

The Return of the Baby Snatcher*

– a social drama

(with puppets, masks and pantomime)

by
Tom Lysaght

* translated from the Spanish by the playwright from his original script

NOTE: In the Andes of Peru, so many children die from dehydration caused by diarrhea that the legend of a Baby Snatcher has become prevalent among villagers there.

RETURN OF THE BABY SNATCHER

— an Andean Circus Drama

[Large backdrop curtain is topped by red lettering, saying:
"The Return of the Baby Snatcher"]

[A funeral procession of both young and old villagers enters. Some MOURNERS carry lit candles. Two carry a sheet like a banner. Bringing up the rear are two people carrying the tiny coffin of a baby. Behind the coffin walks the MOTHER wearing a black veil.]

[The funeral procession comes to a halt. The sheet is folded over what it has been concealing. The tiny coffin is set on the ground in front of the lump concealed by the sheet. Some of the MOURNERS bless themselves with the sign of the cross. The grieving MOTHER kneels and rests her head on the coffin.] The procession exits. MOTHER remains alone and motionless.]

[Enter the CHORUS — three village women wearing enormous full head masks of papier-mâché. On their backs they carry papooses that hold their babies. The women are whispering and gossiping to each other as they point at the MOURNING MOTHER. They nod their large head masks in disapproval.]

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE IS MIMED; NOT SPOKEN

CHORUS WOMAN ONE

(shaking head; miming)

Just like I told you. Didn't I say this would happen? This one was always busy with everything but her kids.

[The other two Women nod their heads in agreement]

CHORUS WOMAN TWO

(miming)

Always out dancing and partying and spending her money on clothes, dolling herself up. But do you think she ever spent a little on soap or detergent to clean her house or her kids?

CHORUS WOMAN THREE

(miming)

You said it. What a dirty house she keeps. No wonder her baby got sick and died.

[As they are gossiping, a PREGNANT MOTHER-TO-BE enters, escorted by her HUSBAND. They also are villagers and wearing the indigenous dress of the countryside. They too wear enormous head masks of papier-mâché. Over his head mask the HUSBAND wears an enormous *chullo* (Andean stocking hat with ear flaps). He is a comic Charlie Chaplinesque character, who enters pointing at his wife's large belly and nodding as if

to say, "See what I did?" The CHORUS is so busy gossiping it doesn't notice. The MOTHER-TO-BE overhears, grabs her belly, and trembling, turns to look at the grieving MOTHER.]
 [CHORUS WOMAN ONE signals to be quiet as she nods at the Pregnant Woman]

CHORUS
 (bowing in turn; miming)
 Good morning.

MOTHER
 (bowing; miming)
 Good morning, ladies.

[The MOTHER-TO-BE bows but once to the CHORUS, but the HUSBAND bows to each one, comically lifting up his ear flaps each time, as if tipping his hat.
 The MOTHER-TO-BE glances back at MOURNING MOTHER.]

CHORUS WOMAN ONE
 (to MOTHER-TO-BE; miming)
 Don't you worry about that.
 (gesturing toward coffin)
 You'll be a better mother than her.

CHORUS WOMAN TWO
 (patting her on back; miming)
 You'll be a good mother.

CHORUS WOMAN THREE
 (tapping MOTHER-TO-BE's belly;
 miming)
 Your baby will be healthy.

[The MOTHER-TO-BE nods her thanks and exits with her comical HUSBAND. The CHORUS of indigenous women begin to laugh and gossip about the couple as soon as they are gone. The MOTHER-TO-Be stops as she overhears but then continues on.]

[The CHORUS of women remove their babies from their papooses and forming a circle, caress the babies in an exaggerated and humorous manner as if showing off how well they care for their children. They exit the scene in this manner.]

[The NARRATOR enters. He is wearing a top hat and tails and carries a portable microphone. He addresses the audience.]

NARRATOR
 All you in the audience, let me ask you a question...
 (gestures at MOURNING MOTHER
 with coffin)
 Do you think this poor grieving mother did not love her baby?

