

PULLYUPULLUS

A strict rule prevents Water Creatures from having anything to do with Land Creatures. Despite this, Water Creature Boko the hippopotamus becomes friends with Land Creature Sungusungu the trickster hare. Together they seek a way to get rid of their terrible rulers – the leopard, king of land creatures and the crocodile, queen of water creatures.

Characters and Performers

Boko – hippopotamus, a Water Creature, narrator

CQ (Chatu Quartet) – 4 pythons in one, Water Creatures, trusted assistants to Mambasa Queen of Water Creatures, enforcers of her will. They speak in unison in four voices, or two at a time, as follows:

CQ Voices 1 – 4 (voices from all four pythons)

CQ Voices 1 & 2 (voices from pythons 1 and 2)

CQ Voices 2 & 3 (voices from pythons 2 and 3)

CQ Voices 3 & 4 (voices from pythons 3 and 4)

CQ Voices 4 & 1 (voices from pythons 4 and 1)

Cowing-Kaa – crabs, Water Creatures, army of Mambasa Queen of Water Creatures

C-Kaa 1

C-Kaa 2

C-Kaa 3

Chatty Chura – frogs, Water Creatures, allies of hippopotamus Boko

C Chura 1

C Chura 2

C Chura 3

Cruising Korongo – cranes, Creatures of the Air

C Korongo 1, narrator

C Korongo 2

C Korongo 3

Creatures of the Bushes

Creatures of the Grass

Creatures of the Rocks

Creatures of the Trees

DoaDoa – leopard, Ruler of Land Creatures

Gwasi – warthog, a Land Creature

Kanga – guinea fowl, Land Creature

Kadufi – turtle, a Little Water Creature, friend of hippopotamus Boko

Kafisima (a.k.a Kafisi Maji) – Otter, a Little Water Creature, friend of hippopotamus Boko

Kakunga – eel, a Little Water Creature, friend of hippopotamus Boko

Karasa – mongoose, a Land Creature

Kenge – monitor lizard, Land Creature

Komba – bush baby, Land Creature

Land Creature Voices

L C Voice 1

L C Voice 2

LiFisi – hyena, Land Creature Victim

Mambasa – crocodile, Ruler of Water Creatures

Mbweha – fox, a Land Creature, also a narrator

Musicians

Nipping Nyigu – hornets

N Nyigu 1, narrator

N Nyigu 2

N Nyigu 3

Nyegerere – honey badger, a Land Creature, narrator

Other Land Creatures

Other Water Creatures, big and little

Paring Panya – rats

P Panya 1

P Panya 2

P Panya 3

Searing Siafu – army ants

S Siafu 1, narrator

S Siafu 2

S Siafu 3

Sungusungu (a.k.a S’Sungu) – trickster hare, a Land Creatur

Tumbili – monkey, a Land Creature, narrator

Land and Water Creatures perform stories of DoaDoa and Mambasa and their lives under the two rulers. Besides acting out, they also narrate the stories. A note about the narrators, and Sungusungu. The narrators consist of Water Creature Boko and several Land Creatures, with the conspicuous absence of Sungusungu the trickster hare. One would expect that given her stature as the trickster and one of two main characters, the other being Boko, she would be a narrator. It's, however, precisely because of her fame and notoriety as the trickster that I decided she should not be a narrator. She is better off to have others talk, in narration, about her than for her to talk about herself and/or others. That, it seemed to me, would sustain her stature as the driving force behind events. It is a mark of the importance of a character when he or she is a persistent subject of conversation or stories by others. Such is the case with Sungusungu.

Act One: Scene One

To music by Musicians, performers and musicians troop toward the stage, in a festive spirit in masks and costumes that represent Land and Water Creatures. They carry a thick, long rope, and red and blue sashes. Two of the performers represent the main

characters, the trickster hare Sungusungu, a Land Creature and the hippopotamus Boko, a Water Creature.

Performers sing. Musicians accompany them on musical instruments.

