

IN SEARCH OF THE DODO BIRD

By Martin Follose

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CHARACTERS

SAFARI GROUP

- PROFESSOR (M) An old - very old - retired professor and explorer who is convinced that the Dodo bird is still alive on an isolated island in the Indian Ocean. He travels to the island to find and document that the Dodo bird is still alive.
- SARAH (F) Daughter of PROFESSOR and a teacher at The Last Chance Girls School. As part of her summer school, she accompanies her father with several girls, all misfits.
- JOHNNY (M) Guide who was hired by PROFESSOR. He would like to find the Dodo first, capture it, and sell it on the black market. He has arranged to have two buddies follow a good distance behind to help when the time comes.
- DAPHNIE (F) A student from The Last Chance Girls School. She cries a lot, over any and everything. A "valley" girl and very ditsy. (Although not written in the part, Daphnie could put several "like", "you know," etc. in her lines. Be an air-head and have fun with it.)
- JEANIE (F) Another student, from a very rich family and is very "uppity". Purely a city girl.
- SNAKE (F) Another student, a very tough girl from the inner city who's real name is Susan. She wears a lot of leather and talks tough. She also does not like snakes.
- PAULA (F) Another student, a hippie and in love with all the animals of the world. She feels that they are her brothers and sisters. She is always bringing on animals she has found in the jungle.

ANITA (F) Yet another student, very smart and knows all the scientific names of everything. Rather annoying to the others.

EXTRAS: Extra female students, if desired.

NATIVES

CHIEF MAJUMBE (M) Large man who says little.

KIJITU (M) Little native and spokesman for the Chief.

TATU (M) Has been chosen to marry Kumi, the daughter of the chief. This is not a good thing!

SABA (F) Native who hangs out with Tatu. She and Tatu would like to be married but the Chief has other ideas.

WATANI (M) Native who has been sent to find Tatu by the Chief.

RAFIKI (F) Helps Watani find Tatu. She and Watani are an "item."

WITCH DOCTOR (M or F) A quack! (male or female)

KUMI (F) Ugly daughter of Chief Majumbe. Kumi means "10" in Swahili but she doesn't live up to the implication.

EXTRAS: Extra natives as guards, etc.

POACHERS

GWEN (F) Thinks she is a good bad guy, but she gives even bad guys a bad name.

LARRY (M) Brainless and has no clue he is!

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

A tiny island in the Indian Ocean, present day

Act II Scene 1

The Headhunter's village, the same day

Act II Scene 2

The Headhunter's village, the next day

PROPS

Act I

Binoculars/spy glass/telescope

Magnifying glass

Snake (rubber or live)

Candy bar wrapper

Rat (fake or live)

Necklace with small shrunken head

Dodo droppings (Refried beans are a good idea. It may sound gross, but it really creates humor. It can also be easily cleaned up.)

Act II

Spears

Rope

Bamboo bowling pins (See note.)

Coconut

Bed of coals (See note.)

Stick

Box or bamboo table

Conch shell or sound effect

Map

SOUND EFFECTS

Act II

Crash of things being knocked over

Explosion

Crash of chair breaking or similar sound

Vacuum cleaner

Conch shell horn

Splash

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

SARAH, JOHNNY, GWEN, LARRY wear usual hiking clothes. SNAKE is dressed in black leather, chains, with possible nose piercings, etc. The gang look. ANITA is dressed very scholarly, glasses, etc. and carries a note pad and possibly bird/plant identification books. DAPHNIE is dressed as if she is going to the beach. JEANIE is dressed more elegantly showing her "rich" status. PAULA is dressed as a hippie, bell bottom jeans, peace necklace, etc. PROFESSOR is dressed in cargo shorts, shirt that matches with pockets, long white socks, and a safari helmet.

The NATIVES are mostly dressed in grass skirts with the ladies wearing "jungle" type fabric tops. CHIEF MAJUMBE is in a grass skirt, lots of necklaces of bone, shrunken heads, shells, etc. He also wears a head dress of feathers and shells and grass leg and arm bands. KIJITU can wear tennis shoes with his grass skirt. WITCH DOCTOR wears a grass skirt and a feather head dress of some type. She/he also can wear items hung from her grass skirt such as pouches, grass tassels, etc. All the NATIVES can wear necklaces of a "jungle" nature and have their faces and/or chests painted with native designs.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The bowling pins are made from bamboo poles that have been cut just above the joint. With the joint as the bottom, the bamboo is filled with a small amount of rocks and then paper is stuffed inside to prevent the rocks from coming out. This weighs the bottom of the bamboo pins down so that they stand more easily. Fishing line is attached to the bottom of the pins so that, just in case the coconut doesn't knock them all down, the strings can be pulled to insure a strike. The bed of coals can be made by gluing foam rubber torn into small coal shapes onto a long narrow board. They are spray painted black, and then the tips are painted red to simulate coals. Small containers could line one or both sides with dry ice to create smoke. Tie the bed of coals to two long bamboo poles to aid in carrying it on stage.

