



A Play for Heroes

**An original play written in Suva by Pat Craddock under my own and and
also a pen name of Ma'afu'atuitoga**

Characters

Tina, who is also the CHORUS
The Hero, the Prime Minister
President
Chief
Politician
Businessman
Officer
Father of Tina
Wife of Hero
Child 1
Child 2
Child 3
Child 4
Voices

This play is set on an imaginary island. Actors should have the ability to sing, dance and act. Music, dance, mime is part of this writer's vision. The Director should make these elements an integral part of the production. The stage setting should be flexible so that the transition from one scene to the next can be almost instantaneous

It is dark. There is a noise offstage of laughter and a woman's voice shouts out "stop it, no, do it again, aha. stop it, now - once again, slowly....,aaah". The lights come up. TINA runs on stage. She is half clothed carrying a camera and a notebook. She stops , looks around and realizes she has an audience. Carefully, without disturbing the few clothes she is wearing she takes out a pen and begins to write in her book. As she does a man enters. He is THE PRIME MINISTER neatly dressed and an imposing figure

PRIME MINISTER: So, my sweet what are you writing now ?

TINA: A few facts, Prime Minister

PRIME MINISTER: Good idea. My life's been eventful. From soldier to statesman. Get the facts right though. You journalists often get it wrong. I want the truth, that's what people want. The plain raw facts

TINA: Yes Raw *(she puts her book away)*

PRIME MINISTER: And now, let's have one more....Your body is beautiful.

TINA: But, I'll miss my plane. Your bodyguard will talk. Then both our reputations go.

PRIME MINISTER: No. Mine is secure

TINA: Well, mine isn't. I'll miss the plane back to the capital and I'll be late with my story. I'll go now.

PRIME MINISTER: No way. *(grabbing her)* when I say stay, you stay. You're my woman for the night.

TINA: Let me go.....let me go.

Music begins. TINA takes his hand and puts it around her. They start dancing to a slow tune, something with the pace of a waltz. They talk lovingly to each other as if in a dream

TINA: For a journalist to make love with a hero is it's own story

PRIME MINISTER: For a leader of a third of the people love is compensation for failing to be the leader of the other two thirds

TINA: For a women journalist her thighs are two stories

PRIME MINISTER: For a politician the penis is perfection

TINA: But what of your wife ?

PRIME MINISTER: What is a wife ?

The music is coming to a close. They begin to break from each other. TINA arrange her dress as she prepares to leave

PRIME MINISTER: I want you to think well of me. Write the truth won't you ?

TINA: Of course, now I must leave

PRIME MINISTER: Stay - for one last fuck

TINA: No. Bad luck

PRIME MINISTER: Let me have the story before you publish it.

TINA: But, that's not possible. My editor.....

PRIME MINISTER: To check for the facts..... the facts... the facts. Truth

The music begins again. They dance as they talk.

The truth. So, sweet fucking journalist. Ah, let me say again - sweet journalist who I fucked. What have you said in your article about me ?

TINA: I looked for an image.

PRIME MINISTER: Good girl. And. ...you have it. How would you describe me ?

TINA: With a bible in one hand and your prick in the other.

PRIME MINISTER: Poetic. Beautiful.

TINA: It will be in the paper this week-end. 50 cents a copy.

PRIME MINISTER: On all the news stands. Everyone can read about me. Excellent. One last feel of your breast. You can kiss my prick ?

TINA: I already have

PRIME MINISTER: You'll miss your plane?

TINA: You'll miss yours. Where are you going ?

PRIME MINISTER: To see the President ?

The music changes to a sound of a helicopter and the scene become an airport. Both THE PRIME MINISTER and TINA pick up suitcases for traveling and they go to each end of the stage.

Will you come back ?

TINA: This story, who will want me? You won't, neither will my village. They'll curse me in their best Christian and Godly fashion, with no forgiveness. What of you ?

PRIME MINISTER: I too have a God on my side. All I need to do is to go to my village. They'll forgive me and blame you. I'll drink a potion, talk and all is forgotten. My problem is to run the country. I don't know how. My soldiers won't put the opposition in jail.

TINA: Your opposition - rubbish you have none. Look at you. Strong.

PRIME MINISTER: My opposition is the Chiefs. Don't laugh at me. Stay for a moment. I enjoyed our night. You're young and that's great. Firm body. You want to understand what I fought for. Stay, please

TINA: But, my plane...it leaves in....

PRIME MINISTER: I could get you another. All I have to do is say... plane, in one hour. If there's no plane, they'll be a helicopter or a speedboat. In the capital, the authorities will stop all functions and activities until I arrive. It's that easy

TINA: What do you want me to do ? You had your fuck, I got my story and that's that. The rest is a dream, a bad one as far as I'm concerned. If this... second story leaks, I'm for the high jump from my Dad. He'll flay me with a stick, my Mum will cry and my school friends will want to know the length of your penis. It's not worth it.

PRIME MINISTER: But, my story. It's about me. Look at me - fat, ugly and revered by my people.

TINA: Well, I'm not staying and that's that. My plane's waiting. That's that. Good-bye. Thank you for the story and the bed. I enjoyed both.

TINA begin to turn and walks away with her suitcase after taking an air ticket from her pocket.

PRIME MINISTER: I enjoyed our night too. Tina

A helicopter engine sound begins. The sound changes to music and it then changes to the sound of an air crash. Sirens sound. A television screen begins to flicker on stage and we see an announcer talking. It is TINA

ANNOUNCER: We interrupt the news for a special announcement. A helicopter is missing. It was on the way to the capital city when contact with air traffic control was lost. There have been no confirmed sightings, but villagers on two outlying islands report hearing the sound of an engine spluttering in the sky. A search has begun

The TV screen goes dead. TINA walks back on stage. The PRIME MINISTER near her.

TINA: Did you hear that? I said, did you hear that? Answer me, you, answer me?

PRIME MINISTER walks off stage without looking at her.

TINA: *(to the audience)* He has his own problems. I like the man. All he did was to obey the chiefs and then seek a little glory. Small rewards for being overweight and bored. Sex is a small pleasure and besides, I got my story, as promised and published it. That helicopter I talked about on the news. I was on it. It crashed.

The TV screen comes on again. TINA is reading the same item. The sound track fades to music. Two men walk on stage.

BUSINESSMAN: No need to see that screen, my young woman.

CHIEF: That air crash never happened. It was all a fiction?

TINA: What are you saying?

BUSINESSMAN: It never happened.

TINA: But, I was there. It was on the news. Listen, can't you see?

CHIEF: I see nothing. Look at the screen. It's finished...empty

BUSINESSMAN: Sit down young woman, you've been under some stress.

TINA: I have been, but I'm not bloody stupid. That crash happened. People were killed including four children.

BUSINESSMAN: It never happened. We must talk. We need media support.

TINA: Children died

CHIEF: Yes

BUSINESSMAN: Do you like him ?

TINA: Of course I do. He saved our country. I know that. And that's why I have sex with him. He's a good man.

CHIEF: Sex, not love ?

TINA: How can I. He has a wife. He's the leader of the country ? I'm a woman journalist ? If I talk I'll only get him and myself into trouble. All for what. Why should I hurt the man ?

BUSINESSMAN: But, he's already in trouble. That is why we're here.

TINA: Who are you anyway, I don't know you ?

CHIEF: Our names don't matter. Call him a friend, and me, chief. That will do in the meantime.

TINA: Such coyness, are you diplomats ?

CHIEF: We are trying to be helpful.

TINA: Not to me you're not.

BUSINESSMAN: Sit down, we're wasting our time. Sit down. Understand us. We are not here on a mercy mission.

CHIEF: You said you liked him ? (*she nods*)

BUSINESSMAN: He's been a loyal servant, but he's in trouble.

CHIEF: That's why we're here. We like him too, although he's not one of us.

BUSINESSMAN: A few questions. You spent the night with him ?

TINA: You know that, so does everyone here, tell me, what's the big deal?

CHIEF: The big deal is the publicity about the other women since he became Prime Minister. He is a lay preacher and a womanizer. We have real figures on his mistresses and church leaders are pondering on what to do..

TINA: So. Leave his face off any "don't catch AIDS " posters.

BUSINESSMAN: You want him to lose his reputation ?