[The MOURNING MOTHER make the sign of the cross as she prays over the coffin.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Do you think she didn't do everything humanly possible to save her child's life?

(circling Mother)

Of course she did! She loved her child! No mother could have loved her child more than this poor mother...

(shakes his head gravely)

But love isn't enough to save the life of a child.

(beat)

Knowledge is necessary too. A mother needs to love her child, yes, but she also needs knowledge of how to *care* for her child. With knowledge a mother can care for her child better.

(beat)

Yes, the Baby Snatcher exists! The Baby Snatcher is ignorance. The Baby Snatcher did indeed steal this child away.

[With a sweeping gesture the NARRATOR removes the sheet near the coffin. A group of amateur MUSICIANS – who play snare drum and cymbals – stand in the wings during the performance. The cymbals CLASH as the NARRATOR reveals the BABY SNATCHER, crouching and rubbing his hands greedily over the coffin. Sound of flies droning. The NARRATOR withdraws to the wings.]

[The Baby Snatcher wears a full head mask of papier-mâché with devil horns – or a stocking cap covers his face the way a terrorist or thief might. A pair of enormous eyes – those of a housefly – are attached on top. His costume is that of the Andean *diablo* (devil) dancer. His loose shirt is painted with toads & snakes. He's very dirty. MOURNING MOTHER exits.]

[The BABY SNATCHER picks up the baby coffin and tucks it under his arm. Approaching the audience in his crouched, stealthy posture, he begins to provoke them. He beckons to children in the audience and holds out the coffin, inviting them. The audience hisses and boos. He provokes them more and exits to a chorus of catcalls.]

[After a beat the pregnant MOTHER-TO-BE enters with her comical HUSBAND. Now she is *really* pregnant, so big she can hardly walk. The nervous and attentive HUSBAND runs back and forth behind her as if to catch her as she waddles along.

[Off to the side stands a two-dimensional plywood cow painted with long eyelashes and big smile. She has a cloth udder painted pink. A bucket of water is on the ground beside her.]

[The MOURNING MOTHER re-enters with a bunch of flowers and approaches the discarded sheet now marking her baby's grave.]

As she sets the flowers on the ground, the CHORUS of three indigenous women re-enter, still gossiping and pointing.]

[Suddenly the MOTHER-TO-BE goes into labor. Her comically nervous HUSBAND walks back and forth trying to decide what to do. Finally he assists her to ascend two small benches. Straddling the benches, she begins to sway precariously, while the MUSICIANS begin a dramatic drum roll.]

[As the MOTHER-TO-BE sways more and more, the HUSBAND clutches his head helplessly. The drum roll peaks with a clash of the cymbals and her BABY (a short actor wearing a knit sweater and shorts) somersaults between her legs.]

[As the BABY jumps to feet and opens his arms as if to say "Dah dum! Here I am!", the HUSBAND/FATHER removes the papier-mâché bald baby head from under the MOTHER's blouse (what was swelling her belly) and plops it over the baby's head.]

[Meanwhile the MOTHER descends the benches to sit on the ground. While the BABY lies in her lap and nurses, the HUSBAND/FATHER gives out cigars to the audience. He pounds his chest and then points proudly at the BABY.]

[The BABY SNATCHER enters stealthily to the SOUND of flies droning and garbage truck bells. As the CHORUS of women see him, they clutch the talismans around their necks and hurriedly exit. The BABY SNATCHER tramples the flowers on the grave and then throws them about. The NARRATOR re-enters.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The Baby Snatcher has returned. He has returned because the mothers did not listen to good advice.

(beat)

They didn't believe that in addition to love, a mother needs knowledge. Instead of acquiring knowledge, they preferred gossiping about others and clutching their good luck charms.]

[The audience, spurred on by actors in the wings, begins to boo the BABY SNATCHER and make catcalls. But the BABY SNATCHER gloatingly approaches the audience. He raises the tiny coffin over his head triumphantly, while inviting other children in the audience to enter it.]

