

Namibian play

!Kung play based on the ritual ceremony of a girl's coming of age

Edited by

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(English)

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P3ICL PROJECT



P3ICL project

The European Union has awarded the Department of Communication in the Faculty of Human Sciences, NUST, a project titled “Protecting, Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge and Culture” (Contract 393-946) under the Call for the *Revitalization of Languages*. This project ran from 2018 to 2020. The main aim of the project was to identify endangered indigenous

languages in Namibia and collect cultural expressions with a view to preserving them for future development. Through this project we hope to raise awareness and advocate for the preservation of the identified indigenous languages and cultures in Namibia.

The overall objective of the P3ICL project is to protect, promote and preserve the culture of Namibian indigenous groups, specifically: the Ovazemba, !Kung and Sifwe.

This publication is of a !Kung play which celebrates the coming of age of a young !Kung woman and her wedding. When a girl menstruates for the first time, she is isolated and kept in a hut for a month. This is very important, because the !Kung people believe that if this young girl walks about, she will cause the death of all flora and fauna. Further, during this period, the girl is also taught what it means to become a woman to prepare her for the next stage in life. Soon after a month is over, she is wooed and married to the best suitor.

The project would not have been possible without the assistance of the following: The data collectors, Frans Tsame and the !Kung elders. The P3ICL team would like to express their eternal and deepfelt gratitude to all the participants in the project.

1. **Data collectors:** Franse Tsame, Drixi Jakobs, Franciska Barase, Linda Jakobs and John Barase.
2. **Villages:** Corridors, 15, 17, 18, Aminuis and Aranos.

//Xansa //”aan qxoa sa /aan
!Khung Theatre Production)

SYNOPSIS

//amsa kaan aan ke Qae ke a n/ahi sae ke //”a eke /o eke si/aqan ka sa’an. //amsa kaan sai //am ki kuri g/ahi. John ee si si /g”anya- /q”an-ya ka g!xamxte /ai Taa, Frans. John sai n!uni N#AI-SAA ee a n//ae Qaan kee n//aa ke ee Qae qai #aqi /oe n/ae //amsa kaan aan ki /qam /aan, aan #qhaa /uni.

CHARACTERS

- N#AI-SAA** - N#AI-SAA ee a sae ka //”ae #uka sai /aan na /ai n!ahi soe nn sai //xaa- //xaa ke tam ke si/aqan ka sa’an.
- QAE** - Thank /ai ki N#AI-SAA /ae n!ore sa’an siQhaa kuu kee.
- FRANS** - Ke Qee si-/xaba ka sa’an ee qaqa sthoo ki #uka ki tshai n/ai /xahe ki /qam n/ai N#AI-SAA.
- JOHN** - Ee tshoo //ai ki N#AI-SAA Uu a n#aqe ee a tana n/ae Qaa ee Qae qai n/ai tahi kee. Xata Hanna Qae //hoa /qam ki #ain kai ki ee /ai.
- TAA** - G!xxanti ka //amsa /ae taa g!xae /aan !khunyake

CAST AND CHARACTERS

- N#AI-SAA** - **Trixy Jacobs**
- QAE** - **Frieda Tsame**
- FRANS** - **Frans Tsame**
- JOHN** - **Veronica Khainamses**
- TAA** - **Trixy Jacobs**

SCENE #UI

N/hama G!xamte /aan a /aan n//haisa /ai tuu kuu !”aan ku i

TAA: Uu g/ahaan koo!! Nn //”aan a Qqxum nn #hain ku a sai kee N/ai ka //”am ka //”amsa ka ka //xa//xa ki ki. N/ahisa kaa. //”amsa ka n#ahan ka n/oi ii !Khunyake. G!ahaan nn ka !obe kuu ka //”amsa Tuu n#um /aan ky/qam kuu g!axa nku kuu /ai ki khoxa qae ke ki Sofia ke. Si’qan ke //”aan !ain ke, ke se /qahi Kalahari ke n!ore ke ee se /xa//xa ke sitani g/ahan ke //”aan so’ani kee. Ti qae Sofia ee qai ka Khoxa /aqi !khunyake //”aan.

Hammah ee ke Oqae /aqi ka n//ahi Uqru ke n//ahe soe kaa. (Lights fade out and fade into a general wash.)

