



Sample Pages from
The Myths at the Edge of the World

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THE MYTHS AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Matt Webster



The Myths at the Edge of the World
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Casting

The play can be performed with 7-30 actors.

Actor 1: (male) Josh - Blue Dragon - Cedar - God 4

Actor 2: (male) Ted - Black Dragon - Pine - God 1

Actor 3: (female) Vicky - Yellow Dragon - Hen - Sequoia - God 3

Actor 4: (female) Gina - White Dragon - Chameleon - Sycamore - God 2

Actor 5: (either) Narrator 1 - Sky - Oak - Nanautzin

Actor 6: (either) Narrator 2 - Obatala - Birch - Rich Beautiful God

Actor 7: (female) Wind - Sentoukun - Orunla - Girl

OR

Feel free to change the character combinations to suit your production.

OR

The roles can be played individually.

Suggestions for Scenic Elements and Scene Shifts

The stage is set at the top of the play to resemble an abstract forest scene. A simple leaf pattern on flats and the ground is all that is needed, but more could be done as budgets and design expertise dictates.

A stream is flowing through the center of the stage, left to right. The stream can be created with a large piece of blue fabric or with lighting or with any other effect that implies water running across the stage.

As the scenes shift from location to location, the look of the set will change. From forest to waterworld, from water to land, land to sky, sky to sun and moon. These do **NOT** need to be realistic, but can be insinuated or abstract using lights or simple scenic elements. It should, however, always show progression and a sense of building up the world, one piece at a time.

Cutting for Competition

This play may be cut for competition purposes. However, the playwright recommends that the cuts be made from the 1st, 2nd, or 4th myths and not *The Girl Who Scattered the Stars* due to the rhyme scheme of that piece. Also, if at all possible, please refrain from cutting the dramatic action of the four campers.

Original Production

The Myths at the Edge of the World was originally performed at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte - December 1996

Written and Directed by: Matt Webster

Choreographed by: Pam Sofras

Set and Costume Design by: Rita Shumaker

Lighting Design by: Kelly Allison

Gina: April Jernigan

Josh: David Scott

Ted: Jimmy Chrismon

Vicky: Shani Harper

Ensemble: Chris Armogida

Paris Battle

Glenn Dotson

Michelle Glasscock

Christel Harvey

Brandy Hyatt

Melissa Lee

Adam Lindsay

Drew Nowlin

Maki Okoshi

Keith Roof

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this play to Karen for her unwavering love and support and I would like to thank the two Sues - Susie Rudisill and Susan Pearson, for their mentoring, guidance and passion.

The stage is dark. Voices are heard from offstage, behind the audience.

GINA: Oh great, we are definitely lost.

TED: When you say lost...you mean...?

GINA: I mean lost. I mean I don't know where the heck we are.

VICKY: Oh, don't say that. It's getting dark.

JOSH: And it's way past dinner.

They slowly make their way down the aisles and toward the stage.

VICKY: We are about to be lost in the woods, in the dark, surrounded by wild animals, and all you can think about is dinner?

JOSH: No! How shallow do you think I am? (pause) I'm thinking about dessert too.

GINA: Well you had better start thinking about finding the trail back to the campground or you might end up BEING dinner if you know what I mean.

VICKY: Does anybody have a signal on their phones yet?

TED: You're kidding, right?

GINA: My phone stopped working 5 minutes after we got off the freeway.

JOSH: I already told you, I left my phone in my duffle bag under my emergency stash of Ho Hos.

VICKY: Well, great...

TED: Does any of this look familiar?

VICKY: No.

JOSH: Not a bit.

GINA: Each and every one of these trees looks exactly like each and every other tree. Who planted this stupid forest anyway? An occasional bright purple tree would go a long way towards marking the trail.

TED: Wait! (they all stop) Listen... (they listen) do you hear water? Like a stream?

VICKY: Yeah! Up ahead. Let's go find it.

JOSH: Why?

VICKY: Because, trail-mix-for-brains, the campsite was next to a stream.

JOSH: Do you have trail mix?

GINA: Come on!

They climb up on stage and look around.

VICKY: All right! There's the stream, now all we have to do is follow it north and we should run right into the camp.

TED: Great! Where's north?

VICKY: I don't know. Don't you have a compass?

TED: Why would I have a compass?

GINA: I thought you were an Eagle Scout.

TED: Who told you that?

GINA: You did! You said you were a fourth degree Eagle Scout with a meritorious achievement cluster, two life-saving commendations, and gold paratrooper wings.

TED: I might have exaggerated a little.

VICKY: Meaning what? That you are only a third degree Eagle Scout?

TED: Um...more like Cub Scout...

GINA: What!?!

TED: ...drop out...

VICKY: Great!

TED: ...fourth class.

GINA: So you have no scouting skills at all.

TED: I can make a wallet.

VICKY: What about you, Gina? Didn't you used to be a Brownie?

JOSH: Who has a brownie?

GINA: Yes Vicky, I made it all the way to Girl Scout, but all we ever did was sell cookies. And no Josh, I don't have any with me so don't even ask. Our troop leader was more into cookies than camping.

JOSH: Me too.

VICKY: So what do we do?

GINA: We can wait for the North Star to come out and then try to follow the stream by flashlight. The bank seems pretty wide, so we should be safe.

TED: What do we do until then?

JOSH: I don't know about you guys, but I am going to rest. I'm pooped.

VICKY: Man. Why does nature have to be so complicated?

GINA: I don't know. I mean, how did all this stuff get here in the first place?

TED: What stuff?

GINA: You know, the trees, the stream, the stars...Josh.

VICKY: It's always been here.

TED: Not always.

VICKY: What do you mean, "Not always?"

TED: Things change. We learned that in Geography. Rivers shift, mountains erode, stars burn out. It's always changing.

GINA: So what do you think was here before?

