

TALES FROM FIVE CONTINENTS

by Claudia Haas and Richard Cash

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Tales From Five Continents is a journey around the globe discovering how other cultures explained “beginnings.” A mysterious storyteller emerges after a storm in a children’s playground and gives the gifts of “stories” to them. From Africa we have the tale of why the sun and moon live in the sky. A story of the ocean and its tides features the Raven figure of the Northwestern Pacific Native American culture. From South America we learn how the beetle got its beautiful coat, and from Asia we have an environmental tale that explains why toads croak before a rainstorm. The play ends with an Aesop fable from Europe that explains why the bat flies alone and at night. Weaving the tales together is a Cherokee fable that explains the bringing the stories into the world. The tales are humorous, touching and explore the richness of other cultures with whom we share our world.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

53 (3 male, 5 female, 45 either gender)

Original Children

Child 1 Child 2
Child 3 Naho/Naha

AFRICA "Why the Sun and Moon Live in the Sky"

Sun (male) Moon (female)
Water Flithy Fish
Fluny Fish Cabbie Crab
Canny Crab Crabbie Crab
Society Starfish Stormy Starfish
Starry Starfish Starving Starfish
Tooney Turtle Telly Turtle
Tarry Turtle Teeny Turtle
Tattle Turtle Willy Whale
Baby-sitter Child Outsider Child

NORTH AMERICA "The Raven and the Tide"

Raven Seagull
Old Woman (female) Saucy Sparrow
Soupy Sparrow

ASIA "Why the Emperor Called the Toad Uncle"

Toad Wasp
Rooster Tiger
Emperor (male) Thunder God (male)
Thunder God Assistants 1 or 2
Hound of Heaven Empress (female)
Sun (female) Moon (female)

SOUTH AMERICA "How the Beetle Got Its Beautiful Coat"

Rat Beetle
Parrot

EUROPE "Why the Bat Flies Alone and at Night"

Lion Zebra
Bear Bat
Eagle Blue Jay
Cardinal Woodpecker
Pigeon Oriole

PROPS

Rock, Buffalo Nickel, Gameboy for children
Story cape with removable continents
Necklace for Outsider Child.
Plank and Clay mixing equipment for Sun and Moon
Blanket representing water
Door unit
Big rock to contain Naho and to serve as a playing area to provide different levels.
Cymbals and drum for Thunder God Assistants. (*Optional*)
Map for the Lion in "The Beasts and the Birds." (*Optional*)

COSTUMES

As simple as possible. These are stories that come alive as the Storyteller (Naha or Naho) tells them. We did it theatrically with masks and headpieces. We wrapped fabrics around the actors to suggest characters. It is up to the director and designers.

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(A THUNDERCLAP is heard and the LIGHTS in the audience go out. RAIN sounds, then all is quiet. SUNLIGHT streams onto the stage. A children's' playground is seen. Debris is scattered around from the aftermath of a big storm. There is a large rock in the middle of the playground.)

CHILD: *(Starting offstage and then running on)* Last one to the slide is it!

(THREE CHILDREN run on and stop short just before the rock.)

CHILD 2: Where's the slide?

CHILD 3: It used to be right here.

CHILD 1: The storm must have moved it.

CHILD 2: What's this thing? It was never here before.

CHILD 3: *(Goes to rock, touches it)* Maybe the winds brought it last night. It's neat, whatever it is.

CHILD 1: I bet we can slide down it.

CHILD 2: *(Rubbing the rock)* It's kind of bumpy for a slide.

CHILD 1 & 3: *(Climbing up the rock)* Let me try!

CHILD 3: What's this? *(Feels some black smooth material on rock)*

ROCK: *(NAHO)* WHO IS THERE?

(The THREE CHILDREN take a leap away from the rock in different directions.)

CHILD 1: What...what was that?

CHILD 2: Let's get out of here?

CHILD 3: I think there's someone trapped under the rock. Maybe from the storm.

CHILD 2: Let's get help.

NAHO: WHO IS IT THAT SPEAKS?

CHILD 1: Did you hear the rock talk?

CHILD 2: I don't think so.

