

The Hurricane

A PLAY BY
PETER HOWARD
AND ALAN THORNHILL

THE HURRICANE

By

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and

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LONDON

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THE HURRICANE was first produced in 1960 at the World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament at Caux, in Switzerland. The role of Mary, the African cook, was played by Miss Muriel Smith, the distinguished Broadway and Covent Garden singer, who stars in the new MRA film *The Crowning Experience*. The play is one of the latest weapons used by Moral Re-Armament in its day to day, world-wide battle to bring an answering ideology into the lives of men and nations.

Dr. Frank Buchman concluded his address at the opening of the Assembly at Caux with these words: 'It needs a hurricane of common sense to bring men to their senses, restoring the Communist and the non-Communist world to sanity and unity before it is too late. That hurricane is sweeping through every nation today, and in the midst of the hurricane the still small Voice of the living God, an unseen but ever-present Guide, willing and able to speak to the men of the Kremlin, the men of Washington, to the millions everywhere, leaders and led, who have lost their way and seek to find it.'

CHARACTERS

MARY	<i>a cook</i>
HUMPHREY LORD	<i>a pioneer settler</i>
JANET LORD	<i>his wife</i>
RICHARD LORD	<i>their son</i>
NIGEL CHARTER	<i>a colonial district officer</i>
DOLLY CHARTER	<i>his wife</i>
MARK PEARCE	<i>a British Member of Parliament</i>

Time: The present

Place: Somewhere in Africa

The first act takes place one evening at sunset at the home of the Lord family

The second act takes place early next morning

ACT ONE

The action of the play takes place on the verandah and in the garden of a gracious home, somewhere in the heart of the African Highlands. It is owned and kept by the Lord family, one of the pioneer settlers of Central Africa.

Theirs is a stately house, built by the strong hands of Humphrey Lord himself. The African forest and bush comes right to the edge of their property. Beyond, we can see a view of rolling hills and forest.

As the curtain opens, the Lords' beloved African cook, Mary, is laying the coffee out on the garden table. It is evening and the forest is alive with sound. Mary is singing to herself an old African melody—a song she has known since childhood.

Once the last cup is in place, Mary goes to the edge of the verandah. She stands looking out over the distances. She seems to be listening for something. We hear in the very far distance the throbbing of a single drum.

Suddenly there is the sound of gay laughter from inside the house and two ladies, in summer evening dresses, enter. Janet Lord is the hostess—tall, stately and charming—one of the great ladies of the settler families. Dolly Charter is the talkative 'très gaie' wife of a Colonial servant, Nigel Charter.

DOLLY

It was a lovely dinner. But that story was too fantastic Humphrey told. Can there be such a character?

THE HURRICANE

M'Bali. Why would they give him such a name?
M'Bali! M'Bali!

JANET

I'm sure it can't be his real name, of course.

DOLLY

I find it rather exciting. M'Bali! Hiding somewhere out in that forest (*Gazing out over the distances*)—always impossible to find. Thousands who follow him—hundreds of thousands who live in terror of him. A fascinating story Humphrey told us! He quite frightened me.

JANET

(*Rearranging the coffee which Mary has set*) I know. It is frightening. Thank goodness, it's cooler out here with this funny shivery little wind.

DOLLY

Nigel says it means we're in for a storm.

JANET

I'm afraid so. It's been building up all day. I hate these storms.

DOLLY

I love them. They're exciting—the forest is exciting.

JANET

(*To Mary*) You might take the gentlemen's coffee in

ACT ONE

to them, Mary, if they're not coming out here.
(*Mary goes in the door to the house*)

DOLLY

Of course, Humphrey can't be serious about all he says.

JANET

I never can tell.

DOLLY

I do hope they come out soon. You know, Janet, I'll bet there's hardly a home left in England where these funny old conventions still hang on—black ties and evening dress—'shall we join the ladies?'—and all that. The only effect Africa seems to have on the British is to make them twice as British.

JANET

And the only effect we seem to have on the Africans is to make them twice as African.

DOLLY

Exactly. White is white and black is black and ne'er the twain shall meet, as Kipling might have said.

JANET

I doubt if Kipling would ever have said anything so stupid. I have many African friends. You take Mary there—a dear, lovable soul. I trust her completely. She goes into town to run our errands and do all the

THE HURRICANE

marketing. She brings me the gossip. Africans are so open, I find, like children.

DOLLY

(*Cutting in*) By the way, darling . . . what did you think of him?

