This evil dark thing could be contagious. I could catch it from you.
FERN: You cotch someting bad from us?

(*KINFOLK laugh*.)

PETER: (*to Catalina*) My father, he -- He won't -- I just -- Let me stay. I'll find out what's killing your people. I'll tell you what to do about it. I will. I promise. I know I can.
SIS: Let him stay, help my Puddy.
IBANNI: Let him stay, find hope.

(*a moment*)

CATALINA: Wa-e-mo.
IBANNI: Yes.
PETER: Thank you. Thank you. Hold on.

(*He jots the word in his pad*.)

IBANNI: He writing "wa-e-mo." Then he can read it. He very intel'gent.

(*TINY enters, having climbed the mountain*.)

TINY: Sneaky coyote! Sniffing 'round like we a henhouse and he stomach rumbling.
FERN: He one them liberals like my husband what got dis-appeared. Watch out for them hippie-dippie liberals.
TINY: She tinks he got connection knowledge more than we know.
FERN: So that's it.
TINY: Got a paper with knowledge.
FERN: Don't need no foreign paper 'cept to stuff boots in winter.
TINY: He wouldn't read the truth in the paper anyways.
IBANNI: I'll read it.
TINY: You caint read.
IBANNI: Peter will learn me.
CATALINA: I gave him permission to stay, Eusteba.
TINY: I say three days afore he gets disappeared.
FERN: I say two.
PETER: Wait --
FERN: Them as does hurt on the mountain gets disappeared.
PETER: Okay. I'm a little nervous now. What happened to the non-violent thing?
IBANNI: You got no worry. You haint gone do hurt.
PETER: If they think some wimpy hippie-type was violent...
CATALINA: Peter Cooper --
TINY: Cooper?!
CATALINA: He will figure the cure and also give Ibanni Jane the power of reading. I pray that power will be what it takes to set blaze to the other powers inside her.
TINY: But --

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CATALINA: Silence.
PETER: I knew you were a wise woman.
CATALINA: Don't butter me.

Scene 12. Ibanni's Dilemma

In IBANNI's room.

IBANNI: Don't feel powers. Don't have powers. Don't want special powers. Why Miz Catalina tink I s'posed t'be Watcher when she dies? Put on the beadstring, you caint never leave the mountain. Gots to be on lookout for danger all day, every day, the rest of your life! Watcher caint be me.
PETER: If the outside world wanted to come up here, the queen of Watchers couldn't stop them.
IBANNI: Yes she could.
PETER: Fern seems more than competent to take over.
IBANNI: I pray for that.
PETER: They can't force you to do it. You could leave if you really wanted to. There's nothing to be scared of. New Jersey -- that's safe long as you steer clear of Newark. Pennsylvania over that way -- they're like Amish -- like dangerous as Barry Manilow. New York... Since Mayor Dinkins -- who is, by the way, an African-American -- since Dinkins took office, New York's become one of the safest cities in the world.
IBANNI: Where is news-paper?

Scene 13. Fishing

A stream. LACEY and SIS fish with homemade poles.

LACEY: Ew! Worm gunk under my nails!
SIS: You got a whine on you like a sick skeeter.
LACEY: Hate fishing.
SIS: Haint 'nuf of us to divvy up the chores no more.
LACEY: Divvied up mending the stupid wedding gown to me.
SIS: You done it?

(*PETER enters*.)

PETER: That was an experience! I haven't used an outhouse since... Never. Okay, so let me—-
SIS: Don't put your hand on me!
PETER: I have to examine you.
SIS: Nutting wrong wit me.
LACEY: Her husband the onliest one sick for now.

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SIS: Don't touch him neither.
PETER: If we catch it early he won't get worse.
SIS: He already worse.
PETER: What are his symptoms?
SIS: (*to Lacey*) Hush.
LACEY: He kin help.
SIS: Auntie Fern say he caint.
LACEY: Miz Catalina say "mayhaps."
SIS: Tiny say "no."
LACEY: Your sister say "yes."
PETER: Why don't you like me? Is it because I'm different?

(*SIS and LACEY burst out laughing*.)

LACEY: HE IS DIFFER'NT!
SIS: (*laughing again*) He is! I hate him!
PETER: Hey, jeez...
SIS: Tiny sees peoples at the K-Mart pay heaps of money for food that haint food color, water in bottles, clothes that haint even warm...
LACEY: Peoples folding money, feeling money, counting money, handing money over like it a precious rainbow, changing money for tings what haint necessaries. A few not-necessaries okay, but they go hog wild. Crazy tings they do, but it don't make Tiny like or not like them.
SIS: Don't make him wanna be wit them.
LACEY: But don't make him hate.
PETER: Is it 'cause I look different?
LACEY: What he mean?
SIS: He taller.
LACEY: Don't like him 'cause he taller? (*SIS and LACEY are collapsing with laughter*.) You fatter than me. Mayhaps I shouldn't like you!
SIS: You got more hair! Don't like you.
LACEY: You got freckles!
SIS: You got owl eyes!
LACEY: You got a outtie belly-beamer!

(*They laugh themselves out*.)

SIS: Not liking somebody 'cause they look differ'nt. Never heard such a fool notion.
PETER: You live in a dream world.
SIS: You must have nutting to do, tinking up notions like "differ'nt."
PETER: You're the ones staying away from the rest of the world. Calling everybody else "foreigners."
SIS: We got reason.
PETER: You should join civilization. We've got welfare, Medi-caid, Medicare, food stamps... (*no reply*) Tell me Bud's symptoms.
SIS: Pud.
LACEY: His knees is bad.
SIS: Lacey.
LACEY: Haint it worth seeing if he can help Pud?

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(*pause*)

SIS: Got knee pain like Pig Head had. Talks tangled, like Dandora did. Swole head like Owlouda. Three circles like my Mama. Hers on her back. Pud's on his leg. Red circles.
PETER: A rash?
SIS: All what had the circles died.
LACEY: Some as didn't too.

(*FERN enters*.)

FERN: What's going on?
SIS: Wants to examine us.
LACEY: Do Auntie Fern.
FERN: Like to see him try.
PETER: Where's Ibanni?
FERN: Packing her bag, one eye on the valley, other trying to read your paper, staring out her head like a squeezed puffer-fish. Pah! Girl got more hope than is healthy. Oatmeal for you in the big room wit Tiny. Don't ask for nutting more. There weren't no lunch leftovers.

(*PETER exits*.)

SIS: (*calls*) Examine Tiny!
FERN: Like to see him try!
SIS: Don't need him. Still plenty-plenty life in my Puddy. When I told him 'bout the wedding he said: Well pluck me and call me "supper"!
FERN: Speaking of which, where is supper?
SIS: Gone belly-up.
FERN: Gimme that pole.

Scene 14. Making the Bed

The house. Main room. Plain, rustic. TINY makes a bed. PETER offers a hand to shake.

