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## Thirty Three Years and Thirty Three Days

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As the rain was pouring down on the sanctuary dedicated to the Rikarama, the former chief of the Juranji tribe of Tatiaroa, an island off the mainland of Tahiti, people were entering the sanctuary and leaving it in homage to their late chief. Since the day of his death, a week ago, Tatiaroa experienced consecutive rain for each day of the week. The Juranji interpreted this weather as a sign that the gods were mourning the death of Rikarama. Pilgrims placed flowers, wreathes and other gifts before a statue of clay that was moulded into his likeness. They kneeled before the statue and prayed to the gods for his soul to have a proper home in the afterlife. Everyone was weeping bitterly in prayer until the appearance of one man. As other pilgrims saw him, they stopped weeping. There was complete silence at the sanctuary. Each of the pilgrims bowed before this man in respect and left. The man kneeled down before the statue of Rikarama and prayed silently. He closed his eyes. He was attempting to make communication with the soul of Rikarama. Suddenly the rain stopped pouring down. A gush of wind was blowing around the man as he prayed.

*Jumajaron, arise.*

Jumajaron lifted himself up off the ground. He stared into the eyes of the statue and felt a presence unlike any another he experienced before. Within that statue, he sensed the existence of the soul of a former human being who was now a different person from what he was when he lived on earth. He sensed the presence of a soul who disregarded the earth on which he trod and wanted his son to feel the same way also. Every day since the death of his father, Jumajaron heard the soul of Rikarama speaking to him. On the first few days of hearing this voice, he was sceptical as to whether or not it was his father speaking to him. It was only since yesterday that he came to believe that the voice was real. He only became aware that it was real after it declared to him that he was thirty two years of age and would have his birthday on the day of the Leaf which was the thirty third day of the year.

*Jumajaron, disregard this world. The people are not paying proper respect to the gods. On the outside they show reverence with their prayers but their hearts are not sincere. Inside their hearts, they are filled with lies and hypocrisy. Avoid people. Stay away from them. Avoid that girl called Tabitha. She is possessed by demons.*

Jumajaron nodded in agreement to the voice he heard.

*Remain true to the armband which you wear. Remain true to the power which it gives you.*

Jumajaron glanced at the armband on his upper right arm. It contained the symbol of a green leaf. This was exactly the same symbol as the one on the towel that was used to clothe him on the day that he departed his mother's womb to come into the world. Without being told anything by anyone, he sensed that through the power of this symbol, he would depart from this world and enter another world. The other world would free him from the evil influence of others in society.



As Tabitha was eating her breakfast, Misty, her pet cat hopped upon her lap. With one hand, she took bites from a banana while she used the other hand to pat Misty with affection. Her parents entered the room.

“I still can’t work out what’s wrong with Jumajaron.” Her father said.

“He’ll get over it.” Her mother replied.

“I don’t think so. He’s behaving like a totally different person.”

“You can’t blame him for being the way he is. He’s the son of a great leader. He needs time to recover.”

“I don’t think it’s a simple case of mourning. Jumajaron’s been like this for the past seven days. He was never like this before. I remember all the other times when things went wrong with his family. On those occasions, he spoke to other people. He’s not speaking to anyone anymore.”

“You think he might be possessed by a demon?”

“I don’t know. We’ll need to meet up with members of his family. He really needs help.”

Tabitha’s father gathered up all the cakes that were specially made for the household of Rikarama. He wrapped them in banana leaves and placed them in a basket woven out of reeds.

“All I can do is offer these cakes to the family and pray for Jumajaron. He needs divine intervention. Only the gods can return him to the way he was before. Are you praying for him.”

“Yes, each day I ask the gods to give him light to take the darkness out of his mind.”

“Hopefully, the gods will have mercy on him. He doesn’t deserve to be in this state.”

“I fear for him.”

“What’s your fear?”

“I’m afraid the gods might be punishing him.”