JANET

Your M.P.? Rather a direct chap. Very interesting to talk with. Quite young, isn't he?

DOLLY

Yes. The jolly old House of Commons must be looking up at last. Can't you just see him leaping to his feet and catching the Speaker's eye?

JANET

You certainly were trying to catch his eye, I noticed—without much success.

DOLLY

He's not even married, either.

JANET

But don't forget, Dolly dear, you are.

We hear the sound of the men approaching. Humphrey Lord enters with Nigel Charter.

HUMPHREY

Hullo, my dear, we thought we'd join the ladies.

ACT ONE

DOLLY

What an inspired and original thought, Humphrey!

Enter Richard Lord with a glass, talking with Mark Pearce, Member of the British House of Commons.

JANET

Mr. Pearce, come and sit over here. After listening to my husband and my son and to Nigel Charter over a glass or two of port, you must know all there is to know about Africa.

RICHARD

(Aggressive) He doesn't know a damn thing about Africa! How could he after twelve days? *(Turning to Mark Pearce)* Of course, I know that won't stop you from making a stirring speech in the House of Commons!

JANET

Richard, dear!

RICHARD

Mind you, compared with most of them, you're a positive encyclopædia.

MARK

At least I read your articles in the *Sunday Outlook* every week.

HUMPHREY

I'm sorry to hear that, Mr. Pearce. Those articles ought to be burned publicly.

THE HURRICANE

RICHARD

It just so happens that in England today . . .

JANET

(*Cutting in*) Richard! You've touched on a rather sore point, I'm afraid, Mr. Pearce. You see, my husband and my son don't seem to see eye to eye on Africa.

RICHARD

Do we on anything?

HUMPHREY

I can't think of a thing.

MARK

Well, at least you agree on that point.

NIGEL

Agree to disagree. That's how we've built up our democracy. I'm sure Mr. Pearce, as a good Member of Parliament, knows the value of a loyal opposition.

HUMPHREY

Loyal? What's loyal about writing articles damning your own country, your own friends—even your own family by name?

RICHARD

There is such a thing as loyalty to Africa.

NIGEL

Quite. But one might ask the question—which Africa?

ACT ONE

(*Gets to his feet*) After all, each of us in some degree represents Africa. I suppose, with the exception of you, Humphrey, I have been here longer than the rest of you. I remember this spot, when it was a tangled overgrown hillside, as wild as the forest there. I've seen your father, year after year, building a home—felling trees, clearing the bush, raising timbers to the sky, and creating a farmland out there. The best of Africa. And the Africans who worked for him he fed and clothed. He taught them how to read. He taught them how to write. And now those men are running his farm.

RICHARD

Why the hell don't you let them run Africa?

NIGEL

In a few years, I would like to think they could. I myself have served for the past twenty-five years in the Colonial Service. We have given a life-time to making Africa what she is. I don't regret one hour of it.

DOLLY

You certainly have done well, my dear—and in another few years you'll deserve a nice fat pension. They should jolly well make you a knight. 'Lady Dolly.' Sounds rather marvellous, doesn't it?

NIGEL

Your son, Humphrey, serves Africa in his own way by

THE HURRICANE

expressing his somewhat radical views in the Press. Even Pearce here represents Africa, in a sense, in Parliament.

Mary has entered unnoticed.

RICHARD

Marvellous! Only you haven't mentioned a single African yet.

JANET

After all, Richard darling, there are no real Africans here—except Mary.

HUMPHREY

I doubt if Mary knows there is such a thing as Africa. Africa to her is the market-place and the long road home through the forest. It's church on Sunday where she meets her friends. Africa is just what she sees around her—a child's Africa.

RICHARD

(Hotly) Of course, we might ask her what she thinks Africa is.

JANET

Yes, Mary.

MARY

(Quietly) Africa is my home.

There is a pause.

HUMPHREY

Africa is my home. . . . There you are. Something that

ACT ONE

you young theorists who write drivel about native rights and racial equality will never understand.

RICHARD

Father! Mary knows more of Africa than you or anyone else here tonight. Why . . .

In the distance we hear the rumbling of thunder.

NIGEL

You know, Janet, I don't want to break up a very happy evening—but that wind is rising a lot faster than usual. If we want to get home tonight, we'll have to get moving.

DOLLY

Oh don't let's hurry. I'm not even drunk yet.

HUMPHREY

Nigel's right, though. The rumour is that M'Bali's in the area again. I know my way round better than most, but believe me I wouldn't be out too late.