PETER: Friends? (*TINY scowls at PETER's hand*.) Can't we have a civil conversation?
TINY: Nope.
PETER: Whatever you say, Chief. No offense intended. Ibanni said you've got some Indian uh Native American blood and -- She said outcast types -- Jesus. I can relate.
TINY: Huh?
PETER: She didn't say "outcast" exactly, but I get the picture of who's been up here living with you over the years. Runaway slaves, escaped convicts, draft dodgers... Your accent's a little Jamaican. Some deep south. Jersey. New York. I've got a good ear. Major interest in dialects. No money in it my old man says. Anyway, fascinating. Your mixed bloodlines. Is that bed for me?
TINY: You tell me. You the fascinated one.
PETER: Can I help make it?
TINY: Most likely, being so fascinated.

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PETER: A family room/kitchen combo. Very --
TINY: Fascinating?
PETER: Functional.
TINY: How you get intel'gent?
PETER: Me?
TINY: Banni got a ting for intel'gent.
PETER: I'm not so. Yesterday I got like the 10th rejection letter from a med. school.
TINY: I never got even one. Hold the blanket that side.
PETER: I don't need this many.
TINY: Chamfer the corner. Fold it tight.
PETER: I like my blanket loose.
TINY: Wa-e-no.
PETER: No. That means "no," right?
TINY: Right.
PETER: I'll make it myself.
TINY: This how it done.
PETER: Not by me.
TINY: By us. (*PETER jots the word in his pad*.) What you putting in there?
PETER: (writing, trying to joke:) "Tiny -- is -- hot."

(*TINY grabs the pad, stares at the words uncomprehendingly, then gives it back*.)

TINY: Don't say no more 'bout me.
PETER: You don't think I'll last a week, do you?
TINY: Nope.
PETER: You're trying to pick a fight.
TINY: Tuck.
PETER: I won't take the bait.
TINY: Tuck.
PETER: How do you "disappear" somebody non-violently?
TINY: Don't hurt nobody.
PETER: If looks could kill --
TINY: Don't you say I do!
PETER: So what do you do?
TINY: Bundle 'em like wood. Take 'em down and leave 'em at the K-Mart door. (chuckles) Don't never come back. Don't hanker to repeat the experience don't reckon. My fingers is itching to bundle you, coyote-boy.
(( ))
PETER: That oatmeal for me?
TINY: Yup.
PETER: I'm not hungry. You want it?

(*a moment*)

TINY: Only got three bowls this morning.
PETER: Go ahead. Knock yourself out.

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(*TINY starts wolfing down the oatmeal*.)

TINY: You know 'bout women and presents?
PETER: Women love presents.
TINY: Shoes?
PETER: They love shoes.
TINY: I'm a get Banni shoes at the K-Mart.
PETER: Really?
TINY: Don't tell her you.
PETER: No problem.
TINY: Haint someting you'd do, not knowing her inside desires. I'm a get her the best shoes in the entire of the K-Mart. She gone drop you like a hot rock when I give her them shoes. So quit making where you from sound better 'n here. Quit being intel'gent. Quit looking at her familiar-like.
PETER: Hey, I don't want her that way.
TINY: She pretty.
PETER: Well yeah.
TINY: Real pretty.
PETER: Yeah, but --
TINY: She tinks you good looking.
PETER: She was being polite.
TINY: You tink I's good looking?
PETER: You're a stud.
TINY: Aiewant mahi. (*virile man*)
PETER: Probably hung like a horse.
TINY: Huh?
PETER: Apparently healthy as a horse.
TINY: Chop wood good.
PETER: I'm sure.
TINY: Couldn't never chop wood good as me.
PETER: You're the man. What's "aiewant mahi"? (*suddenly gets an idea*) Wait. Wait! Oh my God. I'm a genius!
TINY: How come you don't want her that way? Nutting wrong wit her. Hey.
PETER: Hey, "hands-off" is my middle name. Catch you later.

Scene 15. Teach Me to Read!

Ibanni's room. On the bed is the Times and items She is packing in a basket like a favorite feather, a necklace of acorn caps. PETER is very excited.

IBANNI: It means "big man."
PETER: That's what I thought.
IBANNI: Now we have to read.
PETER: First listen. I've got this great idea.
IBANNI: Learn me to read, Peter.
PETER: I'm going to write a book about this language of yours. This Old Kinfolk.
IBANNI: You could.

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PETER: You think so?
IBANNI: You could write many books.
PETER: I barely passed biology. Hated it. Never wanted to be a doctor. I mean, I can figure out the cure for you, but full-time sick people? Bedpans? Vomiting? Blood and guts? No way! What I loved at Williams was creative writing. Aced creative writing. My father wouldn't let me -- Screw him! I can write here. I've got like 150 bucks. I'll get Tiny to buy paper and pens at K-Mart. The best writing paper they've got. A book, Banni! Your language and, and, and living here. Don't freak. I won't say where you're located. The important part is your language. My book about Old Kinfolk will be a contribution to linguistic history! Definitely prestigious. Prestige is almost as good as money. Frequently one translates into the other. Dad said that once. Wait -- maybe it will make money. It could be required reading at universities. Every English major will have to read it. And history major. And -- shit -- you know how many college students there are?! A lot.
IBANNI:: Already you have hope.
PETER: My old man will be impressed as hell! Before you know it, I'll be giving him investment advice!
IBANNI: Now we will read. Should I pick it up?

(*She is looking at the newspaper*.)

PETER: Why not?
IBANNI: I might drop it.
PETER: It won't break.

(*She doesn't dare hold it*.)

IBANNI: Lookit the words! Taken from moufs, put invisible into the air, then swish, down on paper to lie flat and dark. Waiting. Holding secrets. Learn me a word.
PETER: Teach me a word.
IBANNI: Teach me and I will learn?
PETER: A-plus!
IBANNI: That good?
PETER: Maybe you'll be a writer too.

(*He smiles, admiring her. She beams, proud, attracted to him. A long moment*.)

IBANNI: Well... well... Well let's!
PETER: You don't start off a whole word at a time. First you learn the alphabet, then sounds.
IBANNI: Jist read. Please read.
PETER : "April 19,1991. Vice President Dan Quayle --"
IBANNI: Wait. (*She touches fingers to the paper, moves them as on a ouija board, stopping at one spot*.) There. That warm spot. Read there.
PETER: "Excavation in lower Manhattan yesterday uncovered—"

(*SOUNDS: traffic, jackhammer. HARD HATS 1 and 2 in a trench in lower Manhattan. They stare at a hexagonal, dirt-crusted, primitive wooden casket which has just been unearthed*.)

HARD HAT 1: I'll be damned.

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HARD HAT 2: Somebody's ass is gonna be grass.
HARD HAT 1: Where's Higgins?
HARD HAT 2: Wasn't me. My rig's down by Reade.

(*A shadow passes over*.)