There was complete silence in the room. A state of fear overcame the parents of Tabitha. For all the time in which Tabitha had known her parents, there was one fact about them which registered more strongly than anything else. They feared the gods. They believed that the gods had complete control over Tatiaroa and all forms of weather. It was obvious to Tabitha that they were now assuming that a curse may be hanging over the head of Jumajaron. It was a common belief among the Juranji that if a curse had fallen upon a person, that curse would spread to other people simply through physical contact. Tabitha’s parents were like statues. They could not move on account of the fear that was overtook them. Tabitha was oblivious to this kind of fear.

“There’s no curse on Jumajaron. He simply doesn’t want to talk to other people.”

Upon hearing these words, Tabitha’s father was locked out of his state of immobility. “How can you know this? You’re only a child.”

“There’s no proof that any curse exists.”

“We have the shamans. They know the difference between right and wrong. They know if someone is cursed.”

“The shamans only make verdicts to gain presents from people like us. They know nothing.”

“Stop talking like this right now. I will not tolerate you disrespecting the shamans. If you talk like this again, you will not be coming with us. Is that clear?”

Tabitha nodded her head in agreement. They left the house and made their journey to the household of Rikarama. The residence of the family of Rikarama was so much larger than other homes among the Juranji; other houses were usually made of thatched sticks. This home was made of bricks and consisted of several dozen rooms, a wide gate and a courtyard leading into the main residence. Tabitha and her parents entered the courtyard where they were greeted by a few guards whose heads were decorated with bird feathers. One of the guards led them to the room of Elianareb, the widow of Rikarama. Tabitha and her parents bowed to her with reverence before her father handed Elianareb the gift of specially made cakes. Elianareb dismissed the guard and asked her guests to sit down on chairs that were provided.

“Thank you so much for visiting me. I’m pleased to have you here.”

“We’re grateful to you for allowing us to pay homage to your family.” Tabitha’s father said.

“You’re always welcome to our household. You are one of the few families who serve the gods faithfully.”

“How would you be aware of our piety?”

“The shamans told me about you. They revealed the tremendous devotion which you pay to the gods.”

“We do whatever we can to serve the gods faithfully.”

“I hope that your piety may be enough to convince the gods to have mercy on my son.”

“Do you think that he’s in trouble?”

“Yes, I suspect that a curse may be upon him. He hasn’t lived in this home ever since the day his father died. When he comes here, he simply walks around and then leaves without talking to anyone. The fact that he’s avoiding people suggests the possibility of a curse. If Jumajaron were really cursed, he would avoid others to prevent them from being contaminated. I fear the worst for my son.” Tears were flowing down her cheeks as she spoke. “I thought he would succeed his father as the next chief. It appears that the elders will have to choose another chief in a few days from now.”

“Do you have any idea as to where he could possibly be?”

“At this moment in time, I wouldn’t know where he could be. The only thing I know is that he visits his father’s sanctuary for several hours every day.”

“Has a shaman assessed him?”

“No he hasn’t been assessed. I’m too afraid of getting an assessment. If it was confirmed to me that he was cursed, the burden would be too much. I think we should go outside. I need some fresh air.”

They passed from Elianareb’s room to an immensely large backyard which consisted of a sugar cane plantation. There were workers gathering up sugar cane with sickles. They gathered the bundles of sugar cane into baskets that were strapped on their backs and delivered them to a large shed. Outside of the shed were statues of the two most prominent gods of the Juranji, Kuraaba and Rahkalla. Before placing their offerings in the shed, the workers bowed down in homage to the statues. At the start of their prayers, the workers were in an upright position. After less than a minute, expressions of fear came upon their faces. Their bodies slowly descended to kneeling and then crouching positions until they were face down on the ground. Elianareb led Tabitha and her parents to the statues. Upon the sound of approaching footsteps, the workers lifted themselves up from the ground and returned to work. There were a few seats near the statues. Elianareb took a seat and offered the others to Tabitha and her parents. Surprisingly, Tabitha did not take a seat.

“Little one, you can sit on my lap.” Elianareb said as she looked at Tabitha. Her father made a gesture with his hand for her to do as she was being asked. Tabitha sat on Elianareb’s lap as the former chief’s wife was smiling at her. “Do you know where sugar cane comes from?”

“Yes, it comes from the ground.”

“It seems to come from the ground but the ground is not its’ source.”

