

FIJI: DARKNESS LIFTING
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(Begin with MAN shifting through his suitcase. He is particularly focusing on the pharmaceuticals he is taking in preparation for his Global Village trip to Fiji. This section involves MAN who later also becomes World War Two MILITARY MAN, and a second male actor, OLD MAN, who plays a Fijian Elder)

MAN:

O.K., now, I think I've got everything. (Pause) Except....-upset stomach, and it's not heartburn or gas -and I want to sleep? (Sifting through stuff) Tums, no -Pepcid A.C. -no. Alka Seltzer....well, maybe But... -no. Pepto Bismol...Pepto Bismol.... Do they make a Pepto Bismol P.M? I know, I'll take it with a Benedryl. Yeah, that should work. I'd try it, but I'm not feeling sick right now....Oh well, too bad.

(Beat)

I found it surfing the web: "Habitat for Humanity Global Village Work Team." You've heard of Jimmy Carter, right? Well it's travel, and you get to do good things, too -help people by building houses. Cause, you know, I need -something. (Pause) I've done Europe -at least the countries that matter: England, France, Germany, Italy. I went to Belgium, too, but that doesn't really count. But Fiji... I mean, Tony Robbins could chose anywhere in the world to live -right? Right? So I think I've got everything. Wait a second; look at this.

(Takes out small noise machine. This is a machine that makes white noise, used as a sleep aid)

Now listen.

(Turns on the machine, makes white noise, plays with the buttons, so that it sounds more like the sea at some point, then more like rain -the two different types of sounds available for this)

Rain, and the sea....rain -the sea. Louder, softer; louder....

(Then he turns it off)

When you're in a hotel -and it doesn't matter how thick the walls are - you've always got people banging things, playing the television too loud, maids vacuuming too early, ignoring the "Do Not Disturb" -sign: "Housekeeping!". So, what you do is you make your own noise to drown out their noise! Get it -a noise machine. Noise to create quiet!

(Beat)

Anyway, I think I've got everything.: ... Vitamins: multi, assorted, 'Oragel nighttime toothache medicine...' (Then continues, knocks off the following in rapid succession, like a song. NOTE:

This section is purposefully overwritten, and its success will depend on the ability of someone to get a rhythm for it) Imodium if things get out of control; Ex-lax if they don't; Gas -X for bloating and discomfort; charco caps if I suspect it's intestinal. Equialactin if, well... 'irritable bowel syndrom.' Chapstik, Blistex, Visine gets the red out; Tylenol, Advil, aspirin in case of heart attack; Band-Aids, rubbing alcohol, Solarcaine, Lanocaine, and aloe just to be right with the world; Neosporin, Nabesol, Listerine, Ban fresh and clean, fast actin'' Tinactin, A.M. P.M. D.M. P.E. multi-symptom, maximum strength, six to eight to twelve hour sinus, nasal, chest, coughing, sneezing, sniffing, wheezing, headache cold or flu, scratchy throat, watery eyes, in pill, tablet, liquid, and spray. And -did I mention Dr. Schols wrap around corn removers? (Pulls out documents) I think I've got everything. I'm ready, I'm set, I'm prepared, I'm protected. - Except -and this is a big except -(takes out airline ticket) Airline ticket -but... (Beat) No assigned seating! (Then yells) It's a twelve hour flight! I have to have an aisle seat!!

(Beat. Begin set-up for Kava Ceremony, along with taped recordings of ceremony in background)

(MAN, unnerved, sorts through other documents trying to find the same momentum, as if to reassure himself, but it ends up having the opposite effect)

Passport, travelers checks, emergency numbers, briefing...Briefing: (Opens it) "The Fiji archipelago includes 332 islands, of which approximately 110 are inhabited" ...blah blah...sugar refining, light industry, tourism... Oh here - "The houses we will be working on are 24 by 18 cement block structures...." Twenty-four by eighteen -cement?..... "Accommodations during our stay will be in three individual houses; one for women, one for men. We will be sleeping on the floor???" -So please be certain to bring a sleeping bag and pad..." (Increasingly nervous) "We are waiting for more details on the type of bathroom facilities that will be available??!!"

(Begin set up for the kava ceremony)

And look! This -what the... "Upon arrival you will be expected to participate in a kava ceremony which is an initiation rite into the village... Kava is made from ground-up root of the tapioca tree -and it tastes like a combination of dirt and three day old coffee...."