QAE: Frans, Aa /'oa tshuu ki A!ai sa'an nn na koa ki //hau aqa.

FRANS: Nn qae Nn //hoa ka /'khang. Nn Kuu /'aa /O"aan ka //'"anake N#um kaan.

QAE: (QXai) nn //'"hoa se n/ae si/xae ma'am ka ku !au Ahang ka kua aa ka.

FRANS: Ee kng /'aan /aan Ungsa nn /'aan.

QAE: (/'"ae ki John si sai kaan) Xata si/xaan ka //ari se n/oni ki N#AI-SAA.

JOHN: Khoeka tana n/ae.

QAE: Aa si n/are ka tahi?

JOHN: (Ee n/ai situum nn tshuu n/ai Frans) Aa ha #xahi nn Oaa?

FRANS: Na #xahi nn #hain.

JOHN: Nn //hoa si n//are ka aa. Nn si N//are ki N#AI-SAA.

QAE: N#AI-SAA g/ahi, ee khoeka //xa//xa ke tam.

JOHN: N#AI-SAA: (D"oma) ee #"aum ke kuru ke si/aqan ke kee ka /qhua ke 'n/hang ke. Nn si n!uni kng Oaa a n/hanake.

FRANS: Aa si n//are ka tahi nn #hain?

JOHN: (Ee n/ai Frans sa'an) Aa si n!uni ka tahi kahang?

QAE: (Ke John) Nn ka n//aqhi Tee n/aa?

JOHN: Ee toxoba /ai Oai. Nn n/ai Nn /'aan a Oqxum nn #hain ee Qae uqru ki si n/ahi soe, nn n/aan ka ka /qhuu tana. (Frans)

FRANS: Oh, na ka huika /aan sitaan mahoeka ka. Ka si kuru ka tam kaa.

JOHN: Aa /um ka G!xamte saxu aa //aa #'"ua ka khang /ai kee.

QAE: Ee ka si /ui tee n/ai John /ai Frans ke ee n/ai Uu /um n/ai si/xaan /hoa #'"auka kahang /ai kee. Ki /ai ke Oqe ke n/ahi N#AI-SAA ki n/ai kaa.

JOHN: (*!obe ke Frans*) Aa ka taqan?

FRANS: Xata nn khang /ai n/ai NḽAI-SAA.

JOHN: Tah!?!

FRANS: Ee nn ḽhain. NḽAI-SAA /"aan nn si qaqa g!ai se /"aan /ai se g!axa.

JOHN: (*Qxai*) Uu qaqa g!au /aan n/uu g!axa nn qain.

QAE: Nn qain ka !ari-xamake uu ka g!au /"aan /nuu g!axa kee.

JOHN: Aa, aa si/ue si!'aa se n/ae.

QAE: Frans saa ku ki nḽuhin ke ee saa ku nḽhaisa kao.

JOHN: Nn si khang tahi khang?

FRANS: Ee.

JOHN: Nn Khang /ai n/ang ḽaa.

FRANS: Aa si n//arake tahi nn ḽhain?

JOHN: /"aa kua.

QAE: (*Qxahi*) Aa ḽaa ee haa?

JOHN: Ee /ai... N!"aanti sa'an nn si glahe.

FRANS: Glahe? Nn a n/ae ee tuu ḽaan ke !ora soe. Ka kee n//ahe.

JOHN: Nḽaqa ka ḽaan kaan soe. (*/"ae ke si xaba kaan*) Nn ḽaa si n/hana /ai NḽAI-SAA. Ee ka /"ae ka /uni kee.

QAE: (*Ee ka n/ai bikiri ka khee ke*) Ee n/aan John nn /aa nḽaqa ki ḽquqnu uu ka /"ae ka'an kaa.

JOHN: Nn kai na? Ee qae qaqa n/aan si N//hanake xata ii ka n/aan. (*/Ae si ntaga*).

FRANS: Nn ḽhain si n//are ka tahi?

QAE: John si n/aan NḽAI-SAA qae gai ki /ue n/ai John ḽaa ee qai ka si /"aa kee.

FRANS: Xata qham kii?