JOSH: Before what?

GINA: You know, everything. How did it all begin?

VICKY: How should I know, I wasn't here.

GINA: Well who or what was?

TED: Nobody. Nothing.

GINA: Then how did it all get here? That doesn't make any sense!

JOSH: Something had to be here. Somebody had to see SOMETHING.

VICKY: The native people were here long before this was a campground or a national park, or even a nation.

JOSH: So where do THEY think everything came from?

VICKY: I don't know Josh, why don't you ask them?

JOSH: All right, I will! Where are they?

VICKY: Gone.

JOSH: Well maybe we can catch up with them. When did they leave?

VICKY: They left about 300 years ago, genius.

JOSH: That's okay. I'll wait. Maybe they'll have snacks.

TED: I wish they were still here. I bet they would have some cool stories.

GINA: Yeah, old people have the best stories.

VICKY: My great aunt tells stories all the time. It's hysterical.

TED: Where is she from?

VICKY: The old country.

TED: Where's that?

VICKY: Beats me.

GINA: Do you know anyone else who would know those stories?

VOICE OF THE WIND: (*very softly*) AAAsssssk ttthheee
Waaaatteeerrrrr...

VICKY: Nope. (*she wanders toward the water*) She's the only one I know, and I only see her during the holidays.

VOICE OF THE WIND: (*softly*) TTTheeee Waaaatteeerrrrr
kkknnnoooooooooowwsss...

GINA: I wish there was someone we could ask. It would help pass the time.

VOICE OF THE WIND: (*louder*) AAAsssssk ttthheeee
Waaaattteeerrrrr...

The four freeze in their tracks

TED: Did you guys hear that?

VICKY: I don't know. What did you hear?

TED: The wind.

GINA: Talking?

TED: Yep.

JOSH: Yeah. Heard that.

VICKY: What did it say?

VOICE OF THE WIND: AAAsssskkk tthheeee Waaaaattteerrrr
fffffoooooorrrr aaaaaa sssttooorrryyyyy.

JOSH: I am never reading *Harry Potter* again.

GINA: Okay, this is freaky.

VICKY: What should we do?

TED: Call me crazy, but I think maybe we should ask the water for a story.

VICKY: Why?

TED: Because I don't want to argue with the wind, do you?

JOSH: I don't even want to talk with the wind.

GINA: All right, we'll ask. What story?

VICKY: Let's ask where the campground is.

VOICE OF THE WIND: TTThhhaattttt iiiissss nnnnoooottttt aaaa
ssstttooorroryyyy...

JOSH: Yeah, Vicky! That's not a story. What's wrong with you?!

VICKY: What's wrong with me...!?

TED: Everybody cool it! Let's just do what the wind said and ask for a story. Gina, any ideas?

GINA: I don't know, maybe we can ask where everything came from?

VOICE OF THE WIND: YYeeesssss! AAaaaasskkkkk ttthhhheeee
wwaaattteerrrrr...

TED: Okay, so now we know what to ask.

JOSH: Yeah, but who is GOING to ask?

GINA: Go ahead Vicky.

VICKY: What!? Why me?

GINA: Come on Vicky, everyone knows you're the best speaker in school.

JOSH: Yeah! You won that speech contest last year. You slept with the trophy for weeks.

VICKY: How did you know that?

TED: Because for weeks your Facebook status said, "Still sleeping with my speech trophy." Come on, Vicky.

VICKY: But...! Okay fine. But you guys have to come with me.

The campers all move towards the stream in a protective lump.

VICKY: Ahem...excuse us. Mr. stream...

GINA: Miss.

VICKY: What?

GINA: Miss stream, how do you know it's a Mr.?

TED: What makes you think it's a Miss?

JOSH: I don't care if it's a hedgehog named Hank! Ask the stupid question before the wind whips up a tornado and we end up flying with the cows!

VICKY: Right. So, stream, we were kind of wondering, um, could you tell us the story of where everything came from.

Nothing happens.

JOSH: Well that went well.

TED: Boy I feel stupid.

The group turns away from the stream.

GINA: Me too. I'm glad no one saw us. How embarrassing.

Behind them, two human figures begin to emerge from the water. The effect should indicate to the audience that the forms are the personification of the water

JOSH: This was probably all just a hallucination brought on by hunger.

The two figures are almost fully formed.

VICKY: That's the last time I listen to the wind.

The completed water figures are now NARRATORS 1 and 2.

NARRATOR 1: You have asked and we have heard.

NARRATOR 2: Prepare yourself. The stories begin again.

The campers slowly turn around, slack-jawed and bug-eyed.

ALL CAMPERS: Oh my...

Suddenly the stage explodes in activity and light. It should look as though the world is being torn apart from the inside. During this change the forest motif is changed to a Chinese-influenced style. During the chaos the campers are blown offstage and exit. When the shift is complete...

The Myth of the Water Dragons

NARRATOR 1: How the waters were tamed.

NARRATOR 2: A myth from China.

BOLD/UNDERLINED denotes both NARRATORS speak simultaneously.

NARRATOR 1: (*in a BOOMING voice*) In the beginning there was **nothing** and there was **everything** and they were all together.

NAR 1 & 2: **And this wouldn't do.**

NAR 2: You couldn't tell one from the other. You could not tell earth

NAR 1: from sky,

NAR 2: wind

NAR 1: from fire,

NAR 2: water

NAR 1: from stars,

NAR 2: and sun

NAR 1: from moon.

NAR 2: There was no **day** or **night**. All of these things needed a place.

NAR 1: Needed a space...

NAR 1 & 2: ...**needed to be separated.**

NAR 2: Light and dark.

NAR 1: Air and mass.

NAR 2: Those things that were **weightless** and those things that were **heavy**.

