**Cannibal King**

**By Alex Bryant**

**Cannibal King**

Runtime: 60 mins

Cast size: 25-50. 5F, 6M, 10X, 2XF, 7XM, minus 5 or plus 20

 *XF/XM: Written as female or male respectively, but possible to change with minimal adjustments to script*

**Introduction**

Cannibal King is based on the classic camp song of the same name. The song’s about the Cannibal King coming across a lake every night by moonlight to meet a sweet young maid. This play uncovers the story behind the moonlight visits: a story of a clash between the people of Freetown and the cannibals who live in the forests around them. Unfortunately, the camp song that exists in lots of different versions – the one I used featured bungalows and spelled-out words, so if your version is different, you might need to take these references out…and add in a few different ones!

 The characters are divided between the people of Freetown and the Cannibals. Freetown is an antebellum world dominated by two wealthy families: the Thripps, town-dwelling merchants, and the Oatsworths, who live on a ranch. The Cannibals are a tribe living in the forests nearby, with a fearsome reputation for savagery in Freetown, but who we soon discover are peace-loving but nurturing bitter grievances towards Freetown. There’s scope for lots of imagination in this semi-fantastical world; in how to depict both the people of Freetown and the Cannibals. The majority of the roles are cross-castable. This play addresses themes of colonialism, displacement and exploitation of native people, slavery and racial discrimination, albeit in an indirect way, so may be more challenging for younger groups. Please use as much sensitivity as possible when casting and directing this play! There are also two love stories which require actors who don’t get embarrassed too easily. It will work best with an age range of 9-15.

 The parts vary in size, but are as evenly spread as possible, with multiple ‘main’ roles, to ease line learning pressure, and even the smallest roles are written to allow those actors a moment of glory!

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But if you don’t get around to doing anything, PLEASE let me know that you’re staging this script, because it’d make me happy to know that it’s getting put to good use!

**Synopsis**

*If you ever get snatched, you’d better start praying they kill you straight away. Better that, than being brought before the Cannibal King…*

The Cannibals live deep in the bamboo forests surrounding Freetown, ruled over by the dangerous and fearsome Cannibal King. Usually, they leave the people of Freetown alone, which is why Mayor Thripp has something more important on his mind: marrying his daughter Catherine off to Richard Oatsworth, the son of a wealthy ranch owner. However, the Cannibal King hasn’t forgotten the townsfolk, and when he strikes, both sides are sucked into conflict once again. But a moonlit meeting under a bamboo tree has consequences neither the Cannibals nor the townsfolk could ever imagine.

**Character list**

**TOWNSFOLK**

Theodore Thripp (Big, M) Mayor of Freetown. Pompous and self-righteous.

Constance Thripp (Big, F) Mayor’s bubbly wife. Has high hopes for her daughter, which are regularly dashed.

Catherine Thripp (Main, F) Mayor’s daughter. Headstrong and uninterested in Freetown politics, Catherine prefers to spend her time practising her archery skills.

Lucy (Main, F) Catherine Thripp’s trusty maid and best friend. Very polite to the Thripp parents, but secretly supportive of Catherine. *In the first scene, Lucy as a young child could be played by a different, younger actor.*

Grandma (Medium, XF) of Lucy. Doom-mongering and dramatic.

Mother (Small, XF) of Lucy. Strict, with no time for silly stories.

John (Small, XM) The Thripp family footman. Duty-bound and proper.

Curtis Oatsworth (Medium, M) Wealthy landowner. Arrogant and self-regarding.

Helena Oatsworth (Medium, F) Curtis’s gossipy wife, with a streak of malice.

Richard Oatsworth (Main, M) Curtis’s son. Acts like a tough cowboy, coming across as smug at first.

Harry (Big, M) The Oatsworths’ carriage driver. Put-upon and longing for freedom.

Frank (Medium, XM) Scathing ranch farmhand.

Lenny (Medium, XM) Ditzy ranch farmhand.

Walter (Medium, XM) Confused ranch farmhand.

Jacob (Medium, XM) Constantly disappointed mercenary officer.

Paul (Small, XM) Preening mercenary soldier.

Peter (Small, XM) Pampered mercenary soldier.

Horses x 2 (Non-speaking, X). *Can be played by stage crew, or cut.*

 *All these characters can optionally have Southern accents; or just the Oatsworth family and retinue can. For smaller casts, the soldier and farmhand parts can be doubled up. For larger casts, their numbers can be increased.*

**CANNIBALS**

Morisor (Main, M) The vengeful Cannibal King, who plots to strike back at the people of Freetown.

Shekway (Medium, F) The hard-edged Cannibal Queen, fighting for justice.

Aliboo (Main, M) The nervous Cannibal Prince feels he’s not up to the task of ruling, or declaring war.

Throfgar(Big, X) The King’s starchy advisor knows the history of the Cannibals best.

George (Small, X) Throfgar’s faithful pet monkey, with a tendency to scream

Melod (Medium, X) Violent warrior.

Harmon (Medium, X) Cunning scout.

Symphon (Medium, X) Bloodthirsty guerrilla.

Brett (Medium, X) Dimwitted soldier.

Charon (Medium, X) Wizened and sun-struck ferryman.

Kissing Fish x 2 (Non-speaking, X) Savage lake-dwelling piranhas. *Can be played by stage crew. Can be played by different actors in each appearance, or increased in number.*

 *Cannibal numbers can be increased quite easily; the parts of Melod, Harmon, Symphon and Brett could be given to different actors in every scene, suggesting a larger tribe.*

**Scene character list**

*This list is provided to help keep track of who is needed in which scene. Names in brackets are characters who are present, with minimal roles.*

1. THE LEGEND

Lucy, Grandma, Mother

1. THE PLOT

Morisor, Throfgar, Aliboo, Shekway, Melod, Symphon, Harmon, Brett, George

1. THE ARRANGED MARRIAGE
	1. Constance, Theodore, Catherine, Lucy, John.
	2. Constance, Theodore, Catherine, Lucy, John, Curtis, Helena, Richard.
	3. Richard, Catherine, Lucy
2. KIDNAPPED
	1. Catherine, Lucy.
	2. Catherine, Lucy, Richard, Harry, (Horses, Stagehands)
	3. Catherine, Lucy, Richard, Harry, Melod, Symphon, Harmon, Brett
3. THE THRONE ROOM

Morisor, Throfgar, Aliboo, Shekway, Melod, Symphon, Harmon, Brett, George, Lucy, Harry

1. ACROSS THE LAKE

Charon, Lucy, (Kissing fish)

1. THE PLAN

Richard, Catherine, John, Theodore, Constance

1. FIRST MEETING

Lucy, Aliboo, (Kissing fish)

1. RETALIATION
	1. Theodore, Constance, Catherine, Jacob, Paul, Peter
	2. Catherine, Richard
2. DISCOVERY

Morisor, Shekway, Throfgar, Aliboo, Melod, Symphon, Harmon, Brett, George

1. REVELATION

Lucy, Aliboo, (Kissing fish)

1. DISAPPEARANCE

John, Theodore, Jacob, Paul, Peter

1. THE FOREST REVEAL

Catherine, Lucy, Harry

1. THE RESCUE MISSION
	1. Richard, Frank, Lenny, Walter, (Kissing fish)
	2. Richard, Frank, Lenny, Walter, (Kissing fish), Aliboo, Melod, Symphon, Harmon, Brett, George, Lucy, Catherine, Throfgar, Shekway
2. PEACE AT LAST
	1. Curtis, Helena, Theodore, Constance.
	2. Catherine, Richard, Curtis, Helena, Theodore, Constance, John.
	3. All.

**Cannibal King Song**

*This is the version I based the play on. Various others can be found on YouTube and elsewhere! Although the story was inspired by and contains many references to this song, it should work even for those who have never heard it. If your group or audience aren’t familiar with this song, you may want to perform it at the beginning of the play.*

The Cannibal King with the big nose ring

Fell in love with the dusky maid,

And every night by the pale moonlight,

Across the lake he came,

He hugged and he kissed his pretty little miss

Under the bamboo tree,

And every night by the pale moonlight it sounded like this to me,

Ah-wump (kiss, kiss)

Ah-wump (kiss, kiss)

Ah-wump diddle-i-e-a

Ah-wump (kiss, kiss)

Ah-wump (kiss, kiss)

Ah-wump diddle-i-e-a

I’ll build a bungalow

Big enough for two

Big enough for two, my darling

Big enough for two

And when we’re married, happy we’ll be

Under the bamboo, under the bamboo tree

And you’ll be M-I-N-E mine

I’ll be T-H-I-N-E thine

And I’ll L-O-V-E love you

All the T-I-M-E time

You are the B-E-S-T best

Of all the R-E-S-T rest

And I’ll L-O-V-E love you

All the T-I-M-E time!

