



DRAMATIZED READINGS

Master Man

A Tall Tale of Nigeria

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NARRATOR 1: Once there was a man who was *strong*.

NARRATOR 4: When he gathered firewood, he hauled twice as much as anyone else in the village. When he hunted, he carried home two antelopes at once.

NARRATOR 2: This man's name was Shadusa, and his wife was named Shettu. One day he said to her,

SHADUSA: (*boastfully, flexing muscles*) Just look at these muscles. I must be the strongest man in the world. From now on, just call me Master Man.

NARRATOR 3: But Shettu said,

SHETTU: (*scolding*) Quit your foolish boasting. No matter how strong you are, there will always be someone stronger. And watch out, or someday you may meet him.



NARRATOR 1: The next day, Shettu paid a visit to a neighboring village. On the walk home she grew thirsty, so she stopped by a well.

NARRATOR 4: She threw in the bucket—

NARRATOR 1: *SPLASH!*

NARRATOR 4: —then she pulled on the rope. But though she tugged and she heaved, she could not lift the bucket.

NARRATOR 2: Just then a woman walked up with a baby strapped to her back.

BABY: *(makes baby noises)*

NARRATOR 3: Balanced on the woman's head was a calabash, a hollow gourd for carrying water. Shettu told her,

SHETTU: *(helpfully)* You'll get no water here today. The bucket won't come up.

NARRATOR 1: The two women pulled together, but still the bucket would not budge.

WOMAN: Wait a moment.

NARRATOR 4: . . . said the woman. She untied her baby and set him on the ground.

WOMAN: *(to BABY)* Pull up the bucket for Mama.

BABY: *(makes baby noises)*

NARRATOR 2: The baby quickly pulled up the bucket and filled his mother's calabash. Then he threw in the bucket and pulled it up once more for Shettu.

SHETTU: *(gasps)* I don't believe it!

WOMAN: Oh, it's not so strange. After all, my husband is Master Man.

BABY: *(makes baby noises)*



NARRATOR 3: When Shettu got home, she told Shadusa what had happened.

SHADUSA: (*furiously*) Master Man?! *He* can't call himself that! *I'm* Master Man. I'll have to teach that fellow a lesson.

SHETTU: (*pleading*) Oh, husband, don't! If the *baby* is so strong, think what the *father* must be like. You'll get yourself killed!

SHADUSA: We'll see about that!

NARRATOR 1: The next morning, Shadusa set out early and walked till he came to the well.

NARRATOR 4: He threw in the bucket—

NARRATOR 1: *SPLASH!*

NARRATOR 4: —then he pulled on the rope. But though he tugged and he heaved, he could not lift the bucket.

NARRATOR 2: Just then the woman with the baby walked up.

BABY: (*makes baby noises*)

SHADUSA: (*to WOMAN, belligerently*) Wait a minute. What do you think you're doing?

WOMAN: I'm getting water, of course.

SHADUSA: Well, you can't. The bucket won't come up.

NARRATOR 3: The woman set down the baby, who quickly pulled up the bucket and filled his mother's calabash.

BABY: (*makes baby noises*)

SHADUSA: Wah! How did he do that?

WOMAN: It's easy—when your father is Master Man.



NARRATOR 1: Shadusa gulped and thought about going home. But instead he thrust out his chest and said,

SHADUSA: I want to meet this fellow, so I can show him who's the *real* Master Man.

WOMAN: Oh, I wouldn't do that. He *devours* men like you! But suit yourself.

BABY: (*makes baby noises*)

NARRATOR 4: So Shadusa followed the woman back to her compound. Inside the fenced yard was a gigantic fireplace, and beside it was a pile of huge bones.

SHADUSA: (*still belligerent*) What's all this?

WOMAN: Well, you see, our hut is so small that my husband must come out here to eat his elephants.

NARRATOR 2: Just then they heard a great

MASTER MAN: *ROAR!*

NARRATOR 2: . . . so loud that Shadusa had to cover his ears. Then the ground began to shake, till Shadusa could hardly stand.

SHADUSA: (*alarmed, shaking with the ground*) What's that?!

WOMAN: (*shaking but calm*) That's Master Man.

SHADUSA: (*still shaking*) Oh, no! You weren't fooling! I've got to get out of here!

WOMAN: (*still shaking*) It's too late now. But let me hide you.

NARRATOR 3: By the fence were some large clay pots, each as tall as a man, for storing grain. She helped him climb into one, then set the lid in place.

NARRATOR 1: Shadusa raised the lid a crack to peek out.



SHADUSA: (*gasps*)

NARRATOR 1: And there coming into the compound was Master Man, carrying a dead elephant across his shoulders.