NAR 1: What there was most of was water. Water that knew no bounds. Water that covered every inch of this new world and was deep in many places and shallow in others, fast in some places and slow in others, a jumble of whirlpools and tsunamis... riptides... waves... waterspouts and hurricanes.

NAR 2: Out of this chaos, order needed to be established, or this world would never survive. The waters needed to be tamed, but who controlled the waters?

NAR 1: Out of the movement of the waves came four Chinese dragons, the shikairyuos.

A gong beat to announce the DRAGONS.

NAR 2: Goujin the black dragon.

[Gong] - GOUJIN enters.

NAR 1: Goujun, the yellow dragon.

[Gong] - GOUJUN enters.

NAR 2: Goukin, the white dragon.

[Gong] - GOUKIN enters.

NAR 1: Goukou, the blue dragon.

[Gong] - GOUKOU enters.

During the next 3 lines there is a series of Beijing Opera style gonging. The gong is hit with a rhythm similar to a rock skipping across a pond: Slow to fast GONG.....GONG.....GONG....GONG...GONG..GONG. GONGGONGGONG! At the same time, the stage is transformed into the ocean through the use of blue material or lighting or any other representation of a great volume of water.

NAR 2: But when the Dragons moved though the waters, the seas were rough,

NAR 1: out of control, the tides restless,

NAR 2: the wave relentless.

Crescendo of gongs and then silence.

NAR 1: Goujun, the yellow dragon from the South was tired of being tossed from her bed on to her coral floor. Writhing on the cold floor for the hundredth time, it occurred to her that this must be the work of **Goujin**, the black dragon of the North. Goujun set out immediately to confront Goujin. When she finally hunted him down she raged...

GOUJUN: Why are you making the waters so rough!!!! Night after night, I freeze my tail off, get tossed from my bed, and am beaten black and blue by the angry waters. Who ever heard of a black and blue Southern dragon? My proper color is YELLOW.

GOUJIN: Why do you accuse me? I have done nothing. Besides, yellow is not a proper color for a Dragon. It's too feeble. Too weak. Too light. Yellow...(shudder) Now, Black...!

GOUJUN: Don't change the subject! You know exactly of what I speak. You have made the waters too cold and they are restless.

GOUJIN: (snorts) You wouldn't know cold water if you were frozen in a block of ice! I'm the one who has suffered great pain when caught in your boiling hot seas. Obviously there are warm currents where there should not be. And that is why the sea revolts.

GOUJUN: Dare you talk to me about warm! You wouldn't know a warm current if you were dunked in a pot of boiling water like the overgrown lobster you are.

GOUJIN: You yellow-bellied, overgrown steam-vent! Are you saying I don't know warm water from cold? I was born of the North Sea! Icebergs larger than you I have set afloat and pushed a thousand glaciers into place. All before you learned to swim!

GOUJUN: So you finally admit it! You have ruined my warm currents with those glaciers and icebergs. You might have asked me where to place them before you set them loose on the ocean. I had just finished creating the South Seas with their sparkling turquoise pools and glistening underground springs, when suddenly a great iceberg appeared and destroyed all of my hard work. Just when everything was set in the precise place.

GOUJUN gestures wildly and hits GOUJIN in the face with her tail.

GOJJIN: I never came near your boring pale water. I despise the South Seas. And get your tail out of my face you overgrown lizard.

GOJJUN: Who are you calling a lizard you spineless turtle.

GOJJUN pushes GOJJIN, and strikes a martial arts pose.

GOJJIN: You are going to be the turtle when I knock your head between your shoulders.

Strikes a similar pose. A mock battle ensues in which they never touch, but rant and gesture at each other furiously causing the waves to erupt around them. GOUKOU appears and physically separates the other two.

GOUKOU: What are you two arguing about now? All this bickering stirred up the waters so ferociously that I was tossed upside-down and frontside-back and almost ate my own tail. Stop this fighting at once!

GOJJIN & GOJJUN: (*pointing at each other*) He/She started it!

GOJJIN & GOJJUN: Did not!

GOUKOU: It doesn't matter who started it. Stop it now or we all will be shaken to pieces.

Sends the two to opposite sides of the stage.

GOUKIN: (*Spinning on to the stage. To GOUKOU.*) There you are, you big blue troublemaker! I was calmly swimming the seas when I was sucked into a whirlpool and spun out of control. I have hit so many rocks and coral that my beautiful white scales have been pounded an ugly black and blue.

GOJJIN & GOUKOU: Who are you calling ugly!!?

GOUKIN: It is all Goukou's fault with his eddies and whirlpools and riptides and undertows. I am trying to place tide pools and doldrums and deep, still waters where one can rest and dine in peace. But every time I do, a whirlpool swirls by and disrupts my digestion. Look at me! I'm wasting away. Nothing stays on my plate!

GOUKOU: Oh cry me a river. It's not as if you couldn't stand to miss a meal or two.

GOUKIN: Are you calling me fat!!?

GOUJUN: She is NOT fat!

GOUKIN: I am just big scaled. To protect me from the cold.

GOUJIN: What!?!

GOUJUN: See! Too cold!

GOUKOU: Stay out of this you puny pale pipsqueak!

GOUJUN: Make me, you big blue bully. *(strikes a martial arts pose)*

GOUJIN: Don't speak to him that way. *(strikes a pose)*

GOUKIN: Why must you always take his side? *(strikes a pose)*

GOUKOU: Because he knows I always win. *(strikes a pose)*

All four DRAGONS circle the stage preparing to fight and are just about to pounce...when from above:

VOICE: Little Dragons!

All the DRAGONS freeze and slowly look up.

VOICE: Little Dragons. Fight not.

The DRAGONS drop their poses and gawk at the voice.

VOICE: Very good. Listen to me little Dragons, the time is now for you to emerge from the depths, to the surface of the waters come.

The DRAGONS don't move.

VOICE: Little Dragons...NOW!!!!

