

## **In The Beginning...**

Country: United Kingdom

Category: Short Form

Company: Social Broadcasts

Author: Unknown

Producer, directors: Lucia Scazzocchio and Hawa Khan

Sound engineer: Lucia Scazzocchio

Language: English

Length: 10:00

## **SUMMARY**

The most profound human questions are those that give rise to creation myths: Who are we? Why are we here? What is the purpose of our lives and our deaths? How should we understand our place in the world? 'In the Beginning..' brings to life some of the ancestral creation myths and stories that have been an integral foundation of the cultural identity of different peoples across the globe. These tales explain fundamental principles across different cultures as well as providing deep insight into some of the traditions and rituals passed down through generations. They are a universal take on interpersonal relationships and perspectives, lessons on how creative processes can work and ideas of climate change and balance with nature. Adapted and dramatized with humour for young audiences, this series aims to be as engaging and educational for adults, with clever writing by Hawa Khan bringing her West African griot heritage into the mix with a modern twist. We have selected Episode 7: The Council of The Orishas An adaptation of the Yoruba canon, describing how humans were created; the coming of a great flood; and how Oshun, the goddess of fertility ensured that women are equal members of society. (The Yoruba are an ancient people with roots that date back over 2000 years. They were the rulers of the Oyo Kingdom, a West African Empire covering from what is now West Nigeria to Zaire and Sudan. The main city of Ile-Ife cultivated a great cultural tradition.)

# In The Beginning...

## The Council of the Orishas

Written and produced as part of a series of 10 creation stories from around the world by Lucia Scazzocchio and Hawa Khan (Social Broadcasts)

### **Hawa the storyteller**

In the beginning, there was nothing but sky above and waters below. And this was ruled by the mighty Orisha, the Council of Gods. Olorun ruled the sky and Olokun ruled waters below. One day another god Obatala thought that there should be more than sky and water.

### **Obatala**

I know what we need. I'm going to create dry land. I wonder how to start?

I know I'll ask Olorun, Olorun, I'm thinking of creating dry land, have you got any advice?

### **Olorun**

Dry land eh? You should talk to my son Orunmila he's the wisest god of the Orisha. I'm sure he'll be able to give you some tips.

### **Obatala**

Right, yeah, okay then. Oh wise Orunmila, I was told you might be able to help. I'd like to create dry land, so that plants and forests could grow and then maybe some animals...

### **Orunmila**

That doesn't sound like a bad idea. We're going to need a few things. Listen carefully. You're going to need a gold chain, long enough to reach below. So pretty long.

### **Obatala**

Right, one gold chain. Got it.

### **Orunmila**

You'll need a snail's shell, filled with sand.

### **Obatala**

A snail's shell, sand right?

**Orunmila**

Yeah, a hen, a white one. A black cat. A palm nut

**Obatala**

Palm nut. Got it.

**Orunmila**

And you're going to need a bag to put it all in.

**Obatala**

Yeah, I've got the shoulder bag right here.

**Hawa the storyteller**

Once Obatala had collected everything and put it in his bag, he hung the gold chain from the corner of the sky and began to climb down.

**Obatala**

(Sings) I'm going down, to create some land!

**Hawa the storyteller**

And he went down and down and down.

**Orunmila**

Obatala, can you hear me down there? Scatter the sand!

**Obatala**

I don't need a hand!

**Orunmila**

Scatter the sand from the shell! And then let the hen out of the bag!

**Obatala**

Let the hen go, right!

**Hawa the storyteller**

So wherever the sand landed, it formed dry land. The land extended as far as he could see.

**Obatala**

I will call this hill up here Ife. What an awesome landscape. Orunmila, this is brilliant. But what do I do this palm nut?

**Orunmila**

Put it in the ground and plant it!

**Obatala**

Oh wow! Hey Orunmila! Olorun! Have you seen these trees aren't they spectacular? Nearly reaching up to you! I've still got the cat?

**Orunmila**

She's for you. To keep you company down there!

**Obatala**

Oh that is so nice. Here kitty kitty kitty.

**Hawa the storyteller**

Some months passed and Obatala and his cat had explored all the land that he had created.

**Obatala**

Now look kitty, you're a good cat, but the conversation is a little one sided. I need someone more stimulating to keep me company. I'm going to make some people out this clay. Yeah, that's a great idea.

Right? What do I need? A large mixing bowl, two spoons of earth, two spoons of clay.

Oh, I'm going to have a glass of palm wine while I do this. Mmmm not bad, delicious.