(MAN exits, continues reading, as we begin the Kava ceremony: WOMAN comes down with the Kava bowl, and Fijian OLD MAN sits cross legged behind it. He does the call and response chant of the ceremony, with call coming from taped voices from the ceremony, complete with appropriate claps, other sound effects. This continues for a few minutes -all in Fijian, the Kava ceremony.)

(After awhile, MAN enters again, as though arriving from a long flight - disheveled. He is slightly a part of the activities, but descending upon them, about to be a part. As he goes through his tirade, the Kava Ceremony is continuing underneath)

MAN:

(Increasingly frantic)

Center seat! Middle section! Two people on either side!! And one of them had this, this -video game. Every time it made a hit, home run, scored a goal -whatever it did, (Imitates sound) “Bubba -di -boo; bubba-di -boo” -for 12 hours! - “bubba-di-boo,” budda di-boo”, and, and, and, the guy on the other side (Pause, then with emphasis and horror) ‘Aftershave!’ English Leather death! Just when things couldn’t get any worse, the movie was, “The Cable Guy!” Can somebody tell me what’s wrong with Jim Carry? And turbulence -up and down - 33,000 feet over the Pacific ocean, which gets me to thinking, if this thing tanks, and the last thing I see before going down is Jim Carrie yelling, “cable guy!” -does that mean my life will have been absurd?

(Other moment from the KAVA ceremony, as MAN prepares as if leaving the plane)

And finally we get there, and it’s hot, hot, - hot! (Then suddenly begins spraying himself with mosquito repellent) Dengue fever! Malaria! (And turns, his speech pattern becomes broken, sometimes as if addressing someone, emphasis is loss of control) And now, we’re in the village...and we’re sleeping where? But, but, but, I don’t see a room...I don’t see a bed...It’s just a floor....Here? In their house? (Suddenly, in horror) There’s no electricity for my noise machine!

(The WOMAN has taken the Kava bowl and is now standing before MAN offering it to him, which shuts him up. Pause, then:)

Wait -let me take a Pepto Bismol, first!

(He then takes the Kava, as the light goes down on him, ceremony is complete. OLD MAN concurrently gets up and addresses the audience)

(NOTE: MAN will be making character transition to MILITARY MAN, which could involve an exit and re-entrance, or perhaps he will just transition on stage. See later stage note)

Later in the play, the Fijian elder (OLD MAN) reacts to the things his guest has brought to their village.

OLD MAN:

(Trying to regroup)

Did I show this thing to you?

(He goes over to a table where there is a small, rotating electric fan)

Watch .(Turns on rotating fan) One of the men who comes, he buys this in the village in Sigatoka. Too hot, he says. Only, there is electricity in only one house. Unfortunately, it is not where he lives. (Pause, watches the fan, feels the wind) You know, this wind feels nice. So the old men in the room, they pointed it one way, as they sat on the floor and waited for their food. (Adjusts fan) When the women brought the food, they saw that the breeze from the thing was very helpful in keeping flies away. They turned it in another direction. (He does as he says, turning the fan in another direction) A women doing the wash knew that on a windy day, her clothes would dry faster. There was no wind that day, so she turned it this way. (He does). Still another found the smell from a particular part of the room to be -not so good -and turned it another way to blow the smell away. Well, then, one of the men got up, and he turned it back where he wanted it. (He turns it again) The women saw the flies return, and turned it another way. (He turns it again) The wash was still wet, and so -another way. (Turns it again) But the smell... (Turns again, then begins a rapid fire succession of turns) Then it was the old men, this way, the women, that way, the clothes, this way (shifting the thing rapidly back and forth) the smell that way, and on and on and on, and on...(He reaches over and unplugs the fan) And soon we were fighting over something that just minutes ago, nobody knew they needed! Well, I took the fan and tried to give it back to its rightful owner, but when I found him, he had another thing to give me.

(Then at another spot is the noise machine the MAN had talked about earlier. The OLD MAN goes over and turns it on, standing over it, looking utterly perplexed)

And I showed my wife...(Again, just long pause and watching the thing -confused) and I showed my brother -his family -anyone who I could find (Again long pause just looking over it, then finally turns it off) Yes, well, I think I will take this back to him as well.