BETRAYAL IN THE CITY

Published by

East African Educational Publishers Ltd.

Brick Court, Mpaka Road/Woodvale Grove

Westlands, P.0. Box 45314

Nairobi - 00100

KENYA.

Email: eaep@eastafricanpublishers.com

WebSite: www.eastafiicanpublishers.com

East African Educational Publishers Ltd

C/O Gustro Ltd

P.0. Box 9997

Kampala

UGANDA.

Ujuzi Books Ltd.

P.0. Box 38260

Dar es Salaam

TANZANIA.

East African Publishers Rwanda Ltd.

Tabs Plaza, Kimironko Road,

Opposite Kigali Institute of Education

P.0. Box 5151, Kigali

RWANDA.

© Francis Imbuga 1976

I All righs reserved

First published by East African Educational Pu

Reprinted eighteen times

. This impression 2012

Reprinted 2012 (twice), 2013 (twice), 2014

ISBN 978-9966-46-360-9

Printed in Kenya by

Printpoint Ltd

P.0. Box 30975

Nairobi

App designed by Muhoozi Denis Kafarasi

Bachelor of Computer Engineering(2Uppper)-Busitema 2012-2016

dedicated to my Beloved sister Annah Musiimenta Muhoozi who transferred her spirit of literature to me after doing literature in Advanced level

Act One:Scene One

Early morning. A lonely grave surrounded by dry thorny

branches. A wooden bowl sits at the centre of the grave; in it,

a few silver coins. When the grave is fully lit, it will be seen

that a crack runs right across it. Birds, insects, frogs etc. join

in song. A drum beats, stops, beats again and stops. In the

distance, a male voice laments. Now the lament fills the air

as Doga enters immediately trailed by his wife, Nina, weeping

silently. Slowly, they move towards the grave. Suddenly the

song dies on 0090's lips. He stands still, transfixed to the spot.

Nina peers forward, then nervously moves back step by step;

Doga turns and sees his retreating wife. ~

DOGA: Nina, stop where you are! What sort of mother are you? Do you 'now fear to set eyes on this evil that has been done on your own son’s grave? For hours and hours you shook with grief. For days you wailed over his still body as those who saw him die unfolded the staiy. Will you now tremble at the mere sight of the shadow of that evil? Come, come help me put the thorns in place before the morning grows out of our hands.

NINA: Who would have thought they would follow him even to his grave? Only the final night, yet with it the ceremony is gone.

DOGA: It is now clear that the man at whose hands my son died lives among us even now. This is proof enough. What we ignored as empty talk now begins to take on grave meaning.

NINA: But where was Jusper when they did this? We asked him to keep watch, didn’t we? Where was he when the murderers followed his brother beyond the grave? Did they get at him?

DOGA: Come, see for yourself. Smell Nina, smelL Does not the smell of petrol penetrate your nose? Look, it

was no common earthquake that made this crack.
This is the work of a stray clansman, one who thinks
he has the strength to fight those who taught him
how to hold a spear. Thank heaven they did not get
at him.

NINA: God be praised. But but where is Jusper? I do
not understand why he did not shout for help when
he saw them do this to his brother's remains!

DOGA: You forget the boys illness. We were not sure that
he would stay here all night. Besides, what with
last night's downpour, they must have tried to
do it while he took shelter. When he returned, he
frightened them away.

NINA: But where is he now? Doga, my heart fails me. This
is not our day. Let us get away from this place, We
shall return when we know where Jusper is. Look, it
seems there was a struggle here. .

DOGA: Jusper is alright where he is.

NINA: He is our only hope. If they should harm him, I will
hang myself and raise a curse upon the whole clan.

DOGA: Hope? I am surprised that you still talk of hope.
Nina, we buried our hope the day Adika was gunned
, down. Come,,let us not waste any more time. Get me a.,
soil.

NINA: But what do you ...?

2

DOGA: Get me soil, did you hear? Soil! We must fill this
Crack and for a while disguise the evil that lives
among us. The ceremony must go on as planned.
I do not want the spirits of the dead to turn wild
with anger on account of a ceremony unperformed.

NINA: It would be wrong for us to sit on this evil. We
cannot outwit our ancestors. Let us do what is
expected of us. Let us send word to the sub-chief
and …

DOGA: The sub-chief! Who is the sub-chief? A mouse does
not share a bowl with a cat.

NINA: It is the noise he makes that fear.

DOGA: The sub-chief! Who is the sub-chief? Have you so
soon forgotten the rumour that now bears the same
weight as noble truth? Nina, when dry thunder tears
the sky before our eyes, do we forget the storm
of yesterday? The sub-chief! The sub-chief! .Did he
not come from that same stomach that mothered
Chagaga?

NINA: Nothing we do will bring Adika back. You know
how patiently we have waited for this day. A little
delay will do no harm, but if we hide the truth ,I

fear something will go wrong.

DOGA: The ceremony shall go on as planned. I do not want it delayed, A cloudy sky does not always cry rain.

NINA: But if they should know what has happened, they will whisper and say we ignored tradition. They will boycott my son's shaving ceremony. Please Doga , let us report this matter.

3

DOGA: Tradition condemns the shedding of a kinsman's blood. Nina, what will you teach me about tradition? Go get me soiL (Exit Nina. Doga picks up the money fiom the bowl) Cold, cold money. Three cold silver coins. No warmth, no life. What a strange way to appease the dead. Adika, my son, do not let them deceive you with money.

When you came into this world to search for your death, you found money here. Now you are silent, but money is still here. Do not let them tempt you. Follow them to the bitter end. Follow them up the hills and down the valleys. (To audience.) What is in money that is more precious than life? Only a handful of coins cost us a son, killed in the city. People say there were many of them, all marching in the same manner. Suddenly, the shooting broke out. People

fled in all directions, but my son's lonely body lay
in the middle of the street. Only four bullets were
fired that day. Adika had four bullet wounds in his
chest. Two weeks after we buried him, the sub-chief's
brother was dismissed from his job. Rumour
has it that he later said he did it in self-defence.
(Prolonged laugh from off stage.) That is the voice
of the brother of the silent one. They were our only
children. When he heard of the death of his brother,
Jusper was never the same again. He became wild at
the funeral, singing songs of vengeance; then they
came and took him away. Said he was dangerous to
peace loving people and had to be cooled down.
When they brought him back after three months,

he was no longer the son we knew.(Second laugh.
This time it's much nearer. Doga hides behind the
bush as Jusper enters, still laughing. He wears a red
gown. He suddenly stops, stares at the grave then
turns to the audience.)
JUSPER: People say I am mad. My own mother thinks I am
Out of my mind. My father calls me crazy. But that,
(Points to the grave.) that when I show them will
prove I have sense here. (Points his head.)

here is powerful; that is why Regina accepted me for a boyfriend. That is why I know the difference between the sun, Jupiter and Jusper. Hey, come to think of it! You and I have never seen Jupiter, except ...? Except on paper. Jupiter! — Absent sir. Jusper! Present sir. Justice! Absent Sir. Yes I've got it. Jupiter and justice are one and the same.They are neither here nor there. No. That is a debatable point, a philosophical point. That is me, Jusper Wendo, Esquire, almost B.A., Kafira University.(A bird sings.) I like that bird for its bravery. Comes to the wrong place and doesn't even bother to keep quiet about it. Coming to this ceremnony is positively criminal except for close relatives like me. (Strides to the grave.) Adika! Adika! Please come and back me up. Come help me stop mother and father from growing old. We'll need them. We'll need every available person. You know what? We have even accepted the contribution of birds. We need songs, war songs … Adika! Adika! … Alright you are too late. (Begins to imitate his favourite cowboy.)

Brother or no brother you gonna join the struggle by force. We gotta restore human dignity, right? Wake

up, man! Alright; you're rioting in your grave and you gonna pay for it. You gonna face the squad, and this time it's gonna be public. (Picks up two sticks and holds them as if they were two pistoLs, one in each hand.) Squad, attention! Aim! … one, two, three, two, one, fire! Tutututututututu! Squad, at ease! Hey, sergeant, why you lookin' sad eeh? He ya brother or somethin'? Don' worry, don' worry. You were sen/in' your bloody nation, right? (Enter Nina with soil.)

NINA: Jusper, where were you?

JUSPER: Serving the nation.

NINA: How could you desert your brother?

JUSPER: It was an order.

NINA: What order? You take off that thing and go and put on something decent. The others will soon be here.

JUSPER: Is Regina with them?

NINA: Perhaps.

JUSPER: Girlfriend Number One; she ought to come.

NINA: She's far away in the city. Where is your father?

DOGA: (Whispering rather loudly.) Do not detain him. Let him go.

JUSPER: He can't go; he is dead.

NINA: My son, please go and put on a clean shirt.

JUSPER: A clean shirt? No. Not after the murder.