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CHILD 3: I am out of here! (*Goes to leave*)
NAHO: Are there children about?
CHILD 2: Y...yes.
NAHO: Good. It is time.
CHILD 2: Time for what?
CHILD 1: I think this rock came from outer space. Excuse me, rock, are you an alien?
NAHO: (*Emerges from rock wearing the black cape that covered the rock*) I am Naho, the Bringer of Stories. I have an offer for you.
CHILD 1: What sort of offer?
NAHO: An exchange of gifts. I have stories from around the world. I will give them to you, and perhaps you will give me something in exchange.
CHILD 3: I don't know. This is too weird.
CHILD 2: Yeah. I didn't come here for storytime.
CHILD 1: Come on...let's listen. What can it hurt?
CHILD 2: Why should we give you anything?
NAHO: I shall bestow upon you tales of the wonders of your world. A token of appreciation is customary.
CHILD 3: Wait a minute. We didn't ask you to tell us stories. You volunteered. We don't have to give you anything if you volunteer.
CHILD 1: Shh. I want to hear these stories. Uhh...Naho...I have a buffalo head nickel here. It's my lucky coin. And my dad says it's pretty valuable. (*As the children dig in their pockets, they are welcome to make changes here in the "presents" for Naho.*)
NAHO: That is a grand token. Thank you.
CHILD 2: All I have is my favorite rock. It's an agate from Lake Superior. I found it a couple of years ago with my family. I always keep it with me.
NAHO: That will do well. Thank you.
CHILD 3: I just have my Gameboy. It was a birthday present. I don't want to give it away for a bunch of silly stories.
CHILD 1: Come on — you have to. I mean, when will we ever meet a rock that tells stories again?

CHILD 3: Okay...but how am I ever going to explain this to my parents? I lose things all the time. Now I have to go back and say I gave my birthday present to a talking rock?
(Lays the Gameboy on the rock)

NAHO: I thank you. *(NAHO spreads his gifts around him in a semi-circle and turns his cape around to reveal a story cape with the continents on it. He lays it over the gifts.)*
We shall begin our journey. My tales are all here. Find me one.

CHILD 1: Okay. *(Takes the continent of Africa off the cape. Possibly NAHO puts it on a pole.)*

NAHO: This will be a wonderful beginning. A story of the sun and the moon. Have you ever wondered how they came to hang in the sky?

CHILD 1: I think we get that explanation in science next year.

CHILD 2: I've wondered about a lot of things in outer space.

NAHO: Today you shall hear some tales about the sky and about your earth. We begin in a distant land rich and warm, teeming with life. At this point in life, the sun and the moon lived on the earth. Sun and Water were great friends. *(During narration, LIGHTS come up on another place in the playground. SUN and WATER enter.)* The Sun often passed many pleasant hours as a guest at Water's home and was sad that Water always refused to visit him.

SUN: I enjoy coming here a lot and would like to return the favor. My wife Moon, has been asking for you.

WATER: That would be delightful, but I must decline again. My people are so many and we take up so much space, that our hosts have to leave. I'm afraid we don't get asked out much. As you have mentioned that your house is quite small, I don't see how you can accommodate all of us.

SUN: It is true that our house is small, but Moon is eager to build a larger dwelling. It is time to build a new home. I will see that it is large enough to accommodate you and all your people. We shall start building tomorrow, and I promise you that when it is completed, you and your people shall be our first guests.

WATER: We will be honored.

NAHO: And so, Sun returned home and told Moon about building a larger home where he could entertain his friend. Moon was very pleased.

MOON: I have dreamed of having a larger home. I must thank Water for helping me get my wish. Sun, I would like a large, round, open room for entertaining, and a high ceiling that touches the sky, and thick thatch to keep the rain out, and skylights to let the light in, and...

SUN: Moon—do not go on and on with your dreaming. If you want to make them come true, you must save your breath. For tomorrow we begin work. Let us rest now, and in the morning we will start. (*SUN and MOON go inside the hut for night as LIGHTS dim.*)

NAHO: And so, Sun and Moon rested and when morning came they began their work. (*LIGHTS up on SUN and MOON working.*) They toiled for many days and into a few nights when...