During the next three lines the DRAGONS swim through the depths and breach the surface of the water. They gently tread water for the rest of the scene.

NARRATOR 1: As they broke through the sky of the sea, they saw for the first time another sky,

NAR 2: in a shade of blue none of them had ever seen before. And filling all the corners of the sky was a massive red dragon.

NAR 1: Ten times longer than the four of them combined, for this was the weather Emperor: **Sentoukun**.

SENTOUKUN enters. SENTOUKUN is larger than the other dragons and can be portrayed by multiple actors,

or a large puppet or any other device/design that makes him/her appear bigger than the other dragons. SENTOUKUN should also be elevated over the other dragons by means of box, platform, ladder or anything else that represents the sky.

SENTOUKUN: Greetings little Dragons. Nice it is to meet you finally.

GOJJIN: Who are you?

SENTOUKUN: I am Sentoukun, weather Emperor and Emperor of the Dragon Li.

GOJJIN: What is Emperor?

GOUKIN: What is weather?

GOUKOU: What is Li?

SENTOUKUN: So many questions little ones! And so many answers. First answer: For every small a large there must be and what is large must take responsibility for what is small. Between you and I that is how it is.

GOJJIN: And that is Emperor?

SENTOUKUN: Very good! Next answer: As currents only under the water flow, wind only above the water blows. But where wind and water meet...

GOUKIN: That is weather!

SENTOUKUN: Excellent, small one! And now your final answer: Every living thing is connected to every other living thing, like a family. This family is called a Li. There is a Li of fish, and a Li of crab, and a Li of octopus. Every member of a Li is similar. With you so it is as well. In all dragons the Li is the same.

GOJJIN: I am not the same as this yellow barnacle of a tadpole.

GOJJIN: Nor am I the same as this black scaled, monstrosity.

SENTOUKUN: Ah! Now you are learning little ones. What makes you the same is what makes you different.

GOUKIN: How can I be the same as these three and different at the same time? These riddles are making my head spin!

GOUKOU: Your head was spinning long before he showed up. (to SENTOUKUN) Look at me, Emperor. I am nothing like these other three overgrown eels.

SENTOUKUN: (*gently*) Silence little Dragons! Listen and learn. All things, at the moment of their creation, join their Li. However; they also receive Chi in order to be unique. Your Li is the same in all of you but what makes you different your Chi is.

GOUJUN: Like our colors!

SENTOUKUN: Yes little one, now you understand. But there is more: For unity to exist in nature, all things must be in their proper place.

GOUJIN: Such as icebergs.

GOUJUN: And hot springs.

GOUKOU: And whirlpools.

GOUKIN: And tidepools.

SENTOUKUN: Pleases me your wisdom does little Dragons! Clear it is that you understand that a place all things have. But also it is clear that you have not learned that in the same place none of you belong. Look at the disruption in the waters you have caused. I know you do not mean to fight, but for harmony's sake, each of you must find their proper place and stay there.

GOUJIN: But Emperor, where is there to go? Where is the proper place?

SENTOUKUN: Goujin, obvious it is that you are the most comfortable in the cold and ice of the northern climate. Therefore, The Dragon of the Winter, who guards the North, you will be. Go now, your kingdom awaits.

GOUJIN: (*crosses UL and strikes a heroic pose.*) Finally! I will be able to accomplish my momentous tasks, undisturbed by those who do not appreciate the importance of my work. Thank you Emperor.

SENTOUKUN: Protect the South you will Goujun, so as to be as far away from Goujin as possible. Begin your journey now Goujun, for a long one it is.

GOUJUN: (*crosses DR and strikes similar pose*) Ahhhh! I will be warm at last. Warm and alone. It will be heaven Emperor.

SENTOUKUN: Now, you two. Goukou, the East you shall defend, and Goukin, over the West you shall watch. Off to your palaces, both of you, for much work is there to do. (*both cross to their palaces*)

GOUKIN & GOUKOU: Thank you Emperor.

SENTOUKUN: Done is my work here, I believe.

*Lights go down on SENTOUKUN and the four dragons.
Sound of gentle waves on the shore.*

NARRATORS: And that is how the waters were tamed.

NAR 1: (to NAR 2) The stories are once again released.

NAR 2: (to NAR 1) The freedom is exhilarating!

NAR 1: (to CAMPERS) But this is just the beginning.

NAR 2: (to CAMPERS) All stories have a beginning.

NAR 1: But in the middle,

NAR 1 & 2: can you find the end?

The NARRATORS melt back into the water and continue to move the water gently on stage. The water should now “cover” the stage and look to be about shin deep. It should look all-consuming but not threatening. This is now a world of water. If the actors are playing multiple characters, the CAMPERS remove the DRAGON costumes as they speak. They move as if coming out of a dream. They have just experienced something supernatural and unexpected. If they are not playing multiple roles, the CAMPERS simply enter from offstage.

TED: I am stunned.

VICKY: I am speechless.

JOSH: I am wet.

GINA: That was so cool!!!

VICKY: What happened?

TED: It was like we were **IN** the story.

JOSH: How is that possible?

GINA: How is any of this possible? How are you possible?

TED: What did those water guys mean about finding the end from the middle?

JOSH: Holy Guacamole!! Look around. Everything is gone!

VICKY: Hey, yeah. Where is the riverbank?

TED: Forget the riverbank, where's the land?

JOSH: There is no land. Just water. Everywhere. In my socks. In my ears. Up my nose...

GINA: Thank you Josh. We get the picture.

TED: We'll never find the campground now. There are no trails, no trees, no nothing.

JOSH: If my secret stash of Oreos got wet, someone is going to suffer!

GINA: Cool it, Josh. We have to figure out what happened or none of us will ever see cookies again.

JOSH: Don't say that. Not even as a joke.

VICKY: This isn't a joke. This is very serious. We have to figure out what happened and how to fix it or we'll never get back.