QAE: G!huu ꞑui /ai NꞑAI-SAA qae uu ku /ubi qham. (*Lights fade out to black*)

SCENE ꞑUM

Lights fade in to the TAA, who is eating some meat and is seemingly enjoying it.

TAA: Frans /ai NꞑAI-SAA qai !ua /"aan n/uu g!axa n/ai /ai /"au G!xaa n/ai si n/hana /au g!axa ee ka /"ona /"ae kee. Oqae si/aqama /ai ka /"ae kee Uu si oqre ki n!ahi soe ee /ham tuu ki g//au kee ka /"ae kaan NꞑAI-SAA ka g//au ke tam ke si/aqam kaan sa'an. Ee ka //xa-//xa ke tam ka ungsa, ee ꞑ" aun ke hau /ai /ae n/ang kee... /ae kia n//ahisa. Ee ka si aan ke tam n/ai si sa'an ke tam, si doqna ke tam ke //hamtuu. Sitani kaan si khang tam ki tshai g!xai ka tuu g!xabu ka /ai kii.

FRANS: (*Uqru /ai ka /"aan O"aan tam ki*) Nn qaqan //hoa sitaqan.

QAE: Taqan tahi Frans?

FRANS: Tahi kng ki NꞑAI-SAA uqru tshuu ki n!ahi soe ka //ae ka !'am ka khang.

QAE: li /aa G!xamte nng, /aan ungsa.

FRANS: Nn si kuri kng tam. Nn si n/aan si/aqa O"ani g!axa aan /hoa kua si /ai kee.

QAE: Ee, nn kina sitani aan si tahba ii /aa g!xamte aan si n/aa. Ka /"ae ma'an John Uqru nn ꞑaise taa.

JOHN: (*Kee Taa*) Aa /aa ka tzahan ka kui dangi (*Ee qhanya*) nn se sai ka khang.

QAE: John, Aa si uqru ki si n!"aan.

JOHN: N//ahi lobe ke taa kae ke ee a nꞑaqa kng ka sitani !aan, eek u hua n/aan nn ki nhh!uung. Nn ku //hoa n/lae silxaam.

QAE: Xata a kuu n/ae si/aqan ee.

FRANS: Aa taqa ka n/hana /ai NꞑAI-SAA?

JOHN: (*Ke QAE*) Nn ka //hoa ahan. Nn si khan tahi /ae taa ke /uti ke n/aan.

QAE: (D'oma) Aa #haa //”ae tahi /ai tuu #aan tee.

JOHN: Uu //aa g!oan kng sitani !aan (Ki Frans) Ae xareke n#aqa khang nn /hoa qaga uqrie n//aa ka khaa ke.

QAE: N#ohma /aa ka John.

FRANS: Nn a ka khan tahi nn #hain?

JOHN: (Ke Frans) /aa kua. (Ke QAE) Nn si n/uni ka sitani soe kaan n//huun kee.

QAE: Tahi?

JOHN: Nn si n/ae ki #ae saa ke n//ahe ki sthai qai.

FRANS: Tahi?

JOHN: Sita kaan aan si n//aan //ae ka !’amka.

QAE: Aa ku //hoa si n//huun kai ka sitan n//aaka taqi si n/aan //ae !”am ka ke.

JOHN: G!xamte kaan kai /ai xata Nn //hoa si n#”ain n/aa ku qaga /ai ki tshai ki ke.

QAE: Ass //hoa si n/uhung ka n/haama ka ka. Nn !ain aa ka si n/aan nn qai n/aa //”ae ka !”amka kee.

JOHN: Aa ka //hoa /qhuu t”saan Na ka n/ae Oqaqe a saa.

FRANS: A ha si saa //”aan ki N#AI-SAA?

JOHN: N#aqa ka sitan kaan soe nn /hae. //hoa si n/aan ki khare n/aa kng n !hhuun kii. Nn qagan #”aun kng tam nn ku dzoqra kii.

QAE: //hoa toxoba si //ore ki Frans kng ki kam so eke, ee !ain nn si hui.

JOHN: Aa #qhaa si tana n/ae?

QAE: Na kua aa sitana n/aa Oaa ke.

JOHN: Sitaan //”aa nn kuu khang n/aan Oaa kaan.

FRANS: Nn si #ain n/hang sitani #”aun ka kang tam ka Oaa kee.

