

No witchcraft for sale



Doris May Lessing (22. 10. 1919-17. 11. 2013. ) She was a British writer, born in Iran. In 1925 the family moved to a farm in the British colony area of Africa. In the story “ No witchcraft for sale” Lessing tells about a relationship between the Farquars, a Christian family and their servant Gideon, in a colonized Zimbabwe, and the native secrets, that no power can buy. The story is written with a 3rd person narrator with an omniscient point of view, where the happenings are chronological and told in an easy everyday jargon, which is supported by direct speech.

The Farquars, was a very kind and grateful family, who lived on a farm in Zimbabwe. They lived in harmony with their servants, where all parties knew their role and furthermore accepted what God had chosen for them. They had a little boy named Teddy who one day was playing out in the garden and a tree-snake had spat full into his eyes, as a consequence of this Teddy’s eyes swelled to a size of fists and Mrs Farquar thought he was going to go blind. Gideon, the house-cook who had become a really good friend to the Farquars, took action and immediately ran out into the bushes from where he brought a root.

As a savage he chewed on it while collecting the fluid in his mouth and spat it hard into Teddy’s eyes again and again. A couple of hours later the swelling were gone and Teddy could once again see. “ The bush is full of secrets. No one can live in Africa, or at least in the veld, without learning very soon that there is an ancient wisdom of leaf and soil and season – and, too, perhaps most important of all, of the darker tracts of the human mind – which is the black man’s heritage.” (p. 3. l. 23-25. )

When the word got spread about how the black man saved the little boy with his knowledge of ancient medicine, scientists from the city came to ask Gideon about the root and where he had found it. The Farquars welcomed him after he explained that this root might help save thousands of people and because they felt that they would do something good, they used the hegemonic power to put a pressure on Gideon as I see it.”

The Big Baas wants to know what medicine I used?” He spoke incredulously, as if he could not believe his old friends could betray him. Mr. Farquar began explaining him how a useful medicine could be made out of the root, and how it could be put on sale, and how thousands of people, black and white, up and down the whole continent of Africa, could be saved by the medicine when some spitting snake were filling their eyes with poison. Gideon listened, his eyes bent on the ground, the skin on his forehead puckering in discomfort. When Mr Farquar had finished he did not reply.” (p. 4. l. 27-36)

However after many excuses and hour-long search, Gideon chose to find the root. At least that’s what the scientist thought. Just a random flower, which the old cook picked up and handed over. The conflict in this story began when Gideon saved Teddy and the Farquars from there on were forever grateful to Gideon, therefore the roles changed and created an unbalance, a disorder. Moreover, the knowledge of native medicine is all that his people “own”, their legacy, and not yet exploited by the white people.

By maintaining the secret within “ The black man’s heritage” he keeps both. The treasure of dignity- not selling out, and secures that the secret is forever to stay in Africa. As far as I’m concerned, if he gives the black heritage to the

white man, the “black peoples’” value suddenly becomes redundant and the natives truly will become marginalized in their own eyes. By not revealing the plant he retained the crucial dependence tape. Nevertheless, imagine if it happened again!