“What do you mean? Are you saying that the sugar can rise up from the ground without any help?”

“It only appears to come from the ground. The gods are the true source of sugar cane. Look at the statues of Kuraaba and Rahkalla. See their power.”

Tabitha stared with disinterest at the statues. They had faces and bodies which were similar to those of human beings. She could not see anything in them that could make them more important than an ordinary person. She felt like removing herself from Elianareb’s lap but out of respect for her parents, she kept her feelings to herself.

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Misty was running through the forest with great speed. Tabitha assigned her with the duty of spying upon Jumajaron. Misty was different from other cats as well as other animals. She possessed skills that did not exist in other creatures. She could understand the language of humans, interpret their behaviour and use sign language to communicate with Tabitha. Tabitha was using Misty’s skills with the intention of finding a solution to the problems of Jumajaron. Over the past few days, Jumajaron had not returned to his family’s residence and spent all his time at his father’s sanctuary. If other people were seen in the range of the sanctuary, Jumajaron immediately hurled abuse at them and told them to leave. From that time onwards, it was a commonly held view among the Juranji that Jumajaron was cursed. Despite all the negative things that were being said about him, Tabitha was committed to finding out what was wrong with him. On account of Misty’s unique skills, Tabitha was convinced that Misty would be the one capable of uncovering an explanation for the mystery of Jumajaron’s strange behaviour. Upon Misty’s arrival at the sanctuary, there was only one person there. It was Jumajaron. He was standing in front of a statue that resembled his late father. Misty entered the sanctuary and hid behind a basket that was on the ground.

“My father, speak to me. Tell what I must do to fulfil your will.”

*You must reach full wisdom.*

“How can I reach full wisdom?”

*You must bring honour to our family.*

“How can I bring honour to our family?”

*Tomorrow on the day of your birthday, you must take the drawing you did of that wicked girl Tabitha and stab it with a knife three times in succession. After you have completed the act of stabbing, say the words of the curse. After that is complete, a curse will fall upon Tabitha. She will be punished for mocking the god Rahkalla with blasphemous words.*

“Is that all I have to do?”

*No, there is one more favour I ask of you.*

“What is it?”

*You must take the knife one more time and slice your throat with honour.*

Upon hearing these words, Jumajaron was in a state of shock. He took a step back and turned away from the statue for a few minutes. Despite his head being turned in the direction where Misty was hiding, he was completely unaware of her. He turned back to the statue once again.

“I can’t do it. I’m very sorry.”

*If you don’t kill yourself, you have failed the gods and me.*

“Why do I have to kill myself?”

*It is the will of the gods that you kill yourself. You must obey the will of the gods.*

“O.K., I’ll do it.”

*That’s what I want to hear. After you die, the gods will prepare a paradise for you with many virgins. You will be rewarded in the next life.*

Upon hearing these words, Jumajaron left the sanctuary. He was filled with tremendous bitterness on account of the promise he made. Deep down inside, he knew that the actions he was going to perform were wrong but felt an obligation to obey his father even though his command made him ill at ease. He left the sanctuary with his head cast down.



Later that day Misty related to Tabitha the intelligence she gained by means of sign language. She began by waving her arm upwards from the ground in a semi-circle motion. This was sign language to indicate that something would happen on the following day. Misty tapped her paw on her throat three times to indicate that Jumajaron would inflict damage upon his throat. She then rolled over and played dead. Tabitha immediately interpreted what this meant. It was a warning to her that Jumajaron was planning to commit suicide. This revelation presented Tabitha with a few difficulties. Firstly, nobody in the tribe would have

accepted Tabitha's testimony because she was a child. Secondly, nobody would have been willing to get near Jumajaron on account of the widespread belief that he was cursed. If anyone were to come to the assistance of Jumajaron, Tabitha and Misty were the only ones who would be likely to help him. Thirdly, there was no evidence relating to a particular time of day that Jumajaron would be likely to commit suicide. Tabitha needed to conduct research into the life of Jumajaron to develop a psychological profile of him in the hope of working out a possible time frame for a potential suicide.