TED: I don't know about you Josh, but I don't want to stay here.

VICKY: What happened?

JOSH: How did we get here?

GINA: Where is here?

TED: Okay! Okay, calm down, we have to think this through.

GINA: Do you think this is what they meant by "the middle?"

JOSH: Yeah, the middle of a nightmare, in the middle of the ocean in the middle of nowhere! This gives me a sinking feeling in the middle of my stomach.

VICKY: Well, it will match the empty space in the middle of your ears.

GINA: Cool it guys. Arguing isn't going to fix anything.

TED: Maybe if we retrace our steps we can get some answers. First, we got lost in the woods.

JOSH: Then Vicky said she had trail-mix.

GINA: Then we found the stream.

JOSH: Then I looked for brownies.

VICKY: Then we said we would wait for the North Star.

JOSH: Then I got hungry.

TED: Then Josh drove all of us crazy! Will you stop with the food already!

VICKY: Wait! What about the wind? Remember the wind talked to us. It told us to ask the water its story. It must have been the wind.

GINA: What? Like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*? Over the rainbow?

VICKY: No, not like that. More like *IN* the wind. My grandpa used to tell me that history is in the wind.

TED: What the heck does *THAT* mean?

VICKY: Well, Grandpa used to say that all the sights and the sounds of history are caught forever in the wind at the time they happen. They are printed in the wind like a big digital recording, then they blow away. They're still held in the wind, but you can't see them because there is no DVR, no playback machine.

GINA: So that's why the wind told us to ask! The story was held in the wind until we asked the question.

TED: And that started the recording!

GINA: But if the stories are *in* the wind...

JOSH: We would be in the middle of them. We would be part of them. They would be all around us.

TED: We would be there as they happen.

ALL FOUR CAMPERS: Whoa...

GINA: That is what the water people meant about being in the middle. We must be in the middle of the story. I mean look around. This place is just a water wasteland. This can't be the end of the story. There has to be more.

VICKY: But how do we start the story again?

VOICE OF THE WIND: Aaaasssskkk tttheee ppprroooppeerrr qquessssttiionnn aaanndd yyyooooouuu wwiiill sssee...

VICKY: AAAA!!!

GINA: Ooo! Ooo! Chicken skin!!

JOSH: I think I wet myself.

TED: How can you tell?

WIND: Yyyoooouuuu wwwiiiiiiiii sssseeeeeeee...

GINA: See what?

TED: Where the land went?

VICKY: Okay, fine! Where did the land go?!

Nothing happens.

JOSH: Hello! Spooky wind voice! She's asking! Where did the land go?
Hello! I want to get home before my pudding pops melt.

Nothing continues to happen.

GINA: Why isn't anything happening? She's asking where the land went,
isn't that the question?

VICKY: No, not where it went... where it came from! We need to ask
where the land came from. That's the question that starts the
story again.

TED: So who do we ask? There is no one here.

GINA: (to the WIND) Hello? There is no one here. What do we do?!

VOICE OF THE WIND: Ttthhheeee ssskkkkyyyy wwwaaaassss
ttthheeeeerrreeeee...

JOSH: The sky?

GINA: Of course! The land was under water, but the sky saw what
happened. It's the land's story, but the sky can tell it.

VICKY: So who is going to ask?

GINA: You ask.

VICKY: I asked last time, and look what happened.

JOSH: Yeah, waterworld...

TED: I'll ask. If it will bring the land back, I'll ask.

JOSH: Yeah, ask. Before I get pruny toes. Ick.

TED: Hello?! Sky! How did the land get here? Can you tell us?

Soft African drumming begins.

SKY: I can do more than tell.

The drumming gets faster and louder.

SKY: I will show...

Powerful African drum beat, fast and loud. The CAMPERS go spinning offstage again, and the SKY appears as a narrator dressed in traditional African storyteller costume. The SKY sits on an elevated platform that looks remarkably like a cloud, with drums and other noisemakers all around within reach. Over the course of the scene, SKY punctuates the story with the drums/noisemakers.

SKY: The story of Obatala, the King of the White Cloth. A Yoruba myth from West Africa.

Obatala and the Creation of the Ground

SKY: To realize where the land came from, you must understand why it was needed. To understand why it was needed you must know who used it. To know who used it, you must hear the story of ...

OBATALA: Obatala, the King of the White Cloth.

OBATALA appears on a platform similar to the SKY's and surveys his surroundings.

SKY: Obatala was one of the spirits in the sky. These spirits were called the Orishas, and the Orishas were around long before there was man, or animals or even land. They all lived in the vast splendor that I provided in the great airworld above.

OBATALA: However, down below, the earth was all watery, just a marshy place, a waste.

SKY: Even the Orishas did not like to go to the waters. They preferred to spend their time in the realm of the sky, busy with their important work, and gave no thoughts of the dark waters beneath them.

OBATALA: The waters were ideal for creatures of the water.

SKY: But they simply would not do for Orishas. So they never gave the lower world a second thought. Except for Obatala, who, being the owner of the mind and thought, thought about everything. He thought about...

OBATALA: Crabs and sharks and oysters and eels.

SKY: He thought about...

OBATALA: Lobster and starfish and squid and tuna.

SKY: He thought about...

OBATALA: Whales and waterspouts and wind and weather.

SKY: And he thought about man. It bothered him that there was no place on this vast world for man to live. There was no ground to walk on or to plant seeds in...

OBATALA: So there were no trees or grasses to make into huts.

SKY: There were no mountains to climb, no valleys to explore, no sand to scratch drawings into...

OBATALA: So there could be no explorers or poets or dancers.

SKY: Obatala thought and thought and thought.

OBATALA: With no land, there are no trees. With no trees, there is no shelter. With no shelter, there is no safety. With no safety, there is no life. Because of this, no human beings can live under the sky until there is a hard place for them to plant their feet.

