



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

CULTUREVERSE – EPISODE 12: NAFANUA

[0:06]

NARRATOR: This is Cultureverse. A place where myths and legends come alive in the modern world.

(SFX: Ocean ambiance, etc.)

NARRATOR: I'm your host, Yara Shahidi, and today we bring you a story about self-confidence. For this last episode, we're traveling all the way to American Samoa. And I wanted to bring in someone who knows this land better than anyone else.

(SFX: Sea sounds, wind. No music)

(SFX: NAFANUA JINGLE)

NAFANUA: Thanks Yara. This is episode 12, named after... me! I'm Nafanua, Samoan warrior goddess. But we'll get to that later. I want to introduce you to a very special girl, Sefi Leota.

(SFX: Children's laughter comes in, beach sounds, shore, Sefi laughing, having fun, running in the water.)

NAFANUA: Sefi lives in Tutuila, an island of American Samoa. Her father, Loto, is a well-known marine biologist, and right now, they're at a beach in Pago Pago Harbor enjoying the sun. (PAUSE, SOUNDSCAPE CONTINUES) The water is turquoise blue, and Sefi breathes in the salty air with a smile on her face.

(SFX: Sea sounds, shore, Sefi running in the water and having fun. Ominous music starts settling in the scene. A ship's honk is heard in the distance)

[1:23]

SEFI (screams as if she was just scared by the distant noise):

Ah!

LOTO (from afar): Everything alright, Sefi?

SEFI: Look, Dad! The cruise ships are back.

(SFX: Steps in the sand coming closer)

LOTO: Ugh those are the worst. Dumping trash in the middle of the Pacific Ocean without even caring that people might actually be watching. (SIGHS, DEFEATED)

SEFI (intimidated): How much trash are they carrying?

LOTO: I can't tell from this far away, Sefi. (Frustrated) But, you know, our ocean is being polluted every day, and nothing ever changes. Plastics of all sizes get dumped into it all the time! There are a LOT of garbage patches in the Pacific, just floating around. Sometimes they turn into islands!

SEFI (ALMOST HORRIFIED): Islands?

(SFX: Dramatic music comes in)

LOTO: Yeah, trash islands. There's this great Pacific garbage island that goes from the US West Coast to Japan! And you know who's one of the biggest culprits? Those over there! Cruise ships! Back when I went on a few expeditions we found a few of them across the Pacific. We couldn't even count 'em... Then all that ends up on OUR island!

(SFX: Transition with waves and ship's honking to night sounds)

[2:39]

NAFANUA: The rest of the summer goes by pretty fast, and Sefi can't stop thinking about the trash islands. At night she has nightmares where all of Samoa has turned into islands literally made up of trash.

SEFI: (gasping for air) Oh my god! There's so much garbage I can't move around. Oh my god! Oh my... (flailing in water).

NAFANUA: (SFX bird squawking) She spots a seagull tangled in a six-pack plastic soda can ring.

SEFI: You poor thing (Sefi: makes struggling sounds) Let me try and get you... (SFX bird squawking) (SFX: Seagull breaks free and flies off) There! Fly! Fly as far away from here as you

can!

(SFX horror music, birds and animal screaming which crescendos pierced only by deafening horns of cruise ships)

NAFANUA: The last thing Sefi sees before she wakes up is the image of Samoa turned into a trash island surrounded by bleached coral and dead fish.

(SFX: Sefi wakes up and gasps. Whoosh sound to emphasize transition)

SEFI (breathes awake): Whoa! I... I can't let that happen. (SFX: Moves bed sheets, walks around the room) I can't. But what do I do? What do I---- (SFX: She grabs some papers and starts scribbling)

NAFANUA: And that's when Sefi wakes up and realizes there is something she can do about it.

SEFI: Hey! It's almost election time at school! (Inspirational music comes in) Maybe if I run, they'll... they'll listen!

[4:05]

NAFANUA: A few days after that, Sefi finds an empty classroom to concentrate before stepping into the auditorium. She's got a big day ahead of her, because... well,

SEFI (whispering to herself, happily): I'm ready!

NAFANUA: ...she's announcing her run for class president!

(SFX: NAFANUA'S JINGLE)

SEFI (to herself, muffled through the door):

My platform is all about... the... ocean... no... no my platform is all about the trash in the ocean... noooooooo... My platform is all about the... the... arghhhhhhh! (BREATHS IN AND OUT DEEPLY). I gotta beat this stage fright. (breathes out) You can do this Sefi. No fear. (Breathes in and out)

(Transition to SFX: Auditorium/crowd sounds)

LAKI (IN LOUDSPEAKER): (Fades in)

And that's why a Laki class president would mean FREE daily ice cream AND free surfing lessons from my dad, the legendary Samoan surfer: Malosi Mauga!