NINA: What shall we do now? The illness creeps back on him. Jusper, do you know what day today is?

DOGA: Don't remind him

6

JUSPER: Come and see for yourself. (Points at the crack.) Do you see this river, all this water? I threw him in there. Don't tell me he swam away, because he didn't. He was dead when I threw him there.

NINA: He thinks he has killed you. Please do something before he spoils the ceremony.

DOGA: I told you to shut that mouth!

JUSPER: Alright, I will shut up. Nobody need know I am a murderer. (Throws the stick away.) After all, it was great fun. Now I know how they feel when they do it. Shall I go and confess I did it? .

NINA: Yes my son, go and put on a clean shirt and then you can confess.

JUSPER: Do you think they will harm me if I address the rally? .

NINA: No, they won't. Just go and put on your shirt first.

JUSPER: Will they put him in a government coffin, do you think?

NINA: Good God! What shall we do?

JUSPER: I will go and recommend a government coffin with

many handles so that everybody will help lower

him into the grave. (He smiles, stands at attention,

salutes, then exits, military style.)

NINA: He has never behaved like this before.

DOGA: His eyes were full of sleep.

NINA: Why did he think he had killed you?

DOGA: It was his brother he thought he had killed. I saw

him address the grave as if Adika sat right on top of

it. It was both strange and frightening.

7

NINA: I hope he will be calm at the ceremony. What shall

we do if he grows wild? We can't lock him up during

his brother's ceremony, can we?

DOGA: It is his fate. They locked him up during the burial

NINA: Come, let us put this day in God's hands. The drummers will soon be here(They kneel in front of the grave and sing.)

When we walk with the Lord

In the light of his way

What a glory he sheds on

When we do his good will

He abides with us still

Unto all who will trust and obey

Trust and obey

For there is no other way

To be happy in Jesus

But to trust and obey

NINA: (Praying.) Father, Maker of all that crawl and all that

fly, we are dry of words, but we put this day in your

hands. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Saviour

Amen. (Jere and Mulili enter, the latter carries a

bottle a beer, from which he will drink every now and then.)

JERE: Old people, you waste your time. There is to be no

ceremony.

DOGA: Is it to us you speak?

MULILI: No ceremony! That the final.

DOGA: A shaving ceremony is no child's play.

MULILI: Who you call child, eeh? Jere, you tell him. Tell him what I does with stubborn old mens.

JERE: The ceremony is cancelled in the interest of

peace.

DOGA: In the interest of peace? Whose peace?

MULILI: We wants no anymore bloody bloodshed. We have

seen enough. Just who you wants to murder next?

DOGA: Murder? Me? Young man, have you nothing to

do with your time that you come and throw your

weight about the grave of an innocent, harmless

dead? And you young man, is this a time to laugh?

JERE: We are on duty. We serve the nation.

MULILI: Repeat to them Jere, repeat. Tell them this grave

no longer belong them.

NINA: You took our all, but you will not take the grave

from us. If you do not go now, I shall strip and

show you the poor naked bones you have left me.

Do you want to be blinded by the nakedness of your

grandmother's agemate?

JERE: No, we do not ask for blindness. You see, this

friend of mine does not belong here. He doesn't

know our ways.

DOGA: Then he should keep quiet instead of turning our

hearts over and over.

MULILI: Big coward. Why you doesn't let her get on with

it. How many naked body I have seen and I am still

Mulili with my two eyes, natural? Look, no glass

goggles.

DOGA: Let us forget he ever was born. Young man, the

shape of your head even with that thing on is a

familiar shape. Tell me, are you not Kaleka's son?

JERE: I am.

DOGA: Then listen to me. Your father and I shared the same knife at circumcision. What devil makes you look me in the face?

JERE: I do not look you in the face. I know the bitterness

in your heart.

MULILI: Big coward. Jere, you a woman! (They stare at him

briefly.)

JERE: Old man, if I had the power, I would let you go

on. I would even take part in the ceremony. I knew

Adika well.

DOGA: Do you know that even as we stand here, a stranger

who hardly knew him lies in prison because of him?

MULILI: That no matter. He go against law and order. Tell us new thing or make clear out of here. You are

tresspasser.

DOGA: Empty words will be your downfall. May you die the way Adika did!

MULILI: Hey Jere, did you heard that? You tell him me I am man with action, not words. Come on tell …

JERE: Shut up! (Silence, then Mulili chuckles softly.) Old

man, do as I tell you for the moment. It's safer. Look, this is the signed order.

NINA: Do not show us letters when you know well what you did to our eyes. You have blinded us, left us in darkness, and then as if that is not enough, you show us letters. Look young man, that is where our eyes are — under that mound.

MULILI: Your people full of primitive. Instead going to find how the other is, they comes and get stuck with dead one.

DOGA: What other one?

MULILI: You see now, he now being pretend. All they wants the bloody ceremony.

DOGA: Kaleka's son, what is it he talks about? What pretence

does he mean?

JERE: He talks of Jusper.

DOGA: What about Jusper?

JERE: I can't believe it. I can't believe you are in the dark.

NINA: What has Jusper done?

JERE: Have you seen him at all since last night?

NINA: Yes he was even here this morning. We asked him to guard the grave last night, but when we arrived this morning, he was not here; then after a little while, he came. See they did while he was away! (Jere inspects the grave.)

JERE: God, I can't believe it.

MULILI: What have happen? Have the guard eat the body?

(Laughs loudly.) .

JERE: Be serious for once you devil .

MULILI: I am professional soldier by profession.

JERE: I didn't believe the rumour. It is good he is dead.

DOGA: Who?

JERE: Chagaga.

NINA: The sub-chief's brother?

JERE: Yes. (Pause.) Jusper killed him.

DOGA: Jusper!

NINA: Jusper!

JERE: Yes. last night.

NINA: This is a trick!

JERE: It is no trick. People saw him drag the body to the river, and when they sent a search team there they sure enough found the body.

NINA: This is a trick!

JERE: He even confessed it himself.

DOGA: Confessed? When?

JERE: A few minutes before they sent us here.He came dressed in a white shirt and confessed. Beat his chest in front of all the people and said he had done it.

At first people ran away from him, as if he suffered from some horrible infectious disease. After a while they picked up stones and started to stone him.The whole crowd was throwing stones. When he fell down, the people took to their heels, thinking him dead.

DOGA: He is not dead then?

JERE: No.

DOGA: Where is he now?

MULILI: All small murderers get arrest.

JERE: They took him away and asked us to come and guard the grave.

NINA: It was all my fault. I sent him to them. I assured him that they would not harm him. I wish I knew what rally he said he wanted to address.

MULILI: You see. I says these too be murderers.

DOGA: If Jusper killed Chagaga, then he is not mad. We

lack a name for his illness. But days have changed.

Kaleka's son, I have nothing else to offer you;

(Handing him a pocket Bible.) take this. May God

open your eyes to the suffering of your people.

JERE: Even if it means killing a friend?

MULILI: These you call friend?

JERE: Then I did wrong. I let you get away with it. I saved you.

MULILI: Who, me you saved? How? When?

JERE: When you let Mustafa escape, did I open my mouth? Why should we not allow these two

to perform a harmless ceremony for their dead in that same spirit?

MULILI: Mustafa's case be different . Nobody likely to know he go across border.

JERE: Will you help me ?

MULILI: No. Not this. It too dangerous.

JERE: Then I'll do it alone. I shall go to the village and announce that the ceremony is on.

MULILI: You Jokes. You expects me to quiet about it?

JERE: No I don't, but I will go on. These are my people.They have done no wrong. Look at the grave. This is proof that their son was murdered. The man wanted to rid himself of the ghost by burning the body.

MULILI: You still believes in ghost?

JERE: (Losing his temper.) Put that bottle down and listen to me. That boy there died for Kafira's progress. He was slaughtered like a goat and sacrificed for a non-exrstent peace and harmony. Surely he deserves this ceremony!

MULILI: The fellow should ought have know best than incite

his fellow students to rioting. They should ought

have follow proper channels.

JERE: What do you know about proper channels?

MULILI: This, that even although majority lecturers at Kafira University be expatriate, that not his business. He go there to learn, not criticise policy that he know nothing about.

JERE: Do you know they only acted referees in a match between our own sides? It was an empty battle

where we fought against ourselves.

JERE: Who say that? Who say we fight each against ourself? They cross the river, go the other side

and call themself intellectual. They hurl abuse at our symbol of national securicor. A lot public fund and time go be wasted to bring the situation back to abnormal. They were retard progress, not for progress.

JERE: I refuse to kneel down for theoretical progress.

MULILI: Then become student now. (He looks at Jere, goes to the grave, scoops some soil and lets it fall between his fingers.) Dust to dust, ash to …

JERE: Will you shut up you heartless brute! "

MULILI: Brute? Where you get that from?

JERE: Get out of my sight! (Aims a pistol at him.)