DOLLY

How silly of you, Humphrey. I'm not afraid. We've got a gun in the car and a real live Member of Parliament to protect us. Besides, I'd rather like meeting this M'Bali. I love running into strange men in the dark.

RICHARD

I wish you'd stay. I know! Mary could sing for us.

THE HURRICANE

She has a lovely voice. She can sing stories of Africa
that would make your hair curl.

DOLLY

Do let's stay!

RICHARD

Mr. Pearce, you'd get a real education, by God.

JANET

(*To Nigel*) Do stay—for a little while anyway. Mary
would love to sing.

NIGEL

All right.

RICHARD

I know. Sing the song, Mary, about cleaning up after
the guests. Do you remember?

MARY

No. I won't. I won't sing that.

JANET

Mary!

RICHARD

Why not?

MARY

(*Checking herself*) That's not for grown-ups. That's for
children, Mr. Richard.

ACT ONE

HUMPHREY

If it was fit for the children, Mary, I don't imagine it would shock us.

MARY

Oh, but Mr. Lord. It's no song for visitors.

DOLLY

Come on, Mary. We're not visitors. Besides it would be wonderful if you could shock Mr. Pearce. I've been trying to shock him all evening.

MARY

(*Slowly*) Very well. I will.

Mary goes to the edge of the verandah. She starts to sing.

It's been quite a party—it's been quite a party,
And it's getting pretty late.
There's been lots of people—lots and lots of people,
And I can hardly wait:
When the guests have vanished,
Then we have our day.
Oh, whisper lightly—yes, very very lightly!
Sometimes I can't *wait* for them to go away.

Oh! Cleanin' up after the guests—
That's what I like to do.
Cleanin' up after the guests
Gives a wonderful feelin' inside of you.

THE HURRICANE

RICHARD

(Sings)

Ash-trays and beer-bottles and smoke,

MARY

Stains on the carpet, the table-cloth soaked,
Some people leave such a mess—oh, but they do—

But cleanin' up after the guests
Gives a mighty good feelin' inside of you.

It's been quite a party—it's been quite a party,
And it's getting pretty late.

There's been a lot of people—lots an' lots of people,
And I'm *tired* of all those people—

I can hardly wait . . .

I can hardly wait . . .

After the song there is a short silence. Everyone is disturbed and embarrassed.

DOLLY

(Clapping half-heartedly) Wonderful, Mary!

RICHARD

That was wonderful. You must sing more often, Mary.
You make me feel like a human being again.

NIGEL

(Without meaning it) Bravo, Mary!

JANET

Thank you, Mary. Of course I do see it's a little embarrassing actually in front of the guests. Mary meant nothing personal.

ACT ONE

DOLLY

Of course she didn't. I think it was adorable.

HUMPHREY

All the same, Mary. I don't think you ought to sing that kind of song. It's not respectful. Even to children. It would put ideas into their heads.

RICHARD

How deplorable!

HUMPHREY

Richard, that's enough. Mary, we'll say no more. But don't sing that song again, or any others if they're like that.

MARY

Yes, Mr. Lord (*She turns and goes*)

RICHARD

Father, you make me absolutely sick. Of all the damned hypocritical nonsense. It was a marvellous song. (*Turning to the others*) I want you all to know that I'm going to publish that song in my next article and then add my father's comments verbatim.

The wind rises. There is a distant rumble of thunder.

NIGEL

I'm afraid we really must be on our way. Otherwise it will really be a job getting home.

THE HURRICANE

DOLLY

Oh all right, darling, but if we get stuck in the mud again, I am not going to get out and push. Mr. Pearce can do it for me.

JANET

Look, Nigel, we really can't send you home to get caught in this.

HUMPHREY

No, of course not. When the rain comes, those roads are impossible.

NIGEL

I think we'll just get through all right.

JANET

We wouldn't think of sending you out this late.

HUMPHREY

Besides, there's no sense in taking any chances. Janet, darling, we'll have to make up some beds for them.

JANET

That will be easy. There's loads of room.

DOLLY

Do let's stay!

JANET

I'll go and get some bedding. (*She goes*)

ACT ONE

HUMPHREY

Mr. Pearce, you'll be able to enjoy an African storm from here. You wouldn't appreciate it so much out in the bush.

RICHARD

I love a storm. Listen to it. And listen to those drums, Pearce. That's Africa.

They fall silent and in the distance we hear the beating of drums. It is getting dark and the wind is still rising.

DOLLY

Humphrey, that must be your famous M'Bali.

HUMPHREY

It's like the heart of the forest.