BABY: (*in delight*) Papa!

WOMAN: (*to MASTER MAN*) Did you have a good day, dear?

MASTER MAN: (*bellowing*) Yes! But I forgot my bow and arrows. I had to kill this elephant with my bare hands.

NARRATOR 4: As Shadusa watched in terror, Master Man built a huge fire in the fireplace, roasted the elephant, and devoured every bit of it but the bones.

NARRATOR 2: Suddenly he stopped and sniffed.

MASTER MAN: (*sniffs loudly*) Wife! I smell a man!

WOMAN: Oh, there's no man here now. One passed by while you were gone. That must be what you smell.

MASTER MAN: Too bad! He would have been tasty.

NARRATOR 3: Then he rolled over on the ground, and before long the leaves trembled from his snores.

NARRATOR 1: The woman hurried over to the pot and slid off the lid.

WOMAN: (*to SHADUSA, in a hushed voice*) Quick! Get away while you can.

NARRATOR 4: Shadusa leaped out and bolted down the path.

NARRATOR 2: But he hadn't gone too far when he heard a distant

MASTER MAN: (*from a distance*) ROAR!

NARRATOR 2: . . . and felt the ground tremble beneath him.



NARRATOR 3: Master Man was coming!

NARRATOR 1: Shadusa ran till he came upon five farmers hoeing a field. One of them called,

FARMER: What's your hurry?

SHADUSA: Master Man is after me!

FARMER: Take it easy. We won't let anyone hurt you.

NARRATOR 4: Just then they heard a terrible

MASTER MAN: *ROAR!*

NARRATOR 2: The farmers all dropped their hoes and covered their ears.

FARMER: What was that?!

SHADUSA: That was Master Man!

FARMER: Well, then, you'd better keep running!

NARRATOR 3: And the five farmers fled across the field.

NARRATOR 1: Shadusa ran on till he met ten porters carrying bundles.

PORTER: (*calling*) What's your hurry?

SHADUSA: Master Man is after me!

PORTER: Relax. No one can fight us all.

NARRATOR 4: Just then the ground quaked, and they all bounced into the air.

NARRATOR 2: The porters fell in a heap, all mixed up with their bundles.

PORTER: What was that?!

SHADUSA: That was Master Man!



PORTER: Then run for your life!

NARRATOR 3: And the ten porters bolted from the path.

NARRATOR 1: Shadusa ran on till he rounded a bend—

NARRATOR 4: then he stopped short.

NARRATOR 2: There beside the path sat a stranger,

NARRATOR 3: and there beside the stranger lay a huge pile of elephant bones.

STRANGER: *(in a growl)* What's your hurry?

SHADUSA: *(in a moan)* Master Man is after me.

STRANGER: You better not say so—'cause *I'm* Master Man!

NARRATOR 1: From behind Shadusa came another

MASTER MAN: *ROAR!*

NARRATOR 1: . . . and once again he bounced into the air.

NARRATOR 4: The stranger caught him in one hand as Master Man ran up.

MASTER MAN: *(to STRANGER, bellowing)* Let me have him!

STRANGER: *(in a growl)* Come and get him!

NARRATOR 2: Master Man lunged, but the stranger tossed Shadusa into a tree. Then the two strong men wrapped themselves around each other and wrestled across the ground.

MASTER MAN: *ROAR!*

STRANGER: *GRRRRR!*

NARRATOR 3: The noise of the battle nearly deafened Shadusa. The dust choked him. The trembling of the tree nearly shook him down.



NARRATOR 1: As Shadusa watched, the two men struggled to their feet, still clutching one another. Then each gave a mighty leap, and together they rose into the air.

NARRATOR 4: Higher and higher they went, till they passed through a cloud and out of sight.

SHADUSA: *(looking up, grows more and more puzzled)*

NARRATOR 2: Shadusa waited and waited, but the men never came back down. At last he climbed carefully from the tree, then ran and ran and never stopped till he got home safe and sound.

NARRATOR 3: And he never called himself Master Man again.

SHADUSA: *(gives loud sigh of relief)*

NARRATOR 1: As for those other two, they're still in the clouds, where they battle on to this day.

NARRATOR 4: Of course, they rest whenever they're both worn out.

NARRATOR 2: But sooner or later they start up again,

NARRATOR 3: and what a noise they make!

MASTER MAN: *ROAR!*

STRANGER: *GRRRRR!*

NARRATOR 1: Some people call that noise thunder.

NARRATOR 4: But now you know what it *really* is—

NARRATOR 2: two fools fighting forever

NARRATOR 3: to see which one is

NARRATORS 1-4: MASTER MAN!