Half an hour later, Tabitha arrived at Elianareb's residence. The guards led her from the front gate through to the courtyard and into Elianareb's room. Upon seeing Elianareb, Tabitha bowed down before her in humility. Elianareb lifted her up and placed her on a chair.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" Elianareb asked.

"Would I be able to read through the royal family scrolls?"

"Yes, you can read them but I don't recommend it."

"Why?"

"You're a child. You need to go out and play with other children. You need to enjoy yourself."

"I don't play with other children."

"Why not?"

"I don't like their company. The only one I play with is my cat."

"Why do you want to read the royal scrolls?"

"Reading is a pastime of mine. Today, I'd like to read something different."

"O.K., I'll take you to the library."

Elianareb led Tabitha to the library. It consisted of five isles of storage units which were filled with scrolls that were made of thin canvas. Elianareb took out five scrolls and handed them to Tabitha who thanked her for them.

"These are all the scrolls which relate to our family. I hope that they will be helpful to you."

"I look forward to reading them."



After more than an hour of reading, Tabitha had already read through each of the five scrolls. She learnt quite a few facts about Jumajaron and his family which she never knew before. She discovered that Jumajaron would be turning thirty three on the next day. That day would be the day of the leaf. She also learnt that Kuraaba was the god associated with the symbolism of the leaf and fertility in general. After contrasting these facts with each other, Tabitha reached the conclusion that Jumajaron's life was interconnected with the symbol of the leaf. If he were planning to commit suicide on the day of the leaf, he would be doing it for a religious purpose. If this were the case, a private ritual would precede the act of suicide. Tabitha needed to find out as much information as she could about Kuraaba. It became obvious to her that the best means of learning about this god would be through a Shaman who

was very dedicated to the gods. A quarter of an hour later, Tabitha reached the home of Tuliak, one of the keys shamans of the Juranji. After knocking on the front door several times, Tuliak came out. He was surprised to see a child coming to his residence.

“What are you doing here?”

“I need to ask you a few questions.”

“I’m not going to be wasting my time with a child. I have more important things to do.” He turned around to go back inside but felt Tabitha grabbing hold of his loin cloth. As he gazed back at her, he was quite upset. “Can’t you take no for an answer?”

“Please, let me ask you a few questions.”

“What do you want to know?”

“I’m interested in knowing why Kuraaba is regarded as the god of fertility and why he is associated with the leaf.”

“We worship him as the god of fertility because he is the one who gives us an abundance of crops. The leaf is his symbol because it represents the difference between a good and a bad harvest. A green leaf symbolises a good harvest while a dry leaf symbolises a bad harvest.”

“A little over an hour ago, I discovered that tomorrow is the day of the leaf. I’m interested in knowing what kind of ceremonies will take place to mark the importance of this day.”

“There are two ceremonies taking place tomorrow. One is at midnight and the other one at midday.”

“Where are they taking place?”

“Outside the shrine of Kuraaba.”

“Can anyone come?”

“Yes, anyone is invited. I cannot answer any more questions. I have important things to do.”

Taliak turned around and closed the door. As Tabitha left Taliak’s residence, she thought about asking her parents for permission to attend the midnight ceremony. Her father would only give her permission if he were attending the ceremony. When Tabitha returned home, she asked her parents if they would be going to the midnight ceremony of the leaf in dedication to Kuraaba. They responded by telling her that they would not be attending the ceremony on the grounds that it was not compulsory. After being given a negative answer, Tabitha appealed to the fact that her parents had a history of sincere service to the gods; she claimed that they should attend the ceremony to demonstrate their piety. Her father responded by pointing out to Tabitha that she never showed any sincere reverence to the gods and had no grounds for attending the ceremony. That night Tabitha was very uncomfortable as she slept. She was filled with uncertainty. Questions were recurring in her head. Would she be able to leave the home without her parents noticing her? Would she be able to arrive at the ceremony at the right time even though she did not have a sun dial capable of detecting midnight through the movement of the moon? Would there be any hope of preventing Jumajaron’s suicide attempt?