DOLLY

Does the forest have a heart?

HUMPHREY

As wicked as yours, Dolly dear. And twice as dark.

DOLLY

That can't be so bad. Let's forget it, Humphrey. Besides there are much more important things to think about. (*She moves over to Pearce.*)

THE HURRICANE

JANET

(From the house) Come on, Dolly. There's a lovely room just off the first landing with a marvellous view.

DOLLY

That sounds adorable. *(She goes, and Nigel follows her)*
Humphrey, Richard and Mark Pearce are alone on the verandah.

MARK

(Rises) You know, I hear about this fellow M'Bali wherever I go around here. Have you actually ever seen him?

HUMPHREY

Not actually. No white man has. We've got men out searching for him all the time. I've been out myself. But we never know where he is. The trouble is he always seems to know where we are. It's uncanny.

RICHARD

The Africans all believe in him—and they'd lay down their lives for him, most of them.

HUMPHREY

You can't account for what happens at certain times in certain places without him. Knifings—burnings. If he didn't exist, we'd have to invent him.

RICHARD

It all sounds very frightening the way my father puts

ACT ONE

it, Mr. Pearce. It's simply because he hasn't the slightest idea of what it's all about.

JANET

(From upstairs) Let me show you your room, Mr. Pearce.

MARK

Excuse me.

JANET

It's up here at the head of the stairs.

MARK

Thank you! *(He turns and goes. Father and son are left on the stage)*

HUMPHREY

Richard, I wish you'd control your tongue in front of our guests.

RICHARD

I can't think of a thing I said tonight, Father, that I would not gladly say in front of the world. But I would be ashamed the rest of my days to have spoken as you spoke tonight in front of Mary. It was almost as though she wasn't there. Do you care what she feels at all?

HUMPHREY

Mary is a servant.

THE HURRICANE

RICHARD

Mary is a servant! Whose country are you in? Mary is a mother of Africa. This is her home.

HUMPHREY

I understand Mary—and one hell of a lot better than you do.

RICHARD

She happens to have brought me up, Father. She was many times the only friend I had. She taught me what Africa was . . . and the longings in the hearts of her people. But you treat her like dirt.

HUMPHREY

If you don't like the way I run things, Richard, you can leave this house!

RICHARD

All right, by God, I'll go! I'll go tonight!

He turns and races through the door. Humphrey Lord stands shaking with anger. In the distance there is another rumble of thunder—and when it dies away, we can hear drums beating. Humphrey Lord looks out across the valleys. Suddenly he turns and rushes towards the door.

HUMPHREY

Not tonight!

He brushes past Mark Pearce who has reappeared in the doorway. He goes inside and we can hear him shouting.

ACT ONE

Richard! Come down here! Richard, don't be a damn fool.

There is another rumble of thunder. Mark Pearce strolls down to the edge of the verandah. Presently Mary comes with a tray. She lays it down on the edge of a table and begins to clear. She has not noticed Mark.

MARK

(*After a pause*) Of course—you know what those drums out there mean, don't you?

MARY

(*Startled*) Mr. Pearce!

MARK

You know what it will mean if Richard tried to make his way through that forest tonight.

MARY

Tonight?

Mark gets up and comes more into the light.

MARK

You know, Mary, sitting at supper tonight I had a very uncomfortable thought.

MARY

(*Turning back to her work*) Did you?

THE HURRICANE

MARK

Yes—it kept coming to me again and again.

MARY

What was it?

MARK

As a matter of fact, it was about you.

MARY

About me?

MARK

Yes. You are more than you appear to be. How can they all be so blind as just to think of you as a cook.

MARY

(Turning to go) It's getting late, Mr. Pearce. *(She walks to the house.)*

MARK

Mary, you are M'Bali, aren't you?

MARY

(She stops and turns) What makes you think so?

MARK

You've made it so obvious.

MARY

What do you mean?

ACT ONE

MARK

When everyone was talking about M'Bali at supper each one showed fear in their faces—even terror. All except you. I wondered why.

MARY

You don't know Africa very well, Mr. Pearce.

MARK

No. But I recognize a person whose life has been mastered by an idea. Mine has. So has yours.

MARY

And that means I'm M'Bali?

MARK

No. Then it was your song—a children's song—with a knife in it.

MARY

(With a sudden threat) You be careful what you're saying. When you know Africa better you'll learn that it's dangerous to think certain things. It can be death to say them.

MARK

And then just now when I mentioned Richard Lord you were frightened. You must know that something is happening out there tonight. Yet you also care for Richard. Isn't that so?