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ACT I

SETTING: *The scene opens to a clearing in the jungle of an isolated island in the Indian Ocean. There are trees and bushes around the stage. If possible there are large rocks around to be used as seats. There is an exit up center hidden by trees and bushes.*

AT RISE: *SAFARI GROUP enters. JOHNNY is leading followed by SARAH and the GIRLS. PROFESSOR is all over the place making an in-depth search for the Dodo bird.*

JOHNNY: Hold up.

PROFESSOR: Do you see one?

JOHNNY: No, I think we need to stop, so that everyone can catch up.

SARAH: But everyone's here.

JOHNNY: **(Looking.)** Oh, so they are. Well, since we've stopped, we might as well rest. **(To everyone.)** We'll rest here.

DAPHNIE: It's about time.

SNAKE: What are you talking about, we've only been hiking for twenty minutes.

DAPHNIE: Oh, no wonder I'm so tired.

JEANIE: I would have never agreed to come on this . . . this . . . safari if I would have known there weren't going to be any Holiday Inns.

PAULA: But out here we can be one with nature. We can clear our mind of unwanted stress and call on our inner soul to heal ourselves.

JEANIE: The only one I want to call is room service.

SARAH: **(To JOHNNY.)** How far do you think we have come?

JOHNNY: About a mile.

SARAH: Only a mile! We will never get anywhere at this pace.

JOHNNY: Well, you insisted on bringing all those girls along.

SARAH: I couldn't let my father go on this safari alone, and I had already told them where I teach, The Last Chance School for Girls, that I would teach summer school, so the only thing left for me to do was to bring them along. I'm sure it will be a great experience for the girls.

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JOHNNY: Well, some of them don't exactly look equipped for a jungle safari.

SARAH: Don't worry about the girls, I think they will do just fine. **(Looking around.)** Where is my father? He has a tendency to wander off.

JOHNNY: He's over there.

(Pointing to PROFESSOR. JOHNNY keeps looking back where they came as if he was looking for someone.)

SARAH: Oh, good. I have to keep an eye on him. He tends to get wrapped up in his work and doesn't pay attention to where he is going. **(JOHNNY is looking back again.)** Why do you keep looking back?

JOHNNY: Looking back?

SARAH: Yes, I get the feeling that you think someone is following us.

JOHNNY: **(Feeling very uncomfortable.)** Following us? Who would be following us?

SARAH: That was my question.

JOHNNY: I don't know what you are talking about.

(HE moves off. PROFESSOR crosses to SARAH. SNAKE begins eating a candy bar.)

SARAH: Dad, are you sure this is the right island?

PROFESSOR: Of course, I would never make a mistake like that.

SARAH: But are you sure this just isn't a wild goose chase?

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry dear, but I don't think there are geese on the island.

SARAH: No, what I mean is, do you really think the sightings are true?

PROFESSOR: **(Excited.)** Sighting? There's been a sighting?

SARAH: Dad! I was wondering if you think the earlier sightings were true?

PROFESSOR: What sightings?

SARAH: Never mind.

JOHNNY: **(Crosses to SARAH.)** I need to backtrack.

SARAH: Backtrack, why?

JOHNNY: **(Searching for an excuse.)** I think I lost my watch. I need to go back and see if I can find it.

SARAH: But your watch is on your wrist.

JOHNNY: Oh... I mean, I lost my other watch. My back-up watch. It was given to me by my father. I couldn't go on without it. It means so much to me.

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SARAH: Look, we're paying you to help us search this island, we don't have time to have you backtrack every time you lose something.

JOHNNY: It will only take me a few minutes.

SARAH: Very well, we'll wait here. But don't be long.

JOHNNY: I won't.

(HE exits. ANITA moves close to SNAKE. SNAKE throws the candy bar wrapper on the ground.)

SNAKE: Do you mind? You are way too close to me.

ANITA: Do you have a problem with proximity?

SNAKE: No, I have a problem with you being too close.

JEANIE: I think we have been had! I would have never come if I knew what it was really going to be like.

PAULA: Then why did you come?

JEANIE: My parents were going to Europe for the summer and didn't know what to do with me.

PAULA: Why didn't they take you along?

JEANIE: They barely know I exist, besides I would have just been in their way. Why are you here?

PAULA: My parents thought it would be good for me to meet some different people, I have a hard time fitting in at school. ***(Looking at SNAKE.)*** And you?

SNAKE: What?

PAULA: Why are you here?

SNAKE: My parole officer made me.

DAPHNIE: You have a parole officer?

SNAKE: Sure, doesn't everyone?

PAULA: I don't.

DAPHNIE: What did you do to get a parole officer?

SNAKE: Beat up six guys.

ANITA: Six guys?

SNAKE: At the same time.