After having spent a long time contemplating what to do, Tabitha developed a strategy of how to make it to the ceremony. She would have an early dinner and go to bed early to give the impression that she would be fast asleep by the time her parents went to bed. Later that night, there was complete silence at her home for a considerable amount of time. Tabitha took this as a sign that her parents were fast asleep. She left her home and arrived at the shrine of Kuraaba. Upon arrival, there were many pilgrims gathered outside the shrine of Kuraaba. Each of them was carrying a green leaf. A man appeared with a multi-feathered hat with ochre designs painted all over his body.

He was standing several metres behind a statue of Kuraaba. Tabitha recognised him. It was Taliak. He was surrounded by drummers and men holding lamps. The drummers started to pound their drums with a moderate tempo. After a few seconds, the sounds they were making became faster and louder until Taliak raised his arms in the air in supplication to the gods and then slowly lowered them to a normal position at his waist. The drum beats slowed down to a moderate tempo. There was now silence. Taliak moved forward toward the pilgrims. A few seconds later, a group of men came out of the bushes carrying a standard bearer of Kuraaba. They lowered it to the ground, picked up the statue of Kuraaba and placed it beside Taliak. Another man who appeared to be a shaman came forward to the other side of the statue. He was not wearing a hat but had ochre designs painted on his body that were similar to those of Taliak. He looked towards Taliak for a brief second and then Taliak turned towards the pilgrims.

“Welcome to the first of two festivals of the Leaf in honour of Kuraaba. It’s a great honour to have so many of you paying your respect to the one who gives us the food we eat. All of you will be rewarded for your devotion. The first part of this ceremony will begin shortly.”

From a distance of about two hundred metres away, another band of drummers were beating their drums and singing a tune in a dialect that Tabitha could not understand. They made their way to the sanctuary of Kuraaba where they were joined by dancers. Both the dancers and the second group of musicians proceeded to where Taliak and the other shaman were standing. The musicians kept playing their drums while the dancers stopped dancing with the exception of one man. The man who continued to dance was carrying three baskets which comprised of one large basket that was flanked by two smaller ones. He was moving toward Taliak while swaying to his left and to his right in a form of motion where his body was weaving up and down. He gently placed each of the three baskets on the ground. After having done this, the man was blindfolded by Taliak. Taliak turned his attention to the baskets on the ground. He placed his hand into the small basket on his right, scooped up a handful of green leaves and then dropped them back into the basket. He did the same this with the other small basket on his left with the only difference being the fact that these leaves were dry. He then emptied the contents of each of these baskets into the large basket.

“On this night, Uripali has been chosen by the gods to give us a sign of the kind of harvest that will occur this year. May the will of the gods be fulfilled.”

Taliak tapped Uripali on the shoulder and physically guided him to where the large basket was. Uripali placed his hand in the basket and scooped out a green leaf which he held in front of the crowd. Upon seeing this, the crowd began to cheer. Uripali took off his blindfold and returned to where the musicians and the second group of dancers were. The singers and musicians did another song in that same dialect which Tabitha did not understand while the dancers were dancing to this tune. Upon the completion of the tune, Taliak returned to talking to the pilgrims.

“Rejoice, my brothers and sisters. The gods have given us a sign that we will have a good harvest. Now it is time for Kuraaba to speak to us through one of his servants. Sifar will talk to Kuraaba and relate to you the words of Kuraaba.”

Taliak took a few step back and allowed another shaman called Sifar to come forward. Sifar closed his eyes and appeared to be in a trance like state. An expression of intensity came over his face as beads of sweat poured down his forehead. He lifted his head up slightly towards the sky. He began by saying words with his lips that could not be audibly heard and then started to talk to the crowd.

“Rejoice, my fellow Juranji. An abundant harvest is set to sprout upon the land. The rain will come, the sun will shine and food will spread in great abundance to all people, both young and old. One man will give up his life for the gods after the midday ceremony. His blood will fertilise the soil and bring prosperity to you. Rejoice, Juranji.”

Upon hearing these words, Tabitha realised that she no longer needed to take part in the ceremony. As she already had a good idea over the likely time of the attempted suicide, she quietly departed from the crowd and made her way back home. After returning to her home, she only knew one thing about the following day. The duties facing her would be overwhelming.



