

In the Bush of Ghosts

At the same time as I entered into the bush I could not stop in one place as the noises of the guns were driving me farther and farther until I travelled about sixteen miles away from the road on which my brother left me. After I had travelled sixteen miles and was still running further for the fearful noises, I did not know the time that I entered into a dreadful bush which is called the "Bush of Ghosts", because I was very young to understand the meaning of "bad" and "good". This "Bush of Ghosts" was so dreadful so that no superior earthly person ever entered it.

But as the noises of the enemies' guns drove me very far until I entered into the "Bush of Ghosts" unnoticed, because I was too young to know that it was a dreadful bush or it was banned to be entered by any earthly person, so that immediately I entered it I stopped and ate both fruits which my brother gave me before we left each other, because I was very hungry before I reached there. After I ate it then I started to wander about in this bush both day and night until I reached a rising ground which was almost covered with thick bush and weeds which made the place very dark both day and night. Every part of this small hill was very clean as if somebody was sweeping it. But as I was very tired of roaming about

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before I reached there, so I bent down to see the hill clearly, because my aim was to sleep there. Yet I could not see it clearly as I bent down, but when I had lain down flatly then I saw clearly that it had an entrance with which to enter into it.

The entrance resembled the door of a house and it had a portico which was sparkling as if it was polished with brasso at all moments. The portico was also made of golden plate. But as I was too young to know "bad" and "good" I thought that it was an old man's house who was expelled from a town for an offence, then I entered it and went inside it until I reached a junction of three passages which each led to a room as there were three rooms.

One of these rooms had golden surroundings, the second had silverish surroundings and the third had copperish. But as I stood at the junction of these passages with confusion three kinds of sweet smells were rushing out to me from each of these three rooms, but as I was hungry and also starving before I entered into this hole, so I began to sniff the best smell so that I might enter the right room at once from which the best sweet smell was rushing out. Of course as I stood on this junction I noticed through my nose that the smell which was rushing out of the room which had golden surroundings was just as if the inhabitant of it was baking bread and roasting fowl, and when I sniffed again the smell of the room which had copperish surroundings was just as if the inhabitant of that was cooking rice, potatoes and other African food with very sweet soup, and then the room which had silverish surroundings was just as if the inhabitant was frying yam, roasting fowl and baking cakes. But I thought in my

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mind to go direct to the room from which the smell of the African food was rushing out to me, as I prefer my native food most. But I did not know that all that I was thinking in mind was going to the hearing of the inhabitants of these three rooms, so at the same moment that I wanted to move my body to go to the room from which the smell of the African's food was rushing to me (the room which had copperish surroundings) there I saw that these three rooms which had no doors and windows opened unexpectedly and three kinds of ghosts peeped at me, every one of them pointed his finger to me to come to him.

These ghosts were so old and weary that it is hard to believe that they were living creatures. Then I stood at this junction with my right foot which I dangled with fear and looking at them. But as I was looking at each of them surprisingly I noticed that the inhabitant of the room which had golden surroundings was a golden ghost in appearance, then the second room which had copperish surroundings was a copperish ghost and also the third was a silverish ghost.

As every one of them pointed his finger to me to come to him I preferred most to go direct to the copperish-ghost from whose room the smell of African's food was rushing out to me, but when the golden ghost saw my movement which showed that I wanted to go to the copperish-ghost, so at the same time he lighted the golden flood of light all over my body to persuade me not to go to the copperish-ghost, as every one of them wanted me to be his servant. So as he lighted the flood of golden light on my body and when I looked at myself I thought

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that I became gold as it was shining on my body, so at this time I preferred most to go to him because of his golden light. But as I moved forward a little bit to go to him then the copperish-ghost lighted the flood of his own copperish light on my body too, which persuaded me again to go to the golden-ghost as my body was changing to every colour that copper has, and my body was then so bright so that I was unable to touch it. And again as I preferred this copperish light more than the golden-light then I started to go to him, but at this stage I was prevented again to go to him by the silverish-light which shone on to my body at that moment unexpectedly. This silverish-light was as bright as snow so that it transparented every part of my body and it was this day I knew the number of the bones of my body. But immediately I started to count them these three ghosts shone the three kinds of their lights on my body at the same time in such a way that I could not move to and fro because of these lights. But as these three old ghosts shone their lights on me at the same time so I began to move round as a wheel at this junction, as I appreciated these lights as the same.