JOHN: Nn /qhae! (*Nn N!aha g!abi ke n/ai dzori Frans*)

QAE: Aa ka //hoa dzori Frans n//aha kae.

JOHN: (*Ee !am ki g!abi*) Nn n/aan Uu ka ≠ai N≠AI-SAA sai.

FRANS: Ee N!aa qaqa /ae ka /ae soe.

QAE: Si n//are ki qaham aa ka ≠au ka /xahi g//ua n/ai Oquqnu ke ki ka G!xamte si n/ai eahi kee.

JOHN: li /aa G!xamte qai n//aa, G!xamte //aan sitani kaan /hoa sin/ara ka tahan.

QAE: li ≠uan ki /qhuu kngke Aa t'saan n/aan g!ari xamake,

JOHN: //aan ka Mahnti Oqum nn ka !ain kee. (*Nn n≠aqa*)

SCENE //HAIN

Frans tshuu /aan Oaan n/oqan gaho /aan ee /aa gxaba /xaan, nn n/hain.

TAA: (*Oqum*) Si/xaba ka ka /obe ee si siOqumka si/oqma //aan ke. N≠AI-SAA ke si/aqan /aan saqan so eke. Nn saa ku ka g!ari ke a /hoa ke Taa xaa ka //hamsakaan n=ken n saa kuu n//ai N≠AI-SAA, !xuun /aqi ma'an Ah nn si≠ain n/ai N≠AI-SAA ee ka.

Si/aqma ka n≠aqa //ung ka khoxa Qae Sofia sai ka /Hoa, /Khung, Naro ke. li Qae Sofia ke Qoqa g/hai skole ii ki Coridro 17 ki n/ai Ouru !khunyake /au li Ouru ku n/aqa /ai n/ai quri. Ee g/ahi n//ahe //aan sitani !axa.

JOHN: Ee n//hung ke /≠omake nn si (*≠ain nn say n/ai Frans ka //abi Oai*) Nn kue a si-tain kee.

FRANS: NOhahi aa sitana //aan. Nn ≠hain?

JOHN: //aa Kau.

FRANS: (*N//aqa sai*) Ee nn ≠ain.

JOHN: Aa ka !abe kng n?aang ≠ahi ka si n!uni kaan //ao Oaa n?'ang?

FRANS: ≠ahi n//ang?

JOHN: Si/xae-ma'an /hoa si n/hhabe khai /'aan nn ke. Aa !'ainsi /um n/aan nn Oaa n/ang ke kae kee, ke NǀAI-SAA.

FRANS: Nn ǂhain n/aa koo. (*D'oma*) NǀAI-SAA /'aan nn si si 'n//ahana.

JOHN: Tahi? (*D'oma*) Nn G!ain.

FRANS: (*Sa'an N!ahru*) Aa si n//areka tahi?

JOHN: //''aa kua! Nn //''au si n!uni aa G!au g/aan kee.

FRANS: Ee Nn ǂhain.

JOHN: //''abe ka ka 'n/hanasa ke taho soe.

FRANS: Nn /'aan a Oqxum nn ǂhain.

JOHN: Xata NǀAI-SAA ee si n//ahana /'aan Oaa.

FRANS: Xata Nn ǂhain aa a n/aan...

JOHN: //''aa Kau! (*Nn saa*) Nǂaqa kng ki taho soe, nn si n/ang, Oaa /ait oho soe nn n!' ahang saa ki Frans. (*n//ai Oai ma'an ki Frans*)

FRANS: Nn ǂhain Aa ku //hoa.

JOHN: Oh, sita ǂ''ua qxaa ke n//ahe kae ke.

FRANS: Aa si n//are ka tahi?

JOHN: //''aa kua. (*Nn saa*)

FRANS: Aa /'aan ma'anti ka !xaan.

SCENE //HAKA

/ai Frans /ai John Uu n//aha aan /ai Ee mahoeaka. Si kuri kaa sita ee /aan ka n/hhama NǀAI-SAA /aan.

TAA: //ae a sai taa /ae taa /'aan siOqxhum. NǀAI-SAA /aa n//aisa //hoa taqiu ka //ai n//aa ke si kuri si/aqan kee. Si/xaan ma'am si thing ka nǂuhn sa'ani nn si doqru sa'ani, nn /quqn ku thaba kee.