TINA: Hmm, if this is publicized wide enough he can probably become the penis celebrity of the year. His wife should have cut it off a long time ago.... in a military ceremony. Poor woman, she's probably love number one hundred and two.

CHIEF: (*raises his fist*) Shut up woman, or I'll smash your face. Remember you are nothing before a chief

BUSINESSMAN: She doesn't matter. It's him that does.

CHIEF: This is what we want you to do ?

Music begins and the three stand up, form a small circle and start dancing to a lively tune. The sound of the HELICOPTER is heard and the sound of the crash. The PRIME MINISTER walks on stage. TINA embraces him.

TINA: How can I not love a man with ideals ? The time we spent in lovemaking was short. His famous penis was ordinary - the regulation size - just as if it had been issued by the army with his uniform and big boots. I didn't care. He'd one orgasm, after a long battle, but when he's dead I'll see our lovemaking as a long night of love. I'll preserve the hero in my dreams and in conversations with my woman friends. After lovemaking, I lay in his arms. We talked and talked and talked. He came from nowhere, had an ordinary record at school and went into the army. There he understood the rules. He cried as he told me about the first promotion he got. I knew what to do, he said, and what to expect. All I had to do was to accept the rules and higher authority. And then when I became authority, my men obeyed me. No questions.

The PRIME MINISTER unfreezes and moves towards TINA and they sit down on a couch.

PRIME MINISTER: There were only procedures to follow and orders to take. It was God's way of telling me I had a place in life. When I joined the army I soon got authority. My first promotion was the big one. I understood what it was to be a chief, even a small one. I used to look after my uniform carefully, it was brushed and cleaned to keep it smart. Appearance is important. Tina, that is why the churches in our villages look so splendid. People from other countries say we should have God's house under a mango tree. But they have never done that. Look at the cathedrals of the world. And our people are poor - they will never have money in their own lifetime and they will never be chiefs. To ask them to worship under a tree or in a dirt hut is to ask them to say "I was born in shit, I will always be shit, why should I worship this God in a house of dirt." But, if

you give them a big church, with gold and silver and colors, then, our people say - this is a big house, a great house. I am somebody when I come into this place. When people are inside, they see the priest dressed in magic clothes talking about the new life. Heaven is a real place with gold, silver, plenty of pigs, good land. My people believe that. The stars reflect the light of heaven. I believe too.

TINA: Hush, my love. My hero.

PRIME MINISTER: I believe God chooses people. When I went to India for my studies at the university, I met a Muslim soldier. Soldiers understand each other. He talked at night about Islam and Mohammed. He was a messenger, Mohammed, nothing more, a messenger of Allah. I knew then. God chooses messengers. Why else should I be in India, among the people who are taking my country to make us slaves. Only God would send me into the heart of hell to do my study. He guided me too. I worked hard and my tutor let me study military coups. When I came back to my country I used to read my notes, night after night. I would always remember what God taught me to do. *(He embraces her again and wants to make love)*

TINA: And this, what does God say about this ? And your wife?

PRIME MINISTER: My wife doesn't know, God does and he will forgive me. He only gave me one message, not two. I am Christian above the waist, below I am black, hairy and savage.

TINA: That's a man answering, not God.

PRIME MINISTER: I do not insult God. His message was right. The time came. I was called. It was the only thing to do. And now, with democracy I have become Prime Minister several times. *(he breaks from TINA)* I want you to write this story about me when I die. Tell the truth about the choosing. How I was asked to study in that vile land. How I worked and the vision God sent me about the coup. No one died on that morning. My soldiers knew God had chosen me. I chose them. They put on their balaclavas, we said a prayer for peace. That is your story. Put that in your notebook. But keep it till I die. My body is already dying. A soldier cannot live on civilian food and no exercise. *(TINA starts to get up)*

TINA: I have my other story to write. Your promise about the constitution and the economy ?

PRIME MINISTER: Ah .. yes. We already have both of them. Now, come, this may be the only night we ever have of love making. Don't leave me yet. What would you like to do ?

TINA: To touch your mustache ?

PRIME MINISTER: Is that all. Go on then. But, I want more.

The lights begin to go down and we are back in time to where the play first began. We hear exactly the same sounds and voices that we heard at the beginning of the play. TINA rises and undoes her clothes until they look like she looked in the first scene of the play. The lights start to fade and we hear Tina's voice. "stop it, no, do it again, aha stop it, now- once again, slowly....,aaah". The lights go out.

As they come up we see the PRIME MINISTER dancing with a small CHILD to a strong rhythmic jazz tune. The pair move in unison to the tune during the whole of this short scene. The CHILD mimics the hero with voice and gesture. The CHILD has a drum and a small mouth organ. The CHILD plays the drum, stops, and plays again.

PRIME MINISTER: Now, I hear it, now I don't. Shall I have another coup. No I won't

CHILD: Now, I'm stupid, no I'm not. Now, I'm stupid, no I'm not.

PRIME MINISTER: Now, I'm a soldier. No I 'm not. My politics are awful, I should be shot?

CHILD: No, I'm the soldier. I like my fun. Let's talk rubbish and bang the drum.

PRIME MINISTER: My people, my people...I'll give you bread.

CHILD: My people, my people, after you're dead.

PRIME MINISTER: Who are you child, to mock me so. I will give you bread, I will give you wine.

CHILD: I love your wine, I'll eat your bread. Christ promised those and he is dead.

PRIME MINISTER: I warn you child. As the sky is blue, I'll guarantee another coup.

CHILD: You gave me one, your gave me two. Just fuck off now into the blue.

PRIME MINISTER: *(using his hand as a revolver points at the child)* Don't you know or don't you know. A soldier, must threaten. It is just so.

The CHILD turns to the audience, smiles and begins to play the mouth organ. Then changes to the drum and begins a drum

beat. The CHILD dances around the stage with the PRIME MINISTER. The drum beat changes to a solemn one with a regular beat. It becomes slower and slower in pace and the stage darkens. Children exit.

PRIME MINISTER: Always I hear the beating of the hearts of my soldiers. On that morning I had not eaten. I promised myself to have only bread until Parliament was stopped. Before I left the barracks I kissed my gun. I said, if any man is to be killed today, let it be with this weapon. I talked with my soldiers. My revolver was held high. " God, I called out...this holy day, I honor you and ask that you guide us." And no-one died. My men knew that until I killed, they could not. Understand, my people. I was bound to do this ? How could I refuse the order of the highest chief of this land and the message from God in that far off country It was ordained. God chose this small island to show my people that we are were going to the promised land.

A smartly dressed young ARMY OFFICER enters.

OFFICER: The President will be here in a moment sir. He is late. He been talking with the bishop and a group of women. There was a delegation.

PRIME MINISTER: I know exactly how he must feel. Ten years I've been meeting delegations, from all over the world. It's a battle you never win. Your father was never in the army. He must be used to the work of meetings. At least he was born a high chief.

OFFICER: He still finds it hard, Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: The army suits you. One day you will be commander in chief. I'd hoped for that position, but I made a poor judgment. I should never have left the army to fight delegations, armies of paper and the guns of a thousand and one champagne bottles. *(laughs)* Look at my body. It's losing the battle, eh.

OFFICER: You're loved, sir. People crowd to meet you. I've heard my father say you are the most popular person in our history .

PRIME MINISTER: It is good to hear it. I forget sometimes.

OFFICER: You've been Prime Minister for nearly ten years. I think my father wants to talk to you about a special celebration.

PRIME MINISTER: Don't mention this to your father, but I have occasional thoughts that it would be time for me to retire.

The PRESIDENT enters. The PRIME MINISTER and the OFFICER both greet him in the traditional fashion. The OFFICER salutes.

PRESIDENT: Welcome Prime Minister. Son

OFFICER. Father. I will wait outside for the Prime Minister.

OFFICER exits. The PRESIDENT beckons the PRIME MINISTER to sit down

PRESIDENT: May I offer you a drink and some food

PRIME MINISTER: No thank you, Mr. President. I have three functions to attend today. A lunch, a tea and then a dinner this evening.

PRESIDENT: Alas, those are the duties.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes

PRESIDENT: Do I sense a doubt. Come. You've been Prime Minister for nearly ten years because you wanted to be. I tried to talk you out of it, remember. After your first term. You refused.

PRIME MINISTER: I did sir. I believe in serving my people.

PRESIDENT: I understand. But you did not always believe in serving your High Chief.