But as I was staggering about on this junction for about half an hour because of these lights, the copperish-ghost was wiser than the rest, he quenched his own copperish-light from my body, so at this time I had a little chance to go to the rest. Of course, when the golden-ghost saw that I could not run two races at a blow successfully, so he quenched his own light too from my body, and at this time I had chance to run a single race to the silverish-ghost. But when I nearly reached his room then

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the copperish-ghost and the golden-ghost were lighting their lights on me as signals and at the same moment the silverish-ghost joined them to use his own light as signal to me as well, because I was disturbed by the other two ghosts. Then I stopped again and looking at every one of them how he was shining his own lights on me at two or three seconds' interval as signal.

Although I appreciated or recognized these lights as the same, but I appreciated one thing more which is food, and this food is my native food which was cooked by the copperish-ghost, but as I was very hungry so I entered into his room, and when he saw that it was his room I entered he was exceedingly glad so that he gave me the food which was the same colour with copper. But as every one of these three old ghosts wanted me to be his servant, so that the other two ghosts who were the golden-ghost and the silverish-ghost did not like me to be servant for the copperish-ghost who gave me the food that I preferred most, and both entered into the room of the copperish-ghost, all of them started to argue. At last all of them held me tightly in such a way that I could not breathe in or out. But as they held me with argument for about three hours, so when I was nearly cut into three as they were pulling me about in the room I started to cry louder so that all the ghosts and ghostesses of that area came to their house and within twenty minutes this house could not contain the ghosts who heard information and came to settle the misunderstanding. But when they came and met them how they were pulling me about in the room with much argument then they told them to leave me and they left me at once.

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After that all the ghosts who came to settle the matter arranged these three old ghosts in a single line and then they told me to choose one of them for myself to be my master so that there would be no more misunderstanding between themselves. So I stood before them and looking at every one of them with my heart which was throbbing hastily to the hearing of all of them, in such a way that the whole of the ghosts who came to settle the matter rushed to me to listen well to what my heart was saying. But as these wonderful creatures understood what my heart was saying they warned me not to choose any one of them with my mouth, because they thought it would speak partiality against one of these three ghosts, as my heart was throbbing repeatedly as if a telegraphist is sending messages by telegraph.

As a matter of fact my heart first told me to choose the silverish-ghost who stood at the extreme right and if to say I would choose by mouth I would only choose the copperish-ghost who had the African's food and that was partiality, and it was at this time I noticed carefully all the ghosts who came to settle the matter that many of them had no hands and some had no fingers, some had no feet and arms but jumped instead of walking. Some had heads without eyes and ears, but I was very surprised to see them walking about both day and night without missing their way and also it was this day I had ever seen ghosts without clothes on their bodies and they were not ashamed of their nakedness.

Uncountable numbers of them stood before me and looked at me as dolls with great surprise as they had no heads or eyes. But as they forced me to choose the silverish-

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ghost as he was the ghost that my heart throbbed out to their hearing to choose, when I chose him, he was exceedingly glad and ran to me, then he took me on his shoulder and then to his room. But still the other two were not satisfied with the judgement of the settlers and both ran to his room and started to fight again. This fight was so fearful and serious that all the creatures in that bush with big trees stood still on the same place that they were, even breezes could not blow at this time and these three old ghosts were still fighting on fiercely until a fearful ghost who was almost covered with all kinds of insects which represented his clothes entered their house when hearing their noises from a long distance.

