

THE BOY AND HIS MAGICAL COW

An Indian tale

A four-page play

Adapted by Carole L. Cooney

Setting: The Jungle

Characters:

Narrator

Aabheer a young Indian boy (his name means a cow herder)

Gopika, his stepmother (her name means a cow herd woman)

Mura, the cow (the name means cow)

Princess Sabeena (her name means beautiful)

King Rakshan (his name means protector)

Raman, a parrot (its name means cupid)

Narrator: One day, while Aabheer was in the small clearing, he heard some strange noises.

Mura: Mmmmmooo! I just don't understand! Mmmmmooo! I just *don't* understand!

Aabheer: Is that you, Mura, making those strange sounds?

Mura: Moooo! Yes!

Aabheer: What is this? Are you talking to me?

Mura: Well, what does it sound like? Moooo... Did you understand me?

Aabheer: Yes, Mura. Did you say you didn't understand something?

Mura: Yes! I don't understand why you are becoming so skinny! Tell me, Aabheer.

Aabheer: Well, it's because my stepmother does not give me enough food, so I'm always hungry.

Mura: Oh! Well, if you promise not to tell anyone, I can give you food. Follow my instructions. Go to the jungle and collect 2 large leaves for a plate and a cup.

Narrator: Aabheer ran quickly into the jungle, picked two large leaves and ran back to Mura. Then a strange thing happened.

Mura: Quick! Moo! Place one leaf under my horn while I shake it. Moo!

Narrator: Aabheer's eyes grew huge as he saw boiled rice streaming out of the cow's

horn.

Mura: Moo! Now fold the other leaf into a cup and place it under my other horn.

Aabheer: Mura! Look! A tasty relish is dropping into my cup. How delicious! Thank you, Mura!

Mura: Moo! Remember this is our little secret. Come every day to get food and in no time you will be big and strong. Moo!

Narrator: Gopika, the mean stepmother, overheard Aabheer and Mura talking. She became very jealous and decided to pretend to be ill. She called her servants.

Gopika: (very sickly voice) I am *so sick* I can hardly move. The only way I can get well is by having Aabheer's cow killed. Go at once and see that it is done!

Narrator: Aabheer heard that Mura was to be killed. He didn't know what to do until Mura told him another secret plan.

Mura: Moo! Aabheer, make a rope with rice straw so that some parts are thick and some parts are very thin. Place it on the ground where it can be easily found. When I am in danger, pull my tail very hard. Moo!

Narrator: The next day, the servants found the rope and tied Mura to a stake. As one servant began to raise an ax, Aabheer pulled Mura's tail fiercely and she staggered this way and that way until the rope broke. A huge wind blew and swept up Mura and Aabheer, carrying them deep into the jungle.

Aabheer: Mura, you are working more magic. Look at all of the new cows pasturing in the open field. Let us take them to the large lake so that they can drink and I can swim.

Narrator: While the cows were resting, Aabheer enjoyed spashing in the warm water. Then he dried off in the warm sun and combed his long hair.

Mura: You have very fine long hair. That comes from all the fine food I fed you! Moo! I can see one strand floating across the lake. I wonder where it will go.

Narrator: On the other side of the lake, lovely Princess Sabeena and her friends were swimming. Suddenly, the strand of Aabheer's hair moved across the water and clung to Princess Sabeena's shoulder.

Sabeena: Oh! What is this on my shoulder? Why it is a lovely strand of hair. I think it is marvelous! I have dreamed of marrying a young man with such fine hair.

Narrator: And so, when Princess Sabeena returned to the palace, she immediately spoke with her father, King Rakshan.

Sabeena: Oh, Father! I have found a treasure. Look! It is a strand of hair that measures 12 cubits. It is the hair of the man I must marry. Oh, Father Rakshan, please find him for me.

Narrator: Months passed, until one day King Rakshan called his daughter to his side.

Rakshan: Dear Princess, I have done as you asked. My men have searched everywhere in the kingdom looking for the man whose hair measured 12 cubits, but he could not be found.

Sabeena: (crying) Oh, Father, it can't be true. It can't be true!

Rakshan: I have an idea. Raman, Raman, fly here to my side!

Raman: Squawk! Squawk! Yes, King Rakshan, what would you have me do?

Rakshan: Can you find the man whose hair is 12 cubits long?

Raman: Squawk! Squawk! Of course I can find him!

Narrator: And off Raman flew. He searched all day and just before night fall, he found the young man playing his flute while guiding his cows into their pen. Then the young man sat down, hung his flute on a bush and began to brush his hair.

Raman: I'll just swipe that flute and make that young man follow me. Squawk! Squawk!

Aahbeer: What is that strange sound? Oh, a parrot! Stop! Stop! Let go of my flute!

Narrator: Raman had so much fun teasing Aahbeer through the jungle until at last they came to the palace. King Rakshan was standing at the gate.

Raman: Squawk! Squawk! Young man, here is the great King Rakshan!

Narrator: Aahbeer bowed low. King Rakshan lifted him up and embraced him. He ordered the finest foods and begged Aahbeer to stay the night. And so he did. The next morning, Aahbeer left to tend his cows. As he walked near the pen, he heard an angry voice shouting.

Mura: (angry) MOOO! MOOO! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WE ARE STARVING! WE ARE THIRSTY!

Aahbeer: I have wonderful news, Mura! I have met a King and his lovely Princess and ...

Narrator: Before Aahbeer could finish his sentence, the cows crashed through the fence, knocked him down and trampled upon his hair until he was bald!

Aahbeer: Stop, Mura! Stop this nonsense. Let us go to the palace and meet the King and his lovely daughter, Princess Sabeena. There will be plenty to eat and drink!

Narrator: And so, he led his cows through the jungle. As bald-headed Aahbeer appeared at the palace gate, the lovely Princess Sabeena, who was looking for him out the window, suddenly screamed!

Sabeena: (screaming) Oh! Father, Father! Look! Aahbeer has no hair. I can never marry him. No! NEVER!

Rakshan: My daughter, I will never force you to marry anyone. Let me speak with Aahbeer to see what happened to him.

Narrator: The King led Aahbeer into the palace to question him. Aahbeer answered truthfully. After listening to Aahbeer's answers, the King decided instead of a son-in-law, Aahbeer would become one of his hired servants and tend his cows. This made Aahbeer very happy.