SKY: Obatala knew that mankind's proper place was on the earth,

OBATALA: ...for they are part of the great circle...

SKY: ...and without them the circle was incomplete. So Obatala thought for just a minute more, and decided what should be done. First, he went to Orunla, the Orisha who was the personification of all wisdom...

OBATALA: Orunla.

ORUNLA appears on a platform similar to OBATALA.

ORUNLA: Yes, Obatala?

OBATALA: Orunla, I am troubled.

ORUNLA: What troubles you, Obatala?

OBATALA: Orunla, I look down on the great dark waters below and I think that something is missing.

ORUNLA: Sometimes I fear that you think too much, Obatala. Why waste your precious thoughts on such a dreary, spiritless place?

OBATALA: That is just it Orunla, there is no life down there.

ORUNLA: How can you say that? The waters are teeming with life. Why, just look below and you will see all manner of life, from Abalone to Zebra fish. What could possibly be missing?

OBATALA: Mankind.

ORUNLA: Oh. I see. This is a dilemma.

OBATALA: Mankind belongs in the world below, Orunla, but there is nothing for them to stand on. If man is placed there now, they will sink into the waters and never be seen again. What can be done?

ORUNLA: For an answer to that question, let us consult the oracle.

SKY: And with that, Orunla produced his sixteen kola nuts and set out to find an answer to Obatala's question. He looked long and hard at the magic objects and finally said...

ORUNLA: To get what you want, Obatala, you will need a gold chain, a snail shell full of sand, a white hen, a black cat and a palm nut.

OBATALA: What you ask is odd, Orunla, but I do not question your wisdom. I will do as you say.

SKY: Obatala easily gathered the sand, the snail, the hen and the cat. Even the palm nut proved to be simple to find.

OBATALA: However, the gold chain proved to be far more difficult to obtain.

SKY: Obatala rightly guessed what the chain was for.

ORUNLA: But even after he borrowed plenty of gold from each Orisha,

OBATALA: and had Oggun, the Orisha who is the worker of metal, forge it into a chain,

SKY: it was clear that it would never reach the surface of the waters. Obatala, thought for just a second that maybe this task was impossible,

OBATALA: ...but then he remembered what was at stake!

SKY: So he stubbornly continued his quest. He secured one end of the chain to a pillar of his house and let it fall towards the water. Then he gathered up the objects Orunla told him he would need, and with the determination of one who knows what must be done, he courageously stepped off into the abyss.

OBATALA "steps off" the platform and falls a great distance, following the chain all the way down. This can be done with mime, or shadows, or puppets or a simple sound effect. When OBATALA "stops" he is

below the clouds and above the ground, even if only by a few inches.

ORUNLA: Far above, Orunla watched as Obatala came closer to the waters below. When Obatala reached the end of the chain, it was as he had foreseen, the chain did not reach the water.

SKY: Obatala held on to the chain for dear life, for although he was an Orisha, he had never learned to swim, and if he fell into the water he would drown. Suddenly, from far above he heard...

ORUNLA: Do not fear Obatala. All is well.

OBATALA: I appreciate the kind words dear friend, but on this end of the chain, things seem much more dire.

ORUNLA: Do as I say and everything will be all right. First, let the sand inside the snail shell fall into the water.

OBATALA reaches into his bag and pulls out the shell. With shaky hands, he tips the shell and lets the sand fall out.

ORUNLA: Very good. Now drop the hen.

OBATALA drops the HEN. African music begins and the hen starts The Dance of the Scratching Chicken. The dance mimics the movements of a chicken walking and scratching the ground, flinging the dirt all around. This dance can be as simple or complex as your production allows. During the dance the HEN spreads the "sand" out all over the stage.

OBATALA: Look! Everywhere the sand is tossed, new land appears. The world is becoming dryer and dryer! I am saved!

ORUNLA: Do not let go of the chain yet, Obatala. I must make sure that there is enough land for you to be safe.

OBATALA: Please do not climb down the chain Orunla, it will not hold both of us.

ORUNLA: You are right, but do not worry. I will send down chameleon and she will look in all directions at once, she will make sure that all is right with the world.

OBATALA: Yes, yes, a most ingenious idea. Please hurry.

SKY: Chameleon scurried down the chain, and once she got to the bottom, she looked this way... and that way... and up... and

down... and everything in-between. When she had looked everything over she scurried back up the chain and said to Orunla...

CHAMELEON: Yes, yes, yes, the world is plenty wide. But in many spots it is still too wet. Wet, wet, wet.

ORUNLA: Obatala? Is the hen still scratching?

OBATALA: Yes, Orunla. And I am still hanging on to this chain. Is it safe to let go?

ORUNLA: I will ask. Chameleon, NOW do you think the hen has scratched long enough to finish the job?

CHAMELEON: Of course Orunla. Of course, course, course. Now the land is dry. Dry, dry, dry.

ORUNLA: Obatala!

OBATALA: Yes Orunla?

ORUNLA: Do you trust my wisdom?

OBATALA: With my life.

ORUNLA: Then let go of the chain.

OBATALA: As you ask, Orunla.

*OBATALA steps down onto the stage with the HEN.
They dance together over the next 2 lines and then the
HEN exits.*

SKY: And with that, Obatala dropped from the sky and onto the land. This new land was wide and dry, high and low, near and far.

OBATALA: Obatala was beside himself with joy! This would be a splendid place for man to live.

SKY: But once the excitement of the moment wore off he realized that he could not reach the chain again, and he was alone on this new world. In a worried voice he called out to his friend...

OBATALA: Orunla! There is no one on this new world! I do not want to be alone.

ORUNLA: But Obatala, you are not alone. Look in your bag.

OBATALA: *(pulling out the cat)* The cat!