Pullyupullus Pullyupullus Pullyupullus Pullyupullus Aheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee Ahee
Ahee Aheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
Pullyupullus Pullyupullus Pullyupullus Pullyupullus
Aheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee Ahee Ahee Aheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
Pullyupullus Pullyupullus Pullyupullus.....

Performer land and water creatures stop and ask audience members to help carry the rope. Near the stage, they thank the audience members, inviting them back to their seats. Music fades.

BOKO

(to the audience) Welcome to our second Pullyupullus festival. You must be wondering what is the festival is about. I'll tell you.

Boko drags the rope and the red and blue sashes to show the audience.

But in case you're also wondering what *(shows them)* those are for, I won't tell you just yet. You'll see for yourselves.

To understand our festival you need first to know our story. The story of Water Creatures and Land Creatures. A story that has become part of our famous Pullyupullus festival. A story we'll share with you as we have with other guests to our festival in the past. You'll learn as others have, I'm sure, from our story.

Musicians provide a very brief musical riff, as interlude before Boko begins the story. Music stops. Boko begins.

Not long ago when I Boko the hippopotamus was still only a Water Creature, before I became a Land Creature too, we had a ruler.

Musicians drape a crocodile costume on the performer who will play the role of Mambasa. The performer assumes the formidable stature of Mambasa Ruler of Water Creatures. The Water Creature performers react to him in a fitting show of fear and respect.

Mambasa the Crocodile, Ruler of Water Creatures!

Going back in time, Water Creatures show the rule of the Mambasa. They sing, with Mambasa leading, the propaganda song compelling Water Creatures to keep away from Land Creatures. Musicians offer musical accompaniment.

MAMBASA Keep away from

W CREATURES Land creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures

MAMBASA Away from

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures

MAMBASA From

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures

MAMBASA Have nothing to do with

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA Nothing to do with

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA To do with

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA Do with

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA With

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures....

The singing voices fade as Land Creatures narrate below. Musicians stop their accompaniment. Nyegere – honey badger, Tumbili – monkey, and Gwasi – warthog, address the audience.

NYEGERE *(to the audience)* And for Ruler of Land Creatures, we had *(fearfully, to the audience)* DoaDoa the Leopard!

Land Creature performers look on, with a fitting sense of dread, as Musicians drape a leopard costume on the performer who will play DoaDoa.

TUMBILI *(to the audience)* DoaDoa and his notorious moods!

Going back in time, Land Creatures show the rule of DoaDoa who is in one of his terrible moods, striking and snarling at anyone within reach. Land Creatures cover from him. DoaDoa paces up and down and around in his bad mood. Out of his earshot, Land Creatures discuss, keeping an eye on DoaDoa.

GWASI *(to other Land Creatures)* What a terrible mood he is in!

Sungusungu the hare addresses her fellow Land Creatures.

S'SUNGU *(discreetly)* That's why you should have listened to me and not made him Ruler. *(shrugs, sighs)* All I can do now is to try and put him in a better mood, as I've done before, again and again. *(to herself)* Which won't fix the problem. *(to Land Creatures)* I'll try something.

KARASA No, don't try anything! You'll only make things worse.

Sungusungu launches into an impetuous comical dance for DoaDoa.

DOADOA *(to Sungusungu)* What's the matter with you?

Sungusungu throws a cheeky glance at other land creatures.

S'SUNGU *(to DoaDoa)* Just a little entertainment ...to lighten things up...

DOADOA *(to Sungusungu)* STOP! You're making me dizzy.

Sungusungu stops dead. DoaDoa sneers at the mortified Land Creatures.

(to Land Creatures) I deserve to be more important than to rule over the miserable lot of you.

Sungusungu again quickly glances at other land creatures.

S'SUNGU (to DoaDoa) But you're important. We'll show you how important.
Sungusungu signals to the Land Creatures who proceed to sing DoaDoa's praise song to their Ruler, to musical accompaniment by Musicians.

