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STORY TELLING

TRANSVERSAL SKILLS

THE ISLANDS

UPSIDE DOWN ISLAND

As the custom has it, whenever a family throws a party, people who were not specifically invited per se, would join and be offered food and drinks. There once was a celebration on the Upside down island and an old lady came by. She asked for a glass of water, but was refused. After pleading for a while, she decided to leave. On the lake bank she asked a young man to drive her across the lake and he obliged. The last thing he remembers before turning around and seeing the island moving and people dying, was the ladies warning to keep looking ahead.

THE PUNISHMENT ISLAND

The Punishment island was used up to the 1940s as a place where girls, who got pregnant before marriage, were taken and left to die. That is unless they knew how to swim, which was highly unlikely as the skill of swimming still remains a rarity nowadays, or if they were picked up by local man. What was the benefit for them? They needn't pay the 'bride price'. And what happened to the man, who impregnated the girl? He usually ran away from home out of fear of being killed by the girl's family. That is, if it was widely known who the man was, since the only person who knew for sure was the girl.

BACK IN TIME

THE FRIENDSHIPS

The older generations grew up respecting the so called small gods. When honouring them, they would slaughter an animal and serve the meat on wooden plates. The night would then be spent dancing and singing, finishing with a traditional song, whose title translates into how you spend the night or How do you sleep. The song is not as lyrical, happiness is expressed with certain sounds, which can best be described as screams of joy and vary from person to person. After the honouring, two families usually organized a meeting. The host family would slaughter an animal and the visiting one would bring alcohol as an offering. They would dance and bond. At the end the heads of the families would forge a marriage agreement between visitor's son, who wouldn't need to pay the bride price, and the host's daughter. This is the first traditional way of maintaining friendships. The second one is a bit more gruesome; in order for men from different clans to bond; they would make deep cuts on their stomachs and suck each other's blood. If any of the pair betrayed the other, he would die within a short period of time and his family would experience great suffering.

THE FAMILIES

If a man has many wives, they would live in separate houses and meet each day at the community bonfire for dinner. Each wife would prepare a dish. On special occasions they danced ceremonial dances, otherwise they spent the evenings sharing educational stories about the 'right ways to live your life'. For example, fathers would advise their sons to always get along with their uncles, since the uncle is the one, who would reconcile the son and his father after an argument. Daughters on the other hand, were taught the qualities of a good wife and to respect their mothers, as well as their brothers. Afterwards the man would select the wife with whom he would spend the night. There was no set timetable, his choice depended on his character and the wife's qualities; the ones, who were better cooks and whose children behaved respectably, would be chosen more often.

THE DEAD MAN

When an older person died, a traditional healer would be summoned. He gifted the children with special herbs, securing their health. The dead person would then be prepared for the funeral. After four days the house would be swept over and the healer would visit once more. Before finally covering the person with a mat, a pin or a button would be stuck into them in order for their spirit to be undisturbed.

THE PEOPLE

THE SURVIVOR

Mauda Kyitaragabirwe, who is now presumably eighty six years old, was taken to the Punishment Island at the age of twenty, after she got pregnant out of wedlock. After being dropped off on the island, she ran into two other girls, who forged a plan to swim across the lake to the mainland. When they jumped into the water, she stayed behind out of fear of meeting their destiny, namely both of them drowned and died. She had nothing to do, but wait for death. Luckily faith had other plans. After four days a fisherman drove by and she screamed for help. He was a poor man and knowing the girl's purpose, he picked her up, introduced her to his family and married her. She gifted him with five children, her first pregnancy mainly ended with a miscarriage. After the missionaries stopped the practise, she reconciled with her mother and siblings, even her older brother, who took her to the island as a part of his duty to the family. Her husband is now long dead, but she still thanks the God every day for her savior.

THE COUPLE

Let us introduce you to a typical Lake Bunyonyi 'retired' couple. Marion, a grey haired lady, who enthusiastically clasped our hands and flashed us a crooked smile, kept on rambling in the local language called rukiga, when she suddenly grabbed her breast and pointed at us. After taking a look at our confused faces, it was quickly explained as a sign of youth, moreover a compliment. She trusted us with her age, supposedly ninety years, but she wasn't sure, since birth certificates were not issued at the time of her birth. We continued up the hill and stopped at her husband's house, who was simply referred to as 'Muzeii', a nickname indicating he is old and therefore extremely wise. Marion is the ninety-eight year old's first wife, his second wife, who he paid two cows for, is younger and fitter; someone has to take care of him. She gets along with Marion splendidly, thank God! If she didn't he would most likely be dead by now.