HARD HAT 1: Whassat? What happened t'the light?

(*Raven CAWS twice very loudly. They jump.*
Another two CAWS. Raven is dive-bombing them.)

HARD HAT 2: FUCK!
HARD HAT 1: A crow!
HARD HAT 2: FUCK!
HARD HAT 1 Fuckin birds takin / over.
HARD HAT 2:FUCK!

(*Shadow passes. Casket lid slides. They leap back*.)

HARD HAT 1 + HARD HAT 2: FUCK!
HARD HAT 1: I'm outta here.
HARD HAT 2: You never seen one?
HARD HAT 1: Like you did.
HARD HAT 2: My old lady's got a statue on the back of the john. A monkey holding a skull. A human skull, y'know. The monkey's thinking: What the fuck is this? He's like a pre-human monkey, y'know.
HARD HAT 1 It ain't that old.
HARD HAT 2: What're you, Albert Einstein?
HARD HAT 1 Here comes Higgins.
HARD HAT 2: My rig wasn't nowheres near.

(*LIGHTS fade on HARD HATS*.)

IBANNI: (*staring at the paper*) Who's that?
PETER: A skeleton. They dug it up only yesterday. It's a picture of a grave in New York City.
IBANNI: I know that woman.
PETER: How can you even tell it's a woman?
IBANNI: She knows about the connection.

(*FERN bursts in*.)

FERN: Ibanni, come outside. (*to Peter*) You stay put. This haint none your business.

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Scene 16. Bad News

The clearing.

FERN: Where Tiny?
LACEY: Not back from the K-Mart.
SIS: What's wrong? What's wrong?

(*FERN speaks slowly, keeping her emotions under control. It isn't easy*.)

FERN: (*shaky, serious)* I was up the cliff wit Miz Leena's late-day pick-me-up. Tole me Ramapough spoke to her direct. Ast me to relate... Haint a surprise, but it come hard on the heart.
LACEY: Oh no.
FERN: Ramapough tole our Watcher she gone die tomorrow.
SIS:: Tomorrow!
LACEY: She haint even sick!
FERN: Miz Leena say: Tell the Kinfolk build my death bower and no tears.

(*long moment*)

IBANNI: It's time is all.
SIS: We gots to build the grandest bower ever.
LACEY Who gone keep us safe? Who gone watch out for us?
FERN: Tings been happening in my body. Heat starts in my toes, travels up to my ears. Often at night so strong I wake in a puddle of sweat.
LACEY That a power sign?
FERN: Powerful heat.
SIS: Can you see my lights?
FERN: I can.
SIS: Boy or girl?
FERN: Best kept a surprise.
SIS: You got powers, you gots to tell me.
FERN: All right. Gone be a girl. Haint that fine! Pud gone say: Well milk me and call me "Nanny"!
SIS: I felt it's a boy.
FERN: Why look at Banni? I say it a girl, it a girl. Why you stand wit moufs catching flies? Gots to build the bower! Prepare for the pageant! Banquet to cook. Masks to dust. Costumes to air. Landsakes-a'mighty them costumes been packed away since Miz Catalina took over. Be musty as bats. Plus we got that other to prepare for.
IBANNI: What other?
FERN: (claps hands:) Git! Git! Git to work!
IBANNI: What other?
SIS: You find out you be happy as a summer sun.
IBANNI: Don't like secrets.
SIS: You'll like this one.

(*They begin building the bower. LIGHTS fade.*)

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Scene 17. Building the Death Bower

Hours later. SIS, FERN, IBANNI, LACEY build the bower, placing long birch sticks on a framework [see notes].

FERN: I don't tink for one stitch he can figure the cure.
IBANNI: You watch.
FERN: I plan to. I plan to watch.
IBANNI: Feel it in your bones?
FERN: I do.
IBANNI: Your mouf to Ramapough's ears.
LACEY: So you can go wit that Peter man and no worry.
FERN: She haint gots to go.
LACEY: Mayhaps go make money.
SIS: (to Lacey:) Where you been living all your life?!
FERN: Watch what you's doing!
LACEY: Peter wants money and she wants Peter.
IBANNI: Do not!
SIS: What else they do down there 'sides money tings?
IBANNI: I don't know. I want to go see.
FERN: Pay attention what you's doing! (*to Lacey*) Put that lower. (*to Sis*) Put that higher.
SIS: Caint reach so.
FERN: Fill in the top.
IBANNI: I hate this. I hate that she gone die.
(( ))
SIS: You read yet?
IBANNI: Almos.
SIS: Learn what you need?
IBANNI: Almos.
SIS: Gone read more?
IBANNI: Soon's I can.
SIS: In your room? You two alone?
LACEY: Alone and hot and bothered -- yay.
IBANNI: What in tarnation are you --
SIS: Keep youself pure, Banni.
IBANNI: You could try to like him. He likes you.
LACEY: He likes you.

(*IBANNI goes apart to remove dead leaves from sticks in a pile*.)

SIS: Tiny likes her. She likes Tiny.
FERN: (whisper, to Lacey:) Go sew on the wedding gown.
LACEY: She gone leave wit that Peter man. Onliest wedding be Tiny and me.
SIS: Tiny and Banni.
FERN: First ting sun up.
SIS: Afore the pageant?

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FERN: Afore anyting.
IBANNI: (overhearing:) What wedding?
FERN: (*to Ibanni*) Bedding. Gotta air the bedding. (to Lacey, soft:) It settled. The wedding then the pageant where I accept the beadstring. Don't wanna hear no more about it. Scoot. Go sew. I'm a get started on the vittles.

(*FERN exits into the house with Suley. LACEY, who was headed inside, U-turns, crosses to IBANNI.*)

LACEY: Tiny gone ask you --
SIS: LACEY!
LACEY: (quickly:) Gone ask you to marry him.
IBANNI: Don't fool. We building a death bower.
LACEY: Gone ask tonight. (*LACEY returns to the bower*. To *Sis*) Now she be prepared. She tell him "no."
SIS: Tiny be mad as a wet hen you opened your mouf. I won't tell him 'cause he be nervous 'bout asking as is. It don't change nutting. Banni got a soft heart. She won't turn Tiny down. Tings be the way they should.
LACEY: I got a 'mergency measure up my sleeve if needed.

(*PETER enters with an armload of birch sticks.*)

LACEY: Here comes my 'mergency measure. (*to Peter*) Over here!
PETER: What's the word for sticks?
SIS: Sticks.
LACEY: We caint reach the top.
SIS: We'll manage.
LACEY: You so tall! Ooo! You got big muscles. Not so big as Tiny, but very nice. Be sure and let Banni see.
SIS: (*to Lacey*) If we was foreigners I'd kick you!
LACEY: (*to Peter*) Banni haint bad looking you know.
PETER: Show me what to do with this.
LACEY: Reach it up wit your big, strong arm. Way up. Let your mind go quiet. Hold the stick gentle. Get the feel of it.

