

## **A letter to Richard: Agnes Banks**

**Darling Richard, I'm back in town. Finally, I can tell you about my spiritual journey. It hasn't been quite what I thought it would be.**

**Forget chanting, meditation and peaceful moments, that's not what my guide Freddie had in store at all.**

**From the moment I put my foot in the canoe he told me, "You must confront your fears." So for the past few days and nights, I've been following Freddie through bushes, across streams and up muddy banks. It's been relentless - live grubs for dinner, spiders in my face and snakes galore. I no longer need reminding, 'Look before you put your hand, foot or any part of your body anywhere.'**

**Yesterday, I was so relieved when he said, 'Time to visit the shaman.'" It was the usual canoe ride, muddy paths and rickety bridges, but Richard, I was so hopeful this would change my life. We emerged from the jungle into a clearing where chickens scurried and mangy dogs scratched themselves.**

**Freddie prodded me into a wooden hut. There was no one there. Nothing but a wooden bench. Through a hole in the wall I could see a mother in a string hammock reading a book, a child at her feet. An old woman sat sleepily next to a tree. All normal, but I was alone and scared.**

**Wheezing and jangling the shaman shambled into the room. You know how I always giggle at the wrong time, well that's what I wanted to do. I sat, eyes closed, trembling. He started to chant, hitting me with fragrant leaves and blowing smoke in my face. Then it was all over.**

**I stumbled towards the door. Holding onto the doorpost I struggled to put on my wretched gum boots, but it was no good, so I plumped myself down on the doorstep. But it wasn't a doorstep, it was a narrow board. I toppled head over heels backwards and landed at the feet of the shaman. I tried to stop my giggles, but the shaman exploded into laughter and I joined in. It felt so good.**

**So Richard, I'll be home soon. Maybe our next spiritual journey could be together.**

**Love, Charlotte**