PRIME MINISTER; I am loyal to my country and you, sir.

PRESIDENT: Well, those are past days. You are still popular with the masses. We must celebrate your ten years as Prime Minister in a special way. What are your thoughts? A parade. A national holiday ?

PRIME MINISTER: I am honored, sir.

PRESIDENT: High officials deserve high honors. It is a right. You have acted as a chief for ten years.

PRIME MINISTER: Sir. A military parade. And a street march with the army leading.

PRESIDENT: Done. And a feast. One or many. You could travel to different centres and have several. People will honor you where ever you go. Then have a major feast in the capital and invite the chiefs from all over the country.

PRIME MINISTER: It will be a high honor.

PRESIDENT: Modesty is a public sentiment Prime Minister. I know your desires, or most of them. By the way, are you still seeing that journalist, the young woman?

PRIME MINISTER: (*reluctantly*) Sir. I do see her.....

PRESIDENT: (*laughs*) Of course you do. My intelligence sources are good, and so is my reading of your face. She's been your mistress for a number of years now.

PRIME MINISTER: Sir

PRESIDENT: But, to your tenth celebrations. A possible time to announce your retirement, eh? We have elections in another six months. I have a strong interest to see who will follow you. There are so many young people. All of them able. And educated. My health is bad. I could drop dead any day. The next heart attack will be my last. I want to see the new leader before I die.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, Sir

PRESIDENT: Yes, sir...what does that mean ?

PRIME MINISTER: I was showing respect, sir.

PRESIDENT: Stubbornness, Prime Minister

PRIME MINISTER: You always have my respect, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Sometimes you forget I was Prime Minister for many years. I was born into politics, lived it and understand it. I know the niceties of diplomatic language.

PRIME MINISTER: Sir.

PRESIDENT: Yes, I am your Chief. The highest in the land and will be so until I die. But, to your celebrations. Would you like to have a special medal cast in your honor. A military medal with your head on one side of it. Had you thought of that ?

PRIME MINISTER: No.

PRESIDENT: (*laughing*) Your language is coming in short bursts today, Prime Minister. Come, I am talking about a celebration, not a funeral. You are loved and will always be. Dead or alive. I will be forgotten after my death, except by historians and my village. You will become a legend and enter the stories that people tell each other at night when the moon is high and when they want guidance from their Gods. I envy that.

PRIME MINISTER: You planned that first coup, sir

PRESIDENT: Nevertheless, I could never plan to become a legend.

PRIME MINISTER: Sir.

PRESIDENT: But, the medal. Will that do?

PRIME MINISTER: It would be a great honor.

PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. Your silences are annoying some time. They ask for other things. It means you are standing once again in the general election and for Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: My people will ask me.

PRESIDENT: What do I have to ask you for ?

PRIME MINISTER: Sir.

PRESIDENT: You will have to retire at some time ? Only I can carry on to death.

PRIME MINISTER: Sir

PRESIDENT: You infuriate me, with your...Sirs. I am saying to you as clearly as I can that I want you to step down from being Prime Minister. It is ten years, more since the army took over. Your orders came from me at that time. You obeyed then. Now, you disobey. Repeatedly. In the army that would be treason, do you hear me?

PRIME MINISTER: Sir.

PRESIDENT: I want you to retire. You and I both must leave these scene soon. I will die. What will you do ?

PRIME MINISTER: Sir

PRESIDENT: Yes, Yes. To the substance. I know the meaning of words, only too well. Tell me what you want and you will have it. *(long pause)* Come.

PRIME MINISTER: Who will follow you, sir ?

PRESIDENT: Ah. Now, I see why the words fail you. You want to become the next President.

PRIME MINISTER: To serve and...

PRESIDENT: Impossible. And the other chiefs. They would revolt. I cannot make you into royal blood. You will never be President.

PRIME MINISTER: If you supported me. If you spoke out, sir.
At the celebrations sir.

PRESIDENT: I doubt if it would work. Why should I support you
as a future President ?

PRIME MINISTER: Your eldest son wishes to become Prime
Minister. I would recommend and speak in support of his
leadership. There are at least three other contenders.

PRESIDENT: And how do you see this change taking place?

PRIME MINISTER: I could begin standing in for you now sir,
unofficially as Vice President. when you are sick or traveling.
Some months after the next election, I could retire from Prime
Minister to become Vice President. That post has been vacant
for some time. You could confirm me in the post and bypass the
chiefs. It is your choice.

PRESIDENT: And my dealing with the great chiefs. How do I do
that ?

PRIME MINISTER: You may not have to deal with them, sir .

PRESIDENT: (*long pause*) You are a more cunning politician,
than I gave you credit for.

PRIME MINISTER: You always appoint a temporary Vice
President when you are indisposed, away or sick. Tell the chiefs
I am merely acting for you.

PRESIDENT: And after my death? It is part of your plan, am I
right ?

PRIME MINISTER: I hope my reputation will help me ,sir. My
popularity.

PRESIDENT: Mine with the other chiefs will be finished.

PRIME MINISTER: Your eldest son, will be Prime Minister.
Your next son can be Chief of Staff for the army. and your other
son, still young, can be groomed for whatever post he chooses.
I promise them my support. Your family will rule this country for
the next fifty years.

PRESIDENT: And I. My honor.

PRIME MINISTER: Sir.

PRESIDENT: That.... sir, means you have an answer.

PRIME MINISTER: You are an old man, sir. You told me so, a few minutes ago.

PRESIDENT: I understand. A dynasty for my family, but perhaps disgrace for me. Death will be a relief, eh ?

PRIME MINISTER: No one would speak out against you, sir. You are the President. The Highest Chief in the land. You can do anything you want, sir.

We hear a canoe song off stage. FOUR CHILDREN enter singing the canoe song to honor a great warrior. The PRIME MINISTER is looking into a mirror getting ready to give a major speech.

TINA: (*as CHORUS*) Look at the conceit of a hero. This is his vision. Look at him , talking to a mirror. He prepares for his tenth anniversary as Prime Minister by touring the country. At each village gifts will collect like flowers on a grave. He will lament the demise of the spirit of his ancestors. He will talk to the youth of his village, then to the women and to the elders. Words, words, words. Words to himself. It's like saying - left, right, left. Right, left, quick march.

HERO: I had a dream. Do you know what a dream does to a man. It is the secret of a new life. Gone are the wives who manage us. Gone are the mothers who adore us. Defeated are the ravages of age - the double chin, the volcano of bellies pregnant with the birth of approaching death. A dream is the fountain of youth. With an idea, with a dream there is no end to the strength of man. It is a blessed thing.

TINA: What a mockery. Listen to the voice of a man trying to be a lion when he is barely a roar. Oh, men are despicable when they act like this. When we sleep he holds me as if I will die to become a shadow in his arms. But it is I who am alive, it is I who know that his farting belly is his real gift to the nation. At least it has a life unprotected by cheap philosophy.

HERO: (to Tina) My dream is real.

TINA: (embracing him) Come, let me hold you. I am your dream, my hero.

HERO: Are you like all my other lovebirds, those who disbelieve? Tina. we have spent many hours together. You know I believe. You know I had a vision. Believe me.

TINA: (to audience) Because I love him, because I am his woman, I believe it.

HERO: My love

TINA: What have you done in ten years. You are Prime Minister. My girlfriend lives in poverty abandoned by her husband who took the children. She feeds herself by being the mistress of a chief who has shares in the handouts of Foreign Aid Development funds.

HERO: She should of stayed at home with the children and served her husband. It is our custom. My revolution was to preserve our past.

TINA: And what of her future ?

HERO: It will be different one day?

TINA: But not for women ?

PRIME MINISTER: I am not the cause of poverty ? *(He breaks away and talks to the audience)* Before the others came, we had riches. We were a great nation in this huge ocean. People respected our chiefs, we received slaves, women bowed before us. A man could have many wives, live well and die amid huge ceremonies to wake our sleeping ancestors about the last journey to the mountain of our birth where sun and the sky meet. That has been destroyed. My task is to once again visit the mountains and tell our ancestors that I am ready to offer my life to save our people.

He freezes on stage. Two men enter, a CHIEF and a BUSINESSMAN. They take up positions either side of the PRIME MINISTER and freeze.