As Misty was scouting around the sanctuary of Rikarama, she was unable to find any trace of Jumajaron. She made her way to the back exit of the sanctuary. There were a pair of fresh foot prints heading eastward. She followed the foot prints to a large plain of grass. There was a man there standing over a table made of thatched sticks. It was Jumajaron. He was talking to himself. Upon reaching the spot where he was, she climbed on the table to see what was on it. There were several leaves, a drawing a young girl and a knife. Upon see Misty on the table, Jumajaron was angry and tried to knock her off the table with an open palm. Misty moved away to her right and the attempted blow missed. She leaped off the table and ran away. Within less than ten minutes, she caught up with Tabitha at her parent’s home. As soon as she saw Tabitha, she rolled herself over several times. Tabitha knew what this meant. It was an indication to her that Jumajaron was in danger. Tabitha told her mother that she needed to go the market to buy some nuts and left with Misty and a map for directions. Upon reaching the plain, Tabitha and Misty stared at Jumajaron from a distance. When she was at the village, the sun dial indicated that it was half past ten in the morning. It would be at least an hour and a half before Jumajaron would attempt to take his life. Without any kind of warning, Jumajaron ran his fist down the middle of the table. It was split in half. Jumajaron took the items from the table and left. He was heading for the jungle.

Tabitha and Misty followed him from a long distance away. Upon reaching the beginning of the jungle, Tabitha allowed Misty to take the lead. Misty darted a long distance away from her. She agreed to let Misty do this because Misty was both familiar with the terrain of the area and had an uncanny ability to locate the position of where a person was. After catching up with Jumajaron, Misty would be able to point out to Tabitha where he would be heading. As Tabitha was walking through the jungle, the trees were so tall and the vegetation was so thick that sparsely any sun was coming down on her. There were many dry leaves, branches and various kinds of foliage that had already fallen to the ground. The variety of vegetation that was on the ground made it very difficult to follow the footsteps of someone on account of the fact that most steps which were trod on were a mixture of vegetation and ground rather than ordinary ground. A few minutes later, Misty returned. Her right paw was facing up. This

meant that Jumajaron was heading for the mountains. Tabitha took her map out. The journey would take almost half an hour. She would be required to travel north to one of the rivers and then trek westward to the mountains. For a few seconds, Tabitha contemplated whether or not she should go ahead with the trip to the mountains. As she was only a child, she realized the potential difficulties and dangers that would be facing her if she proceeded.

If she reached the river, she would have to swim from one bank to the other. The swim would take energy out of her. After that, she would be required to walk towards the mountains and climb them. Tremendous doubts were coming over her as to whether or not she would be able to make it. She looked behind her and thought about turning back. Suddenly, a single thought persuaded her not to do this. There was concern in her heart about the dangerous fate that seemed to be awaiting Jumajaron. She was convinced that if she did not make any attempt to reach the mountains, Jumajaron would be dead. Tabitha looked at Misty.

“Do you think we can make it?” Tabitha asked.

Misty responded by nodding her head in agreement. The sight of Misty having faith in her was an incentive to continue on. Tabitha took a look through a small opening in the jungle which allowed the light of the sun to pass through. The sky was blue without a single cloud being visible. She resolved herself to the task of making it to the mountains and saving the life of Jumajaron. After almost half an hour of passing through different challenges such as having to swim across a river, Tabitha and Misty reached the base of the mountains where there was a fig tree. Misty immediately climbed up the tree and knocked off many figs from its branches. Tabitha responded by eating as many of them as she could while Misty scouted around the mountain area for the easiest means of climbing it. After she was finished eating, Misty returned and was making a gesture with her paw. She was pointing to the northern side of the mountain. Tabitha followed her to a section of the mountain which caused quite a surprise. It consisted of a flight of stairs leading up to the top of the mountain. In less than a quarter of an hour, Tabitha and Misty were at the summit of the mountain. There was only one object that was visible. It was a sun dial. The time was three minutes to twelve. Misty scouted around the edges of the mountain. On the eastern end of the mountain, she saw a man climbing towards its peak with his bare hands and feet. It was Jumajaron. Misty made a gesture to Tabitha that Jumajaron was approaching and they hid under the cover of the steps immediately below the summit of the mountain. The footsteps of Jumajaron could be heard as he reached the sun dial.