(*IBANNI brings an armload of sticks over.*)

LACEY: *(To Peter)* Feel where it wants to be put.
PETER: I feel something... It wants to go... Way up... There.
LACEY: Yay! You so intel'gent!
PETER: (*to Ibanni*) I'm getting the hang of it.
LACEY: (*to make Ibanni jealous*) You can examine me now, Peter.
IBANNI: (*concerned*) You feel sickly?
LACEY: A mite.
SIS: She haint sick. (*to Lacey*) Don't fool wit "sick"!
LACEY: Say, Peter, can I see what you been writing?
IBANNI: We got work to do.
PETER: (*to impress Lacey*) I'm going to write a book. A best-seller.
LACEY: Very nice.

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PETER: You know what a book is?
LACEY: Holy man come through once. Had a big black book. Banni ast him to learn her to read, but he got disappeared.
IBANNI: Very special -- a book.
LACEY: Peter very special.

(*LACEY bats her eyes at him*.)

IBANNI: Haint you got pageant costumes to fix, little girl?
PETER: A pageant? What pageant? When's the pageant?
LACEY: Tomorrow night.
PETER: Man! Where's a camcorder when I need it?
SIS: (*pointed, to Ibanni*) Pageant tells how important Family is. How we all got responsibilities to Family.
IBANNI: Come on, Peter. Come on.

(*PETER and IBANNI cross toward the house*.)

LACEY: They got someting going all right.
SIS: Slap your mouf and spit!
LACEY: Steam shooting out her ears like a kettle.
SIS: Tinking on reading.
LACEY: Man turns your blood hot, not reading.
SIS: Watch this. I'm a say the word "reading." Watch her turn all hot and jelly-like. Reading.
LACEY: She looking on him.
SIS: She tinking on reading and on Tiny.
LACEY: Who is expert in this area?

(*PETER and IBANNI exit into the house*.)

SIS: I'm a break that up if it the last ting I do.

Scene 18. No Fish. No Frogs.

At the stream. TINY fishes with a net, sitting on the newspaper, beside him, a jug of homebrew. IBANNI and PETER enter. She is furious.

IBANNI: Where is it?
TINY: He still here?
PETER: You sure got to the K-Mart and back in record time.
IBANNI: Where the paper?
TINY: Paper?
IBANNI: Your eye twitching.
PETER: There it is.
IBANNI: Get up. (*TINY doesn't move*.) Gone heave you in the crick.
TINY: Gone heave him in the --

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(*IBANNI pushes TINY*.)

IBANNI: Get it!
PETER: Got it!

(*PETER has the paper. IBANNI glares at TINY, jaw set, hands on hips. To get her out of her mood, he pushes her playfully*.)

IBANNI: Don't.
(*He pushes her. She pushes him. A game. They fall on each other like kids. Then she remembers, brushes herself off self-consciously*.)

IBANNI: Big fat lug! Come on, Peter.
TINY:
Take a break, enjoy the day
Sit a spell and fish, ho-kay?
PETER: That just come to you?
TINY: Yup!
IBANNI: Come on.
PETER: I'd like to try fishing.
IBANNI: We gots to read.
PETER: Every single minute? (*IBANNI stamps a foot*.) I want to bury the hatchet with the chief here.

(*PETER holds out a hand for TINY to shake*.)

TINY: Why you always sticking out your hand?
PETER: Don't you shake hands?
TINY: Not if they haint wet. (*PETER gets the joke. TINY and PETER laugh*.) Here y'go, coyote-boy. Put hair on your chest!

(*TINY offers the jug to PETER. He sits by TINY, swigs, winces*.)

IBANNI: Don't drink no more of that, Peter.
TINY: Ease off, Banni.
PETER: This is cool. All we need is cable and a playoff game.
TINY: I got a story for you.
IBANNI: He don't like stories.
PETER: Sure I do. Grist for my writing mill.
TINY: Once upon a time, Pud had a Shinnecock great-grandaddy what run off from his tribe. Shinnecocks is noted for superior fishing ability.
IBANNI: Do the short version.
TINY: He got disappeared.
IBANNI: The end. Let's go.
TINY: Tell 'im 'bout your daddy. (*IBANNI glares at TINY*.) Her daddy 'scaped a Sing-Sing place. Banni's mama hap-pened on him hiding in Bearclaw Cave.
IBANNI: (*defensive*) Me, Sis and Suley has good blood. Kinfolk blood wit a touch of foreign is good. Like soup wit a touch of pepper-root.

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PETER: What happened to him?
TINY: Swacked her mama atop the head.
PETER: Uh oh!
IBANNI: House haint big. Long winter.
TINY: Knocked 'er cold as a tadpole on ice. Mama pregnant wit Suley too. Next morning --
PETER: Lemme guess.
IBANNI: That's it. That's 'nuf. Come now.
PETER: I gotta make myself valuable so I don't get disappeared. I'm gonna help finish the bower.
IBANNI: I do someting make you mad?
PETER: Can't teach you if I get disappeared.

(*PETER exits. IBANNI sits. TINY puts an arm around her shoulders, hands her the jug. She takes a swig. He scans the creek for fish.*)

IBANNI: Hope is growing in him.
TINY: It's us need hope. Air up here stings wit tears for them that died. The valley haint for you, Banni.
IBANNI: Don't know yet.
TINY: They haint got fish and frogs.
IBANNI: We haint neither lately.
TINY: Air in the K-Mart gots a stench. I believe Evil Dark come up here in stenchy air from the valley. Made fish go belly-up. Made frogs move to other side of the mountain. (*no reply*) My arrow functions first rate, Banni.
IBANNI: Makin babies haint everyting.
TINY: (*slowly, making a point*) No. It haint.

(*FERN enters*.)

FERN: Where supper?
IBANNI: None cotched yet.
FERN: Frogs?
TINY: Nope.
FERN: Whole bloomin Family lose they skill? Gimme that.

(*FERN grabs the net, sits beside them. IBANNI gets up to leave. FERN pulls her back down*.)

FERN: That Peter pulling wool over your eyes. Gone go tell where we at. Next thing, flying conveyance swoop down like a hawk plucking swallows. Somebody capable like me haint on lookout, foreigners will snitch us up one-by-one. Baby Suley first.
IBANNI: What they want wit my baby sister?
FERN: Might could eat her.
IBANNI: Haint no baby-eating stories.
FERN: That gone be the first.
TINY: He won't tell where we at if he's disappeared. Puts shame on a man, found bundled like wood at the K-Mart door. They don't never tell nobody.
IBANNI: He won't tell anyways.
FERN: Miz Leena ast to see you, Banni.
TINY: (*to Ibanni*) Frogs move. Kinfolk don't never.

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FERN: 'Course they don't. Git!

(*IBANNI exits*.)