TINA: *(as CHORUS)* So much hogwash. I too want to believe him, but how can it when these two other men are here. Look at their faces. There is the great chief. Born into glory. His wealth is built on a thousand years of kingdoms. His father was a chief. His grandfather a cannibal who ate the eyes of his enemies and then spat them into a fire. His father before him had many wives. Many were killed. Chiefs survive and the rest survive. He talks of tradition. A man who owns part of a successful airline, hotels and a nation in poverty. He plays Buckingham Palace with a red tin soldier each day. And celebrates the birthday of a prince of adultery. A chief is a shark on land.

An old man, Tina's FATHER enters. He beckons TINA. She approaches and kneels before him in a subservient position

FATHER : My daughter. Come sit by my side. I have to talk with you. This day is a day of farewell and a new birth. Do not look frightened. I have a task for you.

TINA: Father, I obey you.

FATHER : You're the daughter of the chief of this village. Your mother. Her arms. Golden skin of the sun. Her eyes were forever bright. In love, anger and sadness. When we lay together we talked of having many children. I wanted only sons. She promised many sons and one daughter who would fly with the wind and talk with the Gods. I laughed, but loved her so much. I said that was what I wanted. In her first baby gift to me she died. Her golden skin turned to twilight and the gray of that sad night. Her death words were that she had not time for the sons but all of them had their spirit in you. I wrapped her body in a hundred mats and a thousand flowers. I called my people and told them of a prophecy. The spirits of all my unborn sons would be in the soul of a small baby. That night as I lay in my tent I asked for you to be brought to my side. You slept in my arms. In the long night without your mother there was a great storm. Trees ripped from the ground and a flood from the river drowned three men near my tent. I survived. In the morning the storm was gone. Your small face was like a small sun that shone on that sad day. That night amid the feast for the dead, I told the village how the spirits had saved my life during the night of the storm and three dead warriors had gone as guards for your mother's spirit journey. I never took another wife or had more children. My daughter, you have gifts in you that came from your mother, our sea gods, the gods of the mountains and the sun.

TINA: I like to hear about my mother. But, you spoke of a task.

FATHER: I am tired. My heart moves with waves from the sea of your mother. I will not talk for a while. Dance for me. Dance.

TINA dances a slow dance showing duty to her father. On finishing the dance she sits down beside him .

FATHER: There is a man taking up the duties of a chief, but he was not born a chief. He is a warrior, a great warrior who will serve his chiefs well. His battle will be one he trained for in that strange land. We honor him. His feet are being placed next to those of the great chiefs. When he dies his name and the stories of how he saved his people will be placed alongside those of other great names in our history. But there will be a sadness. The Gods, angry with us for elevating him so high will possess him with their wild winds of madness. He will try to destroy us. Your task daughter, is to restore our greatness. The chiefs must please the Gods. You will leave our island and never return until your work is completed. Learn the words of the white faced people. Complete your sacred duty. Go now, daughter.

TINA: How will I know what to do ?

FATHER: The Gods chose you, my daughter. They will talk to you in their own way. Now, turn and leave me in my sickness

TINA: I want to stay and care for you in your old age.

FATHER: You must leave immediately. My sickness will end in silence. Listen, I hear the voice of the birds. Listen to them for a moment and leave. I will sleep. Go.

TINA shows respect to her father and exits . We hear the sound of birds. This changes to the sound of an helicopter Television screens flicker and come alive. Tina is reading the news.

TINA: *(on TV screen)* A helicopter has crashed. A helicopter has crashed. A helicopter has crashed. A helicopter has crashed. A helicopter has crashed.

The sound of the helicopter changes to that of birds and the drone of the helicopter fades away. We see Tina's FATHER alone on stage. He bows his head to the ground in front of the audience. He looks at the sky and the bird sounds change again to the sound of the helicopter. The scene changes and the TV screen goes dead. A group of men are sitting down together. The BUSINESSMAN is of a different race and color to the others. They have a ceremonial drink and begin to talk.

PRESIDENT: We should start with a prayer. This is a day of great importance.

CHIEF: Our father who guides us, Great God. Today direct us with wisdom.

PRESIDENT: This day oh, my God, let us act in wisdom for the people of this country. For our ancestors who brought us here today. And for our children. We are their ancestors and they must respect us. Come, pray with us. We ask you for your guidance on this day.

BUSINESSMAN: I have my own God.

POLITICIAN: We all have need of prayers.

BUSINESSMAN: I have no need of yours.

POLITICIAN: You migrant heathen.....

BUSINESSMAN: Be careful with your facts and your tongue. My God is older than yours. And more tolerant.

POLITICIAN: (*to others*) Why do we need this heretic when we are planning a sacred ceremony. Let's get rid of him ? You are not of our people.

BUSINESSMAN: I was born here. And my grandmother and my children.

POLITICIAN: It means nothing to us, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Be quiet, you know why we have decided to form this group. He is one of us.

BUSINESSMAN: I am not ? (*laughs*) My other God is closer to you, isn't it?

POLITICIAN: And, what does that mean ?

BUSINESSMAN: It means exactly what you want it to mean. You know I trade in both money and.....silence.

POLITICIAN: I would silence your whole race if I could.

BUSINESSMAN: Is that your mandate as an elected politician. That is why I always carry my cheque book. I have my own weapons. And I can pay for silence. You would do well to practice it.

PRESIDENT: This is a bad start. A prayer should unite us, not divide us.

BUSINESSMAN : Then ask him to control his tongue. His thoughts I know and abhor. I can manage those. They are repetitive and boring. His tongue is a public thing...obscene in civilized company. (*rises to leave*) You've no need to buy my silence, I give it to you free, like a Christian would.

PRESIDENT: Sit down my friend. We.... I.... my people, we want your company and your advice.

BUSINESSMAN: And no doubt my money and.... (*he sits*) Do I get his silence?

PRESIDENT: We are all here for the same reason. It is the enormity of the job ahead that overwhelms us. (*he passes around another ceremonial drink. They all drink and there is a short silence.*) You are here because we trust you. All of us have benefited from your advice. Equally, our business ventures together have been successful. We get money from our business deals. Our children go to the best schools abroad. It was you who spoke to the politicians in New Zealand and Australia, arranged visas for them and made our path easier to

walk. Our houses are paid for. We have money overseas. Your help was there too. I welcome you. But today, we are here to protect the future of our leader, the hero. That is our task, that and nothing else.

CHIEF: His health is not what is used to be. Since leaving the army he has become a law to himself,

BUSINESSMAN: His popularity is enormous. We underestimate the memory of a farming people.

CHIEF: And it's getting more difficult now we have television. He is on the box almost every night. The more he is seen the more popular he becomes. A newspaper poll showed he was still the most loved person in the country.

PRESIDENT: Yes, I know. A Prime Minister in another country would give his left ear to be the most popular politician after being in office for so long.

PRESIDENT: He has no political guile, nor an understanding of the economy.

POLITICIAN: His behavior is unacceptable.

PRESIDENT: In a decade we have seen our country become a laughing stock.

CHIEF: In Australia they talk of the Prime Minister in search of a coup.

PRESIDENT: New Zealand is more cruel. They talk of the Prime Minister of Piss and Minister with responsibility for coup constipation. There are others signs of his incompetence. His constant affairs with women have become public knowledge. I have complaints from the church where he is a lay preacher. His wife is the only silent partner to this public insult to our culture.

CHIEF: He has no discretion.

BUSINESSMAN: Crime - women - sex - image. What are we talking about ? We are getting more foreign aid from Australia who prefer us accepting their dollars than American dollars and French francs. He has committed no crime. I too have a wife and mistress. Of this group, one of us is homosexual, two have other women who share their beds and one is impotent.

PRESIDENT: We are talking about discretion ?

BUSINESSMAN: Then talk with honesty. I have lost millions of dollars since he was leader. He has cost me money. Every time the share market hears the word coup, fifty million dollars vanish within hours and the share market goes into decline for a month. I want to stop that. He should be making me money. I too helped to fund that coup that dragged this petty Caesar to power. It will be ten years this month when he first became Prime Minister. We all thought it was for a short time. He is still popular with the poor although it is people like me who make jobs for the poor. *(pulls out a sheet of paper and looks at it)* Look at our damn figures for employment. In a decade we have made a handful of jobs. And most of those have gone to foreigners from the West. I am tired of this decade of destroyed opportunities. He should go. I did not pay you men to fumble with this monster of a hero.