The Smelling-Ghost

All kinds of snakes, centipedes and flies were living on every part of his body. Bees, wasps and uncountable mosquitoes were also flying round him and it was hard to see him plainly because of these flies and insects. But immediately this dreadful ghost came inside this house from heaven-knows-where his smell and also the smell of his body first drove us to a long distance before we came back after a few minutes, but still the smell did not let every one of the settlers stand still as all his body was full of excreta, urine, and also wet with the rotten blood of all the animals that he was killing for his food. His mouth which was always opening, his nose and eyes were very hard to look at as they were very dirty and smelling. His name is "Smelling-ghost". But what made me surprised and fear most was that this "smelling-ghost" wore many scorpions on his fingers as rings and all were alive, many poisonous snakes were also on his neck as beads and he belted his leathern trousers with a very big and long boa constrictor which was still alive.

Of course at first I did not know that he was the king of all the smelling-ghosts in the 7th town of ghosts. Immediately he entered this house, they (golden-ghost, silverish-ghost and copperish-ghost) stopped fighting at once. After that he called them out of the room in which

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they were fighting, when they came out and stood before him, then he asked for the matter, but when they told him he called me out of the room in which I hid myself for his bad smell with his fearful appearance which I was dreaming of, without sleeping. When they called me to come to him and when I stood before him I closed my eyes, mouth and nose with both my hands because of his smell. Then he told them that he would cut me into three parts and give each part to each of them so that there would be no more misunderstanding. But as I heard from him that he would cut me into three, I fainted more than an hour before my heart came back to normal.

But God is so good these three old ghosts were not satisfied with his judgement at all, and after they had rested for a few minutes, they started fighting again.

So I was very lucky as they did not agree for him to cut me for them and when he saw that they did not agree but were still fighting, then he gripped me with his hands which were very hot and put me into the big bag which he hung on his left shoulder and kept going away at the same time. But when he threw me into the bag I was totally covered with the rotten blood of the animals which he was killing in the bush. This bag was so smelling and full of mosquitoes, small snakes with centipedes which did not let me rest for a moment. This is how I left the golden-ghost, silverish-ghost and copperish-ghost and it was from their house I started my punishment in this "Bush of Ghosts". After he left these three ghosts and travelled till the evening, then he stopped suddenly, thinking within himself with a loud voice either to eat me or to eat half of me and reserve the other half till

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night. Because as he was taking me along in the bush he was trying all his best to kill a bush animal to eat as food, as he could not reach his town which is the 7th town of smelling-ghosts on that day.

Although as he was carrying me along in the bush he was trying his best to kill the animals, his bad smell was suspecting him that he was coming so they were running away before he could reach them. He could not kill an animal unless it sleeps. But as I was hearing him when he was discussing either to eat me, luckily an animal was passing at that time, then he started to chase it until he saw a half-dead animal which was totally helpless, so he stopped there and began to eat it voraciously and to my surprise he was also cutting some of the animal into pieces and giving them to all the snakes etc. which were on every part of his body. After he was satisfied with this animal, then he put the rest together with its blood into the bag and it fell on to my head as a heavy load. After that he got up and kept going. But as he was travelling along in the bush and as all the snakes on his body were not satisfied with the meat before him they were rushing to the inside of the bag and eating the meat which he threw into the bag and then rushing out at the same time so that he might not suspect them. Sometimes they were mistakenly biting me several times as they could not hesitate for suspicion of their boss who might punish them for stealing. But once I heard from him when discussing within himself whether to eat me before an animal was passing I planned to stretch my hand out from the bag and hold the branch of a gravity tree, as he was sometimes creeping under the lower bush to a

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distance of a mile or more; this plan means to escape from him.

But after he had travelled for two hours, I noticed that it was very dark, then I got up from the bag to peep out and hold the branch of a gravity tree, because if I jumped right out from the bag he would suspect or remember that I was inside the bag, as I thought that perhaps he had forgotten me there and perhaps if he catches me again at that time he would remember to eat me. Harder to stay in the bag and hardest to come out of it because when it was very dark I got up to peep out and look for the branch of a tree to hold as he was going on, but as these snakes were always rushing in and out of this bag so that at the same time that they saw me they wanted to eat me too as the meat, then I cast down inside the bag at the same moment, and after a few minutes later I peeped out again and they drove me back again, even I could not wait and breathe in fresh air.

