

AFRICAN TALES AND STORIES

THE SILENCE OF THE HIPPO

DAVID BÖHM





Mister Raven sits on a branch with a piece of cheese in his beak.



Mister Fox smells the cheese and greets the fox: oh dear Mister Raven, how beautiful you are!



Oh, how gorgeous you are! If your crowing is as elegant as your feathers, you must be the Fenix of this tree!



With these words, the raven fills up with glee and wants to show his beautiful voice.



He opens his beak and consequently lets his spoil fall to the ground.



Without hesitation, the fox instructs him: my beautiful Mister, you must realize that flattery is always concocted for the one who likes to hear it.



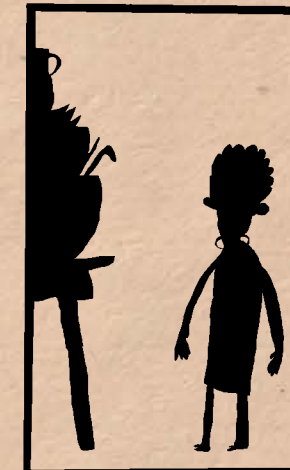
This little lecture showed you that. Now, raven, you are only ashamed and angry while the cheese and I depart. Next time you may lose more.



Once upon a time, there was a mom and she had a child.



Mom wanted to go to the field and so she told her child to wait in the village until she comes back.



So the little girl stayed at home to clean up.



Mother had told her to wash the dishes and sweep the house.



The little girl first washed the plates, all that was left was to sweep.



She was in the middle of sweeping the kitchen when a lizard fell right on her head.



The little girl fell to the floor dead, holding the broom.



A bird in the tree saw this and began to sing:



Donna grabbed the broom in order to sweep the house; a lizard fell on her head and Donna fell to the ground and died.



Mom heard the song, took her belongings and ran back to the village to find out what happened.



When she arrived home, she saw Donna lying on the floor.



She screamed with sorrow as they buried the child. Lesson: If you want to go to the field, do not leave the child at home alone.

ABOUT THE LITTLE GIRL MARY



In a small village there lived a little girl Mary, whose father bought her a pair of mighty panties.



Ever since she was small, he would tell her that when she and her girlfriends go swimming she must not lose the panties for otherwise she will lose her opportunity.



Indeed, once she went with her girlfriends they all washed their panties -



and hung them in the sun to dry.



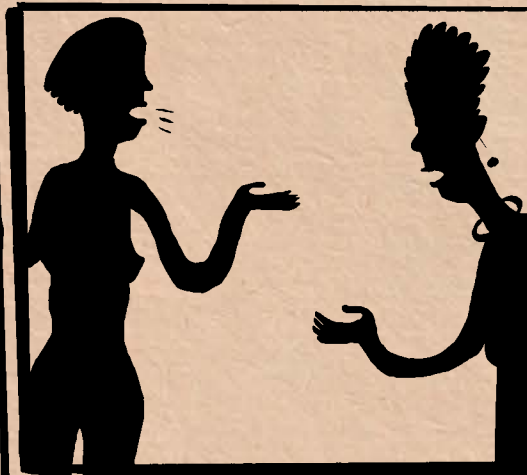
And while they were bathing a small boy sneaked up to the pond.



He sighted Mary's beautiful panties and took them.



When the girls finished bathing and went to fetch their panties,



Mary just could not find hers. The girlfriends announce that it is time to go home, however Mary cannot go.



She starts crying and repeats what her father told her, that if she loses her panties she would also lose her big opportunity.

But her girlfriends had to leave otherwise their mothers would scold them.



Mary remained alone, cried and called out: If a boy was here who stole them, then he already saw my body. May he come here, returns them to me, and I will take him for my husband. You do not have to be afraid of me.



So the boy stepped out of his hiding place and returned her panties.



Mary decided: Let us go to my father, I'll explain everything to him and will go together to your place.