[The new nursing MOTHER doesn't notice the BABY SNATCHER now approaching her and her new BABY with his coffin. Her HUSBAND also does not notice as he continues giving out cigars.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The Baby Snatcher has returned to the village homes, invited there by three evils, the three evils that are found in many homes.

[Just as the new MOTHER shifts her Baby to continue nursing, the BABY SNATCHER sneakily puts a baby bottle in her hand. The MOTHER looks up at the sky, as if thinking the bottle's arrival is a sign. She blesses herself, making the sign of the cross and the BABY SNATCHER slinks away.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

First, the Baby Snatcher is invited into homes by poor nutrition.

[The BABY SNATCHER holds up a large drawing of a sick baby with a bloated stomach holding a baby bottle. He proudly displays it to the audience, who boo him. Meanwhile, the NARRATOR, as if battling with the BABY SNATCHER, wields a large sketch of a mother nursing a healthy baby.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Breast milk is the best milk for a baby. Mother's milk contains nutrients that defeat many sicknesses. Next to mother's milk, store bought milk is a poor substitute. Failure to nurse a baby puts the baby in grave danger. Mother's milk is best for a baby. By nursing a baby receives love, security and good health from its mother – in addition to good nutrition. But we see what this new mother is doing instead...

[The new MOTHER continues feeding her baby with a bottle of milk. The CHORUS of village women re-enters. They continue gossiping about the new MOTHER. Smiling gleefully, the BABY SNATCHER exits the scene with his large sign of a sick baby.]

[The new nursing BABY with the bald head mask begins to cry fiercely. The new MOTHER tries to soothe him. She tries to burp him on her shoulder – to no avail. He continues crying.]

[Next she comically tries to rock the large BABY while his big head turns around and around. Then she feels his diapers to see if he is wet.]

[The HUSBAND/FATHER meanwhile is in the fields – near the plywood cow – working with his hand plow. When he hears the BABY wailing he drops his hand plow and runs comically toward the BABY, rotating his arms in all directions.]

[The BABY continues wailing and kicking his legs in the air in a funny manner. His parents don't know what to do to calm him. Whatever they attempt, the BABY SNATCHER interferes. When the FATHER runs with a kettle to boil water, the BABY SNATCHER hands him the cow's pail of water instead. He then attaches a big housefly to the nipple of the baby bottle before handing it to the MOTHER.]

[All the while the CHORUS laughs at and gossips about the new parents. The FATHER peeks under the diapers of the BABY, and as the Cymbals clash, dirty water, simulating diarrhea, squirts out. Suddenly the BABY looks very weak. More dirty water squirts out. The FATHER becomes more and more frantic. He doesn't know what to do. The BABY looks even sicker.]

[The NARRATOR steps forward to speak the dialogue of the actors who mime their words.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

"Oh my goodness!" cries the new Mother. "What is happening to my baby?"

MOTHER

(miming)

Oh my goodness! What's happening to my baby?

NARRATOR

"Oh my goodness!" mock the other women.

CHORUS

(laughing; miming)

Oh my goodness!

MOTHER

(miming)

What can I do!

CHORUS

(laughing; miming)

Oh my goodness!

MOTHER

(turns to Chorus; miming)

What can I do?

CHORUS WOMAN ONE

(miming)

Don't give it milk! He'll throw it up!

NARRATOR

"Don't give it milk," warns one women. "He'll throw it up!"

CHORUS WOMAN TWO

(miming)

Purge him with warm water!

CHORUS WOMAN THREE

(miming)

He has to pass the bad blood.

CHORUS WOMAN ONE

(miming)

Make his diapers really tight!

CHORUS WOMAN TWO

(miming)

Don't lay him on the ground!

CHORUS WOMAN THREE

(miming)

Make the diaper loose!

CHORUS WOMAN ONE

(miming)

Mak it tight!

CHORUS WOMAN THREE

(miming)

Loose!

CHORUS WOMAN ONE

(miming)

Tight!

CHORUS WOMAN THREE

Loose!