POLITICIAN: We gave you citizenship.

BUSINESSMAN: And you have been repaid. My business deals bought your flats in Sydney and Auckland.

POLITICIAN: Your mother was not one of us.

BUSINESSMAN: I do not forget it. But she only knew one man. I have funded your fucking from Sydney to Suva to Seoul. My eyes slant, my spirit does not.

The BUSINESSMAN takes from his pocket a small silver wrapped box and carefully puts it on the table. The group look at it with curiosity.

A present for my daughter. Chocolates. They will melt in my pocket.

PRESIDENT: A pretty wrapped box. We have other stories. But they come to the same conclusion. Our national hero who served our orders, now serves his own. A mere soldier who did his task and then refused to return to barracks. To our shame we have honored him, so that he now stands above us and seeks to be President.

CHIEF: His army coups gave our people new hope.

PRESIDENT: When we asked him to do the task, we had no idea of the long-term effects. After that election, we were in turmoil. We were in disarray. We could see that it was the end of the Chiefly system. We were shattered. Some of us didn't speak to the High Chief for two weeks. He felt he was losing control. He quickly saw he was losing power, and to no one in particular. It just waned. So he spoke with his son who spread snake words. There was fear that your people would destroy

us, take our land and make us slaves in our own land. You knew that?

BUSINESSMAN: I know the myths.

POLITICIAN: It was real. I know. So did my followers and the church. There was a fear deep in the heart of the poor of my country. The fear of more foreigners taking over everything. They had seen the Europeans doing it, now one half of this nation, this migrant group, was going to be able to take over the other half, perhaps forever. It was a strong fear that terrorized our people. The army coup put the old leaders back in power. It preserved our place in the control of this nation. It must stay that way.

PRESIDENT: What options do we have ?

CHIEF: While he is not a chief, he has acted like a chief. People see him as a chief. Only his blood is wrong ? So, he must be honored as a chief and treated with all the respect we can find. There is the possibility of a trip overseas. That option is out. We would not get the cooperation of the men who rule those countries. Westerners don't respect our ways. The second choice is the one. It will keep the Prime Minister in our own country. When the canoe ceremony is over, respect will become higher. Already we have chosen a place and a time for the canoe. Only the rituals must be agreed upon. We can rely on your cooperation. Thank you. Then let us proceed. You have the details.

BUSINESSMAN: I will do this all from memory. We will have no written records of the canoe ceremony

At that moment TINA walks on-stage and the voices of the men drop until they are in inaudible obviously still in conversation. She talks to the audience and looks occasionally at the men

TINA: (as CHORUS) At some stage, my name will come into their conversation. But there are many other names being talked about. In a few minutes they will talk of details, about the canoe, about the children who will take part in the rituals, the three officers to go in the canoe, the departure place. My part is small. I care for the hero deeply. He's my leader, too. *(listening to men)* I can't hear what they're saying anymore than you can.

As she talks A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN walks on-stage. She wears a mourning dress. TINA, walks towards her and stops.

TINA: I don't understand their minds. *(to the woman)* Do you know what the chiefs are saying ?

The WOMAN doesn't speak she just stands there looking forlorn. Both embrace. They sob together

TINA: It is decided then ? The canoe.

She nods. They embrace again and the older woman sobs loudly. TINA comforts her while talking to the audience.

TINA: And the wife of the leader has a right to cry. No marriage is a failure where there has once been affection. She grieves for her own dead hero. Not the man who became Prime Minister, but for the young soldier with the shining buttons and the strong sure step. We always grieve for the young even when they are old. She thinks she knows what happened, poor woman, but the story she has been told is one of two stories. The other has yet to be told. That is my task. *(the woman is calming down)* Go home now. Your relatives are waiting for you. *(Tina watches as the woman departs)*

Look at those men. Still intently talking about the hero and the welcome for him.

The scene changes to a a room. There is the sound of applause and the PRIME MINISTER enters. He undoes his tie, removes his jacket and sits down on a chair. He is silent and tired. TINA pours him a drink. He accepts, is silent lie on the bed. She removes his shoes and adjusts a pillow beneath his head.

TINA: (as CHORUS) And he is here on his home island. It is the triumph of his life. Ten years as Prime Minister. A soldier, a statesman and my lover. Poor man. He is exhausted. We have had our last night together. In a few hours he returns to the capital for the celebrations organized by the President. Three days. A thousand soldiers will march past. Planes will fly in a special formation to spell his name in the sky. In his village storytellers already talk of him as son of the moon and brother of the sun. Women name their sons in honor of the hero. His special medal will be sold out in less than week. For him and I there is sadness. We have agreed to meet no more to avoid the gossip of the church and the chiefs. These are our final hours together, a time to tell stories, to make vows of silence and to end a time of warmth. We have loved for a long time. Our bodies do not yell at each other anymore. No more the frenzy of the twisted limbs, the mouth in hunger and the passion milk . All now is calm. He is my hero, I will have no other man.

PRIME MINISTER: *(calling faintly)* Tina, Tina. Where are you ?

TINA goes to him .He sits up slowly. They embrace.

PRIME MINISTER: I have been asleep.

TINA: Only for a few moments. You are tired.

PRIME MINISTER: I dreamt. It was a canoe. A traditional canoe. It took place a long time ago. I was in my village. I was going on a voyage. The sky was red. Young men died as the canoe was hauled over their broken bodies to the sea so my voyage would be successful. They were soldiers. Army officers. But I was frightened. I saw four children under the canoe. I asked one. What is happening? Where are the oars? There was no answer. He was dumb. His tongue was gone. I asked the other. They said it was cut by the chief. I cried. And I looked for you. I realized I had no one I loved with me on the long voyage. *(amazed)* Why didn't I know where the canoe was going?

TINA: It was only a dream. You're tired. You've slept little, eaten, given speeches and watched people worship you. It is natural to be tired. I too am tired my love. I have written thousands of words, taken photographs and sat in the room waiting for you each night.

PRIME MINISTER: Your body is my home. In your arms and with your body breathing next to me, the long nights of wakefulness are friendly. When you are away, I feel cold. I imagine death is cold. I observe, but cannot feel.

TINA: Hush, my love. I am here. We must be happy tonight. These are my last hours with you. I want us to drink, to make love, to put flowers on each others bodies. I then want to lie awake beside you, to hear your breath go strong in the night. Like that little military train we created. Puff, puff. Remember when we make love on my birthday and I wanted a child. We said we would never buy him a toy train as you could puff, puff with your breath and I would write the story of the little sugar cane engine.

PRIME MINISTER: I am so tired. Stay by me. I will rest.

PRIME MINISTER lies on bed again and sleeps. TINA sits beside him. Enter CHILDREN who begin a song and dance. TINA beckons one of the children towards her. She sees the child has a fist closed. Gently, as the dance continues she attempts to open the fist of the child. The CHILD resists. She persists and eventually she gets the fist open. There is blood on the palm, a stigmata. She opens the CHILD'S other fist and the same stigmata is there. There is a sound of a helicopter and the children begin to look for it in the sky and wave their hands. The helicopter sounds recedes and the music returns. ALL THE CHILDREN have a blood stigmata on their palms. Each CHILD forms a cross. TINA walks among them asking

TINA: But, why... and who.... why ?

CHILD 1: Do you like the sound ?

CHILD 2: Do you like the sky ?

CHILD 3:(*gestures to fourth child*) He has the answer ?

TINA: And....

All the children dance around TINA to music. The music stops. The FOURTH CHILD smiles and continues to dance silently.

TINA: Why does he keep dancing, there is no music?

CHILD 1: He is dumb.

CHILD 2: But he's special. He knows what is going to happen.

TINA: What does this mean, who are you ?

CHILD 2: Do you like the sound ?

CHILD 1: Do you like the sky ?

CHILD 3: Do you love him ?

THE CHILDREN again form crosses showing their stigmata marks. They dance around her. TINA is mystified. She dances with them. Two CHILDREN go offstage and returns with her FATHER dressed in the robes of the dead. TINA falls before him sobbing. There is a long wait..

FATHER : Sit by me daughter. My body is cold.

TINA: Oh, father I have wept for you these ten years. You died before I had time to complete my journey to the city. And I never saw your body again. Never kissed your lips. Never helped the women wash your body for burial. Never held your hand. Never cut off a lock of your hair before the ground took you for her own. Never dressed you in the royal suit of death. Father, I never....