LAKI (ALTERNATIVE VERSION):

And that's why a Laki class president would mean FREE daily ice cream AND free surfing lessons from my dad, the legendary Samoan surfer: O le Mauga Malosi! Malosi Mauga!

(SFX: Applause from the crowd, a couple of "cheehoos!" and saying "GO LAKI! FREE SURFING LESSONS YESSS!")

LAKI: Remember, VOTE FOR LAKI!

[5:11]

COACH T. (Fading in as the steps approach): (Applauding enthusiastically) Thanks Laki! (In loudspeaker) Now up next, she's already the star of our football team, and now she's running for class president! Give a big round of applause for our very own Sefi Leota!

(SFX: Crowd OOHS in surprise and saying: "Wow, she's running for class president!")

SEFI (IN LOUDSPEAKER, SUPER EXCITED AT FIRST) Thanks for the intro, Coach T.! My fellow classmates, teachers and friends! I am so excited to announce my candidacy for class president...

(SFX: Echoes of herself repeating the phrases she just said in her head)

SEFI (SUPER EXCITED AT FIRST, THEN STARTS HESITATING):

There's so... much... I want to say...

(SFX: Echoes of herself repeating the phrases she just said in her head)

SEFI: (FULLY HESITATES)

My platform is all about... the... uhMM... the... environment.... (AHEM) plastic, and... (Microphone screeches)

(SFX: Heartbeat heavy breathing/TV Anxiety)

SEFI: (GETTING FULLY SCARED)I uhm... Uh... UH... (Breathing in and out heavily, almost panicking)

NAFANUA: Sefi's stage fright kicks into overdrive. She runs off the platform towards the exit while the audience sits in silence. Coach T. runs back onstage...

[6:16]

COACH T (AWKWARDLY) (IN LOUDSPEAKER): Uhm... uhh... uh... (struggling with the microphone) Let's hear it for the Dancing Stingrays, our school dance team!

*(MUSIC STARTS THEN ECHOES AS WE TRANSITION TO OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL,
where Sefi is crying)*

NAFANUA: Sefi runs towards the park across the street from her school. She collapses on a bench in tears.

SEFI (CRYING to herself): I thought I could do it but there were just soo many people... I thought I--- and I don't think they would even care---I never should've tried to do this...

(SFX: Sefi sobbing quietly)

NAFANUA: The bench sits under the bronze statue of a legendary Samoan warrior, who's wearing full battle armor and carrying her war club, just like this one I'm holding! And well, this is my cue! I'll leave you to it, Yara!

(SFX: Falls through high speed through the clouds and lands on the ground)

(SFX: Sefi sobbing quietly)

(SFX: Epic Nafanua jingle and a transformation/possession sound)

[7:13]

NAFANUA: (In Samoan) Talofa, Sefi Leota.

NARRATOR: Good luck, Nafanua! Ok, so Sefi looks up and sees the great warrior goddess Nafanua with her head looking down at her. She just heard the word 'Talofa', which means hello in Samoan. Though... she's all by herself in the park!

SEFI: Who said that?

(SFX: NAFANUA'S JINGLE/SOUND)

NARRATOR: She walks up to the statue and reads the inscription at its feet:

(SFX: NAFANUA'S JINGLE/SOUND)

SEFI (confused) / NAFANUA: Every Samoan has these three things: TOOLS, STRENGTH AND WISDOM... Find yours.

(SFX: NAFANUA'S JINGLE/SOUND)

NARRATOR: Suddenly a seagull lands on Nafanua's shoulder and squawks. (SFX: SEAGULL SQUAWKING)

(Sefi GASPS)

SEFI: (deep breath) Nafanua. I wish I could be as strong as you, but I can't... (SIGH) I better get back there and bow out of this race... who was I kidding?

(SFX: sad music transition to Sefi's house - hubbub, dogs barking and TV rugby match on)

SEFI (says hi to her dad, who's in another room; she's upset and sad): Hey Dad...

LOTO (sitting in the living room couch, happily): Sefi, the rugby match is almost done, but have some of the koko-laisa leftovers in the kitchen!

SEFI (cuts him off): No thanks, I'm not very hungry.

LOTO (suddenly worried): Sefi, what's wrong?

(SFX: Lowers the TVs volume)

SEFI: (Lets out a disappointed sigh) I'm just... stressed out, that's all. It's kinda crazy with the elections coming up and all. Laki is really good, and I'm just so nervous on stage, I can't even talk...