MULILI: (Hands up.) Alright, I am sorrowful. I honest doesn't know it will affect you.

JERE: Get out of my sight now! (Mulili begins to walk off. Jere shoots as Mulili dives offstage.)

MULILI: Hey you, what you thinks you do? You shall pays for it!

JERE: Go shoot your mouth wherever you will. (Jere goes to the grave, takes a coin from his pocket and drops it into the bowl. He kneels down and bends over the grave in prayer. Lights fade out slowly.)

15

Act One:Scene Two

Scene Two

A prison cell equipped with the usual prison stuff: pail, mat

blanket, etc. At one of the comers, Mosese sits with his back to

the audience. Suddenly, the door is opened and Jere pushed in.

He falls just short of Mosese, but the latter is unmoved.

JERE: My friend, why ...

ASKARI: Next time you call me your friend, you will lose a tooth. What makes me think I am a better man than you? Do you think I live off answering such foolish questions? You are inside, I am out, now if that doesn't make sense to you, something else will.

JERE: Alot of things don't make sense to me, you included.

ASKARI: My God, this is the wrong place for you. The place for lunatics is three doors down the corridor.

JERE: You mean three doors up the corridor?

ASKARI: That could land you into more trouble. Three doors up the corridor is the office of the

head of this institution.

JERE: Is he in or out?

ASKARI: In, and he won't be of much use to you when I start educating you.

JERE: Has it ever occurred to you that the outside of this cell may well be the inside of another?

ASKARI: (Looking around to make quite sure that no mistake has been made.) Look, people don't question things here. You make your own life more unbearable.

JERE: I know, but do you know chameleons?

ASKARI: I have had enough of you and your chameleons.

16

JERE: They are masters of environmental adaptation.

ASKARI: You waste your time. Now I see why you tried to make yourself champion of justice, bleeding meaningless words.

JERE: My experience during the last few weeks has made it necessary that I talk. It is as if I have been born again. I have never felt so confident in my life.

ASKARI: That is why you are best ignored. Here I am wasting time talking to you instead of helping the others to fill in forms for your rehabilitation.

JERE: Rehabilitation? After only two days?

ASKARI: Yes, you will need it. It's the only way out of here, otherwise you will never be allowed to mix freely. You see, we have research stations dotted all over the countryside. Experiments at these research stations show that rehabilitation is invaluable for all who pass through here. You should be thankful that in spite of your contribution to the national headache, we still give your future some consideration.

JERE: I am truly grateful now that I know what awaits me.I didn't know you took such pains.

ASKARI: Experts had to be imported to give meaning to the data. It wasn't the type of work any of these local pretenders would handle.

JERE: I see your point. No previous experience, eeh?

ASKARI: Don't cut me short. You do the listening, I talk.

JERE: You work like the meteorological department. No public questions into methods used,

and no assurance.

17

ASKARI: I can see you have come to stay. What has the meteorological department got to do with what goes on here?

JERE: They advise people to spread their blankets out, then unexpected rain falls from the seemingly clear sky. By then, it is too late to fetch umbrellas.(Silence.) Who is he

ASKARI: A more sensible man than you. Used to be a drug addict though. Hey you! What do you think you're doing showing us your back?

MOSESE: I have no front.

JERE: Dead right. Shake my five, shake my five.

ASKARI: Shut up! You, can't you talk?

MOSESE: It is prudent to be silent. But it doesn't prove I am dumb.

JERE: Dead right once more. It's amazing the people you bring here.

MOSESE: I said everything in mitigation. All I had to say,but it did not help. Words have lost meaning to me.Rehabilitation, nationalisation, africanisation. What do these words mean? What is africanisation in your mother tongue?

ASKARI: (Visibly embarrassed.) I—I don't answer such foolish questions. You answer him. What is africanisation in your mother tongue?

JERE: Do you and I share a mother tongue?

ASKARI: Correct! Now don't you ask any other foolish questions. I am here to see that you ask

questions.

18

MOSESE: Then why were you so uneasy when I was silent a little while ago? Why do you now stop me from asking questions?

JERE: It's a perfect example of what goes on outside. No one is sure of what should be done.

ASKARI: You are wrong. Our assessment has never been wrong. Take this fellow, for example. When they brought him in last night, he was all questions. We calculated that two mature strokes would ease the tension.It worked perfectly. This is where the research stations come in.

You see, like all liquids have different boiling points — incidentally I did pure physics up to and including '0' level — like all liquids have different boiling points, human beings have different breaking points. At your trial, there was enough evidence that your breaking point would be just before the end of your present jail

term.

MOSESE: At least you are honest.

ASKARI: Your friend here is two years weaker than you. Congratulations!

MOSESE: Thank you. (Silence) Sometimes I wonder why a man of your understanding should have accepted this job. I honestly think you are in the wrong place.

ASKARI: Many prisoners say that to me, but that is just because they don't understand Kafira. If they did, alot of them would not be prisoners. It doesn't pay to have a hot mouth. Perhaps you were right when you said silence is the best ship home, only you realised it too late. It is now common knowledge that you are a great talker. If you decide to be silent, you will have to explain what it is you are keeping quiet about. That is how prisons work. You have to show a kind of consistency of character at the same time as you show a marked improvement.

MOSESE: In that case, there can be no hope.

ASKARI: There is. Think about what I told you last night. It is the chance of your life. You can't afford to stick to your principles. No. Not here. That is what I told that student from the mental hospital. He took my advice and will be discharged tomorrow.

MOSESE: Do you mean the boy whose brother was killed?

ASKARI: Yes; he has recovered, but he has nothing to go back to. His parents were found dead in their hut.

MOSESE: His parents dead?

ASKARI: Yes, dead. Perhaps that is why he has been pardoned.

MOSESE: Will you do me a favour?

ASKARI: What?

MOSESE: Ask him to see me before he leaves. I have a message for him to take to my sister.

ASKARI: Tell your sister to be careful. That boy's head will never be straight.

MOSESE: I like the boy. He is very like his brother, and like me.

ASKARI: Think about last night’s suggestion. It’s the only way I can help you. That way you will see I am not blind to these things.

20

MOSESE: I can't see myself doing it.

ASKARI: All the same, think about it. I am not asking for an answer now. And don’t listen to this fool. He poison your mind. (He turns to go.)

JERE: Hey you, please return my book. The senior officer said I could keep it.

ASKARI: The senior officer said so, did he? Tell him I said no. We do not want any more trouble from you. (Exit.)

MOSESE: You came with books?

JERE: Only one book.

MOSESE: A novel?

JERE: No.

MOSESE: A play?

JERE: No. A bible. The New Testament. You see, I am a religious man.

MOSESE: You?

JERE: Yes. I am a believer. I believe in travelling light. That is why I carried the book. "

MOSESE: The Bible is a curious thing to deny someone. Why

did they do it?

JERE: You we, we were two men in the cell. Two strangers.We were very bored just sitting there and looking at each other, so we decided to do it, just to pass time.

MOSESE: Don’t tell me you bent so low.

JERE: You draw conclusions too soon.

MOSESE: That is what prison does to a man, but I wasn't

always like this. There were times in my past when I never drew conclusions. There were indeed times when I never fetched my umbrella at the sight of clouds, however dark. Now that is only a thing of the past.

JERE: Yes, a thing of the past, like the game of last night. Do you remember Pilate?

MOSESE: Pilate? Yes, Pilate is supposed to have humiliated Jesus.

JERE: Yes, he actually caned him. Not many of us come by such an opportunity.

MOSESE: Opportunity?

JERE: Yes, opportunity. The opportunity of stripping a king and caning his buttocks. In a way it is a pity that it had to be Pilate. Can you imagine the sense it would have made if only a common man had done

the caning?

MOSESE: I am not with you.

JERE: No? It would have been positive. As positive as when a sick right eye is plucked out lest it infects the left one.

MOSESE: You seem to be quite at home with the Bible.

JERE: Yes I am. I taught religious knowledge for three years before I was drafted into the army.

MOSESE: You are a soldier?

JERE: I was until I came face to face with reality. They sent me to my own sub-location to restore peace and order. It took me only two days to change my mind. My friend, there is fire outside.

MOSESE: That is not new. That fire has always been there. Ever since the take-over. Mind you, things were worse before.

JERE: I thought hard before I made up my mind. Then I said to myself, if they take you in, carry a bible with you. It might restore your faith in humanity. It hasn't. You need first hand experience. You need to live the lives of those you fight for. That is why it is important not only to read that Pilate story, but to live it. Only then can you understand that situation and link it with ours. Perhaps that is why it was strangely fulfilling acting Pilate in a cell.

MOSESE: Is that why they took the book from you?