ORUNLA: Yes, Obatala. The cat will keep you company until mankind arrives. It will not be long, and you will have plenty to do until then. For example, planting the palm nut.

OBATALA: Ah yes, Orunla. What magical effect will planting the palm nut have?

ORUNLA: It will give you a shady place to sit when you are tired, and palm nuts to eat when you are hungry.

OBATALA: Of course. Thank you for all your help, Orunla.

ORUNLA: Thank you for your dedication to mankind, Obatala. Good luck.

SKY: And so it was that the land was put in place. I know. I saw it with my own eyes. Sadly, this is where I must take my leave, for the path is dark, and I can guide you no further.

OBATALA and ORUNLA exit. SKY slowly fades from the platform to the sound of soft drumming. The scene changes to reveal an African landscape that includes trees. The stream is back as a remnant of the Chinese story to represent the waters. The CAMPERS peer around the edges of the set and slowly, testing, step out onto the stage.

VICKY: We seem to have paused again.

JOSH: At least we aren't wet.

GINA: This is so amazing! What do you think is next?

TED: Well we can't ask the Sky, he's gone.

VICKY: That's not all that's gone. Look! (*she indicates up*)

JOSH: Okay, that's dark.

GINA: Where are the stars?

TED: Oh great. That was our big chance of finding our way back, and now that's disappeared.

GINA: Why did the stars disappear? They are not part of the earth.

WIND: Buuuuuuuu tttthheeeeyyy aaarrreee paaarrttttt ooooofff tttthhheee ssssttttoooooorrrryyy.

VICKY: So there is a story about the stars?

WIND: Aaassskkk tttthheee qquueesssttiioonn...

TED: To who?

JOSH: To whom...

GINA: Josh! Okay, let's think this through. We know we have to ask the right question or the story won't start again and we won't get any closer to the end.

VICKY: We know what to ask – "Where did the stars come from?"

TED: The question is to *whommmm*.

VICKY: So who do we ask about the stars?

GINA: I'm thinking, I'm thinking. Okay, the stars were not always here, but the sky was. We can't ask the sky because it is his story, and he might not know what happened.

JOSH: What? How could the sky not know his own story?

GINA: Josh! Look! A wild cheeseburger!!

JOSH turns in wild anticipation.

JOSH: Where!?!

GINA flicks JOSH's ear while he is looking the other way.

JOSH: Ow! What was that?

GINA: Ted, did you see what that was?

TED: Yep.

GINA: Vicky?

VICKY: Uh-huh.

GINA: I rest my case. The sky is out. The water is here, but it is a reflection of the sky and so probably doesn't know either. So. Who would be close enough to the sky to know what happened, and close enough to the earth to tell us?

TED: The trees! We can ask the trees where the stars came from.

The TREES enter.

ALL TREES: We will tell you the story that you have described.

SEQUOIA: A Southwestern myth

BIRCH: from the Cochiti tribe.

In this story, the TREES act as narrators and the character of the girl is played by an actress who pantomimes the action being described. She does not speak, but SYCAMORE is her “voice”. SEQUOIA is the voice of Our Mother.

The Girl Who Scattered the Stars

ALL TREES: Long ago,

BIRCH: in the days since the great flood did dry,
the people emerged to the sheltering sky.

BIRCH (and SEQUOIA on **bold**): They had been underground, kept there safe by **Our Mother**.
But now it was time to move on to another location, far South from the land where they lived.

CEDAR & PINE: This was a new world, and Our Mother would give all peoples a chance to establish again,
what had been destroyed by the floods and the rain.

PINE & OAK: These were tribes of the Pueblos,

ALL WOMEN: children of Our Mother,

PINE & OAK: who instructed them all to be sisters and brothers.

BIRCH & SEQUOIA: Our Mother was wise, and her wisdom did see how much would depend on a strong family bond between one tribe and the next.

BIRCH: So it's easy to see why she was perplexed upon seeing a girl who was left all alone,
for the others already departed for home.

SEQUOIA (OUR MOTHER): “Come closer.”

BIRCH & OAK: Our Mother said to the girl,
who was new to the ways of this unflooded world.

SEQUOIA (OUR MOTHER):

“Come closer and take this bag of white cotton.
I'm troubled to think that you were forgotten,
and so to make up for this obvious lack of respect, you will carry this bag on your back.”

CEDAR: The bag was quite small, and the load was quite light
so the girl put it on and made sure it was tight.

SEQUOIA (*OUR MOTHER*):

“That bag is important, but keep this in your thoughts:
Whatever you do, do not untie the knots.”

CEDAR: The girl promised not to, she said she'd obey.

But Our Mother could tell that her thoughts would soon stray.

SEQUOIA (*OUR MOTHER*):

“Again I must warn you not to open that pouch
for the time is not right for what's in to come out.”

CEDAR: Once more the girl promised with a bow of her head,
then followed the trail to the South, where it lead.

BIRCH: At first she was focused, as straight as an arrow,
though the road was uncertain and the trail often narrow.

BIRCH & CEDAR:

But the further she traveled, the more her mind raced,
and a curious expression appeared on her face.

BIRCH & CEDAR & OAK:

Her head started spinning with thoughts and with pride
as she tried to imagine what could be inside
of this magical pouch to which she was entrusted.

BIRCH & CEDAR:

She stopped for a moment, then she sat and she dusted
with great care and respect, the tiny white pack

BIRCH: which she gently removed from the small of her back.

SYCAMORE: “What is this” she thought, through waves of excitement.

“And what would it hurt if just one little knot bent
between my two fingers until it was loose?
No one would know.”

BIRCH: That would be her excuse.

SEQUOIA: But then she remembered the promise she made,
and that Our Mother expressly forbade
her to open the bag, no matter how much
temptation there was with every small touch.

BIRCH: So she got to her feet and she picked up the sack.

BIRCH & SYCAMORE: She focused her mind and she didn't look back.