Now I'll mold these, here's a leg for you, there you go, two heads. Where does this bit go? Oh yeah, there we are. One arm there. A leg on your head. That's it, that's it. I think I've done a good job here.

Olorun! Hey Olorun!,

**Olorun**

Obatala it's four in the morning, what do you want?

**Obatala**

I've been busy creating these humans here and I would like you to breathe life into these marvelous creations.

**Olorun**

There you go. Can I go back to bed now?

**Obatala**

Thanks. Oh my head, I think I need to sleep it off, strong stuff that palm wine. See you in the morning new creations.

**Hawa the storyteller**

The next morning Obatala woke up with a terrible headache.

**Obatala**

Oh what's that, oh no, oh dear what have I done? It was the wine! Oh no I shouldn't have drunk while I was creating, oh dear, oh dear, this is terrible, I'll never drink again! These beings are all inside out and upside down.

Right start again, no palm wine this time. One part sand, some mud, some water, mix it up and let's get creating! Ah yes that's better, ooh lovely!

Olorun! Olorun! Could you breathe life into this new batch of beings I've made?

**Olorun**

Didn't I breathe life into some beings last night?

**Obatala**

Can you breathe life into these beings please?

**Olorun**

There you go.

**Obatala**

They look great. Fit, good looking! Oh, just like me!

**Hawa the storyteller**

So the humans began to populate the earth, build homes and then began to build cities. All the gods of the Orisha were happy with what Obatala had done and visited the land often. All the gods except for Olokun, the God of the waters.

**Olokun**

So it would appear that beings have been created, cities have been built and populations have grown without consulting me!

**Obatala**

Well, I was just..

**Olokun**

Whatever Obatala! I'll show you the power that is Olokun!

**Hawa The storyteller**

And so Olokun summoned the great waves of ocean and sent them surging across the land, wave after wave was unleashed until most of the land was under water and many of the people drowned. Some people managed to save themselves by climbing to the top of high mountains. They called up to Eshu god of the wind, to report what was happening to the other gods.

**Eshu**

What's going on here?

**Hawa The storyteller**

So Eshu went up to the Orisha to speak with gods who were all still in a meeting while the earth was in chaos and under water.

**Eshu**

So I saw some humans who had escaped your big flood Olokun and they asked me to ask you whether or not the water's going to stop and if they will get the land back?

**Orunmila**

I'll sort this out!

**Hawa the storyteller**

And so ended the great flood. So you see the importance of including everyone?

**Sierra (child listener)**

But no one ever listens to me.

**Hawa the storyteller**

Well, my sweet Sierra, they should be listening to you. Because you hold all the power

**Sierra (child listener)**

Really?

**Quincy (child listener) But**

she's a girl?

**Hawa the storyteller**

Yes! The Orisha were still in that meeting you know, it was not quite done yet. The goddess Oshun, the goddess of love, honeybees and lakes had something to say.

**Oshun**

May I say something?

**Obatala**

Oshun you have to wait your turn.

**Oshun**

I've waited!

**Olokun**

Yes, we have important things that don't concern you.

**Oshun**

What I have to say doesn't matter? I see. Noted. I will go. So my voice doesn't matter. What I say doesn't count for anything. I know what I'm going to do.

**Hawa The storyteller**

Oshun went back down to earth and gathered all the women together.

**Oshun**

Ladies, Are you fed up of being ignored, like I am? I've got a task for you. What I want you to do is, nothing. Anything that you would usually do, do not do! Even talking, we will stop. Every single thing. They want to treat us like we're invisible heh?. Well, that is what we will be!

**Hawa the storyteller**

And so, no meals were cooked, no babies were born. All the women everywhere stopped doing anything that would produce or bring about life.

**Man 1**

My wife is not even speaking to me. I'm so hungry. I've had nothing to eat. Have you seen the house? I don't even know how to clean.

**Man2**

I don't know how I'm going to go on if these women continue. Let's call a meeting. Let's get the gods down.

**Hawa the storyteller**



And so the men called a big meeting and all of the Orishas arrived.

### **Oshun**

It is my duty to make sure the voices of women are heard. It is my honor to be a female Orisha. Women are fundamental pillars of life, family, work and society. You see what is happening when you don't include us? When you do not appreciate, respect your women? I declare that we have a chair at the table. You must treat us as equals, cherished and loved, as the givers of life, we will use our voice and not be taken for granted! Ehe!

### **Hawa the storyteller**

From that day, the Orisha invited Oshun and all the other female deities to participate in all their meetings. Oshun, now that she was heard was content and everything began to flourish and grow again.