MOON: (*Exhausted*) I cannot cut another blade of grass. My heart wants a larger home, but my arms and legs are yelling “no more, let us rest.” I’m afraid my arms and legs are winning the argument. Let us return to our small home and be satisfied.

SUN: Wife, I have made a promise. I cannot go back on my word. We must continue.

MOON: (*Gets up and tries to work and collapses*) I cannot.

SUN: Come, you shall be in charge of mixing the clay. You may sit here and work. I will do all the cutting and lifting. This way our home will be built. (*MOON sits and mixes clay and SUN resumes building.*)

NAHO: And so, this went on for sometime, until...

SUN: (*Lets out a large moan as HE tries to lift a plank of wood*) Moon! Come quick! (*MOON rushes over.*) I’m afraid our work has come to an end. I cannot move.

MOON: But the home is almost ready.

SUN: Almost, yes. Ready, no. I am done.

MOON: But, what about all our hard work? And your promise?

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SUN: Yes, my promise. I cannot go back on my word, but if I cannot move. Perhaps later we can resume building.

MOON: Later will be too late, my husband. I have rested here many days mixing clay. I am sick of mixing clay! My body feels better and I will resume the heavy work. You may take over the mixing of the clay. This way our house will be built.

SUN: Are you sure?

MOON: I have spoken. *(THEY go back to work switching jobs.)*

NAHO: And so, the great day arrived when the home was finished. And as promised, Water and his people were the first to visit Sun and Moon's grand new home.

WATER: *(At door, to SUN and MOON)* Is it safe to enter?

SUN: Yes, my friend, please come in.

MOON: You are most welcome here.

WATER: Thank you, may I bring my people in?

SUN: Most certainly.

(WATER enters and chats with MOON. TWO SMALL FISH enter.)

FISH 1: What a fine home this is!

FISH 2: Look how high the ceiling is. Let's swim to the top

SUN: Water, your people are delightful.

WATER: Thank you. There are many more coming.

MOON: The water is beginning to tickle my toes. Such a funny sensation.

NAHO: And so, more of Water's people entered. Three crabs sidled in next. *(The THREE CHILDREN whisper with NAHO and are given masks and assume the "crab" roles.)*

CRAB 1: *(Shaking hands with SUN and MOON as they enter)* What kind hosts you are to invite all of us.

CRAB 2: And what a magnificent dwelling.

CRAB 1: You must have worked very hard.

CRAB 3: *(To NAHO)* Hey! They're hogging all the lines! When do I get to speak?

NAHO: Anytime you're ready.

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CRAB 3: Is there anything to eat?

MOON: Of course. There is a feast prepared in the back.

(CRABS sidle to back, and the TWO FISH follow.)

MOON: Sun, the water is flowing about my ankles. I fear it will be damp in here tonight.

SUN: Let it be, Moon. Look how Water is enjoying himself.

WATER: Is everything all right? My people are still arriving.

SUN: Bring them in.

(FOUR STARFISH enter.)

STARFISH 1: Charming. I think I will perch here. *(Wraps around a pole)*

STARFISH 2: I'm going to go higher and get a better view.

(Wraps around a higher level)

STARFISH 3: What a wonderful home. So many places to perch.

STARFISH 4: *(From back)* And, look at all this food!

MOON: The water is rising to my knees. I must stand on something higher so I don't get knocked over by a wave.

SUN: Let us watch our party from here. *(THEY stand on a higher level.)*

WATER: *(Waving from door)* There are more ready to enter.

SUN: Send them in. Our home is yours.

(FIVE TURTLES enter.)

TURTLE 1: What a grand entryway. I must swim about.

TURTLE 2: Follow me.

TURTLE 3: Follow that fish!

TURTLE 4: I can swim faster!

TURTLE 5: Do they just leave me here all alone?

NAHO: You must contribute on your own. Join them.

TURTLE 5: Hey, wait up. I'm in this too!

MOON: The water is rising again. I fear our new home will never be the same. Oh Sun, what have we done?

SUN: Make the best of it, wife. We did build this home to accommodate Water.

End of Freeview

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