THE HURRICANE

MARY

He can't go out in that storm.

MARK

And there will be a storm tonight—won't there?

There is a silence. We hear the wind and the beating of the drums.

MARY

Yes, there'll be a storm—all over Africa.

She unties her apron, takes it off and hurls it in a bundle on to the floor. She stands there, a magnificent figure.

My people are going to be free. I don't know how you found out what you did—but you are not going to stop a thing, Mr. Pearce. Nor are any of your friends in there. I don't know who you have told—

MARK

I've told no one.

MARY

I see. Then they still think I'm Mary—the dear old lovable cook. Mary whom each one boasts he understands better than the other, whom everybody treats as a child, whom everybody is kind and gentle to. . . . But I am M'Bali. If they only knew! The very sight of a white man makes me burn with such hatred that I could take any knife on the kitchen table and . . . How many hundreds of times I've been tempted—I've longed to do it—not

ACT ONE

because they are Humphrey Lord or Janet Lord—but because they are white. (*She turns full on Mark*) There will be a storm tonight, Mr. Pearce. You're going to wish you'd never come to Africa. And I wish you never had too. Your people have robbed our people of their land—our diamonds, our gold, our forests. You've killed our children. You've grown up as princes—we've grown up as beggars, living among flies, feeding on scraps in our teeming market places. Don't you think our mothers go through as much pain bearing children as your white mothers, Mr. Pearce? Don't you? Do you think they long for their children's future? Do you ever think of that? You come to hunt our game. You come to take pictures of our nakedness. You go to parties and you drink. I know what you do with our African women at night—and our African men. Do you know how many times I have had to clean up after the white man while he lies drunk on the floor with the wealth of our country? It's been going on for centuries. . . . Now they can go home. They can leave Africa. When tomorrow comes the Africa of the white man will not exist any longer. Yes, there will be a storm, Mr. Pearce. A hurricane.

MARK

Mary! We need a hurricane—in Africa and everywhere in the world. I've understood every word. It's all

THE HURRICANE

true. But your hurricane will never cure Africa of what's wrong. It's too small.

MARY

You are lucky you are here tonight and not in that bush.

MARK

What about Richard?

MARY

Have you shown us mercy? Have you? Why should we?

MARK

You didn't answer my question, Mary.

MARY

This night will answer it for you.

We hear the sound of the ladies coming down again.

DOLLY

(Coming out first—she is slightly drunk) Oh, there you are, Mr. Pearce. What *have* you been doing? Listening to the storm, I'll bet. How romantic—all by yourself. Or I know. You've been looking for M'Bali. What a daring young man you are!

JANET

(Who has followed closely) You know, Mr. Pearce, we're all thinking of turning in early. When this

ACT ONE

storm really breaks, believe me, there'll be little chance for sleep. May as well get what rest we can. (*She sees Mary*) Why haven't you cleared the coffee? What's the matter, Mary? Where's your apron?

Nigel enters.

NIGEL

Here you are. Getting one last breath of air, eh? I'm afraid Richard and your husband are upstairs having one flaming fight. I couldn't help hearing them as I went past.

DOLLY

It's really quite exciting. They're pounding the table and shouting. I wish we could go in and see them. I haven't seen a good fight in ages.

NIGEL

Dolly. Don't please talk like that.

DOLLY

Janet, be a darling and get your cook to bring me some port. I'm thirsty as a drain. (*She and Nigel go back into the house*)

JANET

You'll have to excuse my husband and my son. I'm afraid they don't understand each other at all. Come along, Mr. Pearce.

THE HURRICANE

They all enter the house except Mary. The door closes. She is on an empty stage. She takes a lantern lying on the verandah and hangs it up on a hook where it is in full view from the forest.

Mary looks across the hills. She begins to sing.

MARY

Listen! Listen!

First of all it's just a whisper—
A suffocating, choking feeling,
That you're caught—
That you've got to be free.

Then it's like hot rain-drops—the pitiless drop, drop,
drop,
Of a thousands slights, of insults—
Of the hurts they mean to give you
And the deeper, greater hurts
They never even know.

The wind rises.

Then comes the hurricane!
The hurricane of freedom—the hurricane of hate.
Then comes the thunder saying, 'White man,
Leave us! Leave us! You have stayed too late!'

'And if you will not leave us of your own free will,
There is nothing left before us but to kill! Kill! Kill!'

ACT ONE

Now comes the hurricane!
The hurricane of freedom—the hurricane of hate.
Fly before it, white man! Fly before it, white man!
Leave us! You have stayed too late.