JERE: Yes. My co-actor cried out. I wonder he had the guts to go against the law. He was Jesus and I Pilate. That was unfortunate casting. I had wanted to be Christ but he would not

hear of it. When it came to the caning, he couldn't stand it. He wailed like a woman in a death home. When the guards came, I

tried to explain to them that I was only faithfully following the script but they didn't believe me. They stripped me naked, caned me and took the book away. That, to them, was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; but then they were wrong. They should have let him do it. (Silence.) Stranger I think you and I will get on well together. Fancy me talking to you, telling you all these things without even knowing who you are. I am Jere Kaleka.

MOSESE: I am Mosese wa Tonga.

JERE: Mosese wa Tonga? Why did you take on a name like that? Oh, I am sorry. I am glad to meet you.

MOSESE: Me too. (They shake hands.)

JERE: It's a curious name, Mosese wa Tonga.

MOSESE: I know. It means "remember the past". I took it the day after I was arrested. A strange way to be loyal. Do you remember the great row over the changing of names?

JERE: Only vaguely.

MOSESE: Blows were exchanged in the planning committee over whether the changing of names should be item number one or three in the development plan. Boss had just changed his name; hence the anxiety of some members to put it top. I changed mine for different reasons. I had no choice but to change it.

JERE: How is that?

MOSESE: You see, the day before they arrested me, I attended a funeral. One of my students had been murdered in cold blood. His brother has been here but he is to be discharged tomorrow.

JERE: Is he the one the Askari was talking about?

MOSESE: Yes.

JERE: I see. I think I …

MOSESE: You think what?

JERE: Never mind.

MOSESE: I have never seen anything like it before. The atmosphere was tense at the funeral. I thought for once that things would change in Kafira. But during the speeches, I learned the bitter truth. Kafira wasn't going to change after all. No. Not because of the death of one small student. A handful of politicians tried to turn the funeral service into a political rally. The service must not take more than ten minutes. The coffin should not be carried by students. Weeping in public is illegal for the academic staff. I couldn't bear it, so I told them my mind. The following day they came for me.

JERE: What did they charge you with? Weeping in public?

MOSESE: No. Being in possession of an illegal drug. One kilogramme of opium. When they searched my car, they sure enough found the drug. I laughed. I had heard similar stories, but I never thought it would ever happen to me. The man who planted it on me was called Nicodemus. Nicodemus was my name too, but I dropped it the following day.

JERE: I would have done the same. (Silence) You have been in for the last one year, haven't you? "

MOSESE: Yes. How did you know?

JERE: I have heard about you. I also know your sister.

MOSESE: Who -- Regina?

JERE: Yes. Does she visit you?

MOSESE: He comes twice a month. They won't allow her to come more often.

JERE: She must find it hard going without you.

MOSESE: She is too soft for a prisoner's sister. Too soft. I saw it In her eyes when she came yesterday. I saw betrayal in her eyes. Stood in front of me and said she wanted to go and plead for my release. I nearly slapped her. What weakness!

JERE: Perhaps she knows you stand a chance. Is that why the Askari said there is some hope for you?

MOSESE: No. That is different and more ridiculous. They would have me clown on stage before I am released. And that isn't a certainty either.

JERE: Clown on stage? Whatever for?

MOSESE: A certain head of state is due to visit Kafira, in a few weeks' time. Now, because of his love for the dramatic, Boss has decided that a play be performed. For the visiting head of

state as part of his entertainment.The ludicrous part of it all is that he wants the play to be acted by prisoners. (Laughs.)

JERE: That’s not funny. Why?

MOSESE: It would symbolise national unity. That would show prisoners actively involved in nation building.

JERE: What then has that to do with your release?

MOSESE: If the exercise is a success, he has promised the release of six hundred prisoners.

JERE: I see. In that case I feel we should volunteer even if we won’t be released.

MOSESE: I will not bend so low.

JERE: I don't see it as bending low. To me, that is sacrificing one’s dignity in order to rescue others from inevitable misery. Just think of those six hundred families that will be re-united

MOSESE: I cannot do it. Among my friends, that would be equivalent to kneeling in front of Boss and pleading for mercy. Same thing as my sister wanted to do. That would imply guilt, and I am not guilty of anything.(Enter Askari with a mug of tea.)

ASKARI: Here, tea with milk, yet you don't even belong to my tribe. You need a tall relative to get anything these days. And you, because you think I am a junior officer, you can feed on your saliva. Do you know what we call it?

JERE: Tea with milk.

ASKARI: Nonsense. The term is selective breeding of …

JERE: Progressive layers of humanity. It an epidemic of breaking points.

ASKARI: Unless you are careful, I will recommend that you be shifted to that other cell. I don’t believe they are any crazier than you are. (Sound of whistle; Askari rushes off.)

JERE: What was that for?

MOSESE: Trouble in one of the cells. Here, take a sip before he returns.

JERE: Thank you. It's the only way to beat selective breeding, by being firmly united against it.

MOSESE: That is why I don’t believe in such crap as the last shall be first, and blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the Kingdom of heaven! For years we waited for the Kingdom, then

they said it had come. Our Kingdom had come at last, but no. It was all an illusion- How many of us have set eyes upon Kingdom? What colour is it?

JERE: I wouldn't know, but I guess it's blood red.

MOSESE: It was better while we waited. Now we have nothing to look forward to. We have killed our past and are busy killing the future. Sometimes I sit here and look far into the past. There I see my mother slaughtering the biggest family cock. Once every year she slaughtered a senior cock to mark the birth of Christ. Our children will never have such memories. Now there is blood everywhere. Cocks are slaughtered any day, many times a week.

JERE: Things will change.

MOSESE: Perhaps. That is why I prefer to wait and see. I will stay here and remain loyal to my principles.

JERE: Change will never come that way. You have to make up your mind to take part in that play. That way you will have an opportunity to meet face to face with Boss . That way, you will have given him something to feel ashamed of.

MOSESE: You talk like that Askari. He sees me silent and thinks I am about to break, but he is wrong. He doesn't realise that silence is a weapon just like any other, I don't have to give legal public lectures to reveal what it is I sit on. We all know what should know be done, but we dare not talk beyond whispers.We are dictators, of ourselves. Buying my release by acting in front of a visiting head of state would be to betray our course. Why do people sit and watch in silence as the disease spreads deep inside? I will never forgive them. They watched in silence as soldiers beat up my innocent sister, forcing her to give evidence against me.

JERE: You mean the …

MOSESE: Brutes! Murderers! Beat up my innocent sister until she lost hearing in one ear. Why beat a woman? Why didn't they beat me?

JERE: I am sorry.

MOSESE: What did you say? What did I hear you say? Now listen you! I hate people who say that to me! I hate people who sympathise with me!

JERE: You need some rest. (Mosese goes to a bundle of rags and lies down. He is still shaking with rage. Jere puts a blanket over him as Askari enters.)

ASKARI: What was that noise? Fighting again? You senseless brute! You were in the other cell and there was trouble. Now you are here and there is more trouble. Do you know I have seen people hang for less serious offences?

JERE: I know? Innocence can be an Offence"

ASKARI: Next time you cause trouble here, you won't know when I climb on you.

JERE: Leave us alone. You don't understand our language.

ASKARI: Rioting in a public cell is not a language. I give you just one more chance. If you cause any more

29

JERE: There is no trouble here. If you want to come face to face with trouble, look out there, not here. It’s out there where selective breeding blossoms.

ASKARI: You are not fit to live above the ground, you mole!And just in case you didn’t know, I have once killed a man in this very cell.

JERE: Congratulations! How did you manage?

ASKARI: I am now more convinced that you are insane. Give

me that mug and sleep. (Jere hands mug to him.)

Thank you, and remember what I have just told

you. Don’t disturb him. (He turns and goes off. Jere

begins to organise where to sleep. Suddenly Mosese

utters a terrible war-cry. He wriggles violently as if

in a fight and then stops suddenly. Now he stands

up slowly as if in a slow motion picture. His eyes

are wide open and unblinking. He walks round the

cell greeting old friends and relatives. Jere, now

frightened, edges against the wall. At some stage, they are so close to each other that when Moseses stretches his hand, Jere has no alternative but to shake it.)

MOSESE: Yes I was. All of us were scared that it would go on and on. Pardon? No, I have no immediate plans … Well, yes, I guess I will take up this job they are offering me … It is my conviction that the majority will have to go. No point in hiding what has got to be … Yes, in the hands of the people … Exactly, you’ve put it better than I could ever have … That is a difficult one.

Let’s just say I got a certain amount of satisfaction from it. You see there is a kind of satisfaction you get out of knowing that you are honest with yourself and with the people … No, I don’t exactly mean that. I would find it difficult to take pride in whatI had not helped to build. Of course I am referring to those things we could have done ourselves. Yes,yes.

JERE: Mosese, are you sick?

MOSESE: Yes, that is why I am accepting the post … No, I will forgive, but I will always remember that I forgave them.

JERE: Mosese, can you hear me?