L CREATURES DoaDoa, DoaDoa
Mighty One, DoaDoa
Strong One, DoaDoa
Power-FULL, DoaDoa!

DoaDoa, DoaDoa
Mighty One....
Singing continues in the background.

S'SUNGU And you rule over all sorts of fabulous creatures.

DOADOA (scoffs at Sungusungu) What fabulous creatures?
Land Creatures stop their singing. DoaDoa turns away in disgust, pacing away from Land Creatures. Sungusungu quickly takes the opportunity to brief the Land Creatures what they should do next to improve DoaDoa's mood.

S'SUNGU (to DoaDoa, daringly) What fabulous creatures you ask? We'll show you that too.

NYEGERE Sungusungu arranged a show for DoaDoa. And what a show!
Sungusungu calls out loudly.

S'SUNGU Creatures of the Trees! Homage to our Ruler, one and only DoaDoa!
Creatures of the trees fabulously parade by. They sing the praise song to DoaDoa, to music from the musicians.
Land Creatures call out, with Sungusungu, the various creatures

L CREATURES Creatures of the Bushes!
Creatures of the bushes parade by, singing DoaDoa's praises.

L CREATURES Creatures of the Rocks!
Creatures of the Rocks parade by singing the praise song.

L CREATURES Creatures of the grass!
Creatures of the Grass parade by. The show and the adulation from the various Land Creatures seem to lift DoaDoa's mood.

L CREATURES Creatures of the Air!
Silence. Land Creatures stare in vain at the sky. Sungusungu looks around at a loss. DoaDoa frowns, turns his attention to the Land Creatures.

DOADOA (to Sungusungu) Creatures of the Air? How can I be ruler of Creatures of the Air?
(pause) Their world is up in the sky, out of reach.

S'SUNGU (quickly) True, but when they get hungry, thirsty or sleepy, where do they go?
Sungusungu glances at the other land creatures. Karasa – Mongoose – responds right on cue.

KARASA (to DoaDoa) Back on land!

GWASI So you rule over them, too.

DOADOA (*sneers at Sungusungu.*) Creatures of the Air come and go as they please. They rule themselves. Have you thought of that?

NYEGERE (to the audience) The idea that he could not be Ruler of Creatures of the Air plunged DoaDoa in an even worse mood in the next few days. In that mood he punished, at the slightest provocation, one Land Creature after another. Many were the victims of his vicious mood.

Through narration and demonstration, Land Creatures present a flashback to the punishment DoaDoa meted out to the Land Creatures in the time of his terrible mood.

TUMBILI (to the audience) He sent one unfortunate Land Creature victim into the underground warren of the army ants – the Searing Siafu.

Back in time, a murderous DoaDoa condemns LiFisi – hyena.

DOADOA (LiFisi) Off to the Searing Siafu you go!

LIFISI (*pleads*) No, no. Don't send me to the fierce army ants! No, no! Not the Searing Siafu.

NYEGERE (to the audience) He ordered another into the dark cave of the Nipping Nyigu – the hornets.

Back in time, raging DoaDoa closes in on Kanga – guinea fowl.

DOADOA (to Kanga) Yes, yes, yes. To the the Nipping Nyigu with you.

KANGA Please, please, spare me the Nipping Nyigu.

A simmering DoaDoa advances on Kenge – monitor lizard, who retreats in mortal terror.

MBWEHA (to the audience) DoaDoa sent another hapless victim to the pit of the Nibbling Inge – the Scorching Scorpions.

KENGE (*begs*) Not the Nibbling Inge. Not the Scorching Scorpions. No, no, no.

DoaDoa allows himself a small, wicked smile.

DOADOA (to Kenge) Yes, yes. To the Nibbling Scorpions you shall go!

NYEGERE (to the audience) DoaDoa ordered another victim into a hole full of Biting Buibui.

Back in time DoaDoa, his anger far from fulfilled, accosts Komba – bush baby.

KOMBA No, No. Not the Biting Buibui! Not the Biting Buibui! No, no!