JOHN: *(Uu ka sai ki n!ahi ke) Sii ka //ai ka //''ae haka kose si/aqma kaa aan a n#aqqa ki n!ahi soe.*

QAE: N/ahi John.

FRANS: Nn hina ki tshai kai kii?

QAE: *(Qxai) Aa #''aun ka kuri-kuri qain ka kue ee kee.*

FRANS: Nn si n!uni kaan nn a qain se sai n/aan tam kee.

JOHN: Aa #''au ka qain nn kue ee *(Nn g//xa Oaa) Ee ka ha saa /qhuu?*

QAE: Hake?

JOHN: Nn Oaa. Ee qona tahsa ke taa. *(John saa si g!ahe Oaa) //hao si g/oa ki tuu kee. (Nn saa)*

QAE: Nn //hoa qaqan n/ai John Oaa ee tshao-tshao ka n/hamake.

FRANS: Ee ka n#aqqa ka //''ae haka.

QAE: //hoa ka //''ae ka !''am kaa...

FRANS: Nn ka #''aan //''ae nn ka si tahba kng?

QAE: Frans, tshai qai ki ii //hoa ka ki tshai /ai John Oaa tzaqni kaan, /aan si/xaan ma'ami kaan kaa m'aa ki dzhain kaan. Tshai qai ki N#AI-SAA ki tshai.

TAA: Uu g/aan koo, n/hama tsao-tshao /aan so''aan uu a qahe ka n//ahisa. Hanna si g/uhm ke tam ka //''ai, /ae g!xara. Ki buru ke sab nn kui #xam so''aan ka !qasa tam ke n#omake so eke //hoa qayi tuu kee, /aan n!''aan sa'an ka aan /ae g!oe. Nn ka #um a saa tuu ka /aa /qase ke ee ka qaye.

Ka //amsa ma'am ka Frans kua ke tam nn si ts'ari John ki //''ai n#ahni si /ai kii.

JOHN: Tahi ka kaan aan? T'ahi ke si/xae ma'an kaan kan si /qung ka kaan?

QAE: Ee //hoa si n!uni ke g/ohe ee //''aan ke Oqumse ke. *(Nn saa)*

JOHN: Nn a /uni? (//hoa Frans #ue, John xare ke si n//ahi n/ai si /xgan nn koa nn Oaa.

QAE: *(N#aqqa ki n!ahi soe) Ee g!ahi!*

JOHN: Ka //”ae.

TAA: Ke tshai qai n//ahisa uu si ee si-Oqxobe ka//uni-sa n//oqhe, //”aan ki tshai qai ki nn qaga n/ai nn Qae Sofia //”aan !khunyake /ai tuu g!xabu ka si /xqahan n!ora.

JOHN: Nn a !”ai xata Oqae si/xaba kaan a thaa kaan. Xata Oqae ee mahannti si!’oa nn kha’i. Nn sa’a ku si!’oa ken n sa ku n~~h~~ohama kee. *Taa ke khare ke ee a n/aan ke khare.*

TAA: Frans /ai **N~~h~~AI-SAA** Uu a /xquu Uu ki /qam Uu hao /qam ku g!axa kee /au ka n//ahasa. N/ai n!aisi si /ai.

N!aise Frans /ai N~~h~~AI-SAA ee a n~~h~~aaqa.

English Translation
The Last Dance at Dusk
(!Kung Theatre Production)

SYNOPSIS

This is the story of a young girl who has just experienced her first menstruation and the ritual for womanhood is underway. The story tells of the events taking place while the ritual is being observed. John totally disregards the traditional practice and continuously confronts the Narrator and Frans. Throughout the story, John demands that Hannah be given to his son according to a promise made at the death bed of her mother. It's a story filled with love, passion and confrontations; it eventually ends as a happily ever after tale.

CHARACTERS

- HANNAH** - Hannah has just experienced her first menstruation and she is in a hut, undergoing the instruction for becoming a woman.
- MOTHER** - Mediating between Hannah and the world outside.
- FRANS** - The childhood crush of Hannah; he has been waiting outside since day one, availing himself for any task related to Hannah.
- JOHN** - He is waiting for Hannah to be brought outside so that he can start negotiating for his son. According to him, she has been spoken for with the deceased mother. However, Hannah and Mother do not like the idea, nor do they trust his claim.
- NARRATOR** - The Storyteller and Guardian of the cultural practices of the !Khung people.