MOSESE: I don’t know about that. I suppose I will marry,yes That was inevitable. In such a struggle, sacrifice is necessary. Thank you. I am glad you think so … I wonder if you would have said the same thing last evening Yes, thank you. See you at the celebrations. (He shakes a few hands and waves to well-wishers, then enters a car; quietly goes back, lies down and covers himself as before. Jere tip-toes to where Mosese now lies, bends over him for a moment, then slowly moves down stage and looks intensely at the audience.)

JERE: When the madness of an entire nation disturbs a solitary mind, it is not enough to say the man is mad. (Fade lights.)

Act One:Scene Three

A small room with main and kitchen doors. A bed is neatly spread along the back wall. By the left wall is a clothes stand on which a woman’s clothes hang. Regina enters by kitchen door, soap and towel in hand. She puts the two away and proceeds to wear shoes. Jusper enters by main door and tip—toes towards Regina. He wears his red academic gown.

JUSPER: Tutututututututu! (Regina screams as Jusper laughs.)

REGINA: I have a mind to spit in your face. How dare you do that to me?

JUSPER: That is hardly a way to welcome a boyfriend Regina! It’s happening everywhere, you know. They come quietly when you are least expecting them and before you realise it, they have pounced on you like hungry leopards. It’s happening everywhere. It happened at my brother’s grave too, only this time I was a trifle quicker. Now, don't look at me with those worried eyes. I only wanted to see what you would do if it happened to you.

REGINA: Next time, knock! And you better take off that thing It makes you look more dangerous than you really are.

JUSPER: More mad you mean? Regina, look at me. Look at my eyes. Do you see madness in them?

REGINA: Sit down and have some rest.

JUSPER: What do you see in my eyes? (Silence) Regina, don't be like the others. Don't try to kill me. You and your brother are the only people I have in the world, but Mosese is in; that leaves you —you alone to build or destroy me.

32

REGINA : You need rest.

JUSPER: I don't. I will never have rest. How can I ever rest with the death of my entire family on my mind? Those brutes murdered my parents in exchange for my release. Gave me good treatment knowing well that I had nothing else to lean on except my student status. I will get my revenge someday, even if it means going it alone.

REGINA: Jusper, you promised. You promised to be a good boy. Do you now talk of revenge? Remember what my brother told you before you left prison. What did he say? What did he tell you to do?

JUSPER: To close my eyes, block my ears and pretend that nothing is happening. But he was wrong. Madmen don't pretend. Regina, don't take sides with them.They only use us as scapegoats, a kind of outlet for their anger. It's a shame.

REGINA: It's a shame to wear that thing in the streets, and worse to have it on under my humble roof. Don't they teach you manners at that university?

JUSPER: I am a philosophy student, not a student of manners. Regina, the street disease has caught up with you. You have lost your fighting spirit like everyone else in the street. As we marched up and down, some of them even shouted abusive words at me. Beggars leaning on street walls told us we were wasting time.

REGINA: They were right; you waste your time.

JUSPER: It is a year ago since we lost more than time. All the students want is his photograph printed in the local newspapers. We are prepared to pay for it

33.

REGINA: You cannot force them.

JUSPER: That is the tragedy of it all. We can't force the freedom of the press to favour us. Just a

photograph with the word THANKS above it; that's all we want.

REGINA: What would you achieve by that?

JUSPER: Nothing, but it is what is done in the circumstances.Why should he be an exception?

REGINA: Jusper, no good will come out of this struggle. Like you, I only have two close friends left in this world.You and my brother, but my brother is inside. If anything should go wrong, we'll all be wiped out.What then is the use of this raving? Those beggars who abused you were right. They know better than to fight stones, If your brother had kept his mouth shut, he would be with us now, and if my brother had also kept quiet, he would not be wasting away in a dungeon.

JUSPER: Adika died for the truth. We will not let him down. He was killed for asking whether or not we were on the right train.

REGINA: At that time the important thing was not whether or not we were on the right train. No. The important thing was that at least we were on a train.

JUSPER: Little knowledge is truly dangerous. I wish you knew what dreams I go through at night. I defended his remains like a man, and yet Adika won't give me a night's peace. Keeps appearing to me, and last night he nearly hit me with an enormous slide for shaking hands with our local sub-chief. He made me promise an impossibility. '

34

REGINA: Why don't you simply go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. '

JUSPER: You will need to be more original than that. You got that from a book.

REGINA: What if I did ? It means something to me. Consoles me, tells me that one day my brother will be free again. But when you put on that thing and move up and down the streets, I think of nothing but trouble. Every time you wear that thing in the streets, people think it was right for Mosese to be locked in.

JUSPER: It doesn't matter what the masses think if they have no voice. That is why Adika had to go. That is why Mosese and Jere are in: because they tried to provide voices for the masses. They are all strong men.

REGINA: What is strength in a world such as ours? What did they stand to gain by shouting louder than the rest? Nothing. They simply put a lock to their past.

JUSPER: They are all heroes.

REGINA: Everywhere the world is full of heroism; did they have to ride in a storm to achieve it?

JUSPER: We were right from the start and Mosese knew it. They were foolish to allow him to speak, knowing well what he would say. That is why they were embarrassed to the extent of planting drugs on him. It was the only way they could get him.

35

REGINA: I wish there was truth in the rumour!

JUSPER: What rumour?

REGINA: The state visit may be on after all.

JUSPER: So what? What difference does it make to you? If he comes, he will only be looking for employment.

REGINA: Who, him?

JUSPER: Yes. With so many of his subjects unemployed, he is virtually jobless himself. He comes on a survey mission.

REGINA: What's that?

JUSPER: There are still many pockets in Kafira that need development, and of course we don't have

necessary manpower. Can't you see he is on a do-it— yourself kind of mission?

REGINA: But if the rumour is true?

JUSPER:Everybody will have three days' holiday.

REGINA: Prisoners will be released to mark the occasion. Mosese may

JUSPER: God! What crap! Is your toilet repaired?

Regina: Yes, but wait. (Gets a toilet roll from under the bed and holds it out to him.)

JUSPER: Thank you; it's a short call. (Exit Jusper. Regina picks up a letter from the table and runs through before Jusper returns.)

REGINA: Are you happy now?

JUSPER: Nothing to be happy about a simple biological function. So it will take a state visitor to release political prisoners here in Kafira? What an act of clemency! Where is that from?

36

REGINA: From Mr. Tumbo, my landlord. He gave me the tip.

JUSPER: Let's have a look. (Takes the letter.) What does he mean?

REGINA: I don't read literature. You read between 'the paragraphs.

JUSPER: I can’t trace any paragraphs here. Do you think he means it?

REGINA: He does. Says he will be in charge of the whole thing himself. And don’t forget he is Boss’s right-hand man.

JUSPER: How exactly does he hope to go about it?

REGINA: That is his business, not ours.

JUSPER: Why hasn't he come then? (Looks at his watch.) He is already thirty minutes late.

REGINA: You know well that Tumbo is a busy man.

JUSPER: What in the first place does he hope to gain by helping you? Are you sure this is not a trick —some sort of trap?

REGINA: I approached him myself and asked him to speak to Boss on my behalf. That is when he told me of those other plans.

JUSPER: Does he know me?

REGINA: Who are you?

JUSPER: I may be a student — a nobody — but at least I have a good head. This man may be tricking you. There must be something they want to know. Alright, I intend to beat him at his own game.

REGINA: He won't give you a chance. He has no time to waste on students. (There is a knock at the door. Regina, hand on lips, runs into the kitchen. Knock.)

37

JUSPER: Come in. (Enter Tumbo. He is fat and somewhat overconfident, at least in this house. He wears a neat three-piece suit.)

TUMBO: Good morning young man!

JUSPER: Good morning sir!

TUMBO: Am I in the wrong place? I hope not!

JUSPER: It depends on your destination.

TUMBO: Let's put it another way. Are you in the right place?

JUSPER: As you can see, I am quite comfortable.

TUMBO: I notice you are one of them.

JUSPER: Who?

TUMBO: The red guards.

JUSPER: Red guards?

TUMBO: Yes. Red guards is my name for rioting university students. When will you learn to concentrate on what you went there for? Marching up and down the streets chanting a dead student's name will never improve things in Kafira. Never!

JUSPER: That dead student was too close to me to be discussed by your kind. Whom did you want to see? My cousin?

TUMBO: Is she your cousin? Well, I should have guessed you quite resemble each other. Is she in?

JUSPER: Yes. Shall I call her?

TUMBO: Please do. (Exit Jusper. Tumbo, hands in pockets looks about the room touching this object, then that. Regina enters, followed by Jusper.)

REGINA: Good morning! Have you two met?

TUMBO: No, we haven't, but I am sure you know who I am.

JUSPER:Actually I don't.

TUMBO: You must be one of the very few. Ever heard of a Mr. Tumbo?

