

Master Man • By Aaron Shepard

Taken from the picture book *Master Man: A Tall Tale of Nigeria*, told by Aaron Shepard, illustrated by David Wisniewski, HarperCollins, 2000. Copyright © 1997, 2000, 2004 Aaron Shepard. May be copied for any noncommercial purpose. *Shettu* is pronounced “SHET-oo.” *Shadusa* is pronounced “sha-DOO-sa.” Visit www.aaronshep.com.

When Shettu got home, she told Shadusa what had happened.

“Master Man?” yelled Shadusa. “He can’t call himself that! *I’m* Master Man. I’ll have to teach that fellow a lesson.”

“Oh, husband, don’t!” pleaded Shettu. “If the baby is so strong, think what the father must be like. You’ll get yourself killed.”

But Shadusa said, “We’ll see about that!”

The next morning, Shadusa set out early and walked till he came to the well. He threw in the bucket—*splash*—then he pulled on the rope. But though he tugged and he heaved, he could not lift the bucket.

Just then the woman with the baby walked up.

“Wait a minute,” said Shadusa. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“I’m getting water, of course,” answered the woman.

“Well, you can’t,” said Shadusa. “The bucket won’t come up.”

The woman set down the baby, who quickly pulled up the bucket and filled his mother’s calabash.

“Wah!” yelled Shadusa. “How did he do that?”

“It’s easy,” said the woman, “when your father is Master Man.”

Shadusa gulped and thought about going home. But instead he thrust out his chest and said, “I want to meet this fellow, so I can show him who’s the *real* Master Man.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t do that,” said the woman. “He devours men like you! But suit yourself.”

So Shadusa followed the woman back to her compound. Inside the fenced yard was a gigantic fireplace, and beside it was a pile of huge bones.

“What’s all this?” asked Shadusa.

“Well, you see,” said the woman, “our hut is so small that my husband must come out here to eat his elephants.”

Just then they heard a great ROAR, so loud that Shadusa had to cover his ears. Then the ground began to shake, until Shadusa could hardly stand.

“What’s that?” he shouted.

“That’s Master Man.”

“Oh, no!” wailed Shadusa. “You weren’t fooling. I’ve got to get out of here!”