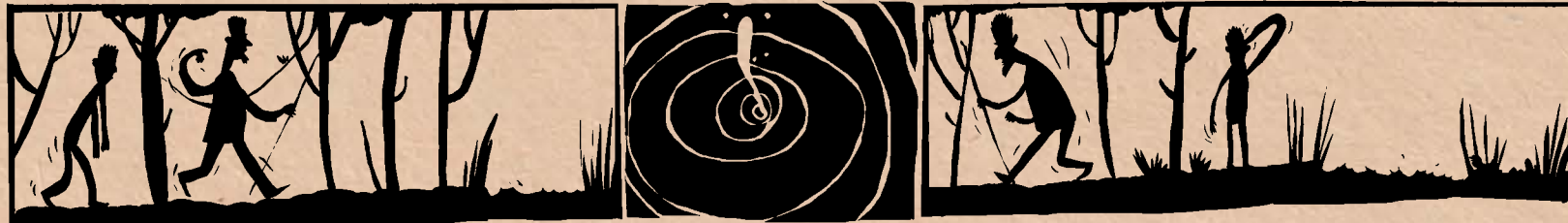
When they arrived at the place, father told them:



If that is the way it is, I will give you a task.



If you fail to fulfill it then you cannot marry my daughter.



And he took the boy to the pond

threw a ring in it

and directed him to fish it out.



The boy had no idea how to do it but Mary placed two kernels of corn on the kitchen table and secretly followed the boy.

She told him to cut her head off and throw it in the water.

That way he will be able to bring the ring back to her father.



When the father returned home, he called Mary and the corn kernels answered him: yes uncle? At which point the boy brings the ring.



And so the father told him: if you managed this, I will give you another task.



Go, plant corn kernels so that they grow and provide harvest today. You pick them, collect the kernels and bring them to me by this evening. And he returned back to work.



The boy remained seated in front of the house totally hopeless.



Mary told him to follow her.

Again, she placed kernels of corn on the table and followed her man.

When father returned home in the evening, he called Mary and the kernels of corn answered: yes, uncle? And prepared corn for him to eat and water to wash.



In the meantime, Mary planted corn and kept repeating: what comes from the tribe of my father grows quickly, what comes from the tribe of my father ripens quickly, what comes from the tribe of my father gives harvest quickly. When she finished the work, she quickly returned home.



Shortly thereafter, her man returned with corn kernels.



When father saw this, he announced: no, this was not you who did all of this.



It was Mary!



She wondered: not at all, it was not me.



Father ordered her to follow him, that he needs to check her neck.

But the blood she had on her neck at that very moment poured over into her ear.

When father looked into her ear, the blood poured over to her neck.



When he looked again at the neck, the blood poured into the ears.

Father yelled: it was you who fished out the ring and who planted and harvested the corn. Return home right away, tomorrow I will come kill the two of you.



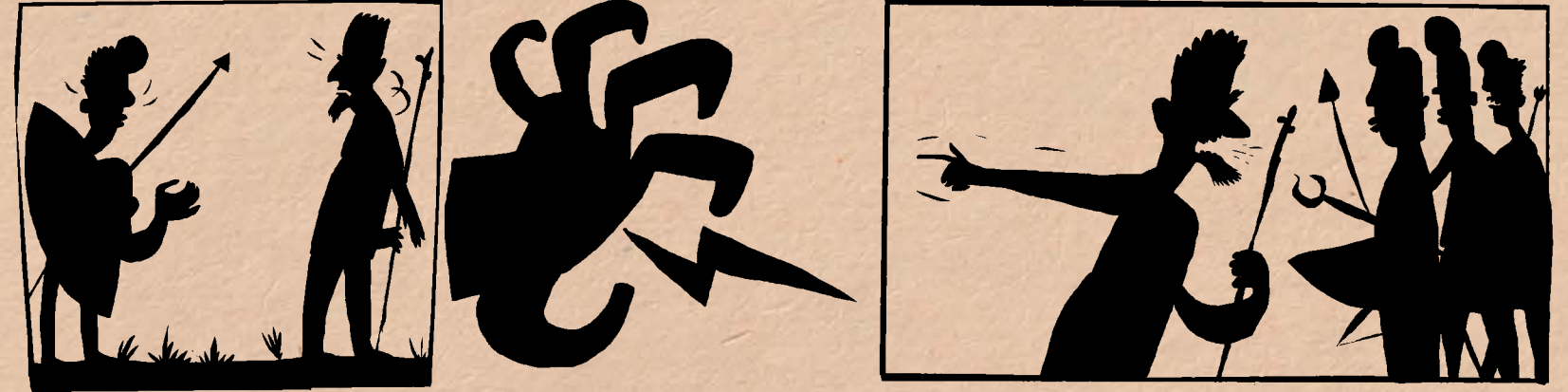
And he called the soldiers to guard their house overnight.