**Cannibal King**

**Scene 1**

*LUCY’s bedroom. LUCY is sitting in bed, dressed as a young child. GRANDMA is in a chair next to her.*

GRANDMA Take a look out of your window. What do you see?

LUCY I can see Freetown. The city streets. A few wagons coming back from the market. People strolling around.

GRANDMA What else?

LUCY Beyond that, there’s the city walls. Then farms, stretching out behind them.

GRANDMA What else?
LUCY That’s it, Grandma. There’s just fields, as far as the eye can see.

GRANDMA The farmland doesn’t go on forever, you know. *(pointing)* You see that dark smudge on the horizon?

LUCY *(squinting)* Yeah. I think so.

GRANDMA That’s where the fields stop and the forests begin. There, the bamboo grows so tall and thick that they throttle all the sunlight before it reaches the forest floor. That’s where our lands stop, and the lands of the Cannibals begin.

LUCY The Cannibals?

GRANDMA The Cannibals are like us in many ways. But don’t be fooled. Their blood runs blue, not red. Didn’t your mother tell you about the Cannibals? I’m not surprised she hasn’t. She’s never seen them. But when I was a girl, everyone knew about the Cannibals. They were everywhere.

LUCY Even in Freetown?

GRANDMA They never broke into the city, no. Our strong city walls kept us safe from them. But they would raid the farmlands. Attack unwary travellers. No citizen of Freetown would dare leave the city alone, in case they were snatched up by the Cannibals.

LUCY But why couldn’t the Cannibals leave us alone?

*MOTHER enters during following speech.*

GRANDMA I don’t know. Jealousy, maybe, of our fair city of Freetown and all the luxuries it contains. Or maybe they just liked the way we tasted. They don’t have farms like we do, you see. So they hunt, and they eat whatever they can find. Including us.

MOTHER Grandma, what did we agree? No scary stories before bedtime!

GRANDMA This is no scary story! This is a precautionary tale. Even though the Cannibals haven’t been seen recently, they’re still out there, biding their time in the bamboo forest. Merchants foolish enough to travel alone still disappear, never to be heard from again.

MOTHER Lucy, you don’t need to worry about the Cannibals. The tribes that used to live in the wilderness moved away a long time ago.

*CANNIBALS begin to enter slowly, humming.*

GRANDMA Then how can you explain the remains? You see the Nile River, flowing from the forest? It carries whatever the Cannibals throw away. Bits of bone and gristle, left over from their feasting. Once, a farmer’s boy even said he saw a human skull floating past.

MOTHER Thanks a lot, Grandma. Now poor Lucy’s going to be up all night.

GRANDMA Better that than being snatched up by the Cannibals!

LUCY What would they do to me?

GRANDMA Nobody knows. Nobody ever comes back alive. But if you ever find yourself getting snatched, you’d better start praying they kill you straight away. Better that, than being brought before the Cannibal King.

**Scene 2**

*The Throne Room. MORISOR enters, and stand imposingly in the centre of the CANNIBALS. Humming reaches climax, then stops. GRANDMA, MOTHER, and LUCY exit discreetly. GEORGE bursts in, screaming and carrying a letter, and hands it to THROFGAR. THROFGAR looks at it and pats GEORGE approvingly.*

THROFGAR Your majesty, my faithful monkey, George, has intercepted a mail wagon travelling west from Freetown. He found a letter bearing the King’s insignia. *(Hands over letter)*

MORISOR Excellent. *(Rips letter open and reads, in mocking voice.)* Dearest Curtis, old chum, we would be honoured to welcome the Oatsworth family to Freetown as our guests. I’m sure Richard will be delighted to meet Catherine after so long. *(Laughs mockingly, then wheezes, clutches chest, and breaks off reading. After a pause; to THROFGAR)* This Catherine…

THROFGAR Is the princess of Freetown and the surrounding lands. She has finally come of marriageable age. Her father is hoping to match her to this Richard Oatsworth, a local nobleman.

MORISOR Exactly as we predicted would happen. But we have our own proposal to make. *(to ALIBOO)* Isn’t that right, Aliboo?

ALIBOO I’m sure, Father.

MORISOR Spell it out!

ALIBOO *(with a weary sigh)* I’m S-U-R-E sure, Father.

SHEKWAY We’ve spent a long time waiting for this day, my son. Make sure you play your part well.

MORISOR The same is true for each of us. Tomorrow, we will finally show the Parasites in Freetown what the Cannibals are capable of. *(To THROFGAR)* Throfgar, see that this letter is returned safely to the mail wagon.

THROFGAR But your majesty, you’ve destroyed the seal. We won’t be able to return this letter without arousing suspicion.

MORISOR *(Briefly annoyed, then throwing away letter unconcernedly)* Let them be suspicious. Whatever measures they try to take against us, we will be too powerful to stop. We will crush anyone who stands in our way. Now, all of you, go back to your bungalows and get a good night’s sleep. Tomorrow, we will show the people of Freetown some true Cannibal hospitality!

*The CANNIBALS cheer and laugh evilly. GEORGE screams. MORISOR stops first, clutching his chest. Blackout.*

**Scene 3a**

*The Thripp mansion. CONSTANCE is brushing CATHERINE down.*

CONSTANCE I do think you could have made a bit more of an effort, dear. It’s not every day you get to meet an eligible young bachelor, especially a bachelor as eligible as Richard Oatsworth. *(Giggles)*

CATHERINE I’ll decide that when I meet him. I don’t see how some cowboy could ever be a match for me.

CONSTANCE He’s not just a cowboy, Constance! Richard is the heir to the Oatsworth estate. The Oatsworths own half the farmland west of Freetown, you know.

*THEODORE enters.*

THEODORE Although I should warn you, if Richard’s grown up to be anything like his father, he’ll be quite the ladies’ man. You might find his charms quite hard to resist! *(Guffaws)*

CATHERINE You’re talking about us like we’re already married. And I haven’t even met him yet.

CONSTANCE I know, my pet. But when you do meet him, just remember, that there’s more at stake than your future family.

THEODORE Indeed. Between you and me, my darling, I rather get the impression that the Oatsworths have fallen on hard times recently. But even if the family is penniless, the Oatsworth land is priceless! Ripe for development. If the two families could be united, the Oatsworth land backed by the Thripp fortune – why, both families’ wealth would be assured for generations!

CONSTANCE But Richard’s not going to be interested in you if you look like you’ve been crawling through a hedgerow.

CATHERINE How else am I supposed to get my missing arrows back?

CONSTANCE Lucy! Lucy!

*LUCY enters and curtseys.*

LUCY Ma’am?

CONSTANCE Lucy, could you find a bonnet for Miss Catherine? I fear it’s too late to do anything but hide that unsightly mess on her head.

LUCY Of course, ma’am.

*Lucy exits.*

CONSTANCE Really, I don’t know why we keep that maid of yours on if she can’t keep you looking presentable.

CATHERINE She tried to, but I didn’t give her a chance. We were down on the archery range all day.

CONSTANCE That’s another thing. You and Lucy seem altogether too close for a young lady and her maid. Now, it’s perfectly natural to confide somewhat in your maid, but the two of you are inseparable!

*LUCY enters with a bonnet, which she puts on CATHERINE, fumbling a little.*

CONSTANCE And about time too. The Oatsworths will be here any minute.

*JOHN enters.*

JOHN Mayor and Lady Thripp, the Oatsworth carriage has arrived.

CONSTANCE There we are! *(To LUCY)* Oh, Lucy, can’t you at least get it straight?

**Scene 3b**

*CONSTANCE rushes to straighten CATHERINE’s bonnet, pushing LUCY aside. CURTIS enters, and strides across the room to shake THEODORE’s hand. HELENA and RICHARD enter behind him. RICHARD stands to one side, glancing at CATHERINE occasionally.*

CURTIS *(Clapping THEODORE on back)* Theodore, my man! It’s been too long. How’s the business?

THEODORE Never a dull moment. Freetown is growing and growing, so there’s no shortage of demand for luxury goods.