FERN: I say I getting powers -- I getting powers. None too soon neither. What we need is a fish spell. Feel one coming on. It coming... It coming...(*Waving a hand over the stream*) Fo fish. Fo fo katuma fish.

Scene 19. The Wedding Gown

LACEY's room. SIS wears the wedding gown. LACEY pins it where it needs mending.

SIS: Nobody sews good as you. Pud say: That Lacey, she got style!
LACEY: Banni calls a bird, that kind comes. She walks soft so not a leaf hears. Swims 'cross the lake wit no hands. Takes apart a owl pellet and tells what it ate from the bones inside. Her feet feel seeds opening underground.
SIS: Why that bother you?
LACEY: She got awful pretty feet.
SIS: You got style.
LACEY: Tiny don't notice.
SIS: Ow! Watch it wit them pins.
LACEY: Why don't he want me?
SIS: You should of married Half-Dead Mike.
LACEY: He were half-dead.
SIS: Weren't to start.
LACEY: Auntie Fern says I haint mature. She got a mouf on her like a rooster. I's almos 15!
SIS: You gone get a man, Lace. It be a magic moment. Like when I was 12 and Pud 13. I had a swole throat so couldn't go on a picnic to Bubble Spring. He brung me back a teeny pink stone shape of a heart. I was asleep. He put it on my pillow. Opened my eyes and there it was. I still got it. How 'bout Peter? He haint half bad.
LACEY: Face like the moon.
SIS: Moon pretty. Wonder what his behind is like.
LACEY: You bad!
SIS: Bet it's hairy.
LACEY: Two big old hairy moons! (*When they stop laughing*) Was giving me the eye.
SIS: You see!
LACEY: Tink he was.
SIS: Sure he was.
LACEY: Wiggled a shoulder t'get Banni jealous so she pay him notice. He couldn't help to notice me.
SIS: What he do?
LACEY: Wink his eye.
SIS: Lacey Mazie deVrees, you got a man in the palm of your hand! OW! Wait for Banni. Measure on her.
LACEY: LOOK UGLY ON HER!
SIS: Gimme the needle. I'm a stitch your bottom lip to the top.
LACEY: That wedding happen tomorrow I'm a kill myself.

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Scene 20. Catalina in Her Prime

IBANNI and CATALINA on the cliff.

CATALINA: Went to the valley once. Afore I accepted the beadstring. Afore I poofed the mad fox. Younger than you I was. For-eigners in a Greenwood Lake place at the foot of Rama-pough were cutting trees, making a road for a schoolbus vehicle to come up to us. Heard them talk plans to take our children down -- learn them ways of foreigners. Some-one had to stop them. I went, brung back their leader. Mayor Samuel Brundage. Brung him up here like you did Peter Cooper. Sam stayed a bit. By when he left the spir-it of Ramapough was quick in him and your grandmother was stirring in me. He stopped the road-building. I was good in my prime.

(*a moment*)

Your Peter's got a weak spirit. Get some of your spirit to take hold in him, you'll have done a remarkable ting.

(*no reply*)

More important yet, the Family needs some of his blood. You hear me? Looks like Peter Cooper got a fully func-tional arrow a'knocking at his quiver door.
IBANNI: Yes, ma'm.
CATALINA: Step up here.
IBANNI: To the edge?
CATALINA: Afeared?
IBANNI: Not of that.
CATALINA: Come close to the sacred spot.
IBANNI: Weighs heavy. You passing.
CATALINA: Never mind. Close your eyes. Find your heart. Grow roots in the cliff. Breathe in. Slow. Pull power from the land up your legs. Feel it move in your blood up to your eyes. Feel it?
IBANNI: Yes.
CATALINA: Focus in and out together. (*pause*) Now open your eyes.
IBANNI: Caint see further than Tuscatora Ridge.
CATALINA: Try again.
IBANNI: I did. I am. I am trying.
CATALINA See the shadow yonder -- the one shaped like a snake -- crawling over the mountain -- there?
IBANNI: I see it.
CATALINA: That shadow reaches the far edge of the slope and the lookout is empty, the sun will go out on the Family.
IBANNI: It moving fast.
CATALINA: I gone die tomorrow, Ibanni Jane.
IBANNI: I caint stop a shadow!

(*IBANNI runs down the path. PETER, climbing to meet her, catches her in his arms, pulls her close. After a moment she pushes back*.)

IBANNI: Get the paper. Meet me at the stream.

Scene 21. Fish Prayer

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The stream. Setting sun. IBANNI puts herbs on a piece of birch bark, folds it into a packet.

IBANNI: (*praying*) Fo-folana hatu bae...

(*She ties the packet with a reed. FERN enters*.)

FERN: Water don't look bad.
IBANNI: You say it haint bad, it haint bad.
FERN: Dream tell you make that?
IBANNI: Nutting special.
FERN: What in it?
IBANNI: Blackroot. Hawthorne. Wormwood.

(*IBANNI slips the charm into the stream*.)

FERN: You know the words? Say 'em, girl. We on the same side.
IBANNI:
Fo-fo-tali
Bend fish
Bae fish
Katuma-tuma fish!
FERN: Don't sound all-fire powerful to me.
IBANNI: Prob'ly won't work.
FERN: Every day, every night I pray Ramapough fill me with powers.
IBANNI: You pray for what good for the Family.
FERN: You a child yet.

(*PETER enters with the newspaper*.)

FERN: Figure the cure?
PETER: The pieces are falling into place. I'll tell you soon as I'm sure.
FERN: Sooner you figure, sooner you can skedaddle. Supper almos ready.
PETER: What're we having?
FERN: Squirrel.

(*FERN exits. PETER sits by IBANNI*.)

IBANNI: I'll hold it. (*the newspaper*)
PETER: (*reading*) "I saw this sort of darkish outline -- " It's an interview.
IBANNI: Put your finger where the words are.

(*SPOT on a bar. HARD HAT 1 sits on a stool, drinks beer, talks to unseen barkeep*.)

PETER: "I saw this sort of darkish / outline -- "
HARD HAT 1 ...outline in the dirt. Clay -- it was more clay than dirt. Wilkens found a strange kind of old nail earlier, so we were ready for something outta the ordinary. We went slow. Keeping an eye out in

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case the boss showed up. Feeling like something big was under that clay and we shouldn't just hove in. Something big, yeah, but not this big!
IBANNI: (*pointing at the paper*) What's that?
PETER: "Bones."
IBANNI: Bones.
HARD HAT 1: Bones it was.
IBANNI: Bones.
HARD HAT 1: Old bones, arranged just so.
IBANNI: There.
PETER: "Old."
IBANNI: Old bones.
HARD HAT 1: Something about them bones. Damn. Can't get the sight outta my head. There it is. Turn it up.

(*HARD HAT 1 looks at a TV over the bar*.)