Listen! Listen! Or it will be . . . too late!

The wind has risen to a colossal pitch. The drums are beating on all sides.

Upstairs angry voices are heard. A door is slammed. We hear Richard yelling as he comes down the stairs.

RICHARD

That's enough, Father. I'm leaving!

HUMPHREY

Richard, be reasonable! Come back here.

RICHARD

I'm leaving now. I don't care a damn about the storm!

He rushes out of the door, across the verandah and down into the garden. Mary sees him.

MARY

No, Mr. Richard. Don't go tonight! No!

But he is gone. She follows in haste.

The wind rises again to a deafening pitch. And on the wind we can hear the drums answering from every part of Africa. There is fury in the night.

THE HURRICANE

We see Mark Pearce come down the stairs to the verandah. He looks around. He sees the lantern hanging. He picks up Mary's apron, looks again at the lantern, then takes it down off its hook and puts it out.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

It is early morning, just beginning to be light. Mark Pearce is on the verandah facing the view. He is writing in a notebook.

There is a sound of footsteps. Mary appears from the direction of the forest. She is still regal, still very much in control, but exhausted. Suddenly she sees Mark.

MARY

What are you doing here?

MARK

(Looking up) I'm listening.

MARY

And do you normally listen at five o'clock in the morning, Mr. Pearce?

MARK

Always.

MARY

(Listening) I hear nothing but the noise of the forest and the drums.

MARK

I hear the voice of the living God. He talks to me every morning of my life.

MARY

The voice of the living God! A white man's God. A

THE HURRICANE

God who used the Bible to beat my people into submission. A God who taught us to fold our hands in prayer while you picked our pockets. I hate your God as I hate your people. I don't believe in Him.

MARK

I do.

MARY

Then listen to my prayer to your God. 'God strike the white man dead.'

MARK

(*Pause*) He may hear that prayer Mary. If He does, you will spend the rest of your life asking Him to forgive you.

MARY

(*Attacks*) Do you really believe in Him?

MARK

(*Stands*) You prayed to strike the white man dead. Now hear the prayer I pray to the living God Who has seen M'Bali's come and M'Bali's go all through history—Who can lift them up and put them down so the world no longer remembers them. I pray Him that the white may change and the black may change, and together we learn to live as His children from one end of this continent to the other. Children of God throughout the world.

ACT TWO

MARY

You are talking like that to frighten me.

MARK

No, I don't want to frighten you or any other living soul. But I know anyone who hates as much as you fears greatly. You have always been afraid of the white man, haven't you, Mary?

MARY

No. I was, until I began to hate. Hate has left no room in my heart for fear. I just hate you and despise you all. You moved that lantern last night, didn't you?

MARK

Yes, I did.

MARY

(Fiercely) I knew you'd do everything you could to stop my revolution.

MARK

No, I'm trying to help you but you are so blind with hate, you don't see what I am trying to do.

MARY

(Contemptuously) You help me?

MARK

Yes. Your revolution is too small ever to succeed. I want a revolution that *will* succeed.

THE HURRICANE

MARY

You are no revolutionary.

MARK

I am. I hate what the white people have done on this continent every bit as much as you do. I was born white myself. Do you think I could help it? I will lay down my life to see the white man change, but not that this continent shall be controlled by people who have never found the answer to hatred, bitterness and the cruelty that comes from hidden fear. I want this continent free. Free from the tyranny of any man of any colour who wants to enslave or liquidate or exploit his fellow man. I want a continent to which the whole world, leaders and led, can turn and say: 'That's the way men are meant to live.'

MARY

But those are the things I want.

MARK

You may believe it, Mary, but it is a lie. You are so blind with bitterness that you think you will build a hate-free continent out of hate-filled men. Your hate would make you destroy even those you love, and freeze your heart so hard you wouldn't even feel it.

MARY

Who have I killed that I love?

ACT TWO

MARK

Where is Richard Lord? What has happened to him?

MARY

What do you know?

MARK

I don't know a thing. Where is he?

MARY

Why should I tell you?

MARK

I've been thinking about him all night.

MARY

While you have been thinking about him, I have been looking for him. If you must know the truth, I have spent the whole night looking for him out in the forest. He is the only white man in this home that ever understood me. I have done my best to save him.

MARK

Save him from what?

MARY

No white man is safe in that forest tonight.

MARK

'God strike the white man dead'—that was your prayer. Remember?