CURTIS Wish I could say the same for Adel. Many of the old families have moved back here to Freetown. Too afraid of the Cannibals!

HELENA I keep telling him we should do the same. I’d feel so much more secure behind the city walls.

CURTIS What, and give up the family estate? The Oatsworths have farmed that land for generations. We’re not going to let a few Cannibal raids scare us away!

HELENA The situation’s worse than that. We’ve lost several farmhands over the last few years. They go out late at night, and poof! They disappear into the forest. Nobody ever hears from them again.

CURTIS It’s their own darn faults, letting themselves get eaten by the Cannibals. Has a member of the Oatsworth family ever been eaten by Cannibals? No! And you know why? Because we’ve got our heads screwed on properly. We don’t take unnecessary risks.

RICHARD Besides, they’re not as dangerous as they used to be.

CATHERINE That’s easy for you to say. You’re not the ones working the fields day and night.

THEODORE Catherine! That’s quite enough out of you.

RICHARD *(smirking)* You city folk always say the same thing. I’d like to take you back to the Oatsworth ranch with me. See how long you lasted before you went running back to the big city.

HELENA Richard, please! That’s no way to talk to a young lady.

CONSTANCE *(uncomfortably)* Good heavens! I don’t think we’ve properly introduced ourselves.

CURTIS The fault was all mine. Mayor and Lady Thripp, this is my wife Helena Oatsworth and my son Richard Oatsworth.

THEODORE My wife Constance Thripp, and our only daughter, Miss Catherine Thripp.

CONSTANCE Mrs Oatsworth, I’ve been told you have a real eye for wallpaper. May I show you our plans to redecorate the dining room? My husband and I simply can’t make up our minds.

HELENA That sounds lovely.

*CONSTANCE and HELENA exit, arm in arm.*

THEODORE Curtis, I’ve found a way to expand Freetown considerably while preserving most of the city walls. You must come and see the plans in my study. *(Starts to leave)*

CURTIS You can’t mean to suggest we leave Richard alone with your daughter? Why, he’s almost as much of a ladykiller as his old man used to be! *(Points at himself and guffaws)*

THEODORE *(joining in laughter)* Quite so, what was I thinking? John, please chaperone this pair of lovebirds.

JOHN Of course, Mayor. *(Steps forward, looking at RICHARD sternly)*

CATHERINE Pa, I’m sure Lucy will be able to look after me on her own.

THEODORE *(looking suspiciously at LUCY)* H’m. I’m not sure which one of you I trust more. But I daresay you’d rather have a little more privacy. John, please attend to the Oatsworth’s carriage.

JOHN Right away, Mayor. *(Exits)*

THEODORE We’ll see the pair of you at dinner. Our cook is preparing her speciality: stuffed goose.

*THEODORE and CURTIS exit.*

**Scene 3c**

*CATHERINE and RICHARD look at each other coolly.*

RICHARD Miss Thripp, I apologize if I came across a little rude just now. I just don’t appreciate a pampered city girl telling me I’ve got it easy.

CATHERINE I suppose I should apologize as well. You’re right. I’ve never been outside the walls of Freetown.

RICHARD It’s a hard life, without the luxuries you’re used to, but a fulfilling one.

CATHERINE So is it true, what your parents were saying? Do you ever see the Cannibals?

RICHARD Yeah, you occasionally see ‘em skulking in the woods around Adel. Me and Pa have to round up the boys and drive ‘em out of our patch.

CATHERINE You mean you’ve actually fought them?

RICHARD *(shrugging)* You’ve gotta do what you’ve gotta do, for the sake of protecting the families and the livestock of Adel.

CATHERINE Surely not all the tribes are that bad.

RICHARD The Cannibals may look like us on the outside, Miss Thripp, but don’t be fooled. Their blood runs blue, not red. And you can’t change the colour of your blood. But don’t worry. If you lived out there with me, you’d have nothing to fear from the Cannibals. Your husband would take good care of you.

CATHERINE *(bristling)* I can take perfectly good care of myself. I’ll have you know I’m one of the sharpest shooters in Freetown, second to only my maid, Lucy.

RICHARD What’s a pretty thing like you doing, using a gun? Don’t you trust your Pa to look after you?

CATHERINE Not a gun. A bow.

RICHARD So you’re an archer. That’s a sweet hobby. But I’d rather have a gun if I came up against a Cannibal.

CATHERINE You wouldn’t be saying that if you’d seen what I can do with a bow and arrow.

RICHARD Well, I’d just love to find out.

CATHERINE I’ll shoot an arrow straight through your heart if you’re not careful.

RICHARD *(clutching his heart; sarcastically)* Oh, Miss Thripp, you already have.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 4**

*The archery range. CATHERINE has a bow. LUCY has a quiver, and mimes passing CATHERINE arrows. She regularly takes aim and fires.*

CATHERINE What do you make of Richard?

LUCY Mr Oatsworth? He seems like a very nice gentleman.

CATHERINE Please, Lucy. There’s no-one else around. You can tell me the truth.

LUCY He didn’t seem like your type, if I may be honest, Miss.

CATHERINE I couldn’t have said it better myself. I don’t know what Pa is thinking, matching me with some country oik with mud under his fingernails. *(Fires bow)* Lucy, don’t you want to shoot?

LUCY That’s all right, Miss.

CATHERINE Don’t be silly. If you don’t keep practising, I might get better than you one day.

LUCY *(laughing)* That’s something I could never allow to happen.

*LUCY fetches a bow and starts shooting as well.*

CATHERINE I just don’t understand what Pa is thinking. I know he and Richard’s father are old friends, but still.

LUCY Don’t forget what he was saying about the Oatsworth estate. Perhaps he’s just thinking about the family fortune.

CATHERINE But I’m the Mayor’s daughter, not some kind of princess! Pa can’t marry me off to some gunslinging cowboy just because it suits his business interests!

LUCY I’m sure he won’t, Miss. He’s just hoping that the two of you will fall in love naturally.

**Scene 4b**

*RICHARD enters.*

CATHERINE Please. I’d rather marry a Cannibal than Richard Oatsworth.

RICHARD Miss Thripp! You do have a way with words.

CATHERINE *(sarcastically; offering RICHARD her bow)* What an unexpected pleasure. Would you like to try your hand with a bow and arrow? Or have you got more manly things to be doing?

RICHARD I only came down here because I wanted to speak to you again. Our carriage is leaving for Adel shortly.

CATHERINE *(sarcastically)* My heart is breaking already.

RICHARD *(insincerely)* I fear I haven’t made the best impression on you, for which I humbly apologize. I hope you will give me the chance to make amends. Would you do me the honour of accompanying me on a visit to the Oatsworth ranch?

CATHERINE Are you serious?

RICHARD Miss Thripp, I don’t like this any more than you do. But my Pa gave me a very stern talking to last night. He reminded me how important a marriage to you could be to our families. Just one visit, and I’ll show you everything your life as Mrs Oatsworth could be.

*CATHERINE looks at RICHARD suspiciously.*

CATHERINE I don’t know about this. Lucy, what do you think?

LUCY *(after some thought)* Give the man a second chance. He looks sorry enough to me.

CATHERINE Very well. I shall put up with the Oatsworth hospitality for one weekend only.

*The Oatsworth carriage is brought onstage, drawn by two HORSES. HARRY sits in the driver’s seat.*

RICHARD I’m glad to see you think so highly of your maid’s opinion. *(Bowing to LUCY)* Lucy, I am in your debt.

*CATHERINE holds out her hand. RICHARD takes it and leads her into the carriage. LUCY enters behind.*

HARRY Are you ready, sir?

*RICHARD gets out.*

RICHARD Wait a minute, Harry. I think I’d like to drive the carriage home.

HARRY Are you sure, sir?

RICHARD Yes. I’ve just remembered that our honoured guest, Miss Thripp, has never been into the country before. *(Gets into driver’s seat, and calls into carriage)* Miss Thripp, would you care to sit out front with me?

CATHERINE If you insist, Mr Oatsworth.

*CATHERINE exits carriage and sits next to RICHARD. HARRY sits in carriage.*

RICHARD The road home is beautiful at this time of year. If we’re lucky, we may even get to see the sunset.

*RICHARD whips the HORSES into motion. The carriage begins to move. Silence. RICHARD focuses on the road ahead, occasionally shouting at the HORSES, while CATHERINE gazes in wonder around her. As they talk, scenery rolls by, and MELOD, HARMON, SYMPHON, and BRETT enter slowly, disguised as pieces of scenery.*

CATHERINE I never knew how tall the corn was, close up.