[8:41]

LOTO: Oh Sefi... Come, sit on the couch with me. (SFX: They sit on the couch. TV Rugby match sounds in the background) Try to think of it this way Sefi - right now, you have a chance to make a difference! Don't miss it! You know what? You just need to channel your inner strength and wisdom.

SEFI: That's funny, I read that on a statue today...

LOTO: What statue?

SEFI: Nafanua's... I spaced out hard in front of everyone, ran off and---

LOTO (dramatically): NAFANUA! That's it! You know it was the great Nafanua, a WOMAN, who united the Eastern and Western tribes of Samoa back in the day... in the great battle of Saveasi'uileo!

SEFI: Um... Yeah, they were fighting over the right to govern Samoa, right?

LOTO: Yes, and it was the great warrior goddess Nafanua who brought the people together. She came to the battle (SFX: TV tunes into a Samoan battle ambiance in the background that

slowly comes to life in the scene) where brothers and cousins were fighting... (TONE CHANGES HERE - BECOME A DOCUMENTARY VOICE OVER) And Nafanua, she got out in front of the two warring groups. She used her powers of wisdom, strength and her battle tools and told them... STOP!

SEFI: And they listened? Just like that?

[10:09]

LOTO: Yes, she was a strong woman and no one dared defy her. (SFX: Battle ambience stops) (TONE CHANGES HERE TO HIS NORMAL DELIVERY) Be like her, Sefi!

SEFI: But I'm no warrior goddess... How am I supposed to unite a bunch of teenagers who only care about DAILY access to free ice cream?

LOTO: Talk about what matters to you, what comes from the heart.

SEFI (insecure first, then enthusiastically): Well... Yes, actually, there was this one thing that I wanted to highlight on my platform. You see, I want the school to start an environmental initiative (Fades out) where students go and clean up the polluted streams next to the school, and we... (Fades out completely)

NARRATOR: Sefi shows up at school the next day with a renewed sense of courage. She heads to the library for inspiration.

(SFX: Going through pages)

SEFI (whispering to herself): "Strength, wisdom, and... tools?"

(SFX: Closes the book and moves the chair)

NARRATOR: Sefi pulls out a library book and looks into Nafanua's history. In the book, the warrior goddess stands with a spear in her left hand.

SEFI (whispering to herself): Her tools were: Ta Fesilafa'i, the great hook... Ulimasao, the club... and Fa'auli'ulito, the spear... Wh-What am I supposed to use??

[11:12]

LAKI (whispers, snarky): How ABOUT... the pen? To write better speeches?

SEFI (whispers): Oh, hey LAKI...

*LAKI (whispers): Sefi, just accept defeat, there's no way they'll vote for you and pass up on my campaign perks. In a week's time, they're all gonna be wearing **I VOTED FOR LAKI** stickers...*

SEFI (whispers): Leave me alone, I need to concentrate! Besides, you know that's not what really matters.

LAKI (whispers): All I know is, my family always wins class president. My uncle, my older brother, and my cousin ALL WINNERS. We're winners. What are you supposed to be?

SEFI (whispers): The president, that's what I'm running for...

RANDOM LIBRARIAN: SHHH! We're IN A LIBRARY.

LAKI (whispers): Whatever, just get ready to lose!

(SFX: Laki walks away)

RANDOM SCHOOLKID (whispering):

Hey, cool speech today dude!

LAKI (whispering, excitedly):

I know right, and GUESS what's coming NEXT!

SEFI (whispers to herself): What am I supposed to do now, anyway...??? What tools could I possibly use to beat Laki?

NARRATOR: At lunchtime, Sefi scrolls through IG and...

(SFX: Random scrolling)

NARRATOR: She spots a post by Laki.

(SFX IN CELLPHONE:

LAKI: Alright, I know you guys are thinking about voting for Sefi, but DID YOU KNOW that she actually poured bleach into the ocean to bleach the coral reefs???)

SEFI: Whattt??? That's not even how that happens! And OH-MY-GOD 7000 VIEWS???)

[12:35]

NARRATOR: He has started a dirty campaign against Sefi!

(SFX IN CELLPHONE

LAKI (fast and energetic): *Alright alright I know we all care about the environment and the oceans and all that but REAL talk, would you rather have ice cream every day **FOR FREE 99**, or work to clean up our waters? VOTE BELOW!*

SEFI: *95% voted for ice cream? You've got to be kidding me...*

(SFX: NAFANUA JINGLE)

NAFANUA (echoing in Sefi's head):

Every Samoan has tools... Find yours... Every Samoan has tools... Find yours...