However, Mary uses her power and lets all the soldiers fall asleep and runs away with her man.

When father discovers this, he sends a soldier after them.

Mary however transforms herself with her man into small children who are playing in the sand. The soldier asks them: Did you not see a girl and a boy here? No, we did not, they answer.



So the soldier returned.

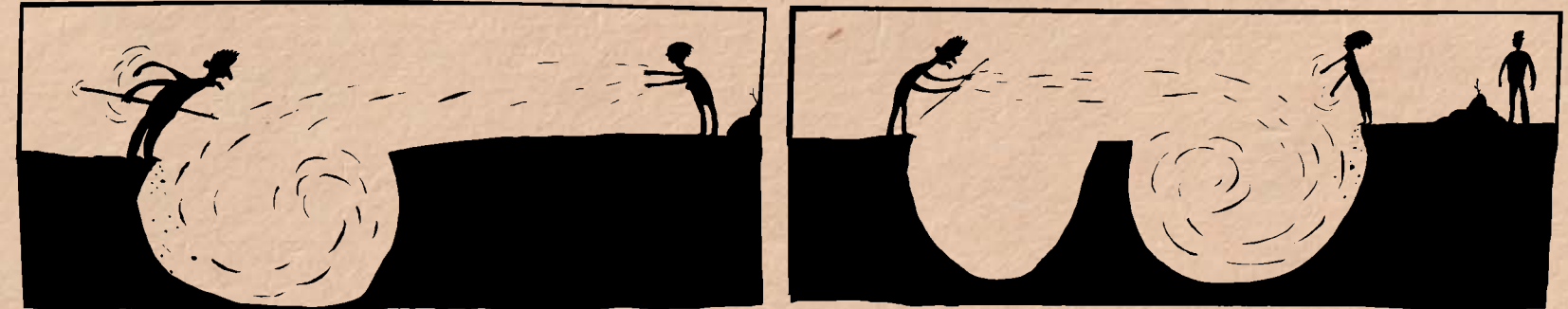
The father killed him right away -

and sent all the other soldiers after them.



They too returned and told the father the same. Father killed them all -

and went after Mary and her man alone.



When Mary sees her father, she makes a large pit in front of him.

But the father makes a large pit in front of her.



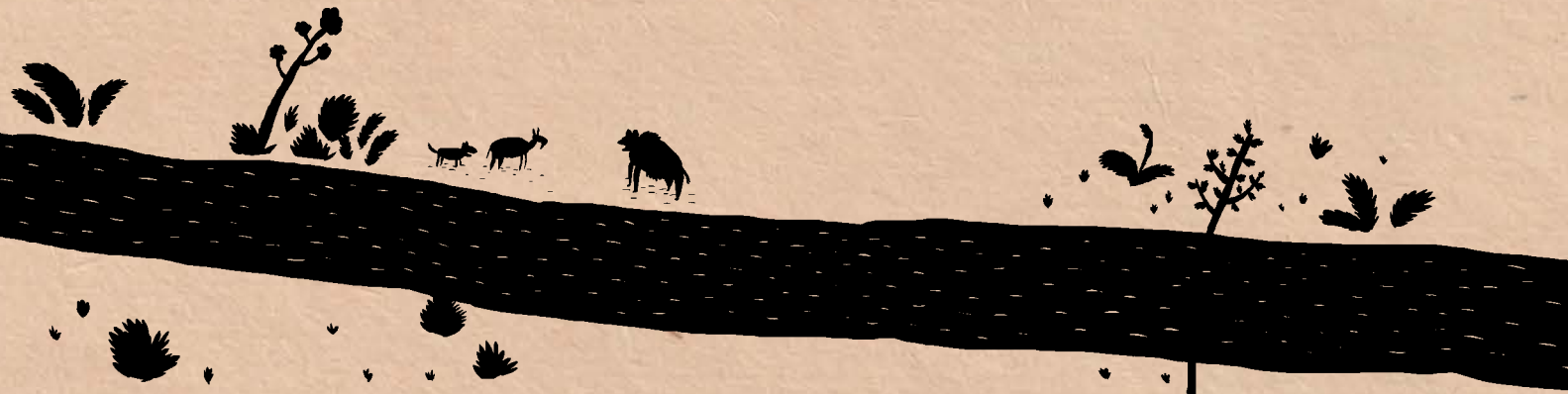
Mary jumps across the pit and throws horrible water in front of him. Suddenly he does not know what to do.