CAST AND CHARACTERS

- HANNAH** - **Trixy Jacobs**
- MOTHER** - **Frieda Tsame**
- FRANS** - **Frans Tsame**
- JOHN** - **Veronica Khainamses**
- NARRATOR** - **Trixy Jacobs**

SCENE ONE

The play starts with traditional choral music in the background. Lights fade onto the narrator who is seated stage right. We also see people seated on a log in front of the narrator.

NARRATOR: Good evening and thank you for joining me for another story night. As practised in our community for years and many decades, storytelling is an important activity among the !Khung people. Tonight, I am going to tell you the love story of two young people

who lived under the queenship of a very brave and heroic woman called Queen Sofia. A woman moulded with the sand and clay of the Kalahari Desert and rains, to learn the names of all trees and roots and animals. Most importantly, Queen Sofia was the treasured leader of our people, the !Kung people. Hannah has just experienced her first menstruation and as per traditional practice she has been put in a hut for two weeks. *(Lights fade out and fade into a general wash.)*

MOTHER: Frans, you have been sitting all day on that log, as if to safeguard the hut.

FRANS: Mother, I don't mind. If it were possible, I would sleep here for the next two weeks.

MOTHER: *(Laughs)* I don't remember seeing any young man committed this much. Since we put Hannah in the hut, you have been coming and going and being helpful.

FRANS: She is the love of my life and I will do whatever it takes to get her.

MOTHER: *(As John walks in)* But many other young men have shown an interest in Hannah.

JOHN: Unfortunately, she is spoken for.

MOTHER: What do you mean?

JOHN: Just that. *(He takes a seat close to Frans)* Anyway, how is my child doing?

FRANS: I am fine, Uncle.

JOHN: I am not talking about you. I am asking about Hannah.

MOTHER: Hannah is fine and she is learning fast...

JOHN: *(Smiles)* She must. Becoming a woman is very important, but knowing how to take care Of your husband is crucial. I wouldn't want my son to starve after the wedding.

FRANS: What do you mean, Uncle?

JOHN: Just that. *(Looks at Frans)* What is it that you want here?

MOTHER: *(To John)* Can I offer you some tea?

JOHN: Yes, please, and a piece of meat will be welcome. *(Mother goes to the kitchen)* Should I repeat myself? *(Pokes Frans)*

FRANS: Oh, I am helping with whatever needs to be done.

JOHN: But you know that by tradition you are not supposed to be around here.

MOTHER: *(As she walks in with the tea)* Yes, you should know better, Frans.
(As she gives John the tea) You too, John, during a young girl's first menstruation process, no men or boys are allowed near the ritual.

JOHN: *(To Frans)* Do you hear that?

FRANS: But I am here for Hannah.

JOHN: What?!

FRANS: Yes, Uncle. Hannah and I promised each other.

JOHN: *(Laughs out loud)* You "promised" each other? That is so cute.

MOTHER: In fact, it is beautiful to see young people make love promises to each other.

JOHN: And you are encouraging him...

MOTHER: If Frans were not respectful of his elders, he would have asked you the same question.

JOHN: What I am doing here?

FRANS: Yes.

JOHN: I am here for my son.

FRANS: What do you mean, Uncle?

JOHN: Just that.

MOTHER: *(Laughs)* But where is your son?

JOHN: He is around...in the veld hunting.

FRANS: Hunting? I saw him sleeping under the tree at your house.

JOHN: Stay out of this. It does not concern you. *(As he rises)* My son is getting married to Hannah as soon as the menstruation ritual is over.

MOTHER: *(As she takes the cup from him)* Well John, it is all up to the children these days.

JOHN: Is that so? *(As he walks away)* She was promised to me by her mother and I am going to see it through. *(He exits)*

FRANS: What does Uncle mean?

MOTHER: John claims that Hannah's mother agreed, on her death bed, to give Hannah away to John's son.

FRANS: But is that true?

MOTHER: Only the gods, John and Hannah's mother will know the truth.

(Lights fade out to black)

SCENE TWO

Lights fade in to the narrator, who is eating some meat and enjoying it, seemingly.