[The CHORUS, arguing and gesticulating, returns to its place downstage. Suddenly, dirty water, simulating diarrhea, also squirts out of the papooses on the Chorus women's backs. They immediately take off their papooses and lay their sick children on the ground. Nervously, they go about tending to their babies.]

[Smiling proudly about what he has done, the BABY SNATCHER slinks across the stage. He takes out a ruler and measures each of the three babies of the CHORUS; then he measures his tiny coffin. He nods his head with satisfaction and laughs.]

NARRATOR

Diarrhea is the second evil that invites the Baby Snatcher to the village, diarrhea caused by dehydration. Dehydration is a fatal enemy of children. Allow me to explain...

[The NARRATOR holds up a large drawing of a potted plant,

looking healthy as it is being watered by a watering can. Beneath it is a drawing of a healthy child, flexing his muscles. The Narrator approaches the audience.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

A baby needs to eat well. It needs to eat nutritious food, just as plant needs water. In order to be healthy a baby needs to eat food that nourishes its body. Then it will be like a well-watered plant... But

(beat)

...when we feed our babies with unsterilized baby bottles, washed with water that is not boiling, then we are inviting the Baby Snatcher right into our homes. Because unsterilized baby bottles, washed with water that is not boiling causes diarrhea.

[As the NARRATOR explains to the audience, the BABY SNATCHER kneels on the ground and furiously begins to draw his own sign. He gleefully holds up a drawing of a drooping plant in an unwatered pot. Beneath it is a drawing of a sick child sitting on a chamber pot. The audience hisses and boos.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

When a child has diarrhea, he cannot retain liquid in his body and he becomes dehydrated. A dehydrated child can die. He can die from the lack of water and salts in his body.

[The MOTHER and FATHER of the newborn sick baby become very agitated. It seems as if their BABY (the actor in knitted baby clothes wearing the bald head mask) is dying. At the same time, the three village women of the CHORUS are agitated as they frantically tend to their sick babies (dolls) lying on the ground.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

It is not only the newborn baby who is sick. The children of the other mothers become sick as well. Because instead of educating themselves how best to care for their children, these mothers prefer to gossip about others. For this reason their children become sick and the Baby Snatcher returns.

[The BABY SNATCHER stalks the sick babies. He is so excited to see so many sick children that he cannot decide which one to swoop down upon first. All the parents appear desperate.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

To finish the murderous work of the Baby Snatcher, the third evil rears its ugly head... Infectious disease!

MOTHER

(miming)

More water!

NARRATOR

(speaking all dialogue)

"More water," calls out the new Mother.

[The comical HUSBAND/FATHER runs in circles as he hurries to retrieve the kettle of boiling water. But the diabolical BABY SNATCHER snatches up the cow's pail of water. He takes the kettle from the FATHER and hands him the pail. The FATHER nods his thanks and hurries back to the listless BABY.]

CHORUS WOMAN ONE

(calling; miming)

The baby bottle!

[The FATHER hurries over to hand the WOMAN a baby bottle, but first the BABY SNATCHER attaches a housefly to the nipple.]

CHORUS WOMAN TWO

(calling; miming)

A blanket!

[Once again the comical FATHER hurries to help, crossing the stage, turning in circles to look for a blanket. The BABY SNATCHER indicates the dirty blanket draped over the plywood cow. The FATHER gratefully bows and delivers the blanket.]

[In the midst of the chaos on stage, the BABY SNATCHER tosses garbage around near the parents. In between his tosses, he holds his nose, indicating how foul smelling the garbage is. Then he shows his third sign to the audience: "DIRT, FLIES AND GARBAGE ATTRACT DISEASE." The audience hisses and boos.]

NARRATOR

Can we rid our homes of the Baby Snatcher? Yes! We can get rid of the Baby Snatcher! If... If we avoid germs. And we can avoid germs in this way...

[The NARRATOR holds up a large sign containing a drawing of two hands being washed under a faucet and a kettle of water boiling on a stove.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

First, wash your hands frequently. Also wash your vegetables and eating utensils. Second, use only boiled water for your beverages. Third, keep garbage covered to avoid the plague of flies. Fourth, go to the toilet in one single place.