So they disallowed me to do as I planned until he reached a place where other kinds of ghosts were in conference, then he stopped and sat with them, but he sat on me as there was no more stool.

As they were discussing some important matters for some hours, he got up on me and took out the rest meat from the bag, he put it before the ghosts that he met there and the whole of them started to eat it together. At that time I was praying not to remember to present me to these ghosts as that meat, until a lower rank ghost brought a very big animal and gave them as a present. But as he sat on me it was hard for me to breathe in or out and if it was not for the boa constrictor with which he

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belted his trousers which was made with the skin of an animal, I would die for his weight as I could not raise him up or lift him up at all. When it was about two o'clock in the midnight their meeting closed and then every one of them started to go to his town. After the meeting had closed he got up from me and hung the bag back on his shoulder and then kept going to his town. But as he was going hastily along in the bush all the animals were running very far away for his bad smell whenever he met them. If he was at a distance of four miles from a creature it would suspect him through his powerful smell. I was still inside this bag until he reached his town which is 7th town of ghosts on the third day.

My Life in the 7th Town of Ghosts

When he reached his town and entered his house then he took me out of the bag and I saw clearly that all his family were also smelling, and his house was smelling so that immediately he took me out from the bag I was unable to breathe out for thirty minutes. The most wonderful thing I noticed carefully in this smelling town was that all the babies born the same day were also smelling as a dead animal. This smelling town was separated and very far away from all other towns of ghosts. If any one of these smelling-ghosts touched anything it would become a bad smell at the same moment and it is bad luck for any ghost who is not a native of smelling-ghosts to meet a smelling-ghost on the way when going somewhere. It is also very bad luck for a smelling-ghost if he meets any other kind of ghosts on the way if his bad smell does not drive them very far away. At the same time as he took me out of the bag he gave me food which I was unable to eat as it was smelling badly. But as I was unable to eat this food I asked for water as I never drank water since I left my brother or since I entered into the "Bush of Ghosts", but they gave me urine as it was their water which they were storing in a big pot, of course I refused to drink it as well. There I noticed in this house

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that mosquitoes, wasps, flies of all kinds and all kinds of poisonous snakes were disturbing them from walking easily about and it was as dark in the day as in the night, so this darkness enabled uncountable snakes to fill up there as if they were taming or keeping them.

It was in this town I saw that they had an "Exhibition of Smells". All the ghosts of this town and environs were assembling yearly and having a special "Exhibition of Smells" and the highest prizes were given to one who had the worst smells and would be recognized as a king since that day as all of them were appreciating dirt more than clean things.

When it was night he pushed me with all his power into one of the rooms which were in his house, and I met uncountable flies, snakes and all other kinds of pest creatures which drove me back at the same time as he pushed me in, but as these pest creatures drove me back to him, then he pushed me to them again and closed the door of the room. Immediately he pushed me back to them and closed the door I was covered by these pest creatures and it was hard for me to move about in this room. When I laid down to sleep on the floor without a mat I asked for a cover-cloth to cover my body, perhaps the smells would allow me to sleep or to breathe, but when all of them heard cover-cloth, they exclaimed: what is called—"cover-cloth". Of course, when they said so, I remembered that I was not with my mother or in my town. I could not sleep or rest for a minute till morning because of these pest creatures, and also the bad smells which were blowing from everywhere to this room or house. But when I got out from this room in the morning

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to the veranda I met over two thousand smelling-ghosts who came from various provinces of this 7th town of ghosts which was the capital to greet him for his good luck, because it was good luck for my boss as he brought me to his house or town.

Immediately I got out from the room they told me to sit down in their middle as they sat down in a circle, so all of them surrounded me closely and looking at me with much astonishment as I was breathing once a minute because of their smells which they themselves were enjoying as perfume or lavender.