JUSPER: I know the name but

REGINA: Don't take him seriously. He is a pain in the neck.

TUMBO: They all are, especially when they wear these red rags of theirs. What is your name?

.JUSPER: Jusper Wendo.

TUMBO: That is a familiar name. Your prayer was very interesting.

REGINA: Does this one pray?

TUMBO: His name was signed against what they called “a student’s prayer”.

REGINA: What was the prayer about?

JUSPER: Just a short prayer for our nation. That’s all. We asked God to help us drop our Christian names.

TUMBO: Young man, you had better watch what you say.If it had half suggested that, you would be behind bars.

JUSPER: But there is nothing wrong with that. Changing names is item number three in the new Development Plan, isn’t it? In fact, Boss himself gave us a fine example when he substituted his Christian name with something none of us can pronounce.

REGINA: (Hands on mouth.) You! That mouth of yours will be your undoing. Mr. Tumbo, please don’t take him seriously. He is only a spoilt child.

JUSPER: Only a spoilt child, but the worst you can do to truth is to clothe it in lies. You can’t undo it.

REGINA: Shut that mouth before someone finds cause to shut it for you. It isn't as if we have had enough.

TUMBO: Actually, between the three of us, the young man has a point. We all feel the same but but know better than to shout about it.

REGINA: But that name is not difficult to pronounce!

JUSPER: Alright, it may not be difficult to pronounce, but just what is African about it? Is it the sound of it or its origin?

TUMBO: A leader needs a mysterious name. A name that common tongues will bleed pronouncing.

JUSPER: A fine preoccupation that one — finding ways to outwit the common man. It’s a shame and it smells.

TUMBO: Do not expect to find refuge in the common man, You will learn that when at you are of.

JUSPER: That is just because our society breeds more uncommon men than common these days. Our eyes are forever turned up. Nobody ever looks down.That to me is what that prayer was all about.

REGINA: Organising Secretary to the national students' body; just a name for a nobody.

JUSPER: I give meaning to that title.

REGINA: Ignore him Mr. Tumbo. I understand the visit is on.

JUSPER: God help Kafira! The visitor's ghost is all over the place. '

REGINA: (Seeking to change the topic.) Does any of you care for coffee?

TUMBO: Coffee at this time of day? Come on, we can do better than that. Let's have a cold drink. Does cousin drink? when I came back from abroad two years ago, I would not be owning this block and that other one. You were born alone, and when you die, you will die alone. Why then do you want to ruin your chances by pretending to talk for others? We are here for a season. That is what you students don't understand. You won't be a student for ever, you know. Learn to fight for yourself and then when your presence is felt, you can risk shouting for others.

JUSPER: That is the surest way to build a man-eat—man society. Can you justify my release from prison? Can you justify …

REGINA: I am about to go and make that coffee.

TUMBO: No, please, allow me to … er … er … Mr. Wendo, can you drive?

JUSPER: I never dreamt of that.

TUMBO: Come off it. A Jaguar is the easiest car to drive; especially the new automatic ones. You see, the gears are …

JUSPER: What are gears? (Silence.) Send me. I will walk.

TUMBO: 0h, great! (Gives him money.) I take White Cap and you?

JUSPER: Any beer will do. We students can't afford to discriminate.

TUMBO: And you?

JUSPER: My cousin takes Tusker.

REGINA: I don't. Get me a soft drink, you know which.

TUMBO: Surely you can do better than that? Get her a bottle of red wine.

REGINA: No. He knows what I take.

JUSPER: How many bottles each?

REGINA: Just bring one each, and remember to take off that thing before you go.

TUMBO: Don’t let her limit us. As the saying goes, money is not the problem; the problem is how to spend it. (Jusper picks up a bag from under the bed. He's about to walk out when Regina stops him.)

REGINA: Jusper!

JUSPER: Madam.

REGINA: The gown! "'

JUSPER: No, I can’t take it off. It will make him angry.

TUMBO: Oh no, I don’t get angry that easily.

JUSPER: Not you! (Exit.)

REGINA: I hope you don’t mind him talking that way to you Mr. Tumbo? It’s the way he was brought up. Besides, I suspect he is a little drunk already.

TUMBO: He’s alright. There is something in him, a kind of finality that I admire. What does he study at

university?

REGINA: He is a philosophy student, though he prefers literature. Sits in here all day long, writing playlets.

TUMBO: Oh, be may be the very man I want. He writes plays,does he?

REGINA: Yes, why?

TUMBO: We need a play. I am sure I told you that they appointed me chairman of the visitor’s entertainment committee

REGINA: You did.

TUMBO: We have decided to include a one-act play on your programme. Boss is very keen on

the idea. You know his love for the arts, especially theatre. The play will highlight some of our achivements since independence. If your cousin can write one, there is a good potato in it.

REGINA: I am sure he will be thrilled.

TUMBO: He better be. You don't come by that kind of money that easily. You see, the whole programme is to cost the Government some quarter of a million shillings. Infact, I had a mind of writing the play myself, but I thought better of it. You see I am a socialist at heart, so I said to myself: let me extend this opportunity to someone else. I said to myself: "Tumbo, you have not done badly, why don't you lead the pack of them. Show them light, eat and let eat."

REGINA: I wish the others felt the same way.

TUMBO: Things will change. Boss is not all bad at heart. His main problem is that he gets scared far too easily. That is why he feigns toughness. Mind you he does it so well that his guards hate his guts but they do not talk beyond whispers. The worst of the advisers is that cousin of his, Mulili.

REGINA: I understand he has been given a large farm for his services to the nation.

TUMBO: It is true. That is why he retired from the Army. He now calls himself a farmer. Until people like him are out , it is dangerous to seem to do things differently in Kafira. It just proves that there are questions in your mind.

REGINA: Those who know him well say he is not at all bad except for his short temper.

TUMBO: His main fault lies in making hasty decisions, and then standing by them;and then he has this ridiculous weakness for women.

REGINA: Now you are talking. If you must know, that is why I fear to see him personally. I have this funny feeling that something will go wrong.

TUMBO: No, you must not fear. If you want your brother released, then you must see him yourself. Of course I am doing the best I can under circumstances. Incidentally, I understand from the prison warder that Mosese has finally been persuaded to take part.

REGINA: Had he?

TUMBO: He has.

REGINA: Thank God! I had feared he would remain adamant.

TUMBO: It now remains for you to play your cards right.

REGINA: When I told him of my intention to plead with Boss, he was so furious that he asked me never to pay him another visit if I talked with Boss.

TUMBO: You shouldn't have told him, you know. I told you it was to remain secret for the time being.

REGINA: But why shouldn't he know? I thought he would be happy that atleast there is some hope.

TUMBO: He should know better than to refuse you making this visit. It is for his own good. Besides, I have already made an appointment for you.

REGINA: But how could you? Supposing I don't make it?

TUMBO: You'll make it alright. He'll send a driver to pick you up at 2 pm.

REGINA: The day?

TUMBO : Next Saturday.

REGINA: I want to come, but something inside me ...

TUMBO: We can't afford to make him angry at this stage .(Knock at the door.)

REGINA: Come in. (Enter Jusper.)

TUMBO: So you see, a block like this one cost me no less than one hundred and fifty thousand shillings. (Looks at Jasper.) You really are a fast walker.

JUSPER: I am sorry. (Drinks are served. Regina takes the remaining ones to the inner rooms.)

TUMBO: Aaa! God knows I needed that drink. It's tough job being a top government servant. Aaa! This is a great drink; yet some people say we are not really independent. Let me ask you, would we drink like this if we weren't independent?

JUSPER: Welcome the visitor.

TUMBO: That will not add an ounce to your weight.

JUSPER: In that case I shall simply sit here and vegetate. No one wants to trust us with anything. Since we sit on the fence. We are neither children nor adults.

TUMBO: You should do something useful for yourself. Your cousin informs me that you write plays.

JUSPER: Yes, just to pass time. To escape for a few moments from reality.

46

TUMBO: Are any of them published?

JUSPER: No one will publish them. They say it is dangerous.

TUMBO: Dangerous?

JUSPER: Yes. One publisher simply returned the manuscript and with it one line. It read: 'I am afraid your manuscript is unpublishable under the present circumstances; your truth is too much in the nude.' He wanted me to dress up the truth, give it a little more padding so that only few would recognise it.

TUMBO: What kind of truth was it?

JUSPER: It is as if it's a crime to have eyes and ears

TUMBO: You should consider publishing it abroad.

JUSPER: No. I will wait until we are of age. At present nobody wants things put in black and white. You need a little grey and perhaps a blue here and there.

TUMBO: It isn't that clear cut, is it?

JUSPER: If you think I lie, ask Soyinka.

TUMBO: Who is Soyinka? 0h… I see, the Prime Minister of …oh I forget the country.

JUSPER: The one I know is only an artist.

TUMBO: Only an artist? Are you sure? That is a politician's name.