BIRCH: Her head was held high as she walked through the flowers
coming closer to home with each passing hour.

PINE: At noontime she stopped by a stream for a rest
and the promise she made was soon put to the test.

OAK: She tried to be good,

OAK & PINE: tried to behave,

OAK & PINE & SEQUOIA:
she thought of Our Mother and the fact that she gave

OAK & PINE & SEQUOIA & CEDAR:
a bag so important to a girl so small.

OAK: And so there she sat until all
she could think of,

OAK & PINE: and all she could see

OAK & PINE & CEDAR:
was the bag she had set near the root of a tree.

OAK & PINE & CEDAR & BIRCH: She finally said,

SYCAMORE: "One small peek couldn't hurt,
I'll just spread out the contents right here in the dirt.
And as soon as I see what this bag has inside
I'm sure this great yearning will finally subside."

BIRCH: So slowly at first, with the greatest of care,
she untied a knot, and was hardly aware

BIRCH & PINE: that the bag started growing, right there in her hands,

OAK: by the stream,

CEDAR: by the tree,

PINE: on the trail,

BIRCH: in the sand.

CEDAR & OAK: Knot after knot she was busy untying,

CEDAR & OAK & PINE & BIRCH:
her excitement kept growing until she was trying

ALL: with all of her might just to loose the last knot:

SYCAMORE: Then something popped out much to fast to be caught!

ALL WOMEN: The last knot was opened and a light hurt her eyes

ALL: and thousands of objects flew up to the sky.

SYCAMORE & BIRCH:

As they rushed by her head and flew past her ears
they sang with a voice that she barely could hear:

Song of the Stars – *a traditional song of the
Algonquin tribe. Consider this more chant than song.*

ALL: We are the lights which sing,
We sing with our light.
We are the birds of fire,
We fly over the sky.
Our light is a voice,
We make a road
For the spirit to pass over.

CEDAR & PINE & OAK:

They spread to the four winds, in streaks and in swirls,

SYCAMORE: With a swiftness that truly did frighten the girl.

BIRCH: She looked up in amazement, and only could stare,
as the things in the bag rose to light up the air.

CEDAR: First thousands,

CEDAR & PINE: then millions,

CEDAR & PINE & OAK: then billions flew up.

ALL: They never slowed down and they never did stop!

BIRCH: Most shot straight to the sky, but some hung in the air.

ALL WOMEN: And playfully danced in the young girl's hair.

ALL MEN: She knew she had done something that she should not!

SYCAMORE: So in an attempt to avoid being caught
she grabbed at the things that had not flown away

BIRCH: to stuff them back into the bag where it lay.

PINE: Her fingers worked fast,

PINE & CEDAR: her heart madly beating,

ALL WOMEN: she grabbed at the objects in hopes of completing
her task of undoing the damage she'd done.

OAK: She grabbed a last handful, and then there were none.

BIRCH: The objects escaped. They had flown to the sky.

SYCAMORE: The girl picked up the bag and she started to cry.

BIRCH and CEDAR: She was scared and embarrassed,

PINE & OAK: humbled and mad.

SYCAMORE: She knew she had done something that was so bad
that she couldn't go home, they would not let her stay.
To avoid such disgrace she would just run away!

BIRCH: But then she remembered her people are brave.

SYCAMORE: She also remembered that Our Mother gave
HER the bag; she had trusted no other.
And that she had given her word to Our Mother.

SEQUOIA: The love of Our Mother soon lessened her fears,
so she took a deep breath and wiped at her tears.

BIRCH: She then noticed the bag, which had faded to black,
regained some of its glow when she put the things back.

SYCAMORE: She hoped all was not lost as she tied the bag's mouth,
collected herself, and moved off to the South.

ALL MEN: When at last she arrived at the end of her trip
she stood with the elders and reluctantly slipped
the bag from her back,

SYCAMORE: her eyes lowered in shame.

SEQUOIA: It was then that she learned that these things had a name.
The objects she scattered to near and to far
are the lights in the sky that we now call the stars.

OAK: And then she found out, turning red in the face,
that each of these stars in the sky had a place.

SEQUOIA: Our Mother had planned that the stars tell the story
of all of man's challenges, failures and glory.
The sky was a blanket on which she would weave
the tale of the majesty man could achieve.

CEDAR: But now those bright stars were carelessly freed.

CEDAR & PINE: And all who had witnessed this sad tale agreed

CEDAR & PINE & OAK:
that although her misdeed made them all feel defeated,

CEDAR & PINE & OAK & BIRCH:

the task they were given must still be completed.

BIRCH: The elders then gathered the stars that remained
and carefully set them in place by their names:

PINE & OAK: The Slingshot,

SYCAMORE & CEDAR: the Pot Rest,

SEQUOIA & BIRCH: the Shield

BIRCH: but no others...

for the rest of the stars are these patterns' wild brothers.

SEQUOIA: Released to the sky with no rhyme and no reason,
telling no story of harvest or season.

BIRCH: They simply exist in the untamed night sky
where a girl's curiosity freed them to fly.

SYCAMORE: And as for the girl who released them afar?

ALL MEN: Her name to this day is

ALL WOMEN: "She Scattered the Stars."

*The TREES (except for BIRCH) make their way
offstage as the campers return to view.*

BIRCH: Our story has faded, the magic near gone,
your last task before morning is to conjure the dawn.

BIRCH exits.

JOSH: Is it me, or is this the strangest camping trip we have ever been
on?

GINA: It's not strange, its magic! It's amazing! We are building the
world from the ground up.

JOSH: Well, technically from the water up.

VICKY: Speaking of up, look!

TED: It's still dark.

GINA: Well it is nighttime, Ted.

TED: Yes, Gina, but look at your watch. The sun was supposed to be
up half an hour ago.

GINA: Are you sure? Maybe your watch is slow.



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