THE HURRICANE

MARY

I didn't mean Richard.

MARK

(Walks to Mary) What you meant is one thing. What God does is another. And what you do is another too. God once said, 'Those that take up the sword shall perish by the sword.' You have taken up the sword in this country. God will decide where that sword falls.

The door bursts open from the house. It is Humphrey Lord. He is pulling on his jacket and carries a gun. Nigel follows immediately carrying a lantern.

HUMPHREY

What the devil is going on here? Oh, it's you, Pearce. I heard voices and I thought someone was breaking in, but it is only you and Mary.

NIGEL

I told you, Humphrey, you are making a song and dance over nothing.

MARY

Put out that lantern.

HUMPHREY

Mary!

MARK

Do as she says!

ACT TWO

Mark forcibly snatches the lantern from Nigel and blows it out.

HUMPHREY

Pearce, have you gone mad?

MARK

If you value the life of your family, you'll obey what that woman says.

HUMPHREY

Nonsense! What's come over you? Mary, get back to your quarters. You are either tight or out of your mind. I have listened to those drums all night. There is something going on. I am going to phone the Governor.

MARY

Don't bother phoning.

HUMPHREY

Have you gone out of your senses, Mary?

MARY

I have cut the line.

HUMPHREY

You? I don't believe it.

Enter Janet.

JANET

Humphrey, what's the matter? What's going on?

THE HURRICANE

HUMPHREY

I wish to God I knew. (*He goes inside*)

Enter Dolly, yawning and complaining.

DOLLY

What an unearthly hour. Nigel, can't you get those natives to stop drumming.

NIGEL

It's nothing at all, I tell you. I suggest we all go back to bed.

Humphrey re-enters in haste.

HUMPHREY

By God! That telephone line *is* cut.

JANET

Humphrey, what does it mean? I'm so worried about Richard. He hasn't come back, has he?

HUMPHREY

No, he hasn't.

JANET

Where is he?

HUMPHREY

He probably got away hours ago. I expect he's all right. He may be better off than we are.

ACT TWO

JANET

I'm not sure.

HUMPHREY

Anyway, we'll have to get the car. We may all have to get out of here fast.

MARY

(With great authority) If you leave this place, you'll be killed.

MARK

She's right, Mr. Lord.

HUMPHREY

How do you know?

MARK

M'Bali told me.

HUMPHREY

Pearce, are you trying to tell us you know where M'Bali is?

MARK

Yes, I know where he is and who he is.

DOLLY

Who is he?

There is a pause.

HUMPHREY

For the love of God, who is M'Bali?

THE HURRICANE

Again there is a pause.

MARY

I am M'Bali.

HUMPHREY

I tell, she's been drinking.

MARY

Yes, Mr. Lord, I have been drinking. I have been drinking the waters of hate and eating the bread of bitterness, ever since I set foot in your house. Believe it or not, but I am M'Bali.

Suddenly we hear drumming in the forest—a quick feverish rhythm, much more intense than any before. Mary breaks off and rushes to the edge of the garden.

MARK

What does that mean?

MARY

I don't know.

MARK

I think you do.

MARY

It means that my orders in the forest have been disobeyed. I gave the order tonight that no white man was to be touched or killed. I knew Richard was out there alone. Those drums mean that some white man has been found. It is the signal to kill.

ACT TWO

JANET

(*Turning to Humphrey*) Humphrey, it must be Richard.

NIGEL

Don't jump to conclusions, Janet. There's no need to believe a word that woman says.

DOLLY

(*Hysterical*) Take me away, Nigel. I'm frightened. I hate Africa. I hate it. I wish I had never come.

NIGEL

It's all right, darling. It's all right.

JANET

How can you say that? Whoever Mary is, she means what she says.

DOLLY

Don't let her do anything, Nigel, take her away.

The drums stop.

HUMPHREY

Listen, the drums have stopped.

JANET

What does it mean?

HUMPHREY

I don't know.

THE HURRICANE

DOLLY

Does it mean it's all over?

MARY

For one person, it is all over. Richard is dead.

JANET

(Slowly) Is that really true? Mary, is that really true?
Mr. Pearce . . .

MARK

Yes, it's true.

JANET

Oh, no!

HUMPHREY

(Deeply shocked) I tried to tell him not to. Dear God,
why didn't he listen. He never would listen to me.

JANET

Richard *is* dead. I know it's true.

HUMPHREY

Richard.

