

The legendary Bushmen of southern Africa, their nomadic lifestyle and their culture have all but vanished—or have they? In many communities the Bushmen are in dire straits, but in Namibia's Kalahari one can still find remote villages where families live in peace and where the elders still know the secrets of nature.

The San, as they are often called, know how to find water and food in the desert; they know how to make fire and how to heal with medicinal plants. Today, this knowledge seems obsolete, but it might very well be the key to the future for the Bushmen.

Every morning, the men set out to forage and to hunt in the bush, carrying little else but homemade bows and arrows as they walk through the wilderness. But this is a special day, as they are accompanied by a young woman from Norway. Aleksandra Ørbeck-Nilssen is their first student; she enrolled at the "Barefoot Academy", a project she founded herself and which is financed by her own foundation. The basic idea: Bushmen can teach the art of survival. They can teach young people from their own tribe, as well as people from the Western world, and show them how little one needs to make a living without having any negative impact on the environment, even in one of the most hostile places in Africa.

This concept is styled to work both ways: while young Bushmen who suffer from unemployment, poverty, drugs and disease may benefit because traditional skills will reconnect them to their culture, for people from the Western world it will be an eye-opener.

As Aleksandra travels with the Bushmen, they discover wild honey in a fallen tree, dig out roots full of water that they use for drinking and washing, and pick leaves to make ropes. For the San, nature is like an open toolbox.

The Bushmen are also Africa's best trackers. Where Aleksandra can only identify sand and rocks, the men detect the tracks of even the smallest animal. They can hear, smell and sense every creature near and far. Walking with the trackers, Aleksandra discovers the amazing wildlife of the Kalahari—from the tiny grass mouse to the massive eland antelope.

The San in Namibia's northeast are still very close to the unity of man and nature, close enough to survive and enjoy life without electricity and tools, without running water and without money. That such a life is even possible today is perhaps the most important lesson that we can learn from the Bushmen.



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NATURE



THE MODEL AND THE BUSHMEN

1 x 50 min.

Written and directed by **Harald Pokieser**

HD, 5.1 and Stereo

Executive producers: **Sabine Holzer, Walter Köhler**



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