(indicating CHORUS)

Unfortunately, these mothers did not listen, and now the BABY SNATCHER is set to steal their children.

[The CHORUS weeps and wails and throws their hands up to the heavens in lamentation. The newborn BABY with the papier-mâché bald head is stretched out on the ground, almost dead. The BABY SNATCHER approaches with his coffin.]

[When the BABY sees the BABY SNATCHER, he jumps up and flees. The BABY SNATCHER chases him, but the BABY ducks away in a humorous manner. Round and round they run with the BABY Snatcher closing in. He is just about to grab the BABY when cymbals CLASH and all action freezes on stage.]

[With all action on stage frozen, an enormous puppet head begins slowly rising from behind the backdrop curtain. Once the head appears, it continues to rise slowly until a 15-foot female puppet – THE HERB HEALER – appears.]

[As the NARRATOR speaks, the puppet slowly comes out from behind the scrim. Two actors under her skirt hold her central rod and slowly turn the puppet so she appears to be walking. Two actors dressed in white control the movements of each of the enormous papier-mâché hands. Besides the head and hands, the puppet is all fabric.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The local Herb Healer enters, and all confusion and chaos stop. The Herb Healer enters with knowledge, the knowledge to rid our homes of the Baby Snatcher.

[When he HERB HEALER is standing center stage, the action around her resumes. The BABY SNATCHER continues his chase. The sick BABY runs around the skirts of the enormous puppet. The trembling CHORUS of mothers watches while they clutch their babies to their chests. THE MOTHER and FATHER of the BABY look on, wringing their hands.]

[The BABY is only just managing to elude the grasp of the pursuing BABY SNATCHER, when it gets an idea. The BABY ducks beneath the skirts of the big puppet. While the BABY SNATCHER makes threatening gestures at the HERB HEALER, the MOTHER and FATHER kneel begging the big puppet's help. The CHORUS joins them. They too kneel and beg the HERB HEALER]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The poor Baby is in danger from the Baby Snatcher. His mother begs for mercy. All of the mothers of the village join in begging that the Baby be saved. At long last the other mothers' hearts are touched and they help the new Mother. They help her because they finally realize that they are no better than she. They aren't any better because they too could lose their children to the Baby Snatcher. Now instead of gossiping, instead of causing division they now realize that they have to cooperate.

They have to unite against the Baby Snatcher. They have to unite and fight him with knowledge – with health knowledge possessed by the local Herb Healer.]

[The Baby Snatcher takes a step toward the HERB HEALER, and the huge puppet raises one of her enormous papier-mâché hands, stopping him.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The village Herb Healer warns the Baby Snatcher not to come near her. "Are you threatening *me*?" laughs the Baby Snatcher

[Laughing, the BABY SNATCHER takes another step forward. Just then the BABY comes out from under the puppet's skirts. He is carrying an enormous vaccination syringe – the size of a rifle. He holds it up like a priest would a crucifix to a devil, and the Baby Snatcher stops dead in his tracks.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The local Herb Healer knows the three weapons that will chase the Baby Snatcher from the village. First, vaccinations. Vaccinations that fight infectious diseases.

[While the BABY SNATCHER staggers from being jabbed with the enormous vaccination needle, the BABY retreats beneath the puppet's skirts again. He returns with a large drawing of a mother nursing her baby.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Next, the second weapon: healthy nutrition. Mother's milk and healthy food combat poor nutrition. Poor nutrition can kill a child.

[At the sight of the drawing, the Baby Snatcher staggers backwards like a drunkard – or a mortally wounded person. Now the BABY gets cocky and begins sawing the air – like a martial arts expert – doing fancy foot work around the BABY SNATCHER. The CHORUS and PARENTS begins jumping up and down in joy. The BABY SNATCHER stands like a rag doll, his arms dangling. The BABY retreats beneath the puppet's skirts.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

But the third weapon is the final blow. The third weapon that chases the Baby Snatcher from the village forever is...