He looks at Mary as her man joins her and they walk off together. That is why they say that if you hand over your power to your child, your child will surpass you.

THE HYENA, THE GOAT AND THE DOG



One day, a goat and a dog took a walk by the river when suddenly they met Mrs. Hyena, their boss.



The moment they saw her, fear overcame them and when the hyena approached, she right away expressed interest in what they are doing there: Us? No, we are doing absolutely nothing here, just sort of taking a walk around the village. The dog is very clever and he immediately understood that the hyena wants to devour them. Now what?



In order to deceive the hyena, he said he needed to go pee.



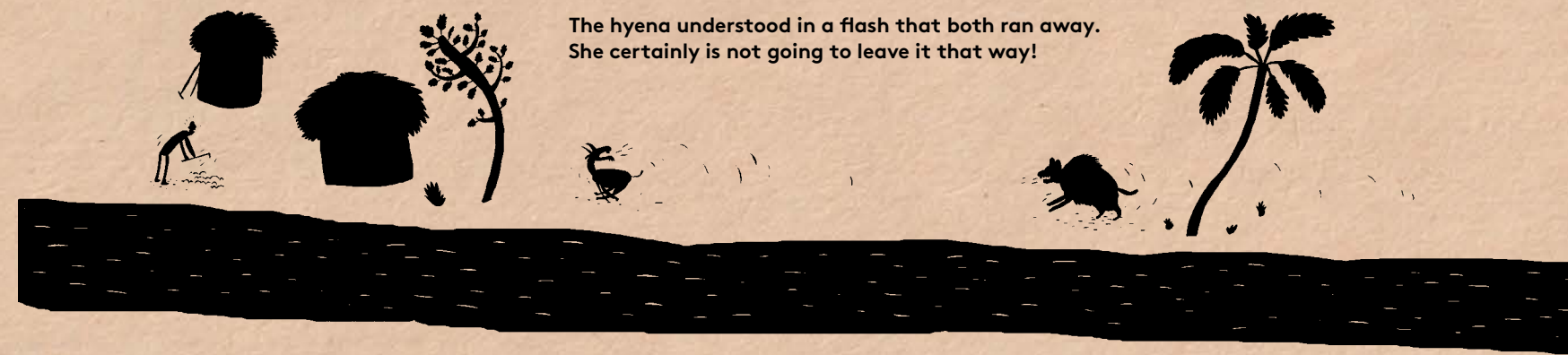
He crawled into the shrubs by the road and then ran away. The dog clearly saved himself; but what about the goat?



The goat and the hyena waited together for the dog to return, he was nowhere to be seen. The goat says to the hyena: I had better go check up on him, how is it possible that he has not returned in several hours. Something must have happened to him. After all, he is my best friend.



The goat also ran away and took off for the nearest village.



The hyena understood in a flash that both ran away. She certainly is not going to leave it that way!

Suddenly the goat heard some noise behind her. When she turned around, damn it, the hyena is catching up with her. Ad so the goat began to scream: help! Help! Help!



A few seconds later, the villagers showed up with sticks in their hands and went after the hyena who barely escaped. And so the villagers saved the goat and the two friends met again.

POETIC, SOMEWHAT ABSURD AND IN SOME PLACES DARK.

Such are the short folktales of this book. Most of them come out of traditional African folklore though, in the rendition of children storytellers, with a rather distinctive flavor. The texts arrived into the hands of the Czech artist David Böhm, in the suitcase of his sister Terezie as a stack of student essays from a small Central African school. The imagination of the Black Continent unmercifully breaks down our European preconception of what a folktale is supposed to look like. Somewhat shocking to children, it is a singularly refreshing comic strip for adults.