RICHARD It should be ready to harvest by the end of the month.

CATHERINE That must be a huge job.

RICHARD Not if you have a big enough team of farmhands. And there’s always migrants passing through Adel looking for work.

CATHERINE Then why is it still such a small village?

RICHARD None of them tend to stay for long.

*CATHERINE looks shocked.*

RICHARD They don’t get snatched by the Cannibals, if that’s what you’re thinking! No, most of ‘em just keeping moving West, looking for their fortunes I suppose.

CATHERINE What about the rest?

RICHARD Well, they get snatched by the Cannibals.

*Pause.*

CATHERINE Don’t you feel scared, travelling this road alone?

RICHARD What, the road to Freetown? ‘Course not. Everything you can see is part of the Oatsworth estate. The Cannibals know better than to go trespassing on our land. They haven’t been seen in these parts for generations.

CATHERINE Didn’t you say they’d been getting stronger recently?

RICHARD Stronger? No way. Just more of a nuisance, is all. Nothing we can’t handle.

**Scene 4c**

*MELOD, HARMON, SYMPHON, and BRETT spring out of their hiding places, yelling the Cannibal war cry.*

RICHARD How in –

SYMPHON Halt, in the name of the Cannibal King!

*RICHARD points his shotgun at SYMPHON. Before he fires, BRETT sneaks up behind him and wrestles him out of the carriage.*

BRETT Not so fast, Parasite!

*BRETT and RICHARD fight. SYMPHON pulls CATHERINE out of the carriage. LUCY and HARRY try to escape.*

MELOD Where do you think you’re going, Princess?

HARMON You’re coming with us.

*MELOD and HARMON jump into the carriage and seize LUCY and HARRY. RICHARD struggles free of BRETT. CATHERINE kicks SYMPHON between the legs, breaks free, and chases after LUCY. RICHARD pulls CATHERINE back into the carriage with him.*

CATHERINE We’ve got to rescue Lucy!

RICHARD There’s no time for that, Catherine!

*RICHARD frantically whips the horses back into movement. MELOD, HARMON, SYMPHON, and BRETT exit with the struggling LUCY and HARRY. Blackout.*

**Scene 5**

*The Cannibal’s castle, in the middle of a bamboo forest. SHEKWAY, ALIBOO, THROFGAR, and GEORGE are standing ceremoniously around MORISOR’s empty throne. MELOD, HARMON, SYMPHON, and BRETT enter, shouting happily, dragging LUCY and HARRY with them. LUCY and HARRY are pushed onto their knees in front of the throne.*

THROFGAR King Morisor will be happy to hear this.

LUCY Where am I? What is this place?

THROFGAR You’re in the Cannibal’s castle, Princess.

LUCY You call this a castle? It’s nothing more than a few tents.

THROFGAR Our bungalows may be simple dwellings compared to your mighty stone walled city, but they’re all we need. *(To MELOD)* Melod, how went the battle?

MELOD It was no battle, Throfgar. They were unarmed and unprepared for our might, just as King Morisor knew they would be.

THROFGAR Were there others?
HARMON Only the carriage drivers. They escaped. No doubt they’ve already returned to Freetown, to tell another terrible tale of the Cannibals.

*All CANNIBALS laugh evilly. GEORGE screams. MORISOR enters. All fall silent, and look guilty.*

MORISOR This is no laughing matter. You should have captured them all, as I commanded.

MELOD The Parasites are weak and pathetic now. They have no armies. They don’t even carry bows. MORISOR Still, they are dangerous when they’re scared. It won’t be long before they muster an army and send them deep into the bamboo forest. *(Wheezes and clutches heart)*

HARMON I hope they do. We’ll be ready for them.

MORISOR *(pointing at HARRY)* Who is this?

MELOD He was riding in the carriage with her. Must be her boyfriend, Richard Oatsworth.

MORISOR Her boyfriend, you say? We don’t have any use for him. Get rid of him.

HARMON Right away, King.

*MELOD and HARMON grab HARRY.*

HARRY Where are you taking me? Get off me! No!

*MELOD and HARMON drag HARRY off, kicking and screaming.*

LUCY What are you going to do to him?

SYMPHON I’ll give you one guess, Redblood.

LUCY You’re monsters!

SYMPHON The only monsters in this country are you and your pathetic Redblood kind.

MORISOR Enough of this. We don’t have much time. Princess, there’s someone I’d like you to meet. My son, Prince Aliboo.

*ALIBOO steps forward and nods.*

ALIBOO *(stiffly)* Pleased to meet you, Princess.

MORISOR Spell it out!

ALIBOO Pleased to M-E-E-T meet you, princess.

MORISOR Better. *(to LUCY)* I suggest you spend some time getting to know him. He’s going to be your husband before long!

*The CANNIBALS laugh gleefully. GEORGE screams. LUCY looks shocked.*

LUCY My husband? What do you mean?

MORISOR Let me explain. For generations, my people have been shunned by the Parasites, pushed further and further into the wilderness. It ends now! *(Wheezes and clutches heart)*

LUCY Who are the Parasites?

THROFGAR That’s the name we give to your people, the Redbloods, Princess. It suits you, don’t you think? Spreading like a disease across the land, building those hideous piles of stones to mark your territory. Cutting down the ancient forests and turning them into the barren wasteland you call farms.

LUCY We’re not parasites.

SHEKWAY And we’re not cannibals. But that’s never stopped your people from branding our people as murderous savages.

LUCY That’s not true. What about all the people that go missing?

MORISOR *(Laughing)* You’ll find out the truth in time. Soon, you will marry my son, Aliboo. And once the Redblood Princess is married to the Blueblood Prince, your people will have no choice but to accept us as their own!

*Pause.*

LUCY You do realize this whole plan is crazy, right? I’m not any kind of princess.

THROFGAR Don’t lie to us, Princess. You and your boyfriend came from the castle. Isn’t that right?

BRETT *(slightly unsure)* That’s right. We pulled her right out of the royal carriage itself. There was no mistaking it.

THROFGAR Exactly. You’re King Theodore’s daughter, Princess Catherine Thripp. Don’t try to deny it.

LUCY OK, for one thing, Miss Thripp isn’t a princess. She’s just the daughter of the mayor of Freetown.

MORISOR Oh, really? Then who is the king?

LUCY Freetown doesn’t have a king. And even if it did, I wouldn’t be its princess. I’m not Miss Thripp. I’m just her maid.

*Stunned silence.*

THROFGAR *(unsure)* Do you really think you can fool us into letting you go, Princess? No, you will be married to Prince Aliboo, and the Redbloods will have no choice but to bow down to the Bluebloods!

MORISOR Symphon! Brett! Take this princess to Bamboo Island. It’s time to show her how the Cannibals treat their guests!

*CANNIBALS laugh. GEORGE screams. SYMPHON and BRETT drag LUCY away.*

**Scene 6**

*CHARON and LUCY are on a boat in the middle of a lake, with Bamboo Island in one area. CHARON is rowing. Periodically, the KISSING FISH jump up.*

CHARON Say goodbye to the shore. It’s the last time you’ll see it for a long time.

LUCY Where are you taking me?

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

CHARON Somewhere where the Parasites will never find you, if they decide to come looking.

LUCY I don’t think they will. People go missing in the forest every year. Nobody ever hopes to find them again. Why would they try to rescue a humble maid?

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

CHARON Because that maid might just be a princess, trying to pull the wool over ol’ Charon’s eyes. *(pointing at himself)* But ol’ Charon’s a lot smarter than you think. You’ve got to be smart if you want to survive on this lake.

LUCY What’s so difficult about rowing across a lake?

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

CHARON See those fish? We calls ‘em kissing fish. You wanna know why?

LUCY Is it because of the kissing sound they make when they jump?

CHARON *(disappointed)* Well, yes, that’s about it, really. It’s because of the kissing sound. But I bet you didn’t know this! They’re not really kissing at all. You wanna know what they’re really doing?

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

LUCY Not really.

CHARON They’re sharpening their teeth while they’re sizing you up. Wondering how many bites it’d take to gobble you up. That’s right. They’re deadly carnivores. Many’s the unwary boatman who’s dipped one toe in the water and… *(makes a loud kissing sound)* Fishfood!

FISH *(more evilly than before)* Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

CHARON It looks like we’re here already. Bamboo Island. You wanna know why we call this ‘ere island Bamboo Island?