THE HEALER

When he met his first wife, whose first daughter is now eighty, he started practicing the art of traditional healing. He is now 105 years old and left with three younger wives, since two already died. Each one gifted him with children (1st with 8, 2nd with 12, 3rd with 11, as well as 4th one and 5th one with 8) bringing the final count to fifty, although five of his sons already crossed to the other side. His youngest son is twelve and was born when the man reached the age of 93. The power of healing, as well as the knowledge of herbs were entrusted to him by God, therefore he will pass them on to his sons.

On how to cure a headache:

Squash a herb called omuhezayo, hold it under your nose, sniff and wait for a short period of time.

On nutrition:

Mix dried baboon's skin with selected herbs, apply the mixture under your nose or around anus and wait for the effects.

On bad spirits:

Bring an animal of a single colour since they are more powerful than colourful animals. The healer proceeds by cutting a bit of hair on the head's backside and if the patient is male, he removes your pinky's right nail. In the next step the animal is slaughtered, the mixture of herbs, hair and nails is put inside its head. The charmed head protects only one person and cannot be applied to properties.

THE STORY IN RUKIGA LANGUAGE

Ekyaiumire embeba zaiuura na abaniu

Obwakale hakaba hariho omusheija owabiire matuura omiwihamba wenka akaba azombekiiremu akaju kebiinyaosi. Eroba rimwe akatiinga omusiri rwebihimbba enyameishwa zaguma zirabibya. Akaza kureeba ebihimba byeye yashanga enyameishwa zabiriire yatega omutego omumusiriqwe yataha omuka yeye.

Hanyima yeshahankye yaza kushuura omutego yashangamu enjoka mpango munonga yagira atii: "Ahaa nakukwata njokawe niwe ondiraga ebihimba?" enjoka yamugarukamu etii: "Ingaaha munywaniwangye." nalandikurabaho natomera omutego gwawe gwankwadoa. Omusheija yagambira enjoka yaza kugiita habwokuba yamumariraho ebihimba.

Enjoka yagambira omusheija etii: "Munywani wangeje. Omusheija yaikiriza yagihamu." Enjoka yakwata omusheija yamuyambira etii: "Ahaa owakugambiire ngu ontege omutego gwawe noha natii naza kukubya." Omubyezoshaha embebo yaturuka erukuruga mukyishaka yabuuza habaho enki. Banyawani bangye. Omusheija yagigambira ebyabaho. Embeba yagambira enjoka ngu egaruke omumutego okuyabire erimu. Enjoka yagaruka mumutego okuyabire erimu. Embeba yagambira omusheija kuronda ekiti kihango yaira enjoka. Embeba yabuza omusheija eti hati munywani wangye kunakuyamba oraze kumpa narishi kunkoreraki. Omusheija yagambira embeba ku araze kugiha ebinyebwa. Embeba yamugambira ngu tekayenda ekyokubya kyona omusheija yagibuza ati: "Munywani wange bwenu nkuheki?" Embeba eti twaza kuyenda hamwe nbure niwe omuju yawe. Omusheija yaikiriza bazakutura hamwe.

Why the rat lives with man

Once upon a time, a man lived in a grass-made house in the forest. His backyard was a garden, where he grew beans. Once, when he went to check on them, he found they were destroyed by forest animals. He decided to make a trap and place it in the middle of the crops. After a while he went to check on his beans and noticed a big snake in the trap. He said: "I got you, you stupid snake! Why have you been destroying my beans?" The snake replied: "My

friend, I'm not the one who was destroying your beans, I was just passing by, when I suddenly got caught. I've been waiting for you ever since to come and save me." The man stated he will have to kill it, since it destroyed all of his food, but the snake slyly replied that if he helps it, it will tell him something later. So the man opened the trap and saved the snake and this is how the snake replied: "Ahaa you were going to kill ME and now I will kill YOU and eat you!" While they were still talking, a rat ran from the bush and asked what was wrong. After the man's explanation the rat asked the snake to go back into the trap, just to show what the situation was like beforehand. The snake slithered back in, the rat ordered the man to look for a stick and using that they killed it. Afterwards the rat wanted something in return. The man told the rat he can only give her beans, but the rat refused, it just wanted a place to live, therefore it ordered the man to take it to his home and they should live together. And this is why ever since the accident rats live with man.

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