SEFI: *Of course! Nafanua had her weapons to stop the battle... (with exaggerated emphasis) I HAVE MY PHONE TO STOP LAKI!*

NARRATOR: *She spends the night putting together Tik Toks and IG posts to help her campaign.*

NARRATOR: *She even puts together a bunch of educational dance videos explaining water pollution in a fun and simple way:*

(SFX: Montage in Robot/Siri voice:

What makes water undrinkable? (Sarcastically happy answer, "pesticides, fertilizers, and lots of human pollution").

What bleaches coral reefs? (Sarcastically happy answer "low tides, climate changes, and human pollution").

What do low tides do to coastlines? (Sarcastically happy answer, "we'll have humans in the coasts polluting even more with human pollution").

NARRATOR: *The next morning Sefi is getting ready for school, when...*

(SFX: knock knock)

LOTO: SEFI... *Your uncle sent me THIS! (SFX: Sefi's Tik Tok video replaying) You went... viral!! Making educational videos too. Nice work!*

SEFI: *Whuuuuuuuuuhhh???*

[14:06]

NARRATOR: *Sefi looks at her dad's phone and sees one of the clips got 2 MILLION views on*

TikTok!

SEFI (anxious): OKAY OKAY OKAY Uhm. That's a LOT of humans, that's 2 million humans, with 2 eyes on average, that's 4 MILLION EYES dad!!

LOTO: I know! I'm gonna go show your aunt, she didn't believe me!

SEFI (super anxious, fast and stressed out): OH MY GOD OH MY GOD OH MY GOD! What am I gonna do? How am I gonna face everyone at the debate when they've all seen me literally dancing in my living room to science facts?? (pause) Wait. Are they even listening? Or are they just commenting on my dancing?

(SCROLLS)

LOTO: EHHHHH... A little of both.

SEFI: Oh God...

(SFX: Door closes. LOTO on the background: HEY SIMA, YOU LOST THE BET, NOW COME PAY IT! I TOLD YOU IT WAS SEFI ON THE VIDEO, CHECK THIS OUT!) (FADES OUT)

(TRANSITION MUSIC)

NARRATOR: Sefi prepares her final speech that afternoon. Then heads to the beach where the school holds the last debate before voting. She's anxious but ready to show what her strength is made of.

(SFX: Nafanua's jingle/song)

(SFX BEACH SOUNDS)

LAKI: (Fade in with a bullhorn)And in conclusion, I come from a long line of Samoan leaders AND surfers and that's why you should vote for me! (SFX: APPLAUSE AND CHEERING: Go Laki, cheehoo!) Thank you, thank you!

(SFX APPLAUSE)

[15:24]

COACH T. (in loudspeaker): And now let's give a big round of applause for our second candidate, Sefi Leota!!!

SEFI (to herself): Here I go.

NAFANUA (echoing in Sefi's head):

You can do this. Every Samoan has strength... Find yours... Every Samoan has strength... Find yours...

SEFI (to herself): Tools, strength, and wisdom... The cruise, of course! (Breathes in and out; she's getting ready to face the audience)

(SFX: Dramatic music transition. Crowd ambiance)

NARRATOR: She shakes off her anxiety, grabs the bullhorn, and speaks from her heart.

(SFX bull horn screeching)

SEFI (From the bullhorn): Hello, um... Hi, everybody. (SFX: Crowd starts to quiet down) My name is... My name is Sefi and well...

LOTO (from afar): THAT'S MY DAUGHTER, WOOO!

(SFX: Ship's horn blows in the distance. Sefi gets inspired by this)

SEFI: (Grabs the bullhorn again and starts her speech) I know... I know Laki has made promises about surfing, but what if you couldn't surf anymore? What if there were low tides all the time and our waters were polluted to the point where we can't fight back? And we are the ones who are losing it to pollution. Everyone here. Including me!

(SFX crowd gets quieter and starts to listen.)

SEFI (with more energy): Did you know that right now in the North Pacific, there is a massive accumulation of non-biodegradable trash that has collected to form the Great Pacific Garbage Patch? The patch is made up of islands of trash, floating around!

Sefi: Is this the world you want your children and your children's children to grow up in?

(SFX crowd "NO!" Etc)

SEFI: I'm running for your class president on an environmental platform.

[16:54]

NARRATOR: The audience is captivated by her words and her passion.