LUCY *(sarcastically)* Yes. I’d love to.

CHARON *(pleased)* It’s because of the huge bamboo tree that grows at its centre. It’s bigger than anything that grows in the forests on the shore. I hope you like it. It’s going to be your new home.

*CHARON pushes LUCY off the boat and onto the island.*

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

CHARON This lake feeds the Nile River, which flows all the way back to Freetown. You know why they call this river the Nile?

LUCY Not a clue.

CHARON Dang. I have no idea either. I was hoping you’d be able to tell me. Anyway, I’ll bet you’re thinking how easy it’d be to escape. All you’ve got to do is swim across the lake, and the Nile River’d carry you back to Freetown in no time.

LUCY Actually, I was wondering if Bamboo Island has wifi.

CHARON But if you dip so much as a toe in the water, the Kissing Fish will be on you in a flash. They’ll tear your body apart! They’ll rip the bones of your flesh, and the only thing that’ll drift down to Freetown is your skeleton! *(Laughs maniacally, and starts to leave.)*

FISH *(very evilly)* Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)* Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)* Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

CHARON Now, before I go, do you have any dietary requirements I should know about? Nut allergies?

LUCY No.

CHARON Gluten intolerance?

LUCY No.

CHARON Lactose sensitivity?

LUCY No.

CHARON Excellent. I’ll be back with your meals tomorrow.

*CHARON rows away, whistling. Blackout.*

**Scene 7**

*The gates of Freetown. Night. RICHARD and CATHERINE enter, RICHARD supporting CATHERINE.*

RICHARD Help us! Someone help us!

*JOHN enters with a lamp.*

JOHN What’s this commotion? *(Sees RICHARD and CATHERINE)* Mr Oatsworth and Miss Thripp! What’s happened to you?

RICHARD Cannibal attack, just before Adel. We barely got out alive.

*THEODORE and CONSTANCE enter.*

THEODORE A Cannibal attack? I wouldn’t have thought such a thing possible.

RICHARD Neither would I. They came out of nowhere and tried to kidnap us.

THEODORE I can only thank the heavens my daughter was travelling with you. I wouldn’t have known what to do in that situation.

CONSTANCE Never have I been so sure that you’re the right man for my daughter to marry.

RICHARD I was barely able to get myself and Miss Thripp away. But they got my driver, and Miss Thripp’s maid.

CATHERINE What are they going to do to her?

RICHARD I hate to break it to you, but they’re not called Cannibals for nothing.

CATHERINE What? You mean they’re going to *eat* her? *(Starts crying)*

THEODORE The poor girl. She’s been a loyal maid to Catherine for many years. I can’t imagine how her family will take the news.

CATHERINE *(perking up)* They won’t have to. We’re going to go back for her. Aren’t we, Richard?

RICHARD What? Miss Thripp, we’ve been travelling through the night. You need some rest.

CATHERINE We have to go back for her!

THEODORE I know you must be feeling very shaken after what you’ve been through. But if we follow Lucy, we could find ourselves walking into a deathtrap. Who knows what the Cannibals are capable of nowadays? It’s been years since they were last seen near Freetown.

RICHARD That’s assuming we can even follow their trail, and don’t get lost forever in the bamboo forests.

CATHERINE Imagine if it had been me getting captured by the Cannibals. You’d be mounting a rescue expedition already.

CONSTANCE But my dear, it’s *not* you, a fact for which I think you should be thanking Mr Oatsworth.

CATHERINE *(cunningly)* They’ve just kidnapped two people off the road to Adel. If we don’t strike back, they’ll think we’ve grown weak. Maybe next time, they’ll come to Freetown itself.

THEODORE *(nervously)* That’s why we built these strong city walls. The Cannibals have never broken into Freetown.

CATHERINE Who knows what the Cannibals are capable of nowadays?

*Thoughtful silence.*

RICHARD Miss Thripp may have a point. We can’t let the Cannibals think we’ve grown weak, or they’ll be back in greater numbers. Mayor, if you want to keep Freetown safe for its citizens, you should rally a people’s army and take the fight to the Cannibals.

THEODORE There may be some merit in that idea. After all, we’ve lived in fear of the Cannibals since our ancestors first settled here. What if we could be the ones to finally end the Cannibal threat once and for all?

RICHARD Mayor Thripp, you’d go down in history!

THEODORE Mr Oatsworth, you’ve quite won me over. Tomorrow, we shall sound the alarm and begin to muster a citizen’s army. I’ll have supplies and munitions shipped in to Freetown with all haste. We won’t let the Cannibals get away with this.

*THEODORE claps RICHARD on the back. CATHERINE looks knowingly towards the audience. Blackout.*

**Scene 8**

*Bamboo Island. Night. LUCY is sleeping. ALIBOO paddles to the island. The KISSING FISH are circling, and periodically jump and kiss the air.*

ALIBOO Princess! Hey, princess!

LUCY For the last time, I’m not a…Oh, it’s you. The Prince of the Cannibals.

ALIBOO You can call me Aliboo.

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

LUCY What are you doing here? Have you paddled all the way across the lake to taunt me some more?

ALIBOO No. I’m here to tell you that I believe you. You’re not the Redblood princess at all, are you?

LUCY No. And there is no princess. Where I come from, you don’t get princesses.

ALIBOO I’m relieved to hear it. Maybe now my father will stop pursuing his plans.

LUCY You mean, you think it’s stupid too?

ALIBOO It’s worse than stupid. It’s going to K-I-L-L kill us all.

LUCY What do you mean?

ALIBOO If we really had captured the princess, the Redbloods would have started a war with us which we could never have won, despite what my father S-A-Y-S says.

LUCY Why do you keep doing that?
ALIBOO Keep doing what?
LUCY Spelling out all the words you’re saying.

ALIBOO We take spelling very seriously. We weren’t always able to spell. We used to be unable to R-E-A-D read B - double O - K books.

LUCY So now, your father forces you to spell out half the words you say.

ALIBOO You may not understand or care about the Bluebloods, but we have our own culture and traditions, and we take them very seriously.

LUCY Like kidnapping innocent maids and trapping them on islands surrounded by carnivorous fish?

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

ALIBOO I only came here to ask if there’s anything you wanted.

LUCY Yes. Get me off this stupid island. Row me back to Freetown.

ALIBOO *(embarrassed)* I would, but my father would murder me if he found out.

LUCY Aren’t you already going to be in trouble when he realizes you’re gone?
ALIBOO He won’t notice. My people don’t live together as families, you see. Each of us lives in a separate bungalow.

LUCY That must get lonely.

ALIBOO *(shrugging)* It’s tradition. We’ve always built our bungalows T-I-N-Y tiny.

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

LUCY In that case, why don’t you get back into your stupid B-O-A-T boat and leave me A-L-O-N-E alone? I’ve got enough problems, without you coming here and whining about how you can’t even stand up to your own father.

*ALIBOO slumps, and returns to the boat.*

LUCY *(pointing at her food)* But if you’re coming back anyway, you may as well bring me something edible to eat, like a nice steak or something. Medium rare.

ALIBOO *(looking at LUCY’s food)* I won’t be able to find anything like that. We’re all vegan.

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

ALIBOO But I’m sure I could steal some of the royal nut roast and bring it to you tomorrow…princess.

*ALIBOO starts to paddle away.*

*Blackout.*

**Scene 9a**

*The Thripp mansion. THEODORE is working. CATHERINE rushes on.*

CATHERINE What’s going on? Why haven’t we sent the army to rescue Lucy yet?

THEODORE Patience, my darling. We can’t afford to make a move until everything is in place.

CATHERINE How can you tell me to be patient? It’s been two weeks! Every day that we wait is another day that the Cannibals could…oh, I just don’t want to think about it.

THEODORE If our soldiers march straight into that forest without adequate supplies, they’ll get eaten alive! Literally.

*JACOB enters, followed by PAUL, ANDREW, PETER, and TOBIAS.*

JACOB Mayor, the latest shipment of anti-frizz hair serum is here.

THEODORE Perfect. Make sure it’s distributed amongst the troops.

CATHERINE Aren’t there more important things to be worrying about? Such as my maid’s life?

TOBIAS The humidity levels in the forest are through the roof. Without an adequate supply of serum, we’ll have frizz halos within days.

PETER Yeah! We’re soldiers.

PAUL We can’t be expected to live like Cannibal scum!

