

HOW ARE YOU CALLED?

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How Are You Called?

CHARACTERS

GIRL
ANCESTOR
GIRL'S FATHER

I.

(Drumming music. GIRL starts to chant hesitantly.)

GIRL

Aaaaa...
 oooooo...
 eh-eh ya yo
 Aaaaa oooooo
 eh-eh ya yo
 Aaaaa oooooo eh-eh ya yo
 Aaaaa oooooo eh-eh ya yo
 Aaaaa oooooo eh-eh ya yo
 Aaaaa oooooo eh-eh ya yo
 Aaaaa oooooo eh-eh ya yo
 Aaaaa oooooo eh-eh ya yo

(She continues to chant while beginning to dance. She is tentative and uncertain in her movements until she gives up. She turns off the music.)

II.

GIRL

I-yay¹? I-yay!
 Hello?
 Hello?
 No, that's not right. What's the word? It's... it's... Cooyah²! I think that's how you say it.
 Cooyah?
 Cooyah?
 Hhhhhhhhhuh.
 I-yay?
 How are you called?
 What was your name?
 What did it mean?
 And what about the one before you. And the one before her.
 And the one before her. And the one.
 My father should have told me those things.
 He should have made the book your picture and the story your name.

III.

¹ Mother. (actually spelled iyè)

² Hello. (actually spelled koyo)

FATHER'S VOICE

Okay now my daughter. It is time for bed. But first, I will tell you a story.

(GIRL sits eagerly.)

Once upon a time, Mosquito fell in love with Ear. So Mosquito said to her, "Ear, will you be my bride?" Now back then Ear could see, and she saw that Mosquito's body was wasting away.

"I cannot marry a skeleton. You will be dead soon," she replied.

Embarrassed and heartbroken, Mosquito flew away.

But whenever he passes Ear, Mosquito reminds her,

(a whisper)

"I'm still alive to this very day."

(GIRL experiences a moment of excitement that's followed by sadness.)

GIRL

I didn't know I should have stopped him.

I should have said, "No, no not that one.

Tell me one about your mother. My grandmother. And the one before her. And the one before her. And the one.

Tell me who they were.

Tell me their names.

And what did they mean?"

FATHER'S VOICE

Okay, okay, my daughter. This is my mother. Your grandmother. And her name was...

GIRL

Tell it to me again?

FATHER'S VOICE

This is my mother. Your grandmother. And her name was...

GIRL

Again?

FATHER'S VOICE

This is my mother. Your grandmother. And her name was...

GIRL

Again?

(A moment of sadness.)

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IV.

GIRL

But he never made the book your picture and the story your name.

And I'm too old to be tucked in and told "once upon a times" about you now.

I could call him up and ask. But he would just yell about it being my fault. The not knowing.

The not knowing is always my fault somehow.

FATHER'S VOICE

What do you mean what was my mother's name? Do you not know? How do you not know? Why do you not know?

(GIRL stands.)

V.

GIRL

All I know is that even after the body wastes away to bone, the spirit always stays.

It just has to be called.

So.

(Drumming music. GIRL begins to chant and dance more forcefully than earlier.)

Aaaaa oooooo eh-eh ya yo

(Eventually she stops caring about getting it right or wrong and allows the spirit to take her until she cries out in desperation.)

GIRL

E-YAY! E-YAAAY! E-YAAAAAY!

(ANCESTOR enters and GIRL senses her presence.)

GIRL

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Hello?
I mean... coo-yah?

Coo-yah. ANCESTOR

Coo-yah. GIRL
E-yay?

Ih-yeh. ANCESTOR

Ih-yeh? GIRL
Ih-yeh.

How are you called?

Tell me the story of your name.

(ANCESTOR whispers into GIRL's ear.)

And the one before you?

(ANCESTOR whispers into GIRL's ear.)

And the one before her?

(ANCESTOR whispers into GIRL's ear.)

And the one before her?

(ANCESTOR whispers into GIRL's ear.)

And the one?

(ANCESTOR whispers into GIRL's ear. They continue this call and response as the lights fade.)

END OF PLAY

How Are You Called?