TV ANNOUNCER (*voiceover*) ...examined the southeast section of the construction area where excavation was halted 16 feet below ground level.
HARD HAT 1: Wasn't that deep. Not the one I found.
TV ANNOUNCER (voiceover) An NYU archeologist told this reporter that the discovery could be a burial ground dating back to the time of the Revolutionary War.
IBANNI: Old. Bones. Arranged just so. (*Dinner bell CLANGS*.) Dang!

(*SPOT fades down on HARD HAT 1*.)

PETER: We'll work tonight.
IBANNI: All night.
PETER: Promise.
IBANNI: You are the most wonderful ting ever happened in the entire of my life, Peter.
PETER: I like that you don't laugh when I talk about writing a book.
IBANNI: I like how you talk.
PETER: I like how you listen.
IBANNI: I like that you call me a lady.
PETER: I like that you think I'm intelligent.

(*Dinner bell CLANGS insistently*.)

IBANNI: Tonight.

- END ACT I (optional break) -

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ACT II

Scene 1. The Diagnosis

The clearing. Early evening. Sleepy BIRDS; TREE FROGS. Bower complete. ALL sit around the fire. CATALINA peels a bit of bark off a birch stick, chews it, passes the stick on. KINFOLK do the same in turn. SIS draws in the dirt with a stick. IBANNI tries to read the paper in the dim LIGHT, but stops to listen.

SIS: Circle wit a dot in the middle.
PETER: A bullseye.
SIS: Same for Mama.
LACEY: Same for many.
PETER: Same as Pud.
IBANNI: The rash?
PETER: Definitely Lyme Disease. A bacteria gets in you from tick saliva. From a deer tick. The bacteria attacks your nervous system. It's not usually deadly. You people must be deficient in something. Highly vulnerable somehow. Do you understand?
FERN: We know what ticks are.
PETER: The Lyme Disease tick is tiny. Like a dark freckle. The head of a pin. How dangerous it is depends on the time of year. Where the tick is in its life cycle. But you can't take chances. If it's on you -- get it off.

(*PETER takes the paper from IBANNI, puts it aside so he can examine her. TINY starts to take the paper, but IBANNI sits on it. PETER brushes dirt off her feet, checks her feet and ankles for ticks. Then he goes from one to another, making sure they check for ticks. They respond to his urgency. Finally he checks his own ankles. No ticks*.)

PETER: It gets on you from deer or small animals or from bushes the animals brushed against. You have to wear long pants -- shoes -- socks.
IBANNI: Shoes?
PETER: And white socks so you can see the ticks easily. You don't get infected 'til it's been on you a few days. Nobody will get sick if you pick them off every day.
FERN: Tiny will save up firewood money. Purchase white socks at the K-Mart. We'll have tick-search buddies. Every night afore bed check your buddy, report to me.
SIS: What about my husband? (*PETER puts his arms around SIS. Silence*.) Not gone see our baby?
CATALINA: You saying there haint a cure?
PETER: Not without medical insurance. Not without a lot of money.
TINY: I knowed it! He a fake!
SIS: Give him our money, Tiny. Give him all our money!
PETER: Not me. The insurance --
SIS: Give it to them!
PETER: You don't have near enough. You never will.

(*SIS runs, buries her face in CATALINA's lap. IBANNI hands birch stick to PETER. FERN snatches it away*.)

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FERN: Make him git!
CATALINA: Let it be, Fern. This my last storytelling circle. Come, Peter Cooper. Take our spirit into your heart. Ibanni -- begin.

(*CATALINA takes PETER'S hand. A DRUM, KALIMBA, maybe other homemade instruments. SPIRIT OF AFRICA dances among them as KINFOLK tell a nightly story*.)

IBANNI: Once in a far-off land lived a tribe wit no name. Bright-colored birds sung in trees so tall their tops touched the sky. Days was filled wit a warm breeze. Slow buzzing of insects. Fruits and nuts grew in profusion. Fish shim-mered in pools so clear you didn't have to look twice to see 'em.
FERN: In the evening, when gathering and fishing was done and their stomachs nicely full, the people sat close and tole stories.
LACEY: They was loving, peaceful, hope-filled people. Same as us.
TINY: 'Cept not a one of they stories would frighten even the smallest child 'cause nutting bad had ever happened to them.
SIS: They had never been touched by the outside world.
CATALINA: Lo-lo-no la lana [*Hush! We sing to join spirits*]
KINFOLK: (*response*) Kampo Ramapough; [*with the safe, peaceful mountain*]
CATALINA: Kae-ma-e motulo, mahi, mawah [*Small child, man, woman*]
KINFOLK: (*response*) Kobo-tu la lana Ramapough. [*Love, silence, come into us from the mountain*.]
CATALINA: Lo-lo-no la lana
KINFOLK + **PETER:** (*response*) Kampo Ramapough.
(( ))
CATALINA: Bower is most beautiful. I thank you all. I pray tomorrow isn't the last day for us for lack of a new Watcher.
IBANNI: Auntie Fern?
CATALINA: Haint her decision. Haint her load.
FERN: Why then it feel so heavy?

Scene 2. Mending the Wedding Gown

LACEY's room. SIS puts on the gown.

SIS: Finish this up. I gotta feed Suley.
LACEY: What's "insurance"?
SIS: A cure. Someting foreigners got.
LACEY: Money is good if it gets insurance.
SIS: Haint 'nuf for all. Gots to fight for a share. Drains the spirit.
LACEY: Like wit Peter?
SIS: Like wit him.

(*LACEY has taken a pouch from under her pillow*.)

LACEY:
Oh pretty herb beneath yon tree,

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Thy true name is yarrow;
Who my bosom friend must be,
Pray tell me that tomorrow.

Sleep on it every night. Dream of Tiny every night.
SIS: Haint no good less he dream of you.
LACEY: Dumb yarrow! Hate the stink of it! Goldurn my hormonics is raging!
SIS: Cheer up. Spring has come.
LACEY: Yay. Skeeters. Ticks.
SIS: Flowers, birds --
LACEY: Hope I get that Lyme ting and die.
SIS: ...shiny hair, long legs, man winking at you.
LACEY: Wrong man.
SIS: Me, I got bird legs.
LACEY: Oh, Sissy, don't cry! I'll take Pud's part in the pageant so he don't feel he letting us down. Don't --
SIS: They here! Tick bug on my leg -- all swole wit blood!
LACEY: EW!
SIS: It the bad kind?
LACEY: Don't know!
SIS: Get it off!
LACEY: Throw it outside!
SIS: Got blood on the gown.
LACEY: How it get in my room?
SIS: Must of come from the bower branches. Bugs get every-where.
LACEY: Not on me. Not in my room.
SIS: Been on me one day only. That don't harm he said.
LACEY: See if any on my head.
SIS: Check me.
LACEY: Check my back.
SIS: Check mine.
LACEY: Jist a skeeter bite.
SIS: Itches some.
LACEY: I got mallowroot.

