

# **THE HAPPY HORNBILL**

a short drama about spousal abuse

by Revelly Robinson

Copyright © July 2015 Revelly Robinson and Off The Wall Play Publishers

<http://offthewallplays.com>

## THE HAPPY HORNBILL

### SUMMARY

A mother reads a bed time story to her child as a metaphor for her ultimate action. The story and videography reveal a life torn apart by domestic violence and the difficult choices women in these situations face.

### CHARACTERS

Mother	A young woman, constantly exhausted and drained
Sunni	Son/daughter of couple, around six years old
Voice of father	

### PROPS

Bed lamp  
Book  
Pillows  
Bed and quilt  
Toys  
Bedside table

### SETTING

A child's bedroom, ostentatiously adorned with plush toys, mobile hangings, posters and all sorts of brightly coloured manner of toys. In the centre of the room is the bed upon which the characters sit. A rotating lamp on a bedside table next to the bed throws contrasting light and shadow across the scene.

### VIDEOGRAPHY

Scenes representing iconic moments from the play are projected onto the bed sheets under which the mother and child lie, in effect making the bed a stage within a stage. The violent undertones of the story being told are juxtaposed in the videos being projected on the bed.

*(Son/daughter runs into room and jumps into bed clutching a book.)*

SUNNI	Mum, are you coming to tuck me into bed?
-------	--

*(Voices shouting from off-stage.)*

FATHER	It's like you don't know what's for your own good. I've told you before not to run off like that –
--------	--

MOTHER	Okay, okay I won't do it anymore. Please Michael, just stop shouting. It's late. I've got to put Sunni to bed.
--------	--

*(Father grunts and heavy footsteps can be heard walking off before a door slams loudly. Mother enters scene flustered and looking distressed.)*

MOTHER                    I'm sorry baby. I know its past your bedtime and I owe you a story.  
What do we have here?

*(Mother climbs into bed next to child.)*

SUNNI                    *(gleefully as s/he jumps on the bed)* It's the Happy Hornbill mum!

MOTHER                    Alright, don't get so excited before bedtime. Come here. Lie down.

*(Son/daughter snuggles up to MOTHER while she opens the book and starts reading.)*

MOTHER                    Once upon a time there was a beautiful, orange-billed hornbill bird called Simone who lived on the open plains of Africa. Simone would spend all day singing from the tops of the trees and talking to the other animals.  
'Hello giraffe,' she would sing across the tree tops to the long necked giants.  
'Hello elephant,' she would holler into the big, floppy ears of the beasts.  
All the animals on the savannah –

SUNNI                    *(mumbling with eyes half shut)* What's a savannah?

MOTHER                    It's just a field where animals live in Africa honey. That's it go to sleep now.  
So anyway, all the animals on the savannah knew the friendly call of Simone the hornbill. One day, Simone was singing to herself as she usually did in the morning when she heard someone singing just like her in the distance.  
'Who is that calling?' yelled Simone.  
She heard a flutter of wings and from out of the leaves of the acacia tree there appeared the most magnificent looking hornbill Simone had ever seen.  
'My goodness. What brings you to these trees?' asked Simone.  
'My name is Stanley and I heard your song from all the way over the other side of these plains. I had to see what bird had such a beautiful call,' replied the bird.  
Simone blushed. She had never seen feathers as bright as Stanley's feathers.  
Simone and Stanley started to sing together and their voices matched each other so perfectly that soon they were singing together day and night.

SUNNI                    What does a hornbill sound like?

MOTHER

*(pauses and thinks for a moment)* I don't know what the song of the hornbill is like. I don't think I've ever heard it. *(MOTHER trails off)* I imagine its nice.

*(MOTHER returns to the story)* Eventually the time came for Simone and Stanley to lay an egg together. They hunted far and wide for the perfect hollow in a tree where the egg would stay safe and warm. Finally they found the right spot where they thought an egg would be safe and sound. There, Simone laid her first egg.

SUNNI

Mummy, who do birds lay eggs?

MOTHER

You'll see darling. We get to that in the story.

*(continues reading)* Simone was the happiest bird in the land after she laid her egg. She called out to Stanley, 'Come see our beautiful egg Pappa Bird.'

However, as soon as Stanley saw the egg he started to change. He flew off in a rage and when he returned he brought back several twigs and leaves with him.

'You are not to leave this tree trunk,' Stanley shouted at Simone. 'You have to stay where I tell you to.'

Simone was shocked. She had never seen Stanley like this before. It was like he had completely changed.

'But what will I eat? What will I do?' sobbed Simone.

'You'll eat what I feed you,' yelled Stanley as he started to barricade Simone in the tree trunk.

Stanley worked all night to enclose Simone in the tree trunk until before she knew it, she was trapped on her nest in the tree with only a tiny opening for light. There she sat, frightened and alone with only her unhatched egg for company. Stanley would visit her each day to feed her through a tiny opening through which Simone could barely even see.

"Please Stanley," sobbed Simone each day. "Please let me out of here. I need to breathe."

"You'll realise that it's for your own good to be trapped in the tree trunk dear," reminded Stanley. "You're safe in there."

So the couple continued, day in and day out, until one day Simone felt a pecking coming from the inside of the egg.

"What is that?" she said to herself, as she sat in the dark tree trunk.

She looked at her egg, eventually seeing a small beak protrude from the shell.

"Why, it's a baby bird," Simone cried. "It's my baby!"

Simone wept in disbelief as the most beautiful baby bird she had ever seen emerged from the egg.

"Mama," the baby bird mumbled, before falling into a heap at Simone's knees.

Simone was overjoyed. Each day she regurgitated the food that Stanley brought her to feed her baby.

"Stanley, you have to see our beautiful child," Simone would say to Stanley each day.