ANDREW That reminds me. When’s the dry conditioner arriving?

THEODORE My trading partners have already dispatched it. It should be here by the end of the week.

CATHERINE The end of the week? We can’t afford to wait that long.

**Scene 9b**

*CATHERINE storms away and finds RICHARD.*

CATHERINE I don’t believe it! It’s been two weeks, and Pa still hasn’t done anything. It’s like he doesn’t even care.

RICHARD Give your old man a break. He’s just scared of the Cannibals. We all are. I’ve been dealing with them my whole life, and even I didn’t see this coming.

CATHERINE I don’t care. We’ve got to do something. You told me you’re pretty handy with a gun. Why don’t you round up some of the boys on your ranch and deal with them yourself?

RICHARD We can’t do that. We can deal with them on the open farmland, but in the forest, they always have the upper hand.

CATHERINE Why’s that?

RICHARD I guess it’s because they know how to keep totally silent. They use their bows, and they work alone.

CATHERINE *(thoughtful)* Is that so? Well, they don’t have to be the only ones.

RICHARD What do you mean?
CATHERINE Perhaps we’ve been doing this all wrong. Perhaps an army would never be able to stop the Cannibals. The only way I’m going to see Lucy again is if I find her myself.

RICHARD *(snorting)* You can’t be serious. I know you’re upset, but –

CATHERINE The Cannibals must have had a reason for kidnapping Lucy. Perhaps if I speak to them alone, I can find out what it is. *(Exits.)*

RICHARD Miss Thripp, I think you should sit down and think about this for a second. What would your Pa say? Miss Thripp? Miss Thripp!

*Blackout.*

**Scene 10**

*The Cannibals’ castle. MORISOR in on his throne, surrounded by SHEKWAY and THROFGAR, then MELOD and HARMON. GEORGE enters, screaming. SYMPHON and BRETT enter, holding ALIBOO between them.*

SYMPHON We found him paddling the boat in, Your Majesty.

BRETT It was just as George told us.

*GEORGE points accusingly at ALIBOO and screams.*

MORISOR How can this be, Aliboo? Have you really been visiting that Parasite scum?

ALIBOO Yes, father.

MORISOR How often?

ALIBOO Every night, father.

MORISOR Every night? For how long?

ALIBOO Since she first got here. Two weeks ago.

MORISOR What would possess you to do such a thing? That girl is a Redblood! She is one of the people that enslaved us! *(Wheezes, clutching at his heart)*

ALIBOO You’re the one who wanted us to be married.

MORISOR So that the Redbloods would have to bow down to the Bluebloods at last! Not that you could start playing happy families with the girl.

ALIBOO Why don’t you just let her go? She doesn’t have to be our enemy. Nor do any of the Redbloods. We could live S-I-D-E side by side, in peace.

MORISOR We’ve lived in fear of the Parasites since their ancestors first settled here. I’d sooner die than make peace with those monsters.

SHEKWAY Aliboo, if you’d ever seen the city of Freetown, you’d understand. It sits on top of a hill, its white stone buildings shining in the sun.

MORISOR Every stone of that city was placed by our people!

SHEKWAY Around it, as far as the eye can see, are fields overflowing with crops.

MORISOR Our ancestors worked those fields tirelessly, only for the Parasites to grow fat from their bounty!

SHEKWAY Everything they have, they took from us. They took our land, and when that wasn’t enough, they took our bodies and souls too.

ALIBOO We can’t keep living in the P-A-S-T past. We’re free now. Isn’t that enough?

MORISOR While the Redblood Parasites feast off our land, we can never be truly free. When you turn a blind eye to the past, Aliboo, you bring shame on the Bluebloods, and desecrate the memory of our ancestors! And if I never live to have my vengeance, you must continue our great work in our name. *(Stops, and clutches at his heart. With great difficulty, breathing heavily)* Do you understand me, Aliboo? Do you?

*MORISOR gives up and sinks to his knees, gasping for air.*

SHEKWAY Morisor!

*THROFGAR and SHEKWAY rush to catch him before he collapses, and lay him flat on a table. MORISOR motions frantically for ALIBOO to come over. He does.*

MORISOR Aliboo, my son. You must – put an end to this.

ALIBOO Yes, Father.

*MORISOR dies. All the CANNIBALS mourn. THROFGAR ceremonially removes MORISOR’s crown and nose ring. MELOD and HARMON fetch a sheet and cover MORISOR.*

THROFGAR The King is dead. Long live the King!

*THROFGAR ceremonially places crown and nose ring on ALIBOO, who accepts them, looking extremely nervous.*

THROFGAR The King is dead.

ALL but ALIBOO Long live the King!

*Blackout.*

**Scene 11**

*Bamboo Island. Night. LUCY waits for ALIBOO to arrive. ALIBOO paddles to the island.*

LUCY It’s about time. I was beginning to get worried you’d been eaten by the kissing fish.

*ALIBOO is silent and sombre.*

LUCY What’s the matter, Aliboo? You look different…*(noticing nose ring)* Oh.

ALIBOO My father died today. It was my fault.

LUCY How could that be?

ALIBOO My father’s heart has been weak for many years. His plot to destroy your people brought it on, I’m sure of it. Then, today, he discovered that I’d been coming across the lake to see you every night. He was so upset at my betrayal that his heart failed him.

LUCY I’m sorry to hear that. Your father was…a great man.

ALIBOO *(suddenly angry)* You’re not sorry. My father ordered your kidnap. You’re trapped on this island, thanks to him.

LUCY If you’re sorry, then I am too.

ALIBOO I wasn’t the son he wanted. He wanted a fierce and mighty warrior. But he got me. A weak and pathetic R-U-N-T runt who couldn’t even do as he S-A-I-D said.

LUCY You’re not weak. You were brave to stand up to him.

ALIBOO Not brave enough. I’m the Cannibal King now. The very name of the Cannibal King should strike his enemies dead with fear! And I couldn’t even scare you if I wanted to.

LUCY Did you at least wash that nose ring before you put it in?

ALIBOO This was my father’s nose ring, and his father’s before him. It would be a desecration to wash it.

LUCY OK. I’m going to go ahead and not touch it. I hope you don’t mind.

ALIBOO I don’t even know why we wear these nose rings. It’s just another sign of our shameful past. It was your people that gave us these nose rings, to mark us as slaves.

LUCY Slaves? What do you mean?

ALIBOO When your Redblood ancestors arrived in our land, they waged a terrible war on the Bluebloods that we had no hope of winning. They had guns. All we had were bows and arrows. The surviving Bluebloods had no choice but to submit and become the slaves of the Redbloods. These rings were hammered into our noses to display our value. The bigger the ring, the more industrious the slave. Even after we escaped, we kept our nose rings to show our place in society. The more important you are, the bigger your nose ring. And the Cannibal King has the biggest nose ring of all.

LUCY I had no idea.

ALIBOO I’m not surprised. The Redbloods could never admit that all their hard-earned wealth was stolen from others. Or that we escaped them in the end.

LUCY Escaped them? How?

ALIBOO When they first captured us, we were forbidden from learning to read and write.

LUCY Why would it matter if you could read and write?

ALIBOO Without written words, there was no way to communicate with each other. We were forced to live separately, you see, in tiny shacks they called bungalows, only big enough for one person. The Redbloods made sure we were kept lonely and ignorant of our past, so that we wouldn’t even want our freedom.

LUCY Then how did you ever manage to escape?

ALIBOO One of us learned to read in secret. He managed to teach the other slaves to read as well, then taught them who they really were: a proud and noble people who had been wrongly enslaved. Then, he organized an escape by moonlight, leading all the slaves up the Nile River until they came to this lake and built the castle on its banks. That man was my great great grandfather, the first Cannibal King.

LUCY If the citizens of Freetown knew the truth…

ALIBOO Didn’t you ever wonder why the Bluebloods seemed to hate your people so much?

LUCY I thought you just wanted to eat us. That’s what we’ve always been told. None of this is taught in our history lessons.

ALIBOO We don’t want to eat you. We just want to take back what’s rightfully ours. Our land. Our freedom. But you don’t need to be involved in this. I’ll row you back to Freetown.

LUCY You can’t do that. It’s too dangerous. Besides, maybe I don’t want to leave anymore.

*Pause.*

ALIBOO Well, I’m not keeping you as a prisoner anymore. You can come back and live with us. I’ll build you your own bungalow.

LUCY Maybe I don’t want my own bungalow. Maybe I want to share yours.