(*LACEY rubs mallowroot lotion on SIS's back*.)

SIS: I'll be your tick-search buddy, Lace.
LACEY: Holding out for Tiny.
SIS: I'll help rinse the blood outta the gown.
LACEY: I'll do it.

Scene 3. The Proposal

The clearing. DARK but for the fire. IBANNI gazes toward New York. PETER gazes at the stars. He has the Times. They sigh with pleasure in unison.

IBANNI: Look at them lights.

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PETER: The med. school rejection is a million years away. My father is a galaxy far, far away. Here, I'm not an outcast.
IBANNI: New York City lights.
PETER: I'm staying here. At least 'til the book is done. (*He inhales deeply, with pleasure*.) Mmmm... night air, pine needles -- you.

(*TINY enters, K-Mart bag behind his back. He's a little tipsy*.)

PETER: (*to Ibanni*) How do you say "beautiful" in Old Kinfolk?
TINY: Mountain is beautiful. How we live is. Don't need special word. (*to Ibanni*) Look at your hands -- turning black wit they ideas.
IBANNI: It rub off from the newspaper.
TINY: Evil.
IBANNI: Words aren't evil.
TINY: "Aren't? Aren't!" He got you talking like him.
IBANNI: You smell differ'nt.
TINY: Took a bath. What that?
IBANNI: Don't fuss wit my body.
TINY: Raise your sleeve.
IBANNI: Stop it!
PETER: Hey!
TINY: Let me see.
IBANNI: It poison oak.
TINY: Too early for oak.
IBANNI: Ivy then. Get off / me!
PETER: Let go of her!
TINY: Hear how he talk to me?
PETER: Did I disrespect you?
TINY: Huh?
PETER: Dis-re-spect.
TINY: He putting words in my mouf!
PETER: Gosh it has three syllables.

(*TINY grabs the paper from PETER to throw it in the fire. IBANNI grabs it. The MEN are about to hit each other*.)

IBANNI: Tiny!

(*TINY's fist freezes in mid-air. He lowers it slowly. He is truly ashamed of himself*.)

TINY: I was on the brink of violence. I's so ashamed.
IBANNI: (*to Peter*) And you.
PETER: He wants me to hit him. He wants a reason to get me disappeared.
TINY: (*to Peter*) Forgive me. I beg you forgive me.

(*IBANNI looks at PETER*.)

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PETER: Please accept my apology.

(*PETER holds out a hand to shake, remembers, withdraws it. IBANNI gives him the paper. Nobody moves. She pulls up her shirt sleeve*.)

IBANNI: It haint in a circle. Okay?
PETER: You've gotta start wearing shoes. (*TINY chuckles*.) What's funny?
TINY: She will.
PETER + **IBANNI:** What?
TINY: Nutting.
IBANNI: They's some secret going 'round and you gone tell me. I'll be in shortly, Peter.
PETER: (*giving Tiny the "peace sign"*) Peace, bro.

(*PETER exits to the house with the newspaper*.)

IBANNI: What is it?
TINY:
Drink a bucket arborvitae,
Make a man both strong and mighty!
IBANNI: Drinking the night afore Miz Catalina dies? That stinks! What's the secret?

(*TINY clears his throat*.)

TINY:
Crocuses croaking, yo-ho, yo-hoo -
Happiness waiting for me and you,
I hope and I pray, tomorrow the day
That all of my wishes come true!

(TINY *offers the K-Mart bag*)

TINY: For you.
IBANNI: You spend money on me? Chicken feed has maggots. Oil gone rancid. What? Candy? Don't want candy.
TINY: Haint candy.
IBANNI: Hair decoration?
TINY: Your hair super-dooper as is.
IBANNI: Hate decorations.
TINY: Haint a decoration.
IBANNI: Don't cotton to scents in a bottle.
TINY: Haint scent. You sweet 'nuf as is.
IBANNI: Color for my mouf?
TINY: You don't need none.
IBANNI: Cream?
TINY: Your skin soft like a baby rabbit.
IBANNI: A sash?
TINY: No.

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IBANNI: Tell me.
TINY: I understand the secret wants in your heart. (*He moves to kiss her. She backs away.)*
Open the present then. We'll have a kiss after.
IBANNI: It haint like that atween us, Tiny. What's atween us is more. Don't ruin it.

(*TINY clears his throat*.)

TINY:

Got up nerve; got up gut
It now, no "if" or "and" or "but"!
Got this here to prime your pump
Hoist me over the op'ning hump.
Take it and see: I know the score --
Take it and tell me you's mine evermore.
I love you like the sun, the moon
I love you night 'til afternoon
I love you --

IBANNI:
Tiny, shut up.

(*She opens the bag, takes out a shoe box, removes very gaudy shoes with spike heels. A moment. She puts the shoes back in the box, puts the box down.*)

IBANNI: Don't say nothing. ("nothing" pronounced correctly)

(*She goes into the house, into her room. CandleLIGHT. PETER waits on the narrow bed. She unbuttons his shirt. They kiss. LIGHTS fade in the room. Outside: TINY drops the shoe box in the fire, watches the fire consume it*.)

Scene 4. Mixing in Foreign Blood

IBANNI's room. PETER and IBANNI have made love. They lie on their backs, catching their breath.

IBANNI: I'm floating on the lake. Moon on my skin. Water soft as milk. Flowers sprouting from my mouth. Vines growing from my fingers and toes, curling to the sky, wrapping 'round mountain walls. Blanket of water lilies 'cross my belly. Warming the inside of me. Sweet wild water lilies where I once was a girl. Ah-kobo, Peter.
PETER: Ah-kobo.
IBANNI: Kobo-tu. [*I love you too*.]

(*She picks up the Times by the bed*.)

PETER: That will totally ruin the mood. (She kisses him.)
All right. Five minutes. (reading:) "Construction -- "
IBANNI: Let me.

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(*SPOT on HARD HATS with the* Times.)

HARD HAT 1: (*reading*) "Construction was halted on the planned 34-story federal office building in lower Manhattan when an excavation crew -- "
HARD HAT 2: Namely us.
HARD HAT 1: "...unearthed -- "
IBANNI: "Bone."
HARD HAT 1: "...shards."
IBANNI: "Bone shards."
HARD HAT 1: "Homicide detectives and an archeologist from the Land-marks and Preservation -- "
HARD HAT 2: They got our names?
HARD HAT 1: "...Commission -- "
HARD HAT 2: Blah blah blah. Where's our names?
IBANNI: "...were called in."

(*She is reading. PETER is amazed*.)

HARD HAT 2: Lemme see it.
IBANNI + **HARD HAT 2:** "The site, shown on 18th-century city maps as the -- "
HARD HAT 2: No names.
IBANNI: (*reads slowly but firmly*) "...the Negroes Burying Ground --"
HARD HAT 2: Tole the wife my picture'd be in the paper. Fuck. Not even my name. Fuck.

