

**Bones** by Sadru Kassam (from Ballnas et al., 2005)

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Sadru Kassam was born in Mombasa, the second largest city in Kenya. He worked as a high school teacher. He became involved with the Free Traveling Theatre while studying English at the Makerere University in Uganda. The theatre group was composed of professors and students who organized to bring the theatre to rural villages and towns.

**SCENE:** A butcher's shop. A sign reads: "SALEH BIN AWADH, The Big Butcher, P. O. MAJI MOTO, Coast Region." On one wall is a painting of a bull, and on another a picture of the BUTCHER slaughtering another bull. There are notices reading: "FRESH MEAT" and "WELCOME."

**NOTE:** It is intended that each scene shall open with an extended mime by the Butcher, which can be developed from the outlines in the stage directions.

**SCENE 1**

The shop is tolerably clean and tidy. The BUTCHER wears an almost white coat and his hair is combed. He sings as he arranges his meat to conceal its shortcomings. A joint tumbles to the ground: he looks to see if anyone is around, then picks it up and brushes it before replacing it, clean side upwards. He spits and scratches himself vigorously. He starts dividing some meat into smaller sections with a large knife, swinging the blade dangerously. At length he cuts himself, shrieks, prances around, tends his bleeding finger, wipes the blood off on a piece of meat and sucks the wound. The WOMAN is heard singing as she approaches. She enters, wearing a khangha.

<sup>1</sup>WOMAN: Eec, banakuba? How are you?

<sup>2</sup>BUTCHER: Me? Very well, mama, very well. You want meat?

<sup>3</sup>WOMAN: Yes, banakuba, I want meat. How's your meat? Is it good?

<sup>4</sup>BUTCHER: Very good, mama. Good and fresh. Can't you see me in the picture there slaughtering a bull?

<sup>5</sup>WOMAN: From what part will you give me?

<sup>6</sup>BUTCHER: Any part you want, mama. Whatever you ask for, I'm here to serve you. (He sharpens his knife on his file).

<sup>7</sup>WOMAN: I want of that. I hope it's fresh.

<sup>8</sup>BUTCHER: Completely fresh, mama: number one. How much do you want?

<sup>9</sup>WOMAN: Aaaaah! A shilling's worth only — unless you want to give me more on credit.

<sup>10</sup>BUTCHER: No, no, no, not today. (The BUTCHER cuts a small piece from the meat the WOMAN has chosen, and then begins to cut larger pieces from another joint.)

<sup>11</sup>WOMAN: A-a-a-a, I want off that only.

<sup>12</sup>BUTCHER: Yes, but you want good and fresh meat, isn't it? This is very good. See...excellent! Numberi one! I tell you.

<sup>13</sup>WOMAN: (Violently) I don't want it.

<sup>14</sup>BUTCHER: O.K. your wish. Was it this one you wanted?

<sup>15</sup>WOMAN: That's it. Now you know it.

<sup>16</sup>BUTCHER: (He puts some meat on the scale and is about to add several bones).

<sup>17</sup>WOMAN: What's that you're doing there? I didn't ask for stones. I don't want them. Remove them at once.

<sup>18</sup>BUTCHER: Mama, they aren't stones. They are very good bones with plenty of meat on them. See... excellent! Grade one!

<sup>19</sup>WOMAN: And what am I to do with bones? I'm not a dog.

<sup>20</sup>BUTCHER: (He finishes weighing the meat and wraps it. The WOMAN takes out a small pouch and offers money which she draws back as the BUTCHER tries to snatch it, so that he pitches across his counter before she gives it to him).

<sup>21</sup>BUTCHER: Here it is, mama, your meat.

<sup>22</sup>WOMAN: And here's your money... unless you don't want it.

<sup>23</sup>BUTCHER: Eh, why not? Thank you, mama, thank you very much. God help you.

<sup>24</sup>WOMAN: O.K., banakuba, good-bye.

(A GIRL enters, dressed in a dirty, tattered frock and carrying a kikapu.)

<sup>25</sup>GIRL: Get me half a pound of meat, please. Nice — like you!

(As the WOMAN is going out she bumps into DONGO as he enters.)

<sup>26</sup>DONGO: Good morning, mama.

<sup>27</sup>WOMAN: Good morning, brother.

<sup>28</sup>DONGO: What's the quarrel with the butcher?

<sup>29</sup>WOMAN: Aaaa, nothing.

<sup>30</sup>DONGO: Weren't you complaining of ill treatment? I heard you shouting.

<sup>31</sup>WOMAN: No, no, no. I was iust iokino with him. That butcher is a very nice man, you know.