NARRATOR: Frans and Hannah promised each other to continue their courtship after the month-long menstruation process. They promised each other love and eventual marriage.

During the menstruation process, young girls are isolated in a traditional hut and cared for by elderly women. In this case, Hannah will be taught the rules and given the tools of womanhood. She will be taught about life skills, how to behave as a young adult, how to look after herself and, when ready to take a husband, how to treat and care for her family. As this teaching and guidance takes place, she is exempt from performing certain tasks; she is fed, bathed and clothed by an elderly woman. All these are done in preparation for the big day, the day she is presented to the family and community.
(Lights fade out to general wash)

FRANS: *(Enters the stage with some firewood)* I still don't understand this.

MOTHER: Understand what, Frans?

FRANS: Why my Hannah should be kept in the hut for so long?

MOTHER: It is our tradition, our way of life.

FRANS: But is it necessary? I mean, I don't see other girls going through the same ritual.

MOTHER: Well, that is the danger of modernity. Things are changing and some of our traditional practices are dying out. *(Just then John walks in, shouting at somebody backstage)*

JOHN: *(To somebody offstage)* You are as useless as donkey dung. *(Very angry)* I am coming back for you.

MOTHER: John, you are disturbing us.

JOHN: Then tell that man to stay out of my business. How dare he say I am too old to take another wife.

MOTHER: But are you taking another wife?

FRANS: Are you marrying Hannah?

JOHN: *(To Mother)* Of course not. What can I possibly do with another wife?

MOTHER: *(Smiles)* Then why bother with what people say?

JOHN: They just need to stay out of my business. *(To Frans)* You too. Get out of here before I break my stick on your head.

MOTHER: There is no need for violence, John.

FRANS: But what did I do, Uncle?

JOHN: *(To Frans)* Just that. *(To Mother)* I have decided that this process should be stopped.

MOTHER: What?!

JOHN: I am taking her home with me today.

FRANS: What?!

JOHN: This has been going on for too long. Besides, this traditional practice is outdated and I can't remember the last ritual we had.

MOTHER: You cannot just stop a ritual because you think it is too long. You are right to say that it has been a while since we've observed such an important practice.

JOHN: And there is no need to bring it back. Can I then take the girl and go?

FRANS: And where are you taking my Hannah to?

JOHN: Stay out of this, young man. Don't be fooled by my age. I am still able to give you a good beating.

MOTHER: Can you please not threaten Frans in my yard? He has been nothing but good and helpful.

JOHN: So now you are speaking for him?

MOTHER: Just as you are speaking for your son.

JOHN: This has nothing to do with my son.

FRANS: I thought everything here has to do with your son.

JOHN: Young man! (*Lifts his walking stick to hit Frans*)

MOTHER: I dare you to hit Frans with that stick.

JOHN: (*Brings the stick down and sighs heavily*) Can you bring Hannah now?

FRANS: But the ritual is still on.

MOTHER: Frans is right and you of all people should observe and respect our traditions. You are the one who is supposed to teach the young people about our customs and practices. Not destroy them.

JOHN: Well, it is all long destroyed, and besides, we are the last of all the people here. Our rituals and traditions mean nothing anymore.

MOTHER: That is why we need to protect them and reintroduce them to the young people.

JOHN: You do that. (*As he exits*) I will be more than happy if they all disappear and are forgotten. (*Exits*)

SCENE THREE

Lights fade in centre stage and Frans is seated on the logs, day-dreaming. He breaks into a song and dance, followed by some poetry.

NARRATOR: *(Excited)* This young man knows how to soften a woman's heart. Hannah is a very lucky woman. If I were younger... way younger, and not the narrator of this story, I would have been Hannah, the !Khung goddess... Oh, this reminds me. Hannah is the descendant of Queen Sofia, the /Hoa, !Kung and Naro people. It was Queen Sofia who requested the construction of the only school in Corridor 17 so that the San children from nearby villages could attend school. Her hard work and leadership brought about the building of houses, as well as a needlework hall for her people. But, back to our story...

JOHN: *(Standing by the footpath and noticing Frans walk by, carrying some meat)* Just as I thought. Young man!

FRANS: *(Startled)* Are you talking to me, Uncle?