(*SPOT fades on HARD HATS*.)

IBANNI: "...had once been a cemetery for paupers, people of Afri-can descent and prisoners of war during the American Revolution."

PETER:	**IBANNI:**
You're reading!	I'm reading!

(BLACKOUT)

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Scene 5. Tiny Wakes Up to Lacey

The clearing. Dawn. LACEY hovers over depres-sed TINY who hasn't moved all night. He swigs from the jug. LACEY takes it, swigs.

TINY:

Redbird sits in the june-berry
On the ground.
Broke.
No nest.
No song.

LACEY: Anybody makes my Tiny man feel so low deserves to get kicked out of the Family and good riddance.
TINY: Haint never making another poem.
LACEY: She dumped you like spoilt milk. Like rotten egg. Like gorgeous shoes like I haint never got. Like I don't want no more truth be tole.
TINY: He still in her room?

(*LACEY nods. SIS enters*.)

SIS: Wedding gown done?
LACEY: I lost it.
SIS: You WHAT?!
LACEY: That gown been let in, out, up, down --
SIS: So you lost it?
LACEY: Was rinsing it in the crick. Slipped out my fingers. Washed away.
SIS: You awful person!
LACEY: Don't yell at me!
SIS: (*yelling*) YAAAAAH!
TINY: Don't need it, Sis.
LACEY: I's sorry, Tiny! I's sorry!
TINY: Don't need it.

(*LACEY bursts into tears. TINY puts his arms around her, wipes her tears with a corner of his shirt. SIS swigs from the bottle*.)

LACEY: I wish you could see, Tiny. I wish you could look at me and see how I love you how a woman loves a man.
TINY: I am looking at you, Lacey Mazie. I am looking at you now. How'd I miss when you changed from a girl to a woman? Dumb old me -- been like a duck wit its tail pointed skyward, its head under water chasing a bug. I's waking up to you now, Cousin Lacey.
SIS: Seems tings is ending and beginning too.
TINY: I will go to the K-Mart tomorrow. Purchase three ribbons. All diff'rent colors. No, yellow. Yel-low's your favo-rite. Hang the cost. You should have ribbons. Imagine that. I's getting ribbons for Lacey!
LACEY: Don't want tings what take money. Don't want nutting but you.

(*FERN enters from the house*.)

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FERN: Had sufficient indications, tell her. Predictables. Somewhat. Dreams. Somewhat powerful. I can do a reasonable job, but she won't listen to reason. Hangs on the beadstring like a eagle on a mouse. Desire haint power, she say. Shadow almos

(*FERN swigs from the jug several times*.)

FERN: reached the far slope, she say. What shadow? What far slope?

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Scene 6. Lights

IBANNI's room. PETER and IBANNI are still in bed. SIS slams in.

SIS: (*to Peter*) OUT.
IBANNI: Sis --
SIS: Git out my sister bed. Git your pants and GIT OUT!
PETER: But --

(*SIS flings his pants at him. PETER exits in a hurry, struggling to put the pants on.)*

SIS: You gotta marry Tiny. You and me gotta have plenty-plenty fat babies. Together, Banni. Us sisters. We'll take our babies on picnics. Show 'em pictures in the clouds. Tickle they toes wit touch-me-nots. Canoe on the lake. Mama and all them what passed smiling up from below the water where they lay. Watcher smiling down. I thought we'd do that ever so long. Please, Banni. Please don't go nowhere.
IBANNI: I caint marry Tiny.
SIS: (*a stomach pain*) Oh!(*another pai*:) OH! (*doubling ove*:) OH! OH! OWW!
IBANNI: I'll make some tea.

(*SIS grabs hold of IBANNI, doesn't let go. FERN enters. SIS howls, clutches her middle*.)

FERN: Get out the way.
IBANNI: It haint the baby.
FERN: How many you helped birth?
SIS: No! I want my sister! OWWW!

(*PETER comes to the door*.)

FERN: Lift her on the bed.
IBANNI: The baby haint coming 'til the gibbous moon.
FERN: PAH!
SIS: Don't never go -- OOOOWWW!
IBANNI: Yellin bad for the unborn. Make sour juices. Turn him green.
SIS: "Him"?
IBANNI: Your lights is bright boy color. Anybody could see.
SIS: (*looking Fern in the eye*) A real Watcher could see.
FERN: (*not ready to concede defeat, claps her hands, to Peter and Ibanni)* Boil water! Get pillows!
SIS: It stopped.

(*a moment)*

PETER: False labor.
IBANNI: Gas. She ate corn puddin wit a full moon up over last night.
FERN: She's worried you'll leave. That brought it on.

(***CATALINA*** *enters, supported by TINY and LACEY*.)

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CATALINA: Vultures circling. Shadow cutting like a mean knife. Haint gone be nutting left the correct woman don't step up quick and stop that shadow.
SIS: Banni saw my baby's lights.
FERN: So did I.
SIS: Banni knows the baby a boy.
PETER: Maybe she's wrong.
CATALINA: Ramapough will send a test.
SIS: A baby test?
CATALINA: A power test. Everybody outside.

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Scene 7. Joint Snake

The clearing. All increasingly in shadow. No woodland sounds. The New York Times is on a log bench. A curtain over the bower opening. TINY sticks 10 poles in the ground. FERN directs PETER which poles to hang five homemade white masks on. IBANNI, LACEY and SIS hang simple costumes on the poles. Tension thick as stew.

SIS: No birds. No crickets. Even the chickens is quiet.
LACEY: What the test gone be?
TINY: Someting mighty.
IBANNI: Ground unusual hot in this spot.
FERN: If you put on shoes like everybody --
IBANNI: Like hot ash.
FERN: Likely pepper-root.
IBANNI: This late, there'd be a stem, a bud. Smells like salt and fish. Like the cliff.

(*IBANNI and PETER put their hands on the spot. He jumps back*.)

PETER: It moved!
IBANNI: Like breathing under ground.

(*RAVEN crows once*.)

IBANNI: He say "dig."
FERN: Was jist gone say that.
SIS: Don't! Could be evil.

(*IBANNI unearths a small shell*.)

IBANNI: Folana.
CATALINA: Wa-e-mo. (*Good*.)
FERN: Yah. Thought so.
LACEY: It jist a shell.
IBANNI: Like the shells on the Watcher beadstring.

(*LACEY grabs the shell*.)

LACEY: A smelly ole shell!
SIS, **FERN** , **TINY:** Lacey!
LACEY: You all so serious! A shell haint a mighty ting.

(*LACEY skips off*.)

IBANNI: It haint a toy!
LACEY: (*to Sis*) Tag! You's it! Come on, Tiny!
SIS: I'll get her!

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IBANNI: Don't run.

(*SIS runs after LACEY.*)

LACEY: Run run fast as you can, Caint catch me, I'm a Indi -- (Indian)
SIS: (cries out:) AAA!

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