In the presence of these guests, my boss was changing me to some kinds of creatures. First of all he changed me to a monkey, then I began to climb fruit trees and pluck fruits down for them. After that he changed me to a lion, then to a horse, to a camel, to a cow or bull with horns on its head and at last to my former form. Having finished that, his wives who were all the while cooking all kinds of food brought the food to them together with ghosts' drinks at the same place that they sat, and looking at me as dolls, because none of them had ever seen an earthly person in his or her life. None of them talked a single word, as looking at me motionless as dolls and all these food and drinks were also smelling badly, and at the same time that they brought them it was hard to see what sort of food and drinks because of flies which almost covered them. After all of them had eaten and drunk to their entire satisfaction then they were dancing the ghosts' dance round me and beating drums, clapping hands on me and singing the song of ghosts with gladness until a late hour in the night before every one of them

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who came from various provinces of this 7th town returned to his or her province and those who came from this 7th town returned to their houses. But he was still receiving uncountable messages, congratulations with many presents from those who were too old or in difficulties to present themselves at this "good luck ceremony".

After the fourth day that he had performed the "lucky-ceremony", his oldest son, who had only an arm and had no teeth in his mouth, with a bare head which was sparkling as if it was polished, took me out of the house to the front house. After that his father came and performed a juju which changed me to a horse unexpectedly, then he put reins into my mouth and tied me on a stump with a thick rope, after this he went back to the house and dressed in a big cloth which was made with a kind of ghosts' leaves which was the most expensive and he was only entitled to use such an expensive cloth as he is the king of all the smelling-ghosts, but all these smelling-ghosts did not appreciate earthly clothes as anything. After a while he came out with two of his attendants who were following him to wherever he wanted to go. Then the attendants loosened me from the stump, so he mounted me and the two attendants were following him with whips in their hands and flogging me along in the bush. As he was dressed with these leaves and mounted me mercilessly I felt as if he was half a ton weight.

Then he was riding me to the towns of those who attended and who were unable to attend his "lucky-ceremony" to greet them and whenever he reached a house he would get down off me and enter the house to

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greet the owner of it who came and enjoyed the "lucky-ceremony" with him or who sent him presents. But within an hour that he entered and left the attendants with me all the rest of the young ghosts and old ghosts of that area would surround me and look at me with great surprise. Sometimes these young or children ghosts would be touching my eyes with their fingers or sticks, so that perhaps I would feel it or cry and they would hear how my voice would be. He spent almost one hour in any house he was entering, because he would eat and drink together with everyone that he was visiting to their satisfaction before the whole of them would come out and look at me for about half an hour. After that he would mount me mercilessly and both his attendants would start to flog me in such a way that all the ghosts and ghostesses of that town would shout at me as a thief. But if they shouted at me like that my boss would jump and kick me mercilessly, with gladness in the presence of these bystanders until he would leave that town.

When it was two o'clock in the midday, he reached a village which also belonged to the smelling-town, he got down from me and entered the largest and finest house which belonged to the head of this village, and after a few minutes that he had entered the house a fearful ghost who was speaking with his nose and whose belly was on his thighs brought horse's food in which guinea corn and many leaves were included to me. But as I had never eaten anything since my boss took me from the three old ghosts so by that I ate the corn which I had never tasted since I was born, but I was unable to eat the leaves as I am not really a horse. Having finished the

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corn another terrible ghost whose eyes were watering all over his body and his large mouth faced his back brought urine which was mixed with limestone to me to drink as they were not using ordinary water there because it is too clean for them. But as I was all the while tied in the sun which was shining severely on me, then I tasted it as I was exceedingly feeling thirsty, although I took off my mouth at once when I discovered that it was urine and limestone. And the worst part of these punishments was that as I was tied in the sun all the young ghosts of this village were mounting me and getting down as if I am a tree as they were very surprised to see me as a horse.

When it was about eight o'clock in the night my boss came out from that house together with some prominent ghosts of the village and after they looked at me for some minutes he hung all the presents given to him on me and then mounted me. As it was very dark at that time, so I was staggering or dashing into trees along the way when he was returning to his town, and it was almost one o'clock midnight before we reached his town. Having reached his home he was unable to change me to my former form that night, but his attendants simply tied me on a stump outside as he drank too much. So the whole of them left me there and I was totally covered by mosquitoes until morning but had no hands to drive them away. But he came in the morning and changed me to my former form.