JUSPER: All sensitive artists are in danger of being branded politicians. To poke your nose in other people's affairs is to be political. A politician these days is anyone who tries to tell people what they already know.

TUMBO: Is it the beer or is that what you actually write about?

JUSPER: It may be the beer. The effect is tremendous when you haven't tasted it for months.

47

TUMBO: What kind of plays do you write then?

JUSPER: Absurd. It’s the only way to safely get the truth across. Only a few things are in black and white; the rest is darkness.

TUMBO: Just the kind of play we need for the great day. A play that will outline our achievements in black and white and ignore the dark side 'of the picture. Do you think you can write one for that purpose?

JUSPER: What is it in aid of?

TUMBO: It’s an item on the entertainment programme. There is good money in it. What achievements would you highlight for example?

JUSPER: You can’t run short of them. The number of expatriate professionals has steadily increased over the years, signifying the full extent of our potential progress.

TUMBO: Good, I am glad you think in terms of progress. May I assure you now that your prize-winning play will be performed for the visitor?

JUSPER: Prize-winning?

TUMBO: Yes. A sum of money has been allocated for a play-writing competition, but there is no point in organising a competition if we already know what play ought to be produced. You see, my friend, the democratic aspect of this game is that anyone has a right to participate. Now, without wasting any more time, I pronounce you winner of the proposed playwriting competition.

JUSPER: (Obviously amused.) Out of the more than eighty plays submitted, Jusper Wendo’s play came first.

TUMBO: You’ve got it, son. Only make sure that you have the play by tomorrow. News of your having won the competition will be in the papers next week

JUSPER: The other entries have, of course, been returned to their authors.

TUMBO: You are there son, you are there. Now three cheers to the winner. Hip! Hip! Regina!

REGINA: (From kitchen.) Yes, cheers.

TUMBO: Give us a minute. (Enter Regina wiping her hands with her dress.) Regina, it’s all settled. Your cousin has won the play-writing competition. That saves the government alot of money. No need to run up and down looking for one little play.

REGINA: But isn't that …

JUSPER: Regina , life is not a straight line.

TUMBO: Good. Now of the six hundred pounds that was to finance the competition, I give one third to the two of you. The other two thirds will be used to put the records straight. But remember all this is in strict confidence. Your prize money will be sent to you as soon as the results of the competition are mede public.

REGINA: I still feel that …

TUMBO: Jusper, tell your cousin that we are here for only a season

JUSPER: Regina, we are here for only a season.

TUMBO: And who knows, your cousin here may even sit on the dais with the rest of us. Young man shake my hand. You are a very fortunate. student. You can't get that kind of money by digging among books in that library of yours. No sir, you need a different kind of this. (Points to his head.)

49

JUSPER: How long do you want it?

TUMBO: About forty-five minutes, and make sure the words 'progress' and 'achievement' appear on every other page. It should be ready before lunch tomorrow. Regina, may I have a word with you?

JUSPER: (Removes money from his pocket.) Mr. Tumbo, your change.

TUMBO: 0h, that! Keep change. I know you students only have money in theory. Bye. .

JUSPER: Bye. (Exit Tumbo and Regina. Wendo, still holding the money in his hand moves downstage to remind the audience of what he holds.) The fruits of independence. We get them second-hand. (Fade lights.)

50

Act Two:Scene Four

Stage is set for the final rehearsal of the visitor's play; Jasper, who carries bits of costume, props and a script, now begins to put the final touches to the stage. Tumbo soon joins him.

TUMBO: Have they set it right?

JUSPER: It will do.

TUMBO: Of course there will be other additions like the red carpet, and the other decorations.

JUSPER: It will do. In such circumstances, almost anything will. Mind you, we have to improvise with the resources at hand. After all we are only a developing country.

TUMBO: We can't take an chances, he is in such an unpredictable mood that he has even locked up his own wife in the Palace cell. He nearly slapped … I mean he was very cross with me when I told him we don't have all the props.

JUSPER: I am determined that nothing should go wrong.

TUMBO: The future of six hundred prisoners depends on it. And that includes Mosese. By the way did he cooperate fully during last night's rehearsal?

JUSPER: He was at his best. He knew all the lines and moves and went through them as if he had lived with them all his life.

TUMBO: You know, I have not had the chance to go through the script.

JUSPER: But then you have been busy.

TUMBO: That is no excuse. If he should ask for the story of the play, I will point at you and say, Your Excellency, the author of the play is better qualified to give that information." I trust you will face him and answer that question with precision

JUSPER: I will try.

TUMBO: It is too late to say you will try. You will do it.

JUSPER: Why do you appear nervous?

TUMBO: Boy, you still don't understand the principles of survival. When he loses his temper, he can hardly tell a human being from a rat. The man is an animal, I tell you, and this is one of his bad months if you believe in astrology.

JUSPER: We shall make a permanent impression, I am sure. That will help me to convince my fellow students, who threw me out, that it is not by isolation that problems are solved. They sacked me, said I was going round the bend again, called me a traitor and betrayer of their cause. If this play is a success, I will have demonstrated that determination is greater in worth than numbers.

TUMBO: Do you intend to lead them afterwards?

JUSPER: If there is an afterwards, it will sort itself out. We have no future until we see it in the past. That is the only time we may know we once had a future. Mosese once had a future, until he came to my brother's funeral.

TUMBO: Was he your real brother?

JUSPER: Same father, same mother, and he made me kill, but they set me free. Knew I was no longer dangerous, but what about Mosese?

TUMBO: He should make maximum use of what luck brings his way. Why did you not tell me these things before?

JUSPER: What would you have done? I am still the same.

TUMBO: I know, but I am worried. I don't think Boss knows it's your play we are performing. We have to keep it secret. All he knows is that you are a student.

JUSPER: Why are you worried?

TUMBO: Because I know I like you. I also know that the day of a man's death is not written on his forehead. Kabito is a case in point. You will have to talk less. Your blood is well known.

JUSPER: That means that the release of a few prisoners will not change Kafira. The sun will still rise in the east and set in the west.

TUMBO: The image of Kafira will be different in the eyes of the world.

JUSPER: We only help to obscure the true picture. The release of a few prisoners is, in fact, a positive distortion of the picture.

TUMBO: You want them out, don't you?

JUSPER: Yes, but I do not wish to see them come from one i prison only to enter another. (Boss takes them by surprise.)

BOSS: Everything in place?

TUMBO: Yes, Your Excellency.

BOSS: Drop the formality. We are all actors here. Boy, did you know I was once a good actor?

JUSPER: We all know it, sir.

BOSS: Good. Only they almost always gave me bad roles. In four out of five cases, I had to die

for little mistakes that were not my own. Do you still call that tragic?

JUSPER: I would say it's sacrifice. A kind 'of death for a future. The sort of role Christ played.

66

BOSS: Death for a future? Yes, that is absolutely necessary. Are you the author of the play?

JUSPER: We could say so, but friends helped me alter it.

BOSS : Good, that is positive unity. I understand you study at the University?

JUSPER: Yes, sir.

BOSS: Represent the intellectuals well. (Seriously.) Some of the reports I get from there are simply disgusting. Who made you students spokesmen of truth and justice? What do you know about justice?

JUSPER: Nothing, Your Excellency.

BOSS: Completely nothing. Take the second last time, for instance: what was it they were protesting against? Speak out! There will be no victimization.

JUSPER: The influx of expatriate personnel into the country.

B0SS: Now listen to that. Do they want to walk before they can crawl? When you go back, tell their leaders that it is my duty to decide on the magnitude of the Kafira's africanisation programme. They have no right to chant about it; and if they do, the result will always be the same. What do you think they gained by that demonstration?

JUSPER: Nothing, sir.

BOSS: Completely nothing. A dead student leader and a senior lecturer in prison … no, no, the lecturer went in for a different offence. Not so?

TUMBO: (Glad to join in.) Completely.

67

B0SS: In a way, it was very sad. They should have known my arms are long. My eyes see far, and my ears are the sharpest on the continent. Am I wrong?

TUMBO: (Still nervous.) Yes, sir.

BOSS: Wrong?

TUMBO: Who, you sir? No! Never!

BOSS: No one who shouts at me ever gets what they want. You saw what happened the last time, didn't you.

JUSPER: Yes, Your Excellency.

BOSS: Because they shouted against the appointments, . five of which were my own personal appointments, I deliberately sent in an order for three hundred more expatriate personnel, Just to put them in their place.

TUMBO: Most of them lack understanding. They are too young.

BOSS: Precisely , they Just don't reason like leaders of tomorrow. I understand they even wanted to demonstrate against the visit. I warn them that I will not tolerate such behaviour in Kafira. Do you hear?

JUSPER: Yes, sir.

B0SS: Where are the others.

TUMBO: Dressing up, sir.