‘My father I am ready to pass from this life to the next. I am ready to give honour to the gods like no other man has done before me.’

These words were followed by a few minutes of complete silence as Misty stared at Jumajaron from a distance. A piece of long cloth, a drawing of a girl and a knife were on the ground. The sun dial reached midday. Jumajaron looked up to the sky.

‘My father, tell me what I must do now.’

There was complete silence once again. Jumajaron was seen praying silently for a few seconds and then picked up the long piece of cloth. He tied it around his eyes as a blindfold. As soon as this was done, Misty sprinted in the direction of Jumajaron, scooped up the handle of the knife with her mouth and raced to the stairs and then past Tabitha. Upon seeing this, Tabitha used her instincts as the best means of confronting the situation that was facing her. She made her way to the sun dial. Jumajaron prayed a few more words and attempted to pick the knife up. He moved his hand in various directions but still could not find the knife. He

lifted the blind fold from his eyes to see Tabitha in front of him. For several seconds, he was in a state of shock.

“Who are you? How did you get here?”

“I’m the one who’s here to save you. I came here the same way that you did.” Tabitha lied.

“Where’s the knife?”

“I threw it over the mountain.”

“You crazy girl. Damn you.” He turned away for a few seconds in frustration before returning his gaze to Tabitha. “Do you really believe that you can defy the will of the gods and get away with it?”

“I’m not defying the will of the gods. They don’t want you to die. Whoever you think is talking to you is not real. I heard you talking to yourself. There was no one talking back. It’s an illusion.”

“It’s not an illusion. My father was talking to me.”

“How can you know it was your father?”

“He told me facts that are true.”

“It’s still an illusion. Your mind can play tricks on you by replaying facts you already know.”

“I will not let you destroy the will of the gods. I will enter the afterlife very shortly.” Jumajaron turned away from Tabitha and walked toward the edge of the mountain. In a matter of seconds, he felt himself being knocked to the ground. He looked up to see Tabitha clinging to one of his legs. There was an expression of sorrow on her face as tears fell down her cheeks.

“Don’t do it. Please don’t do it.” She pleaded.

Jumajaron responded by staring at Tabitha in silence. In a few moments of human weakness, all desire to throw himself off the mountain disappeared. Blind faith in the will of the gods was replaced with compassion for another human being. A sense of guilt came over him. He was filled with regret over the fact that he caused sorrow to a child.

“Please don’t cry. I’m not going to kill myself anymore.”

Upon hearing these words, Tabitha let go of his leg. The previous expression of sorrow was now replaced with a smile. Both Jumajaron and Tabitha lifted themselves up from the ground.

“What’s your name?” Jumajaron asked.

“Tabitha.” She replied.

Jumajaron was shocked to hear this name. This was the same name that was cursed by the mysterious voice which claimed to be that of his father. He did not think it was the same Tabitha spoken of by the voice. The voice spoke about Tabitha being the same girl as the drawing of a girl that was done by her father. The Tabitha from the picture did not resemble the one who rescued him.

“We need to get out of here. If you hop on my back, I can climb you down the mountain.” Jumajaron said.

“You don’t need to do that. There’s a flight stairs on the northern side of the mountain. We can walk down them.”

Upon hearing these words, Jumajaron was sceptical about what Tabitha said. She responded by taking him by the hand and leading him to the top of the staircase. The sight of the staircase, baffled Jumajaron. He had never seen anything like it before in his life. His only assumption was that the staircase must have been created by an ancient tribe which predated the Juranji.

“I have a few questions that I need to ask you.” Jumajaron said.

“What would you like to know?”

“How did you know I was going to commit suicide? How did you make it here?”

“I know secrets which I never tell to anyone. You’re no exception.”

The response given to him by Tabitha left Jumajaron with no other choice but to accept the fact that he would never know with certainty how a child could do things that ordinary human beings could never do. In his state of ignorance, he simply assumed that there was a form of divine power working within her that was unknown to the Juranji.