

The Waterfall of San Luis

(La Cascada de San Luis)

Based on the story co-created by the Shuar community of San Luis and Dramatic Adventure Theatre

Performed in Gualaquiza, Ecuador, in July 2022

Script written by Peter Petkovsek

Characters:

NARRATOR

MAN

WOMAN

ARUTAM

ROCK

NUNKUI

House, Animals, Plants, River

NARRATOR: In a community not too far from here there was a typical Shuar house. The husband and wife who lived there went about their normal routines, hoping to live a peaceful and happy life. But as the days went by, they slowly realized that things were no longer working as they should. The water they used for bathing, drinking, and cooking, became contaminated and couldn't be used anymore. The food sources dried out, and the plants in the garden weren't growing properly, because the balance had been disturbed.

NARRATOR: One day, they realized they couldn't live like this anymore. But what could they do?

MAN and WOMAN ask each other what they should do, the kids tell them to go to the waterfall.

NARRATOR: So the Man decided to go to the waterfall to seek some energy and guidance. He left the house and followed the river, until the playful streams brought him to the waterfall. There, while animals of the jungle watched over him, he fell asleep. And as soon as he closed his eyes, the dream came...

MAN wakes up, is surprised to see himself wearing traditional clothes. The waterfall parts and ARUTAM enters.

NARRATOR: The Man was frightened but excited, because he recognized the spirit of the waterfall, the great Arutam. He bowed with respect, and Arutam spoke to him.

ARUTAM speaks in Shuar. The MAN doesn't understand. ARUTAM speaks again. The MAN pleads in Spanish.

NARRATOR: The Man didn't know what to do, when suddenly, he heard a peculiar voice.

ROCK speaks to the MAN from the audience. You don't speak Shuar? Etc. ROCK comes to the MAN and starts to teach him Shuar. He teaches him three words; the MAN starts off clumsily but then learns a word well.

NARRATOR: The more Rock taught him, the more the Man remembered the words of his grandfathers.

ARUTAM bows and leaves – maybe the MAN says thank you in Shuar.

NARRATOR: What the Man didn't see, was that when Rock was teaching him language, a little bit of his Rock body crumbled into nothing... But this was just the beginning of the Man's remembering.

ROCK says, I have much to teach you, but first you need to learn how to hunt. He hands the MAN a blowgun.

NARRATOR: The Man tried to hunt the animals, but at first, he didn't know how, and the animals mocked him. Little by little, the knowledge that was in his blood started coming back to him.

The MAN has now learned how to use the blowgun, and when a jaguar comes to attack him, he successfully avoids it/makes friends with it, and maybe successfully shoots a bird.

NARRATOR: While the Man was celebrating his success, he didn't see that another piece of Rock fell off... *(a piece of ROCK falls off)* But it seemed like all of nature was celebrating with him, because the rain finally came and filled the forest with the sound and smell of life-giving water.

The kids become the rain, spraying water all around and at the audience as well.

NARRATOR: The Man felt himself protected.

Someone says, a rainbow! The rainbow puppet comes in, the kids grab the ribbons and do the rainbow dance.

NARRATOR: And more and more memories of the Man's culture were returning to him. And the dream became family...

ROCK shouts something like, let's dance! Music starts – a Shuar song. The kids start to dance the Shuar dance. The WOMAN dances her way in, and they're both trying to learn the steps with the MAN. ROCK helps them. Through the song, together, they start to dance quite well. They dance for a while.

NARRATOR: Dancing as one with the Woman, the Man felt his ancestors' blood surging through his veins, felt the land under his feet, and the music vibrating through his body. He finally felt at home, he knew he could never again forget. The dancing and remembering made him hungry and thirsty.

The MAN says he's hungry, and ROCK says, we need to go to the garden. The kids become the garden. The MAN says, but I can't go, only the women can go. The WOMAN says, so I will go. ROCK takes her to the garden and wants to tell her to sing a song to enter, but she is impatient and enters anyway.

NARRATOR: The Woman wanted to cut the plants and get food quickly, but when she touched the first plant, it suddenly died. Surprised, she ran to the next plant, but as she touched it, it too withered and died. She became more and more worried, running from plant to plant trying to get the fruits and vegetables to feed the Man and her family, but they all died at her touch. Until there was only one little sprout left, and it hid behind the Rock.

The WOMAN and ROCK have a short conversation, something like: What am I doing wrong? You didn't enter the garden properly, you need to sing to enter, then sing to the plants. But I don't know how to do that! We need some help...

NARRATOR: And as the Rock offered help and lost another piece of himself, the plants parted and suddenly, Nunkui, the goddess of the garden and fertility, appeared.

The NUNKUI puppet appears.

NARRATOR: And she started to sing, teaching the Woman the correct songs for the garden. While she was singing, a miracle happened and the garden started coming back to life.

Dominga's song is played. As we listen to it, the kids/plants come back to life and slowly dance to the song. When the song ends:

NARRATOR: The plants came back to life and gave abundantly to the Woman, who collected fruits, vegetables, and medicinal plants, and showed all the richness of the garden to the land. She thanked Nunkui.

NUNKUI bows and leaves.

NARRATOR: There was bounty and knowledge. But as the Man and the Woman turned to the Rock to thank him for his guidance, there was a surprise waiting for him...

The MAN wants to thank ROCK, but ROCK is dying. They have a short conversation, something like: what is happening to you? I'm dying, I gave all that I have to you, so that you could reconnect and remember. Now I will wither away.

NARRATOR: The Man felt a great sadness for the Rock that guided him and helped him through his dream journey. So he called all the animals and all the plants, the rain and the rainbow, the spirits and the sky to help him revive the Rock. And they all came and gathered around the Rock to give him energy and life. United together, the animals, the plants, the rain and rainbow, the community and everyone else took care of the Rock and nursed him back to life.

Everyone group hugs ROCK (maybe puts stuff back on his costume, so that he's back to normal).

NARRATOR: With the Rock back, and with his remembered knowledge and roots, the Man was now ready to face Arutam again, and he let the river guide him back...

The MAN says goodbye to the dream version of the WOMAN, the kids turn into the river and take him back to the waterfall. ARUTAM appears again and says something in Shuar. The MAN replies in Shuar, confident. ARUTAM nods and leaves, the MAN falls asleep.

NARRATOR: When he woke up, the Man came back to the house and told his dream to the Woman. They both knew what needed to be done: the knowledge, culture, and land needed to live on through perseverance and unity... Never to be forgotten or lost, but always cherished and protected.

Everyone makes a final tableau.

The End.