*Pause.*

ALIBOO You wouldn’t be saying that if you’d seen my bungalow. I mean, it’s tiny. There’s barely enough room for me to fit inside.

LUCY Then you’ll just have to build me a bigger one.

*Pause.*

ALIBOO I’m not sure how the others would feel about that. Our bungalow size is a tradition of the Bluebloods.

LUCY But don’t you see? You’re the Cannibal King now. It’s up to you to decide what’s best for your people. None of you should be living alone, or wearing those nose rings. You shouldn’t even call yourself the Cannibal King, if it’s not the name you want. So what do *you* want to do?

ALIBOO I want to fulfil the last promise I made to my father. He told me that I had to put an end to the conflict between the Bluebloods and the Redbloods. But how am I supposed to do that? I don’t have his might. Or his anger.

LUCY Your father’s might and anger didn’t put an end to the conflict. But you will.

ALIBOO How can you be so S-U-R-E sure?

LUCY Because you have something that your father didn’t have. Something far more powerful then weapons or might. You have me.

*LUCY and ALIBOO look at each other and draw together, then pull away awkwardly. They repeat this, until their lips are almost touching. Then, the KISSING FISH jump up in front of them.*

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

*Blackout.*

**Scene 12**

*The streets of Freetown. JOHN enters, frantically.*

JOHN Mayor Thripp! Mayor Thripp!

*THEODORE enters, blearily.*

THEODORE What’s the matter, John?

JOHN It’s Catherine! She’s gone missing!

THEODORE What? How can this be?

JOHN Her wing is empty, Mayor. There’s no trace of her.

THEODORE Alert Sergeant Jacob. We must rally the army immediately.

*JACOB enters.*

JACOB I’m afraid that’s quite impossible, Mayor Thripp. The men have just re-applied their cucumber face masks. The antioxidants will need at least three hours to sink in.

*ANDREW, PETER, PAUL, and TOBIAS enter with white cream on their faces and cucumbers over their eyes, feeling their way forwards.*

THEODORE The anti-oxidisation will have to wait. My daughter’s been kidnapped! She could be with the Cannibal King as we speak!

JACOB But what you’re suggesting could be fatal! To the long-term natural subdermal collagen production of my troops.

*RICHARD enters.*

RICHARD Mayor Thripp, let me take care of this. I’ve rounded up all the farmhands on my ranch. We know this land, we know the Cannibals, and we have a plan that might just save your daughter’s life.

THEODORE What a relief it is to hear that. Mr Oatsworth, you have my blessing to do whatever it takes to get my daughter back. God speed!

*RICHARD exits hastily. Blackout.*

**Scene 13**

*The bamboo forest. CATHERINE is stalking through alone, wearing a hood, bow raised, flinching in fear every time she hears a noise. LUCY enters stealthily, with a bow, wearing Cannibal clothes. The two stalk each other. Then, LUCY jumps out of hiding, yelling the Cannibal war cry, and aims her bow at CATHERINE. CATHERINE yells too, and aims her bow back. The two fall silent and breathe heavily, bows still raised.*

LUCY Miss Catherine?

CATHERINE *(same time)* Lucy?

*Pause.*

LUCY What are you –

CATHERINE *(same time)* Why on earth are you –

*Pause. LUCY and CATHERINE continue trying to speak at the same time, then stopping.*

LUCY This is getting awkward.

CATHERINE Tell me about it.

LUCY I can explain.

CATHERINE Why don’t you go first?

LUCY No, after you, Miss Catherine.

CATHERINE After you were kidnapped, I did everything I could to make Pa rescue you. But I realized he was never going to come after you, so I had no choice but to do something myself.

LUCY *(same time)* The Blueblood King thought I was you, or rather that you were me, if you see what I mean, and tried to marry me to his son. But his son turned out to be not so bad after all, and Miss Catherine, I’ve fallen in love.

*Pause.*

CATHERINE I don’t know what the Cannibals have done to you, Lucy. Don’t you remember who you are? You belong with me, not with these murderous savages.

LUCY We had it all wrong, Miss Catherine. They’re not the savages, we are. A hundred years ago, the Cannibals were our slaves.

CATHERINE What do you mean, slaves? That’s crazy.

LUCY And they’re not Cannibals, and never have been. We made that up, to feel less guilty about driving them away. They call themselves the Bluebloods.

CATHERINE Don’t you remember how they attacked us? They carried off you and that Oatsworth carriage driver, Harry.

*HARRY emerges from hiding.*

HARRY So they did, and I’m glad for it.

CATHERINE Harry? Is that really you?

HARRY Aye. Although my blood has changed from red to blue. I have a new, Blueblood name now. *(Grandly, with a sweeping gesture)* Hashtag.

CATHERINE Don’t be ridiculous. You can’t change the colour of your blood.

HARRY Of course you can. You don’t think the Bluebloods actually have differently coloured blood, did you? All those farmhands who we thought had been eaten, had actually chosen to become Bluebloods.

CATHERINE But why would anyone want to do that?

HARRY For years, I was treated as little better than a slave by the Oatsworth family. Day in, day out, from the crack of dawn to after sunset I was tending to those horses. I never got a minute of time to myself. All I got in return were meals and lodgings, and a salary so meagre it was barely worth counting. I tell you, it was almost as bad as being a camp counsellor.

CATHERINE It sounds horrible.

HARRY But as a Blueblood, I’m treated like an equal. It’s a simple life out here in the forest, but a happy one, serving my Queen. *(Bows to LUCY)*

CATHERINE Er…did Harry, I mean, Hashtag, just call you ‘Queen’?

LUCY Yeah, I forgot to mention that part. My blood’s also changed colour. I’m now Queen of the Bluebloods.

*Pause.*

CATHERINE Dang, girl, you move quickly.

LUCY Let me take you back to the Blueblood castle. Then you can see that I’m telling the truth. The Bluebloods mean us no harm.

CATHERINE Then we’ve made a terrible mistake.

LUCY Yes, but it’s not too late to make things right.

CATHERINE It might be.

LUCY What do you mean?

CATHERINE To tell you the truth, Lucy, I didn’t think I’d have a chance of finding you. My father’s been organizing a rescue mission ever since you were kidnapped, but I realized that he had no real plan to actually send it out to rescue you. I figured, if I were to go missing, he’d have no choice but to send it after me. I’m afraid there might be an army already on its way.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 14a**

*RICHARD, WALTER, FRANK, and LENNY are motoring up the Nile River. The KISSING FISH leap periodically out of the water near the boat.*

WALTER I still think this idea of yours is slightly mad, Mr Oatsworth.

RICHARD I’ve been tending this land for years. I know the Nile River like the back of my hand.

PAUL But this is supposed to be an invasion, not some kind of cruise holiday!

RICHARD If we keep following the Nile River upstream, we come to a lake in the heart of Cannibal territory. They’ll never see us coming.

FRANK *(looking through telescope)* The river’s opening up, Sergeant.

RICHARD What did I tell you? George, is there any sign of the Cannibal encampment?
FRANK No, sir. The shore line’s empty. Just an island with a huge bamboo tree on it, coming past us on our left.

RICHARD Perfect. We’ll have the element of surprise.

FISH Baroomp *(kiss, kiss)*

LENNY Look! Fish! *(to WALTER)* Can I feed them? Please? Please? *(Starts feeding the KISSING FISH)*

WALTER Lenny, our supplies our very limited. We don’t know how long we’ll be trekking through the forest. *(Sees that LENNY is already feeding the KISSING FISH)* Lenny, what do you think you’re doing?

LENNY, Here, fishy, fishy!

FRANK That was our last pack of jerky! I hope you’re happy, Lenny.

*The KISSING FISH are devouring the food in a frenzy of kissing noises.*

WALTER That’s strange. I’ve never seen fish devour food that quickly before.

FRANK Aren’t fish supposed to be vegetarians?

*LENNY flinches back with a yell. The KISSING FISH make even more noise, and start rocking the boat.*

LENNY My finger’s bleeding! These blighters have sharp teeth.

WALTER Then leave the fish alone, and perhaps they’ll leave you alone.

FRANK Richard! We’ve sprung a leak in the bottom of the boat!

WALTER What? How can that be?

FRANK It’s those fish. They’re chewing right through!

LENNY We’re sinking!

RICHARD Shore up ahead. We’ve got to make an emergency landing.