[The BABY comes out from under the puppet's skirts with a large sign that says: ORAL REHYDRATION.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

... Oral rehydration serum!

[Furtively, the BABY approaches the drooping Baby Snatcher. As he winds up his leg, we hear a DRUM ROLL. He then boots

the BABY SNATCHER in the butt and the cymbals CLASH. The BABY SNATCHER collapses on the ground. As the CHORUS and PARENTS cheer, the BABY puts one foot on the downed BABY SNATCHER and clasps his hands over his head like a champion.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Oral rehydration serum cures diarrhea.

[One of the CHORUS rises and holds up the earlier drawing of the healthy plant, being watered with a watering can. The BABY runs over to his parents and takes a drink from a glass while the CHORUS sits on top of the Baby Snatcher to keep him on the ground. After drinking the serum he BABY flexes his muscles and begins shadow boxing.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The Baby suffered from diarrhea. With diarrhea he lost all fluids and salts. He needed oral rehydration salts to replace the lost fluids and nutrients. Many children die from diarrhea. But parents can save their children from death. They can save them with oral rehydration serum. All parents can help. Fathers too.

[The comical FATHER points to himself as if to say, "Who, me?"]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

(nodding)

Yes, fathers too. Every father can protect and defend his children. Every father can keep his family healthy because every father can easily prepare the oral rehydration salts.

[The comical FATHER nods and then pounds his chest proudly. The BABY reaches up and presses his FATHER's biceps. The proud FATHER paces back and forth self-importantly.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

If every village father learns how to prepare oral rehydration salts then we can rid the village of the Baby Snatcher forever.

[The Father and MOTHER turn to where the BABY SNATCHER is sprawled on the ground. The CHORUS, sitting on top of him, shake their fingers back and forth as if to say, "Don't worry." They Point to their pinned prisoner, fold their arms, and sit down more forcefully on him.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

When a baby has diarrhea, it is a serious error to feed him milk or other liquids. A mother should still feed her child *but only* by also feeding him rehydration salts.

[The FATHER begins banging pots and pans, making a racket, as he prepares to make the serum. The MOTHER back nursing her large BABY, looks on, smiling proudly.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

First, a mother must continue nursing her baby...

[The BABY lifts his papier-mâché head and nods in agreement, and then goes back to nursing.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

...Next, a little bit more than a liter of boiling water is needed.

[Another CHORUS woman rises and holds up a drawing of a liter bottle of a familiar drink – and a drawing of a kettle of steaming water.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Any father can boil water, right?

[The FATHER nods proudly and pounds his chest. The nursing MOTHER looks up, gesturing as if to say: "That's *my* husband."]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Next four carrots are needed. Carrots that are cut up and put into the liter of boiling water...

[The third woman of the CHORUS holds up a drawing of four carrots dangling over a sauce pan of steaming water. The FATHER, turning in circles, begins searching for carrots. His nursing wife, with infinite patience points out where the carrots are. The FATHER smiles and hits himself in the head, as if to say: "How stupid of me!"]

[The FATHER sets the four carrots down and raises his hand plow precariously over his head as he prepares to cut the carrots with it. The MOTHER extends her arm just in time to stop him. Holding the sharp hand plow over his head, he pauses, looking confused. His wife hands him a sharp knife. Smiling, he sets down his hand plow and accepts the knife. He bows formally to her and sets about cutting the carrots.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Next, after boiling the water, allow it to cool off.

[The FATHER begins frantically blowing on the boiling water and fanning it. Finally, the nursing MOTHER patiently signals to her HUSBAND to have a seat. FATHER sits obediently, folds his arms, taps his foot, and drums his fingers impatiently.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Next...

[The FATHER immediately jumps to his feet.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

... measure out one liter of the rehydration serum. One liter precisely...

[FATHER holds up the liter bottle of serum.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

When you have one liter exactly, add four level teaspoons of sugar and one level teaspoon of salt.