DOLLY

Oh, Janet. *(Suddenly)* I can't bear it. *(She rushes into the house. Nigel follows)*

HUMPHREY

If only I could have just been able to tell him what I

ACT TWO

really felt. Now it's too late. (*Flashing round in fury to Mary*) But you killed him, by God. You killed Richard. (*He raises his gun*)

JANET

(*Rising to her feet*) Humphrey, that's a lie. We killed our son. He ran out into that forest tonight because of you and me. He couldn't stand his own home.

HUMPHREY

Janet dear, don't talk like that. Not now.

JANET

We've got to see the truth. We loved Richard, but we made him hate us. We love this land, but we have made this land hate us. We seem to have stirred up nothing but bloodshed.

HUMPHREY

I won't have you talk like that. I can't bear it. I loved that boy better than I loved myself.

JANET

If we go on living the way we have, all Africa will be like this forest tonight.

MARY

Mr. and Mrs. Lord . . .

THE HURRICANE

HUMPHREY

If you say one more word, I will shoot you. By God,
I will.

JANET

No, let her speak.

MARY

You may find this hard to believe, but I cared for Richard almost as much as you do. He was like a son to me. He was the one white person who treated me as if I really mattered. I'd have done anything to save him. I spent the whole night searching for him in the forest. I told my people not to kill. But they disobeyed my order. I love my people as you loved Richard, and I want you to understand why they disobeyed. They know, as I know, that the only way to get rid of the white man is to kill him. They know, as I know, that blood alone will purge this continent of the white man.

MARK

I agree with you. Blood alone will purge this continent. But it is a different kind of blood from the blood shed tonight.

MARY

What do you mean?

MARK

I mean that 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin'. Nothing short of that experience will

ACT TWO

touch the root of the evil in your country or mine: the blood that cleanses white men and black men of all sin, so that they learn to live the way God means all men to live.

MARY

I don't know what that means.

Janet goes across to Mary.

JANET

I know. It means that women like myself are washed clean from the pious unreality that sent Richard to his death. It means that men like you, Humphrey, are purged from the calculated superiority that your son and all Africa hates so much. It means the end of bitterness.

MARY

I don't know what to do. For the first time in years, I don't know what to do.

MARK

The living God can tell you.

They are quiet.

HUMPHREY

I've been wrong. My God, I've been terribly wrong.

MARY

I killed Richard. Not just my people. I, I myself. I

THE HURRICANE

made a prayer this morning—‘God strike the white man dead.’ Mr. Pearce knows what I mean. I suppose I do believe in God. Even when I’ve hated Him most. With all my heart I ask you to forgive me. I cannot put right what’s happened to Richard. I can put right the wrongs I have done to my people. The faith I have destroyed and the false hopes I have given them. They are a great people, looking for the right lead. I had the clear thought, ‘Go to your people in the forest. Make them know that under the leadership of the Living God this land can be the sounding board of an answer for every nation.’ Like those drums in the forest. Listen! (*We hear the beating of a single drum*)

MARK

You can’t do it alone.

MARY

I can’t ask anyone to come with me.

MARK

No. And this time men like myself can’t come without being asked. We have done too much of that. We must face the truth. The whole world is in danger of death. Not just the death of destruction, but the death of nations which have forgotten the secret of life itself—that God must come first or we enslave and exploit each other. It is a colossal task.

ACT TWO

MARY

Task?

MARK

To re-educate humanity in time.

MARY

But many of my people can't read or write.

MARK

We have all got to learn to read men like a book. To change them. To write a page of history that has never yet been written. Where no man is content to have too much while any other man alive goes hungry. Where no mother rests content while any other mother's son throughout the world is robbed of his chance of greatness because of his colour, birth or upbringing. Where nation learns to care for nation as you care for your own people—and for Richard.

MARY

(With longing) It is a dream!

MARK

It is a reality if we decide to make it real. We can do everything together as sons and daughters of God. We can do nothing that will really work if we persist in the pride and bitterness which make us stand alone.

THE HURRICANE

MARY

God! God of the white man, God of the black man, God of all men, hear my new prayer: 'Strike the hearts of the white people, the black people, all people under your sun and your moon, to new life. Bring us to our senses. Forgive us for the past. Help us to take on the future together. Show us each step of the way. Set us on fire with your Spirit so we move fast enough together before it is too late.'

MARK

God will hear that prayer, Mary.

MARY

Now I must go to my people—and you to yours.

MARK

Yes—and no: we must go to the ends of the earth together—all of us who really care—so the whole world knows that a hurricane is blowing. A hurricane of common sense that promises something new for the entire world.

CURTAIN