ANITA: Why did you beat them up?

SNAKE: Do you really need a reason to beat up guys? They won't be coming near me again.

PAULA: ***(Looking at DAPHNIE.)*** And why are you in summer school?

DAPHNIE: I checked the wrong box for summer school instead of Violence Prevention Class. And by the time I noticed the mistake, it was too late.

PAULA: ***(Looking at ANITA.)*** And what is your story?

ANITA: I always do summer school. It enlightens and enhances my overall education.

JEANIE: The only thing this summer school enhances are my blisters.

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PROFESSOR: What is that? (**GIRLS rush over to PROFESSOR.**) Why could it be. . .

SNAKE: Whoa! This is not something I want to see.

PROFESSOR: Droppings! We must make a closer examination to determine what left the droppings.

SNAKE: You can make your droppings determination without me. I don't do droppings.

SARAH: Dad, do you think it could be?

PROFESSOR: (**Examines the droppings with his magnifying glass.**) Yes! Yes, I think it is droppings of the Dodo.

PAULA: Wow! Dodo droppings!

SNAKE: Well, that kills lunch.

PROFESSOR: This proves the sightings. The Dodo bird is not extinct. This could be the most important discovery of the year, maybe the century. We must find and document its existence and prove it to the world.

ANITA: I thought we were searching for endangered species?

PROFESSOR: I think we can now classify the Dodo bird as an endangered species.

ANITA: But Professor Livingston, the raphus cucullatus . . .

JEANIE: The what?

ANITA: (**To JEANIE.**) The raphus cucullatus, that's the scientific name for the Dodo bird, everyone knows that. (**To PROFESSOR.**) Anyway, the raphus cucullatus only lived on the island of Mauritius and hasn't been seen since 1681.

PROFESSOR: Yes, yes Anita, but it has been rumored that several ships captured Dodo birds and took them on their ships as food. There are several accounts where the ships landed on other islands where some birds escaped and fled into the jungle. I believe that . . . that . . . Oh my, what was I talking about?

ANITA: The Dodo bird.

PROFESSOR: Oh yes. I believe that some Dodo birds exist on this island. Very little is known about this island, and its wildlife hasn't been disturbed by man.

DAPHNIE: You mean we are the first people on this island?

PROFESSOR: Well, not exactly, Daphnie. Others have explored this island, but they never returned.

GROUP: What?

PROFESSOR: Now, now, there is nothing to worry about. I am sure we are all safe.

SARAH: (**Taking PROFESSOR to the side. Girls try to overhear their conversation.**) Dad, why didn't you tell me about this? I am responsible for these girls.

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PROFESSOR: Sorry Sarah, but it slipped my mind. Besides, I don't believe the rumors about the headhunters.

GIRLS: Headhunters!

SARAH: Now girls, I am sure we have nothing to worry about. (**Pulls PROFESSOR further aside.**) Dad, why didn't you tell me about the headhunters?

PROFESSOR: What headhunters?

SARAH: The ones that might be on this island.

PROFESSOR: Oh, those. Slipped my mind.

SARAH: Then why do you think the others didn't return?

PROFESSOR: Who?

SARAH: The other explorers.

PROFESSOR: Oh them! It was probably malaria.

GIRLS: Malaria!

SARAH: Girls, please. (**Pulls PROFESSOR further yet to the side.**) Why didn't you tell me about the malaria?

PROFESSOR: Slipped my mind.

SARAH: Is there anything else that slipped your mind?

PROFESSOR: How would I know? (**Moves off.**)

JEANIE: Isn't malaria spread by mosquitoes?

SNAKE: Yeah, like the one on Daphnie's arm.

(DAPHNIE screams and swats at the mosquitoes. SNAKE laughs.)

SARAH: Now girls, we have to stick together if we are going to make it through this. The boat won't return for a week, so it would be better if we tried to get along. I am sure that we are safe.

ANITA: But Miss Livingston, what about the headhunters?

SNAKE: And the malaria?

JEANIE: And no hotels?

PROFESSOR: There's no fun without a little risk.

(GIRLS break out into ad lib, "You call this fun?" "Headhunters are not my idea of fun." "Mosquitoes infested with malaria is not fun." "There are no hotels." etc.)

SARAH: Girls, girls. Now calm down. (**To PROFESSOR.**) Dad, maybe you better use the radio to call the boat so we can take the girls back.

PROFESSOR: Radio?

SARAH: Yes, the radio. Don't tell me you didn't bring a radio.

PROFESSOR: Completely slipped my mind to bring the radio.

DAPHNIE: We are going to die. (**Starts crying.**)

SARAH: We are not going to die. **(To DAPHNIE.)** Daphnie, I want you to stop crying right now. It is not going to help.

SNAKE: Yeah, I heard that tears draw mosquitoes.

DAPHNIE: What?

SARAH: That is not true. Now Susan, stop it.

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