FATHER: (*interrupting her*) Hush... I cannot feel your tears now. There is nothing where I am now. I observe. I see. I do not feel, nor care that I am what I am. That is the real power of death. I watch the events of the world unfold.

TINA: (*crying bitterly*) I have cried in my dreams. I have no home. When you died, I lost my home. Our people have no use for women who leave their homes and go to the stone houses of the city. I will never return to my village. I will never enter it

proudly on the arm of my husband. Oh, father, father. I had planned to return home to you when the task was over. I said I would marry the man you chose for me. My job would then be to serve my husband and serve my father. Your death deprived me of a father. Your task deprived me of a husband. In old age, women will laugh at me and say she was a nothing. A mere sound of a broken wave. She never loved, nor bore a child. Even the birds of the sky bear children and love. She is an ash, a burnt tree. I will be mocked. They will say her father believed in a foolish daughter and called her a great chief. I have failed you. Father.

FATHER: Tina, I am not here to receive your tears. I am no more. I am a cold spirit. My body lies consumed by worms and my mind is no more of this earth. I come to give you a simple message. Before you made your journey from the village at the time of my death, I said you must complete a task. The time is coming. You must fulfill your promise.

TINA: What must I do, I am lost.... a journalist, a mere messenger who eats other people's bread. I have little in my life. I sleep and love a man who loves only the faces of women. And when he has loved once he forgets the face. But I cannot forget his. Forgive me, father. *(sobbing)*

FATHER: I know you love this man.

TINA: Your face looks the same. Your voice is the voice I know. And yet, you are dead these ten years.

FATHER: In a moment I must go. I am unhappy among this land of mortals and their pointless ways. You will join me soon. You must complete your task. You will then return to your village with your chosen husband. Your work is nearly over.

TINA: But, what am I to do.

FATHER: The child will tell you.

FATHER walks slowly off stage as the music begins. The FOURTH CHILD returns and dances as the music fades to silence. TINA watches. The child beckons TINA who slowly follows the child off stage. As THE CHILD leaves the stage the PRIME MINISTER awakes and groans. She crosses to him.

TINA: Are you in pain ?

PRIME MINISTER: It is my heart. I can feel aching and my arm is getting stiff. The doctors told me this would happen.

TINA: Shall I call your officers? They'll tell the High Chief, the President. You can rest here and go tomorrow.

PRIME MINISTER: I cannot. I am being honored. It is my duty to be there.

TINA: My love, the Chief will understand. Where are your pills?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't want them. I, I.....

TINA: What foolishness. Where are they? You told me you would take them ?

TINA starts to look for the pills.

PRIME MINISTER: Tina, Tina

TINA: (*distressed*) Stop it, you promised, you promised you would take them. Where are those pills? I checked them myself before you left the last hotel ? You'll die without them. Your heart pills are your lifeline. Please, where are they ?

PRIME MINISTER: (*gets up and crosses to a chair*) Tina, come to me.

TINA goes to him. They embrace for a long time. They sit together in a loving manner.

PRIME MINISTER: I haven't taken any tablets this week. I wanted our lovemaking to be good. Pills make me tired, impotent and bad tempered. This is our last day. Have you forgotten ?

TINA: I have been thinking of it all day, and yesterday and the day before and for a long time.

PRIME MINISTER: I'll take my pill tomorrow. I cannot take you tomorrow. So I had to choose.

TINA: But, it's dangerous to your health. And I love you, like a wife.

PRIME MINISTER: Hush, we don't want the soldiers to hear that. They think we are just lovers.

TINA: Lovers. Just. Eight Years. Blind, stupid soldiers.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, perhaps. But, loyal to me. Only they have been loyal all these long years I have been Prime Minister. When they see me, they salute. And they know I care for you. What will you do tomorrow?

TINA: Sleep. I will sleep all day, and the next and the next until the celebrations are over. I have nothing to celebrate.

PRIME MINISTER: Won't you watch a little of the celebrations on TV. It would ease my loneliness.

TINA: You are the hero with the country at your feet. Your home island is sending four young children with you on the helicopter. The President has selected three army officers, all the sons of chiefs to accompany you. Your guard of honor is impeccable.

PRIME MINISTER: In this last year, I have traveled the country. Not just the cities, but the cane farms, the flour mills, I have been into poor schools where the migrants send their children. I have seen so many poor families. Poverty is everywhere except in the houses of the chiefs.

TINA: That is how it has always been.

PRIME MINISTER: When I went into the streets in my military uniform with a gun, I believed our people were in danger. I was fearful of the migrants. Fearful. They were to take our land, destroy our churches and put up their own dark Gods who would ignore us. I swore to my own God I would protect and enrich my people. But, it was the chiefs and cities who prospered, not the poor farmer, nor the fisherman. In some of the villagers I saw mixed marriages with our people and the foreigners. People working on the same land. And with barely enough food to keep them alive. Their children were still hungry, dirty and with little education. I failed. My revolution lied to me. Tina, I have been Prime Minister for a selfish few. For the chiefs.

TINA: But, you are loved.

PRIME MINISTER: It is not enough. I betrayed myself. I wanted to share my salt, sugar and bread. I still have dreams, but they will not be realized. With you by my side, I could talk to all the people in this country. That is denied me. (*embraces her*) Be my wife these last few minutes.

TINA: I am. I have been and will remain so.

PRIME MINISTER: No. You must go back to your village, find a good man and live with him.

TINA: I would like to enter my village on your arm, to say, here is my husband. A warrior, a real chief. A man who made his own mana. A man with honor. A hero.

PRIME MINISTER: *(laughing)* Because I didn't take my heart pills. Come, we have only a few of minutes together. We must laugh.

TINA: I want to laugh, to cry, to love, to die, to live.

PRIME MINISTER: That's a big request, even for the Prime Minister.

TINA: But, I have one request. I want to fly back with you in the helicopter. I can do it, as an official Press Representative. It's the last time, I'll be with you. I want to sit by you until we land. No one will see us in the helicopter and your soldiers are loyal. You said so yourself.

They stand up together. He nods. They embrace. There is the sound of a helicopter starting up outside. The noise gradually gets louder. Cheering of people can be heard over the sound of the helicopter and the a farewell song sung by children. They exit. The scene becomes an office in the President's palace.

PRESIDENT: Come in. Sit down. This is a strange hour to call. In a few minutes we are all going to be needed. I must ask you to be brief. Is there anything wrong?

BUSINESSMAN: As one of the planners, I need your time for a few minutes. Be assured, the canoe is on it's way. In a few minutes, it will have engine trouble. Then silence. All you will need to do is fill the silence with the appropriate words of praise and sadness. A small task after the other one. You will do it splendidly.

PRESIDENT: Your voice is cynical. It will be a sad time. I have no joy in my heart at what I have had to do. .

BUSINESSMAN: When we first met in this room to plan today's events, one of your political colleagues was abusive to me. He said I had no part in the future of this country.

PRESIDENT: He is an extremist.

BUSINESSMAN: Quite, but extremists are lovers of poisonous snakes. In the few minutes we begin to mourn the dead hero. I have come to build his monument.

PRESIDENT: Do not misjudge or mock. You are not one of our people, that is why you cannot understand. The hero will be given a burial worthy of the highest chief of the land. His name will be talked about for decades. We will be seen as his friends who supported him, who praised him.

BUSINESSMAN: That interpretation will depend on me.

PRESIDENT: You over estimate

BUSINESSMAN: I accurately estimate. My survival depends on it and the future of my children.

PRESIDENT: I have no quarrel with your children, they are innocents.

BUSINESSMAN: Like the four children you are sending at this moment to their death.

PRESIDENT: That is a religious ritual. They were chosen to accompany the canoe. We have merely gone back to our cultural roots and tradition. We chose children, children of our blood to honor the hero. Their innocence is the greatest tribute we could make. They are pure before God. It is right that the hero should die with purity and goodness by him. He must be honored. The children will be honored too. Parents will receive compensation.

BUSINESSMAN: You are a savage. And will that be the end of the sacrifice. What of my people's children ? Will they die in yet another ritual, planned by your filthy smiling colleagues who concocted this assassination. I will not let our children be murdered.

PRESIDENT: You are deranged talking of murder. This is a civilized country.