JOHN: Just that!

FRANS: *(Moves closer cautiously)* Yes, Uncle?

JOHN: Would you care to tell me what it is you want with my son's wife?

FRANS: Whose wife?

JOHN: Young man, don't try and play smart with me. You very well know that I am talking about Hannah, my daughter-in-law.

FRANS: Well... you see, Uncle, *(Clears throat)* Hannah and I are planning to get married in the future.

JOHN: What? *(Pauses and smiles)* Good, good to hear that.

FRANS: *(Confused)* What do you mean?

JOHN: Just that! Now this is what I want you to do -

FRANS: Yes, Uncle?

JOHN: Keep your marriage plans in the future.

FRANS: Thank you, Uncle.

JOHN: For now, Hannah is getting married to my son.

FRANS: But Uncle, you just said...

JOHN: Just that! *(As he walks away)* Stay out of my way... I mean my son's way. *(He walks towards Frans)* I will deliver this myself. *(Takes the piece of meat from Frans)*

FRANS: Uncle, you cannot just...

JOHN: Oh, one more thing. Stay away from that house.

FRANS: What do you mean?

JOHN: Just that. *(He walks off stage)*

FRANS: This is so unfair. *(Lights fade out)*

SCENE FOUR

Lights fade into a general wash on stage. The Narrator, Mother, Frans and John are all on stage. Each one is busy with their own little tasks in preparation for the presentation of Hannah.

NARRATOR: Finally, the day has come and everybody is excited. Hannah's family cannot wait to receive and welcome her into womanhood. The young men have been preparing themselves as well. Cleaning their faces and tightening their bows and sharpening their spears.

JOHN: *(As Mother appears from the hut)* How long still are we going to wait for this young girl to make an appearance?

MOTHER: Very soon, John.

FRANS: How do I look today?

MOTHER: *(Laughs)* You're looking good, as always.

FRANS: But I want to look handsome for her. I mean the competition is intense!

JOHN: You should look smart, like him. *(Points to his son)* Now where did he disappear to again?

MOTHER: Who?

JOHN: My son. He is such an embarrassment. *(John walks off to look for his son)* Stop hiding

behind people and... *(He walks off stage)*

MOTHER: I have never seen John's son since we started with this process.

FRANS: How long before she is brought out?

MOTHER: Not very long.

FRANS: Will I have time to go home and change?

MOTHER: Frans, today is not about you. Neither is it about John and his mysterious son, nor the many young men who have been here as frequently as bees at a beehive. This day is about Hannah.

NARRATOR: After a month of preparation, a ceremony is held at the end of the process, which includes giving medicine to the family and community. As part of the ceremony Hannah will be adorned with jewellery on her head and some face painting, to resemble an Oryx. Medicine will also be applied to her feet to protect the community when she walks around, and, more importantly, to let the rain come. Because it is believed that if she just walks around without the medicine, she might stop everything, even the rain.

That day the family and friends and the community celebrated until late into the night. Like never before, the moon and the stars joined in the celebration. Their light shone and twinkled, and in the darkness of nights, I could see Queen Sofia and the rest of the !Kung elders, who went ahead, dancing in the night sky and milky way. *(Lights fade to a special in the middle of the stage)*

Out of sheer excitement Frans breaks into a praise poem and this brings John back on the stage, looking very puzzled.

JOHN: What is going on here? Why is this young man making so much noise?

MOTHER: He cannot contain his excitement anymore. *(She disappears into the hut)*

JOHN: Was that all? *(Not to be outdone by Frans, John also goes into song and dance and praise for his son)*

MOTHER: *(Comes out of the hut)* She is ready!

FRANS: About time.

JOHN: I admit defeat. I've tried so hard to win her hand for my son, but that boy has had the upper hand all the while. If my bones were not tired and my breath didn't smell of decay, I could have fought that young man and secured the love of Hannah. *(Sighs)* But

Translated by Frans Tsame

even a fool knows when his foolery is just for the entertainment of the people around him.

NARRATOR: As for Frans and me, we fulfilled our promises to each other, and shortly afterwards we got married and lived happily ever after.

Lights fade out into a special of a picture of Frans and Hannah waving to the audience. Black out.

Conceptualised and written by Keamogetsi J. Molapong