DOADOA (to Komba) Yes. To the Biting Spiders I'll send you!

NYEGERE (to the audience) He had never been in a worse mood.

TUMBILI (to the audience) Again we discussed what to do.

GWASI (to Sungusungu, back in time) Something has to be done.

KARASA There is only one of us who can think of what to...

Land Creatures all look at SunguSungu.

S'SUNGU *(sighs)* ... can think of what to do. *(wearily)* Always me, always me. *(to herself.)* It's exhausting being a trickster. *(to Land Creatures)* All right, I'll think of what to do. But to think —

GWASI ...you need to be alone.

TUMBILI *(to the audience)* Sungusungu had well known strange thinking habits.

S'SUNGU *(back in time, to Land Creatures)* And I think best—

KARASA ... when on a journey.

Sungusungu sets out on a journey.

MBWEHA *(to the audience)* Word of Sungusungu's mission spread.

Back in time, far and near Land Creatures, Nyegere, Tumbili and Mbweba among them, pop up on either side of Sungusungu as she makes her journey. Sungusungu notices the snooping Land Creatures

S'SUNGU *(irritated)* So much for being alone!

Nyegere nudges Tumbili who is nearer Sungusungu.

NYEGERE *(to Tumbili)* As her if she has thought of something yet?

TUMBILI *(to Sungusungu)* Have you thought of something yet?

S'SUNGU *(curt)* No.

Nyegere turns to Mbweba, who is also near Sungusungu.

NYEGERE *(to Mbweba)* Ask her where she's going.

MBWEHA *(to Sungusungu)* Where are you going?

S'SUNGU *(to Mbweba)* For a long, long walk.

NYEGERE *(to Mbweba)* Ask her if we can come along.

MBWEHA *(to Sungusungu)* Can we come along?

S'SUNGU No.

Nyegere turns to Tumbili.

NYGERE *(to Tumbili)* Ask her why not?

Sungusungu stops. To all Land Creatures, near and far.

S'SUNGU Because. I want. To. Be. Alone. To. Think.

NYEGERE *(to Tumbili)* Ask her, to think about what?

TUMBILI *(to Nyegere, annoyed)* You ask her. You see the mood she is in.

Nyegere turns to Mbweba.

NYEGERE *(to Mbweba)* Ask her, to think about what?

S'SUNGU *(to the Land Creatures)* Don't ...ask me...anything!

Tumbili turns to address Nyegere and Mbweba, but careful Sungusungu doesn't hear.

TUMBILI *(mocking)* Leave her alone. She's a *thinker*.

Nyegere, Tumbili and Mbweba and other peering Land Creatures disappear, grumbling, out of sight. Silence descends, to Sungusungu's relief.

Act One: Scene Two

BOKO *(to the audience)* East of Land of Land Creatures was where we, the Water Creatures, lived.

Back in time, Water Creatures, led by their Ruler Mambasa, sing their chant.

MAMBASA Keep away from

W CREATURES Land creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA Away from

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA From

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA Have nothing to do with

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA Nothing to do with

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land Creatures, Land Creatures.

MAMBASA To do with

W CREATURES Land Creatures, Land...

Water Creatures exit, their chant fading. Boko ambles up and down the river.

BOKO *(to the audience)* I loved wandering about, to the delight of Little Water Creature friends to whom I brought back interesting stories.

Back in time, excited Little Water Creature friends, KaFisi Maji or KaFisima – river otter, KaDufi – river turtle, and KaKunga – eel, greet Boko as he returns from his wanderings. He gives each of the Little Water Creatures a ride.

KAFISIMA *(breathless)* Tell us where you went today!

BOKO The western riverbank.

KADUFI *(wide-eyed)* The western bank...?

KAFISIMA *(gasps)* The one nearest land of Land Creatures?

BOKO Yes. But a big swamp lies between the river and their land.

KADUFI Yes, the swamp.

KAKUNGA *(in great alarm)* Wait a moment! Don't tell us you went into the swamp. *(Whispers.)* Did you?