BOSS: Go inside and call all the staff. We need an audience. (Exit Tumbo.) I hope it's a good play. What is it called ?

JUSPER: "Betrayal in the City."

BOSS: Betrayal in the City? That's a curious title. What is it all about?

JUSPER: Army cadet.

BOSS: Army cadet? That should be interesting. The visitor himself was in the army for seven years before he joined active politics. What does the cadet do?

JUSPER: The main drama is built around what he doesn't do, or rather around what is done for him. In the first place, he is promoted to the rank of captain within six months of his enrolment …

BOSS: Hmm, very hard working.

JUSPER: Because he doesn't quite know how to handle a gun, he accidentally shoots his colleague during a pass-out parade.

BOSS: That is manslaughter.

JUSPER: The climax is reached when it is discovered that he is not, in fact, a relative of the army commander as had been thought.

BOSS: It sounds very interesting. Is it a comedy or a tragedy?

JUSPER: It is neither, but it could be both.

BOSS: But someone dies?

JUSPER: It is possible to have a death that is not tragic.

BOSS: Very clever. The first time I have heard sense spoken by a student. (Enter Mulili and a few Palace staff.) Come for the final rehearsal?

MULILI: Yes, Your Excellent. I say to myself: go and be with cousin as he see the final one.

BOSS: Good, make yourself comfortable. (Enter Tumbo, Askari and more Palace staff.) ,

TUMBO: Sir, I understand that one of the actors — the one who was to have played the chief of staff — is not well.

BOSS: What is the matter with him?

ASKARI: Stomach troubles, Your Excellency. The doctor has recommended rest for him.

BOSS: The affairs of state shall not be halted just because of the stomach troubles of one prisoner. I must see the full-dress rehearsal.

JUSPER: Perhaps we should get someone to read his part for the moment sir; it will save time.

BOSS: Alright then, Tumbo will read it. (Mulili hails the idea.) Were you ever an actor?

TUMBO: No Sir.

BOSS: (Jokingly.) Then how did you become a big man?

(General response to His Excellency's joke.)

MULILI: If he could not, then I should read for the part.

BOSS: Alright; we shouldn't waste time. I will stand in for him for the moment. Give me the script. Thank you. Where am I to stand?

JUSPER: you are to sit on that chair, Sir. (Boss goes to the chair as Mosese and Jere are brought in hand-cuffed. They are in their acting costumes.)

BOSS: Are they to act like that? Untie their hands. (Askari unties them.) ?

JUSPER: (Nervously) Sir, what about the props?

TUMBO: The carpenter we asked to make guns has not yet made them.

BOSS: (Angrily.) I will not have this. I hate last minute strugglers. I want to see you with all the props first thing tomorrow morning, okay?

TUMBO: Okay, Sir,

BOSS: Are the props that vital to this rehearsal?

TUMBO: No Your …

JUSPER: Very vital Your Excellency; we need them for the prologue.

BOSS: Guards!

GUARDS: Sir!

BOSS: Bring your guns forward and put them

JUSPER: Here sir. (Three guards bring their guns forward.)

BOSS: Put them there.

JUSPER: His Excellency has kindly agreed to read the part of the chief of staff. Remember the prologue is fast and should only last seven minutes. Ready, let's go. (Mosese and Jere argue bitterly.)

MOSESE: I can prove it to you now that a .32 automatic is shorter than a .28.

JERE: You surprise me. The two guns are equal.

MOSESE: Have you measured? You have only been here six months. How much do you think you can teach us about guns? (Boss laughs and Mulili joins him.)

JERE: You lack respect for your seniors. Who gave you permission to argue with me? '

MOSESE: I am sorry, Captain. (He salutes, Boss laughs.)

JERE: That’s better. Now, the captain says the two guns are equal: do you agree?

MOSESE: I agree sir, but may we see the chief of staff for confirmation.

JERE: You should know better than that. The chief of staff will sooner agree with his captain than listen to a mere lieutenant. Come on then. (They move to where BOSS now sits and mime knocking at the door. Being busy, he will continue to work until after the third knock.)

71

BOSS: Step in. (They step in cautiously and salute.) Yes, what can I do for you?

MOSESE: Sir, we have come to enquire whether a .32 automatic is equal to a .28.

BOSS: That’s very vague. Even you, Captain?

JERE: He won’t believe me, Sir. ‘

BOSS: Alright, you show me a .32 from those guns, and you captain will show me a .28. (Mosese and Jere go for the guns. Jusper is over-excited.)

JUSPER: I can’t believe it! I can’t believe that we have done it on the off-chance!

BOSS: I do not see those lines in the script.

JERE: (Pointing his gun at Boss.) No, Your Excellency, such lines are never scripted.

JUSPER: I can't believe we’ve done it. Shoot now! Shoot now! .

BOSS: Guards, what do ...?

JERE: You have no guards, Your Excellency. Remain seated or I'll shoot. People, do not fear. Remain calm, all is well. (Mulili tries to sneak away.)

MOSESE: Remain seated Mister Mulili.

MULILI: I go for short call.

MOSESE: I said, sit down. (He sits.)

JUSPER: You waste time, pin him down. I said, pin him down. Alright, let me do it. Squad, attention! Aim, one, two, three, two, one tutututututu!!!!!!!!!! Squad, at ease! (To Mulili.) Hey, sergeant! Why so sad, eeh? He your cousin or something?

MULILI: Oh, no, no, is never!

JUSPER: We’ll put him in a government coffin. I will design it myself. (He begins to stride off but

is stopped by Mosese.)

72

MOSESE: Jusper, where are you off to?

JUSPER: (In a sad trembling voice.) To design the coffin.

MOSESE: No. Remain where you are. (To Boss.) See what you have done to him? He alone would justify your death a thousand times, yet you are still alive. Tell me why?

BOSS: I do not know why.

JERE: I will show you why. Mulili, come towards me. (Mulili obeys.) This man is your cousin.

MULILI: He is only distant cousin, that is all.

JERE: Give me one good reason why he should not be killed.

MULILI: No reason. You can kill.

JERE: Do you agree that he should be got rid off?

MULILI: Kabisa! One, he take everything in his hand. Two, he spoil the economic of Kafira. Three, he rule too long. Change is like rest. Four he kill Kabito.

BOSS:Am I hearing right? Mulili? (To Jere.) Shoot me. Spare me this betrayal. Shoot me!

JERE: Your Excellency, we shall not shoot you. Kafira needs each one of us, you included. .

BOSS: You mean you will not kill me?

JERE: No. What do we stand to gain by your death? Nothing. Our wish was not to swim in human blood, but to provide a mirror for Kafira. A mirror that will reflect the real faces of Kafira's front men. But it is not enough, to provide only a mirror. No. We must learn to sacrifice ourselves for a better future. A future where these events that now take place need not be repeated.

73

MOSESE:A future where men like him need not be members of our society. (To Tumbo.) But we thank you; it was largely through your inefficiency that we have achieved this. So go, depart from our midst. (Tumbo hesitates, then speaks.)

TUMBO: I am truly sorry, but I am not entirely to blame. I was trained, but given the wrong job. Once again I am sorry. (He hesitates, then exits.)

JERE: We have sacrificed, but it seems we must continue. Look at him. (Pointing to Jusper.) Is he not sacrifice enough? Your Excellency, I now offer myself. Here, shoot me. (Gives him the gun.)

BOSS: No. I cannot. I have no reason to.

JUSPER: Give it to me! I will sacrifice him! Give it to me!

MOSESE: Jusper, stop where you are.

JUSPER: Give it to me! (Boss hands over the gun to Jusper. The latter stares at the weapon unbelievingly. Slowly he turns and surveys the people with his eyes. Finally, the eyes are fixed on Mulili. Now Jusper stands at attention.) Squad, attention! Aim! (He aims.)

MULILI: (Indicating Boss.) Not me. It him!

JUSPER: Fire! (He shoots and Mulili's body slowly falls; now Jusper turns and surveys the people with his eyes once more.) I did it for Kafira. I did it for all of you people.

(Jere slowly walks towards Mulili's body, he picks a small particle of soil and lets it drop through his fingers as he speaks.)

74

JERE: Dust to dust, ash to ash. (Slowly everyone freezes into the shape of trees. The picture on stage should be identical to that of the grave-side scene. Mulili's body taking the place of the grave. Birds, insects, frogs, etc. are Singing. A drum beats, stops beats again and stops. In the distance a male voice laments and becomes louder as the man nears the grave. Suddenly all is quiet, then we hear strange ghostly music. Doga's ghost enters, immediately trailed by Nina's. They both go through their movement of the new beginning of the first scene, except that now they are ghosts.

DOGA: Nina, stop where you are! What sort of mother are you? For years you have wept. Do you now fear to set your eyes on .this; evil? (He points at Mulili's body and freezes in his position. Nina freezes too. Slowly lights fade)

SLOW CURTAIN.

75