BUSINESSMAN: I am making strict precautions to prevent killing. As in the first army coup, you will encourage street riots in the city by doing nothing about them. Your young men will rob, beat up people, smash windows set fire to shops and rape our wives and daughters. My people will be terrified. They will leave their jobs, hide and the ablest will go abroad. You will kill a few, not many, just a few. Next you will excuse your young men. They will be grieving for their hero. Who will punish grieving young men mourning their national hero. Not you. Nor the other chiefs. Once more a military regime will arise.(pause) It will not happen.

PRESIDENT: Why should I do this ?

BUSINESSMAN: Because you too hate the other half of this nation that wants to sit by your side. We have learned much in ten years. You ignore our ancient religion while your ignorant followers worship a savage Christ .

PRESIDENT: You blaspheme.

BUSINESSMAN: I belong to a class of warriors too. But my guns are modern, like yours. I too know words, the showing of the ritual knife before the massacre begins. My sons went overseas to become warriors. Their weapons will be different to yours. A bomb in the market place and the knife in the night, a fire in the village, poison in the water, an exploding tourist bus. We are learning to threaten and terrorize our enemy. Our conversation on the canoe ritual was recorded in this room. I have every word of that meeting. It is on a tape cassette, it is duplicated, it is transcribed. It is the knowledge of at least thirty people of my race and copies are already on their way to Britain, Australia, New Zealand and a dozen other countries.

PRESIDENT: Why should I believe this story ?

BUSINESSMAN: You have no option. It is the truth. You remember the box of chocolates for my daughter. A small sophisticated tape recorder. Like the type used by your security men to record my meetings with foreigners. There is no misunderstanding about your plans. If there was, it will become clear after the helicopter crashes with the Prime Minister.

PRESIDENT: A bluff. You would not dare to do such a thing. I am the leader of this country.

BUSINESSMAN: You forget I am a self-made man. I make my own rules. *(takes a mini-tape recorder from his pocket)* It looked like this. I take no chances either. If I am not back home within this hour, my friends will release the messages. Within minutes of his death the world will hear how the hero really died.

PRESIDENT: Your price. A high one I expect?

BUSINESSMAN: I am a business man, what do you offer?

PRESIDENT: How much do you need, how many millions? Five?

BUSINESSMAN: Higher ?

PRESIDENT: Ten. Twenty million? It will be difficult to find that money. I will need time. Many months.

BUSINESSMAN: You could sell your hotels and airline. So, my deal is truly worth something ?

PRESIDENT: And if I don't sell?

BUSINESSMAN: Your life will be a risk as long as you live and those of the chiefs who took part in the canoe planning.

PRESIDENT: And so will yours, and your wife and children.

BUSINESSMAN: They are at this moment on their way overseas to safety. My eldest son is in hiding instructing our warriors or terrorists. They awaiting orders. You dismantled the laws of trust of respect, disinherited my people's dreams. These years have given time to learn hate.

PRESIDENT: You are a fanatic. I need to know your final terms now. We have only hours left before his death must be announced. Then the ceremonies begin.

BUSINESSMAN: You will immediately revise the constitution and decide within one year that one quarter of all cabinet posts will be given as of right to races other than your own people. Within three years we will expect more posts. We do not seek equal power any longer. We demand it. Now.

PRESIDENT: No

BUSINESSMAN: Come, the constitution has been talked about for too many years. Only the action is missing. Within the first four hours of the hero's death, you will give strict orders to the army and police that looters and rioters will be arrested or shot on sight. Those orders will be repeated daily on radio, television and in the papers for as long as you and I think is necessary. One half of all police and government top positions will be shared by other races. You will have several years to action this.

PRESIDENT: I cannot promise. The chiefs had agreed to postpone all constitutional change for twenty five years.

BUSINESSMAN: You will alter it by decree as President of this country and in your position of High Chief. I have one other demand. Your colleague who hates and insulted me in this room will meet with a fatal car accident. That will be before the funeral of the Prime Minister.

PRESIDENT: Murder him?

BUSINESSMAN: A second murder. Yes. And immediately. But, I asked for an accident. .

PRESIDENT: I know he is a dangerous person.

BUSINESSMAN: It will be hard to control the police and army without controlling him. There must be no riots. He cannot be trusted. He knows all the plans. No-one is safe while he lives.

PRESIDENT: I accept he is untrustworthy. It was a mistake to have him in our plans. But, murder is impossible.

BUSINESSMAN: Then both our peoples are damned. They will murder each other. They will kill you first and then they will have time for me.

PRESIDENT: And you, you are not afraid of death?

BUSINESSMAN: Our deaths will be a ritual. Like his (*pause*) Come. I need my answer. There is little time.

PRESIDENT: I would kill you if I could.

BUSINESSMAN: You have the choice. But there will be many more murders. Yours will be first as people kill you, then each of your sons and their sons. Your kin will be erased from this country and cursed forever. Then will come the slaughter of all the chiefs and politicians who took part in the plans to kill the Prime Minister.

PRESIDENT: How will I tell my people, persuade the other chiefs to do what you ask ?

BUSINESSMAN: We have patience. My people have been here for a hundred years. In the next decade we will have a most successful business venture. I will support you, with money. My people will. We will fund the intellectuals of both races, develop a propaganda campaign. We will talk of South Africa, of Nelson Mandela. The hero's name will always be equated with liberty and justice. In a decade we will see the rainbow, it will never fade. After all, the hero has been talking about reconciliation for years. I am not asking for miracles. This will be his monument. One people, one destiny.

PRESIDENT: I need time

BUSINESSMAN: (*angrily*) There is none and who will you talk with? Collect yourself. You must answer. You are the highest chief of this land, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: (*walking away*) It is a dishonorable settlement. I should have died myself before I let this happen.

BUSINESSMAN: Your word. Or we both die. And thousands of others. Do you agree ?

PRESIDENT: It is settled.

BUSINESSMAN: To all the conditions? Including the car accident?

PRESIDENT: It is settled.

He walks off stage. Four children come on dancing with banners full of welcome signs. Cheering and shouting. It is gradually replaced by the sound of an helicopter approaching. . The TV screen begins to flicker. Announcements from various loudspeakers scattered in the auditorium

VOICE 1: The Prime Minister completed a day of national celebration by visiting four villages in his home province. Four children were chosen to fly with him to the capital where he is to be greeted by the President and escorted to a dinner in his honor.

VOICE 2: At this moment the police band is on the tarmac. One hundred young athletes will give a gymnastic display as the Prime Minister alights from his helicopter.

VOICE 1: The Prime Minister spoke once again of national reconciliation and asked all races to recognize their part in developing peace and harmony

The cheering gets louder and the sound of the helicopter approaches. The lights on stage begin to change and it become darker. Fanfares and band music are heard with the sound of a crowd in the background. We hear the sound of a helicopter and music. The stage becomes darker. Two figures emerge that of the PRIME MINISTER and TINA. We hear engine trouble, a spluttering of sounds and then silence. The lights turn to a brilliant red and the hero enters and slowly sinks to the ground. He is dead. A spotlight shines on him. TINA stands in the same spotlight.

TINA: (as CHORUS) I was on that helicopter. We had made love for the final time. I wrote many stories, I knew the man. He was tired. Last night I got my best interview. Tina, he said, I am finished. I have accomplished nothing being Prime Minister. This has been a decade of waste. Poverty is everywhere. It is time to retire. But there is nothing else for me after that. Tonight at the great banquet in the capital I shall announce my retirement. I go home, and await death in my village. It was to be my best and last exclusive story. But now, like both of us, the story lies in the ashes on that beach spread among the rocks and the sand.

The sound of the helicopter becomes louder. Children gather around the dead hero and put flowers on his body. The TV screen flickers. We see TINA on screen .She is reading the news, but the voice is of an unknown man, a TV announcer. The PRESIDENT is by himself watching the TV screen.

ANNOUNCER (On TV) Details are now emerging about the death of the Prime Minister. He was traveling in a helicopter

with three army officers, a woman journalist and four children. The children were all from his village and had been especially selected to accompany him to the capital. They were to take part in celebrations for the late leader who had just completed ten years of service to the nation as Prime Minister. The President has already spoken on both television and radio. He ordered that a state funeral be held and said that the Prime Minister; a former commoner, will be buried like the great chief he had become. A rescue party reached the wreck of the helicopter some hours ago. According to reports from the chief search coordinator, the helicopter burst into flames on impact and the bodies are scattered over a wide area. The President has ordered a full inquiry into the crash. He announced that he will take personal responsibility for finding out all the circumstances that led up to the tragedy.