Boko enjoys the reaction of the Little Water Creatures.

- BOKO *(smiles)* I did.
 Chuckles at their shocked expressions.
To get to the riverbank.
- L W CREAT *(over each other)* And ...? What did you see?
- BOKO Beyond the riverbank, I saw trees – not small ones or stunted like those in the swamp, but giant ones. And I saw magnificent cliffs and mountains that shimmered in the distance.
- KADUFI Did you see ... any Land Creatures?
- BOKO Yes. Colourful birds and butterflies.
- KAFISIMA No. Not those. We see them all the time, too. *(looks around)* Did you see the bigger Land Creatures?
- Boko casts anxious looks around, then turns to his three little friends.*
- BOKO Not one.
- KAKUNGA You were right next to their land. You must have seen at least one.
- Pause.*
- BOKO I did.
- ALL THREE We knew it!
- BOKO *(looks around)* Hush. *(excitedly)* I saw them jumping from tree to tree.
- KAFISIMA *(to KaKunga and KaDufi)* Those must be the tree climbing ones we've heard. Did you speak to them? Did they speak to you? Did they see you?
- BOKO Nooo. I didn't speak to them. No, they didn't speak to me. And maybe they saw me, maybe they didn't.
- KAKUNGA Did you step out of the swamp onto the riverbank?
- BOKO *(quickly)* No.
- Pause.*
- KADUFI Why must we keep away from Land Creatures?
- BOKO *(to KaDufi)* Hush.
- (to the audience)* Not many days later, I got a message....

Back in time, the Chatu (Pythons) Quartet enter with a message for Boko; four pythons in one – in four coils and four heads that seem to share one body. Mambasa's trusted assistants, they enforce her will over the Water Creatures. They move together and as if they share one mind, they speak together in four chilling voices, or in two voices at a time, in a chorus-like sing-song manner. They now speak in unison in their four voices to Boko, who is alarmed to see them.

BOKO *(to the audience)* From the sinister Chatu Quartet themselves. Mambasa's trusted assistants. Four pythons in one body, speaking together like a chorus in four voices, or two at a time.

CQ Voices 1 - 4 *(to Boko)* Mambasa would like a word with you.

BOKO *(to the Chatu Quartet)* What for?

CQ Voices 1 - 4 We'll know soon enough, won't we?

The Chatu Quartet exit. Boko follows. Watching Little Water Creatures exit in the opposite direction.

Act One: Scene Three

Land of Land Creatures. Desolate stretch. Sungusungu is on her journey, alone at last relaxed in the silence.

S'SUNGU Alone at last.

A gaggle of chatter from unseen Land Creatures breaks out around her.

Oh no.

Sungusungu tenses, stops, listens to voices (L C Voice 1 & 2) coming to her from unseen Land Creatures.

L C VOICE 1 If anyone can do anything about DoaDoa's bad mood, you know who that would be. Oh, such a little thing and so clever, that Sungusungu.

Sungusungu grins.

L C VOICE 2 I'm not sure anyone can do anything.

L C VOICE 1 She *will* think of something, you will see.

L C VOICE 2 You think so?

L C VOICE 1 No. I know so!

The voices drift away. Sungusungu stands in thought.

S'SUNGU *(speaks her thoughts)* "I wish I were as confident. *(sighs)* I have much to figure out about my true mission. Which is to show how little DoaDoa deserves to be Ruler. The only way we can get rid of him.

She resumes her journey, in a pessimistic slump.

"It *is* hard to be the *clever* trickster. Everybody expects me to know everything about everything, to have a solution to everything. To be able to move earth and the heavens in search of what to do and to...

She stops dead in her tracks. Musicians play the trickster's musical beat, to signal an idea coming into Sungusungu's head.

"Mmh, now there is a thought. *(mulls the word)* Heavens... Heavens equals skies, which equals air, which equals creatures of the air, which equals Korongo – my friends the cranes! *(chuckles)* Now why didn't I think of that before?"