*SEFI: (fades in) (with LOTS AND LOTS of PASSION AND ENERGY)...So, in conclusion, a vote for me is a vote for us. A vote for me is a vote for strength, for the strength of our people to (emphasis) **fight back** and (emphasis) **protect** our island!!*

(SFX: Applause from the crowd)(SFX: Cruise ship horns again)

LAKI (to himself): Hey is that... that cruise is... (SFX: Walks a few steps in the sand) The cruise is dumping all the trash in the water! Everyone, LOOK! (All cheers suddenly stop and start murmuring again) (SFX: steps in the sand)

(SFX: Waves crashing and cruise ship horns in the distance. Everyone is quiet)

NARRATOR: The whole crowd stares at the ship dumping its garbage in the distance.

(SFX: Ominous music)(Tension builds up)

NARRATOR: After a while, Sefi is swarmed by curious concerned citizens who want to know how they can make a change.

COACH T.: Please stand by everyone! Vote count is about to begin!

NARRATOR: Laki pushes his way through the crowd and stands face to face with her. She holds out the bullhorn

LAKI (enthusiastically): Bravo Sefi! Preach! You killed it out there!

SEFI (with distrust): Uh thanks I guess...

LAKI: Noo really your speech was great!

SEFI: Huh?

LAKI: After everything you said, I got it, you know, I get what we need to pay attention to. So, uh... congrats! Sorry about all those videos I posted... I just really wanted this, you know. But now I really feel I oughta help you out!

[18:22]

NARRATOR: For a moment, she remembers all of the fake videos Laki posted to win. (SFX: Laki's video plays in her head)

SEFI (indignant, ironic): WOW, Laki... That's very big of you... uhm I don't know what to say...

NARRATOR: And the image of Nafanua in full armor pops in her head, smiling.

(SFX: A swing of Nafanua's club, and then Laki's voice breaks like a wooden object being shattered to pieces)

NAFANUA (echoing in her head):

Every Samoan has wisdom... Find yours... Every Samoan has wisdom... Find yours...

NARRATOR: *And Sefi, well... she decides to use her wisdom.*

(SFX: NAFANUA'S JINGLE/SOUND)

SEFI (enthusiastically): *You can help, of course you can! We can work together as a team to make a change. Maybe um... maybe you could help me run the cleanups! Bring Ice cream and your dad to draw a crowd!*

LAKI (surprised): *Alright! DEAL! Thanks, thank you----(get cut off) Hey, what are you staring at the sunset like that?*

SEFI: (To Laki) *Oh, nothing. Let's get to work!* (To herself, satisfied) *Thanks, Nafanua.*

(SFX crowd applauding)

(TRANSITION TO CREDITS)

(Fades out)

[19:35]

NARRATOR: *This tale is based on the legendary oral history of Nafanua, the daughter of Saveasi'uleo, the king of the underworld, who once stepped in to end a great battle between eastern and western tribes of Samoa. Nafanua has 3 special tools that she uses: one was for herself, the TaFesilafa'i; one was for her adopted family, Fa'auli'ulito, and the other was called Ulimasao which was used for victory, to end war and bring peace. She is a historic figure that is often cited as being one of the great leaders of Samoa.*

NARRATOR: *If you're interested in learning more about these ancient tales, check out the following books: Tala O Le Vavau: Myths, legends and customs of old Samoa, by C. Steubel, Iosua Toafa, and Brother Herman.*

NARRATOR: *Sefi was voiced by Abby Leuelu. Nafanua was voiced by Aryn Rozelle; Laki was voiced by Jared Raman; Loto was voiced by EJ Espino and Coach T. was voiced by Irvin Kalugdan. Special thanks to our Cultureverse editorial team for this episode: Nicole Alefaio, Izik Moreno, and Terisa Tinei, who brought their Samoan experiences to this story.*

[20:55]

NARRATOR: *The Creative Director and Executive Producer for this series is Lory Martínez, founder of Studio Ochenta. Dr. Kiona is our consulting producer for all things culture. Our Senior Fiction Producer is Maru Lombardo. All original opening songs for this series were composed by Gabriel Dalmasso. Sound design Maru Lombardo and Luis Raúl López Levi. And our art is by Steve Aparicio.*

NARRATOR: *The Executive Producer for TRAX is Michelle Smawley and our scripts were*

edited by Nathan Yungerberg.

NARRATOR: Follow us on TikTok & IG @cultureversepod. Transcripts are available at ochentastudio.com/cultureverse.

NARRATOR: And I'm Yara Shahidi, your host. Thanks for listening!

(SFX: STUDIO OCHENTA AUDIO LOGO)

(SFX: TRAX/PRX AUDIO LOGO)

END OF EPISODE