And here again are the names of the other people who were killed in the helicopter crash. Major John Ratuva, Captain Joseph Serevi, Lieutenant Paul Lau, Ms Tina Tokatoka and the four children. Michael Varasakete, Abraham Yaya, Alicia Cakau and Adi Maopa

As the names are being read a young ARMY OFFICER enters the room unannounced. The PRESIDENT turns off the TV.

PRESIDENT: Any more news on the crash, son ?

OFFICER: I spoke to the crash search coordinator by mobile phone. It's a terrible mess. Wreckage scattered for miles. The helicopter caught fire. Bodies charred beyond recognition. Only the children can be identified because of their size. We think the helicopter had engine trouble for several minutes before it crashed. Some passengers tried to hold on to each other for security. There's three bodies welded together with heat - children. The army officers were all separate.

PRESIDENT: And the Prime Minister ?

OFFICER: It's embarrassing, father. His body and the journalist are also welded together with the heat from the crash. I assume the woman panicked in the few seconds before the crash and obviously rushed over to the Prime Minister.

PRESIDENT: Unfortunate

OFFICER: Yes

PRESIDENT: You know she was the Prime Minister's mistress .

OFFICER: It's common knowledge sir.

PRESIDENT: We'll have to protect him now.

OFFICER: Yes, Father

PRESIDENT: What if we separate the bodies ?

OFFICER: It would be difficult. The soldiers are already at breaking point just sorting out the wreckage. If we did it on site, it would be an insult to the dead.

PRESIDENT: And if we got a local pathologist to do the job?

OFFICER: They're all Indian, sir. It would be hard to keep information secret. We could get an expert from overseas.

PRESIDENT: No, the radio, television and press journalists from overseas would find out. Then the shame. Our Prime Minister must be protected.

OFFICER: Our men at the search site can be trusted. They're so upset that they won't remember too many details.

PRESIDENT: Can you get military metal coffins ?

OFFICER: We have large stocks. Aid projects from the Americans.

PRESIDENT: Excellent. I want you personally to go to the crash site with one coffin for each person. On arrival, have the coffins stacked up on the ground, some distance from the crash site, so your crew delivering them don't see where the bodies are. Your crew will then immediately fly back to the capital. Only you will remain. Order the search coordinator to take the search party on a reconnaissance away from the helicopter. They are look for any other missing parts of the helicopter Tell them this is a order from the president. I want to conduct a full and thorough investigation into the crash. While they are away you will personally put the bodies into the coffins. Keep the children together in one box.

OFFICER: Father. Are you asking me to separate the body of the Prime Minister and the woman. I'm a soldier, I have killed men, but, father, I lack the courage to attack the dead.

PRESIDENT: My son. They'll be no need to do that. One coffin will be empty. The Prime Minister and his whore will share one.

OFFICER: But, father. You are going to give him a state funeral, like a high chief. We cannot bury his mistress with him. When

they find out, the army will rebel. I cannot do it. It will shame us all. Father, father.

The OFFICER goes onto his knees before the PRESIDENT and bows his head.

PRESIDENT: My son. You have always trusted me.

OFFICER: I have tried to obey you, always.

PRESIDENT: In this you must trust me too. The army must never know.

OFFICER: Yes, Father

PRESIDENT: One of the coffins will be empty

OFFICER: Yes

PRESIDENT: You will put some old bits of rubbish in that coffin and then seal it. There will be one coffin for each person except for the children. Keep them together. You understand. This is an order from me as your father and your commanding officer.

OFFICER: I will obey.

PRESIDENT: The Prime Minister and his remains, along with his mistress will be placed in another. That, too, will be sealed. When the task is done, you will phone me. All you will say is that the coffin of the Prime Minister is ready for return to the capital. Nothing else must be said. I'll personally fly to the site, see the wreckage, take part in a short ceremony and return with the coffins. You will accompany me.

OFFICER: Yes, father.

PRESIDENT: And we will never talk again of this conversation. It never happened. I will personally check that each coffin is sealed in my presence with a second lock. The keys will then be immediately destroyed. Son, go and do your duty for our dead hero.

The OFFICER rises and walks to the door. He stops and turns .

OFFICER: I don't understand how the accident occurred. We have the best engineers, the best pilots and the helicopter was nearly new.

PRESIDENT: Go my son. Do your duty as my son and an army officer. I have much to do. I must write his funeral speech.

OFFICER: He believed in his people. Tell the nation soldiers cried at his death. He was a man who dedicated his life to his country. He did what was necessary.

The OFFICER salutes his father and departs. Slowly the PRESIDENT returns to his chair and turns on the TV. The news is on once again.

ANNOUNCER: The first film pictures of the crash are now arriving at our studios. Wreckage of the helicopter carrying the Prime Minister is scattered over many hundred of meters of the beach where the helicopter crashed. We announce again the names of the three army officers, the woman and the four children who also died in the crash.

During the news the PRESIDENT turns off the TV and sits in his chair. As the names are read out the characters come slowly on stage in a small dance ritual and we hear again the sound of a helicopter. The PRIME MINISTER comes out last. He goes over towards the PRESIDENT and stands before him. The sound of the helicopter gets fainter, but it can still be heard.

PRESIDENT: Listen to these words soldier, as I won't say them over your grave. I have other words for that. You betrayed us. Like all soldiers you were always more stupid than the politicians. You did as we told you. Your military coups made secure our traditions and rights. Afterwards you could have asked me for anything you wanted. But you took political power from us. We forgave you the first time, and the second time and even tolerated you for a third term as Prime Minister. But, your mistake was wanting my job as President. For that you had to die. You. A commoner. A disloyal warrior. At this moment my eldest son is putting your bones and those of your whore in the same box. And rubbish in another. He believes you will both have a state funeral, and it is to be a secret between us. I intend to change those coffins. You and that slut will be buried in her village. Our people will never know how despised you were by the chiefs of this land. Your death has sealed the fate of our country. All our actions were for nothing. Your disloyalty has led to those stinking people sharing our land and our power. You have destroyed both your country and the chiefs. Both. Destroyed. Forever. Double traitor. Now, go. Leave my memory.

The PRESIDENT turns away. TINA embraces the PRIME MINISTER. We hear a lament for a dead chief. They exit. The music changes to a martial funeral march. Tina turns on the TV. The PRESIDENT is giving a speech.

PRESIDENT: (on TV) He was and will always be the most noble hero of this land. In death we respect him as we did in life. His

military action over ten years ago in taking over the government of this country, was that of a protector of his people, a crusader soldier of the Lord. His actions were those of the visionary. He was a man of the church. Today we bury him with the highest honors of the land. A commoner who rose to the rank of chief although he was not born one. He was brave enough to have even become President of our country. We shall never see that day. This cruel, cruel accident deprived us as the death of a father deprives his children. Let us honor him in the most befitting way. His funeral will celebrate the rights of the common man to reach towards the highest ranks of his chiefs. God save our Prime Minister, God save our hero.

The screen picture goes off and we see it flicker. It changes to show a still picture of the HERO. Funeral music. A procession comes on stage. TINA and the four CHILDREN are covered in blood and ashes.

TINA: Is this his fate, is this way chiefs repay their loyal warriors? See his ash. See his blood. Look, the children

Two of the CHILDREN sit down on the stage exhausted and huddle together. During Tina's speech the other two children sit down. They huddle together.

TINA: It was to be a day of celebration, not of tears. And not of fire and the burning of children's flesh.

FATHER enters dressed in traditional robes.

TINA: Father.

FATHER: I watched, awaiting your return.

TINA: I held his hand. We both sobbed in the moments before the death bird came. And we cried for the children of the village, now burning on the island sand. I obeyed you, father. I thought only of my duty. But I loved this man, this hero. It was my only defiant act, father. He too loved me. Except for this love, I have waited for your message on my task. I failed you and mother's memory.

The PRIME MINISTER walks in dressed in a military uniform.

FATHER: You obeyed. You have done all I asked of you, my daughter. I welcome you home to our village with your husband. Your task is over.

TINA rises. She holds the hands of the PRIME MINISTER. They kneel before the old Man. Music gets louder.

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