[CHORUS WOMAN ONE turns over her sign and we now see a drawing of four teaspoons with the word "SUGAR" under them and one teaspoon with the word "SALT" written under it.]

[Meanwhile the FATHER holds up a shovel and approaches the pot. MOTHER holds up her hand and points out the teaspoons to him. The FATHER looks confused. The BABY stops nursing and gets up and hands his FATHER the teaspoons. He then resumes nursing while MOTHER pats his bald head of papier-mâché.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Mix it well.

[The FATHER furiously mixes the serum in the pot. MOTHER extends her hand, calming him, and FATHER mixes more slowly, takes out a handkerchief and wipes his brow.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Now, after each movement of diarrhea, give the child as much serum as it will drink.

[SECOND CHORUS WOMAN holds up a drawing of two glasses that are filled according to the NARRATOR's explanation.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

After each diarrhea movement, if the child is less than one-year old, give him between a quarter and a half glass of serum. If the child is older than one year, give him between half a glass and a full glass of serum.

[The BABY gets up and squats down to go to the bathroom. FATHER watches him closely. When the BABY is finished, he gestures toward the serum - that he wants some. The FATHER jumps up and hurriedly pours half a glass of serum and hurries over to give it to his BABY. The BABY drinks it down, flexes his muscles, and resumes nursing with his MOTHER. The

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Get your children immunization shots for measles...

[The BABY jabs the BABY SNATCHER with the needle as the disease is mentioned. The BABY SNATCHER jerks his body, and the seated CHORUS is jolted upright.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

...whooping cough...

(another jab, jerk and jolt)

...polio..

(another jab, jerk and jolt)

...dyptheria...

(another jab, jerk and jolt)

...tetanus...

(another jab, jerk and jolt)

...and tuberculosis.

(final jab, jerk and jolt)

Oh and...

(gestures toward BABY SNATCHER)

...keep your garbage covered.

[The CHORUS fold their arms and sit down more firmly on top of the BABY SNATCHER.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

But... should your child happen to come down with diarrhea and become dehydrated, don't delay in starting the proper treatment. Prepare the oral rehydration serum and give as much to your child as he will take - after each bowel movement. And finally...

(beat)

Please remember that we need each other. Don't gossip or backbite about one another. We must cooperate.

[The CHORUS of three women nod. As they sit atop the BABY SNATCHER one covers her mouth, one covers her eyes and one covers her ears - like the three monkeys in the totem.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

And above all... Fathers can help mothers at home. Fathers can also help in caring for their children.

[As the FATHER overhears, he cups his hand to his ear, then drops his plow and comes running in from the fields. He comes to a sliding stop in front of his wife and mimes "Did somebody call me?"

NARRATOR (cont'd)

"Did someone call me?" asks the Father. "No, no, papa," says the Mother. "Nobody called you."

[As the NARRATOR explains, the MOTHER pats her HUSBAND's hand and leans against him affectionately.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

"I only wanted to say that I'm proud of you," says his wife. "I'm so proud of how you protect and defend this family. You even helped with the oral rehydration serum..."

[The FATHER toes and kicks the dirt as if to say, "Aw shucks, that weren't nothin'." He then stands proudly behind his seated wife and child, as if posing for a family portrait.]

NARRATOR (cont'd)

And now, thanks to the cooperation of these parents...

(indicates family "portrait")

...thanks to the cooperation in the community...

(indicates CHORUS)

And most of all, thanks to the local Herb Healer and her medical knowledge...

(gestures at large puppet)

Thanks to her knowledge about staying healthy, the Baby Snatcher will no longer visit this village.

[A drum roll begins as the large puppet opens her hands as if in benediction, or as if deflecting the compliment. When the hand are fully extended, the drum roll peaks, the cymbals CLASH, and a vertical scroll falls from each one of the puppet's hands. One scroll reads: KNOWLEDGE and the other says, COOPERATION.]

[The entire cast comes forward, removes their masks and standing in a line, bow to the audience. They then filter into the audience, distributing cards that have the recipe for oral rehydration serum.]

"THE BEGINNING"