After some minutes he gave me their smelling food which I was unable to eat satisfactorily. But after I ate some of this food he changed me again to the form of a

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camel and then his sons were using me as transport to carry heavy loads to long distances of about twenty or forty miles. But when the rest of the smelling-ghosts noticed that I was useful for such purpose then the whole of them were hiring me from my boss to carry loads to long distances and returning again in the evening with heavier loads. But as I could not satisfy all of them at a time so they shared me, half of them would use me from morning till night, then the rest would use me from the night till morning. At this stage I had no chance to rest for a minute for all the periods that I spent with them.

As the news had been spread to many towns of other kinds of ghosts, and as all of them wanted to see me as a horse, so they invited my boss to a conference so that they might see how he would ride me to their town where the conference would be held, because ghosts like to be in conference at all times. But as he ought to change me from the camel to a horse, because the camel is useful only to carry loads so by that he changed me to a person as I was all the while in form of a camel. After he changed me to a person then he went away to take the reins which he would put into my mouth when he changed me to a horse, but as soon as he went away I saw where he hid the juju which he was using to change me to any animal or creature that he likes, so I took it and put it into my pocket so that he might not change me to anything again. God is so good, he did not remember to take the juju when he came out from the house, he thought that he had already put it inside the pocket of his leathern trousers which he was always belting with a big boa constrictor, because he would not change me to a horse until he

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climbed a mountain which was at a distance of about six miles from his town and his aim was that he would change me to a horse after he had climbed the mountain and ride me from there to the town in which he was invited to the conference.

When he came back from the house he simply threw me inside the big bag which he hung on his shoulder, because he could not go anywhere without this bag, as it is a uniform for every king that reigns in this 7th town of ghosts which belongs only to smelling-ghosts. Immediately he put me inside the bag then he kept going to the town that they invited him to. But when he climbed the mountain to the top he branched to his right then he bent down and started to pass excreta. But as I was inside the bag I was thinking how I could escape from him, and after a while I remembered that I had taken the juju which he would use before he could change me to any creature that he likes and at this time he has no power to change me to a horse again. So I jumped right out from the bag to the ground and without hesitation I started to run away inside the bush for my life and immediately he saw me running away he got up and started to chase me, saying thus with loud voice: "Ah! the earthly person is running away, how can I catch him now, oh! what can I ride on to the conference today, as all the ghosts who invited me are waiting to see me on a horse. Oh! if I had known I should have changed him to a horse before I left home. But if my head helps me and I catch him now I will change him from today to a permanent horse for ever. Ah! how can I catch him now?" But as he was chasing me fiercely and saying like that, I myself was

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also saying thus: "Ah! how can I save myself from this smelling-ghost who wants to catch me and change me to a permanent horse for ever, and if he catches me now it means I would not return to my town or I will not see my mother for ever?"

But as any ghost could run faster than any earthly person, so that I became tired before him, and when he was about to catch me or when his hand was touching my head slightly to catch it, then I used the juju which I took from the hidden place that he kept it in before we left his house. And at the same moment that I used it, it changed me to a cow with horns on its head instead of a horse, but I forgot before I used it that I would not be able to change back to the earthly person again, because I did not know another juju which he was using before changing me back to an earthly person. Of course as I had changed to a cow I became more powerful and started to run faster than him, but still, he was chasing me fiercely until he became tired. And when he was about to go back from me I met a lion again who was hunting up and down in the bush at that time for his prey as he was very hungry, and without hesitation the lion was also chasing me to kill for his prey, but when he chased me to a distance of about two miles I fell into the cow-men's hands who caught me at once as one of their cows which had been lost from them for a long time, then the lion got back from me at once for the fearful noise of these cow-men. After that they put me among their cows which were eating grass at that time. They thought I was one of their lost cows and put me among the cows as I was unable to change myself to a person again.