*RICHARD, WALTER, LENNY, and FRANK jump out of the boat as it’s sinking, and huddle up on the shore*

RICHARD We’ve lost everything. All our food. All our weapons.

LENNY *(holding out conditioner)* Don’t worry, everybody, I saved enough conditioner to last us at least two weeks.

*RICHARD grabs conditioner from LENNY and throws it into the lake.*

LENNY Noooo! *(To RICHARD)* You monster!

RICHARD Let’s work out how on earth we’re going to get home. We’re in the heart of Cannibal territory, with nothing to defend ourselves.

WALTER We’ll have to wait until we get rescued.

RICHARD By who? The Cannibal King?

**Scene 14b**

*SYMPHON and BRETT enter.*

BRETT That’s the Blueblood King to you.

*WALTER, FRANK, and LENNY scream and huddle together.*

FRANK Don’t eat us!

SYMPHON Come with us.

*SYMPHON and BRETT lead RICHARD, WALTER, FRANK, and LENNY to the throne room, where ALIBOO, LUCY, THROFGAR, GEORGE, SHEKWAY, MELOD, and HARMON are assembled. None of the CANNIBALS are wearing noserings.*

THROFGAR Kneel before the Blueblood King!

*WALTER, FRANK, and LENNY scream and start to kneel.*

ALIBOO Hold it.

*WALTER, FRANK, and LENNY stop mid-kneel and look fearfully at ALIBOO.*

ALIBOO Throfgar, we’ve stopped the whole kneeling thing, remember?

THROFGAR What? First, you make us take out our nose rings, then you allow us to build our bungalows any size we want, and now you won’t even make our Redblood enemy kneel before the King and Queen?

ALIBOO The Redbloods aren’t our enemies anymore. They’re our guests.

THROFGAR You are not the king your father used to be.

ALIBOO No, I’m not. I’m King Aliboo of the Bluebloods, and I’m going to put an end to this conflict just like my father wanted. *(To RICHARD)* What brings you to my castle, Redblood?

RICHARD I’m here to find Miss Catherine Thripp. *(Spots LUCY)* Wait a minute! I recognize you! You’re the maid that got kidnapped! You’re the reason I lost my darling Catherine to the Cannibals! You’re a traitor! What have you done with Catherine?

LUCY Don’t worry, she’s fine.

RICHARD Then why hasn’t she returned to Freetown?

LUCY Do you remember that day on the archery range? You invited Miss Catherine on a trip to Adel with you. She would have said no, but I thought you should be given a second chance. How about you return the favour?

*RICHARD and LUCY stare at each other for a while, RICHARD squaring up to LUCY. Then, RICHARD backs down.*

RICHARD I don’t know what’s going on here, but all I want is to see Catherine again. She’s like no girl I’ve ever met. She’s braver than me, and cleverer too. I do my best to act tough, but the truth is, I was too scared to enter Cannibal – I mean, Blueblood – territory, even with my farmhands by my side. In all the time we were planning our attack, I was too scared even to tell her how I really felt about her. The truth is, I want to see Miss Catherine again so I can ask for her hand in marriage.

*CATHERINE enters during speech.*

CATHERINE Did your father write that little speech for you?

RICHARD Miss Catherine! I didn’t come here for my father’s sake. Who cares about what our parents want? All I care about is what you want. Say you’ll marry me!

CATHERINE You know, for the first time since I met you, I think you’re being honest with me. But what’s the big idea, charging to my rescue like this?

RICHARD I know it wasn’t a clever idea, but it was the only one I had. I couldn’t bear to lose you.

CATHERINE Well…OK, then. But on one condition.

RICHARD Anything!

CATHERINE Our friends the Bluebloods want to end the conflict between our people forever. I know just how we can do it. But it’ll take both of us. Can you handle that?

RICHARD I’ll do whatever it takes.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 16a**

*The Thripp mansion. CURTIS and HELENA are talking to THEODORE and CONSTANCE.*

CURTIS I can’t tell you how pleased I am that everything worked out for the best.

HELENA Our son, married to the Mayor’s daughter. We really couldn’t be happier. Could we, Curtis?

CURTIS When Richard told us he was marrying Catherine, he was insistent that he take control of the Oatsworth estate right away. Between you and me, I was very grateful. Helena and I have been looking for a chance to retire for years.

HELENA And Richard had never shown much interest in the business side of things before. He as always too busy grubbing around outdoors with the farmhands.

CURTIS Your daughter’s clearly having a positive effect on him! He’s hardly set foot outside his study since he got back from the honeymoon. He’s been drawing up all kinds of plans and contracts that even I can’t make sense of!

THEODORE I have no doubt he’s working out the best way to invest the Thripp fortune.

HELENA That was exceptionally generous of you.

THEODORE What use do I have for it now? Constance and I have enough to live on, and the rest, we may as well invest in our children’s future.

CONSTANCE Especially after all that nasty business with the Cannibals, which almost ruined everything we’d worked so hard to achieve.

THEODORE I think we can safely say the Cannibals are nothing more than an unpleasant memory now.

CONSTANCE Here comes the two lovebirds now!

**Scene 16b**

*CATHERINE and RICHARD enter, arm in arm.*

HELENA How are you settling into your new home? Not too rustic for you, I hope?

CATHERINE Adel is lovely. We’ll be very happy there.

HELENA I’m thrilled to hear it.

RICHARD Especially now that our plans have been finalized.

CURTIS What plans might these be? We’ve been dying to hear about your vision for the future of Freetown and the Oatsworth Estate.

RICHARD Ma, Pa, the Oatsworth Estate is no more. I sold the whole thing.

*Silence.*

CURTIS Is this some kind of joke? The Oatsworth estate has been in the family for generations!

RICHARD And now, it’s been returned to its original owners. The Bluebloods.

HELENA You mean, the Cannibals? You’ve sold our land to a bunch of savages?

RICHARD It was the least we could do.

CATHERINE Don’t worry, we made sure to get a good price for it. In exchange, the Bluebloods have agreed to forgive us for our crimes against them, and put an end to their raids. From now on, they will be welcome in our cities and on our farms as equals.

THEODORE Catherine, this idea is suicide!

CATHERINE Nonsense. It will make us all better off than ever. We now have trading partners much closer than your friends over the sea, who will be happy to provide us with everything we need. I felt it was only fair that I give them my inheritance, just so that they could get started.

CONSTANCE We trusted you with the Thripp family fortune, and you’ve thrown it away!

*THEODORE, CONSTANCE, CURTIS, and HELENA argue over each other, directing their words from RICHARD and CATHERINE to each other.*

THEODORE After all the work I’ve done for this family and this town, to make sure we never had to want for anything, this is how you repay me! I had high hopes for this marriage, and for the Thripp fortune, and now I can see it was all for nothing.

CONSTANCE *(same time)* The pair of you clearly have no idea what kind of sacrifices we made for you. If you ask me, this marriage was a terrible idea from the start. This Oatsworth boy is clearly a rogue and a scoundrel, and I hope I never have to see any of you again!

CURTIS *(same time)* Just think what your grandfather, and his father, and his father would say if they could see what you’d done to our proud history. The Cannibals have always been our sworn enemies. How can you possibly turn around and give everything to them?

HELENA *(same time)* I don’t know what terrible ideas your daughter has been giving our son, but I only know it must be her fault! Our Richard used to have his head screwed on, and now he’s ruined everything! We should have stayed far away from your family.

*THEODORE and CONSTANCE storm out in one direction; CURTIS and HELENA in the other. Silence.*

CATHERINE Well, that went a lot better than I’d expected.

RICHARD I thought they’d take the news a lot worse.

CATHERINE At least we can invite our guests of honour in now.

*JOHN enters.*

JOHN Mr and Mrs Oatsworth, may I present the retinue of the Blueblood King and Queen.

**Scene 16c**

*LUCY and ALIBOO enter, and greet CATHERINE and RICHARD warmly. All other CANNIBALS join them. Then all CANNIBALS enter, bow, and move to back.*

*All FREETOWN citizens enter, bow, and move to back.*

*All STAGE CREW and PRODUCTION CREW enter and bow.*

*All bow again.*

**The End**

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About me: I live in Oxford, UK, where I’m currently working on the *God Machine* series. *God Machine* is an epic urban fantasy for teenagers and up, set in an alternative London where magic exists, but is illegal and doesn’t work anyway. I’m also an improv comedian with Hivemind: [www.hivemindimprov.com](http://www.hivemindimprov.com). Take a look around my site to find out more!

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