



SOME LOVE, *SOME RESTORE*

ENYO: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PLAYS

EDITED BY
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SOME RESTORE

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Literature from
Africa
and the Diaspora

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THE CURATOR'S NOTE

The Play as a genre of literature has over the years been evanescent. Today in Africa, just few writers still write play and no African magazine publish play. It has always been prose, poem and creative non fiction. Perhaps, it's so because a play is better appreciated when acted. People don't find pleasure in reading play because it's dialogues, but it is not an excuse why play should not be inclusive in the African literary magazines submissions. No prize and fellowship for playwrights.

The **Enyo Anthology** was curated to offer a publishing opportunity to playwrights who long to be read. I was amazed by the number of submissions we received from different countries in Africa. It has a lot to say about the diminishing growth of the African play. We need more anthology for the African play. The African literary magazines should incorporate play in their submissions. If the young contemporary playwrights do not have the opportunity to publish their work, what will posterity read about the 21 century African play ? Because this generation does not read play, do we forget the genre entirely ? No.

There has to be an archive for our play and that's the purpose for curating the **Enyo Anthology**.

The 5 Plays we selected defile the form, of what an African play should be. It's in their correlation to history that make these plays remarkable. Effortlessly and honestly written, powerful dialogues that conjure bold imageries. I hope the African literary magazines will begin to consider plays. It's a genre that matter as the prose and poem.

Abuchi Modilim

Some Love, Some Restore

by
Kudzai Mhangwa

Characters

Stella – Eddy’s wife. She is a loving and devoted wife.

Eddy – Stella’s cheating husband.

SCENE ONE

Setting – *the stage is bear apart from two chairs which are at the centre of the stage. Enter Stella and sits on one of the chairs. She is uneasy and fidgets while on the seat. Eddy then enters and sits on the other chair with his back to Stella.*

STELLA: Are you finally ready to speak to me?

EDDY: Is this really necessary?

STELLA: I've asked to speak with you for the past month and you're not the least bit curious about what it is I want to say to you?

EDDY: We talk every day. There isn't a day that goes by that I haven't come to this house and we haven't spoken.

STELLA: You know what I mean Eddy. I want to have a conversation, a proper conversation with my husband. And not just the brief chats we have before we leave for work or when you return from work and you tell me that you're not in the mood for talking. Right now I need more.

EDDY: You always need something.

STELLA: Yes Eddy and what I need right now is your attention, your time. That's it! That's what I need right now.

EDDY: Stella! There is no need to be dramatic about this.

STELLA: It seems like this is the only way I can get you to listen to me. If I have to act like a fool so that you listen to me then so be it.

EDDY: You're a grown woman, and I'm a grown man. Let's be civil about this.

STELLA: Grown man, are you? Great! Because you can have a meaningful conversation with a grown man, a proper conversation not like the ones I have with the six year olds I teach at Sunday school.

EDDY: Stella! Get to the point. We don't have all day.

STELLA: *(Brief pause)* I noticed something not right on you, on your skin. I tried to tell you

EDDY: You went to the doctor without telling me?

about it but you said it was just a minor skin reaction. Then I noticed something not right on my skin. I went to see my doctor and she suggested that I get tested.

EDDY: You went to the doctor without telling me?

STELLA: This was serious Eddy, this is serious.

EDDY: No! You don't go off doing whatever you want without consulting me. This is a partnership.

STELLA: A partnership not a marriage. Sometimes a partner acts without consulting the other partner. I used to be a 'yes' woman who listened to everything that her husband said. But now that's over. I've buried that coffin.

EDDY: This is not how you speak to me.

STELLA: I speak to you however I please and you're going to listen. I was tested and my result came back positive.

EDDY: Positive? For what?

STELLA: Make a guess.

EDDY: I have no clue.

STELLA: Stop! What else could I be talking about?

EDDY (Pause): HIV? (Stella gives him a long stare) HIV? That's not possible.

STELLA: How so?

EDDY: Why would you be positive?

STELLA: You know exactly where I got it from.

EDDY: You just admitted to sleeping around.

STELLA: (Laughs) I never admitted to anything but you've just shown me what you take me for.

EDDY: It's the only explanation. It couldn't have been me.

STELLA: No, there are many explanations, why?

EDDY: To me this is the only logical explanation.

STELLA: Have you looked at yourself in the mirror Eddy? Seriously, have you?

EDDY: I look in the mirror every day.

STELLA: Then you're not looking hard enough.

EDDY: Aren't you exaggerating the situation? I have a few flakes on my skin so what? What does that have to do with you? Between the two of us you're the one who just confessed to having HIV so I should be the one angry here.

STELLA: You always try to hide behind your issues that way. You make me the demon, you make me the villain in the story but this is not me. This is far from me. This is on you.

EDDY: So who is the villain right now? You admitted to being HIV positive. For all I know you are the one who has infected me and God knows how many other men.

STELLA: Eddy, I've been here for five years. Five years, have I been coming home to you, five years I've lied right next to you and you alone. And I came into this house when I was twenty. Twenty years old to be with you, Eddy. You. I may be a lot of things, I may have done some things that may disqualify me from entering heaven but one thing I never did was stray from my vows, from my husband, from my devotion to be with you.

EDDY: We all have sins and we all need forgiveness. And if this is your way of asking for forgiveness it needs revision.

STELLA: I'm not asking for forgiveness, I don't need forgiveness from you.

EDDY: Then you are crazy. Crazy!

STELLA: I'm not going to ask you to forgive when I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't know about this, I didn't.

EDDY: But you had an idea I'm sure. That's why you went for the test.

STELLA: I had a feeling but for once in my life I was hopeful that I was wrong. I wished that

EDDY: And congratulations on acting on it. Now you've saved me.

STELLA: It wasn't to save you, it was for me.

EDDY: At the same time it was me being saved as well. So thank you.

STELLA: Try and picture what I went through. When I woke up, made you breakfast and saw you off to work then I was completely on my own. I didn't know whether I should go or not. I thought about it for a long time. Until I finally lifted myself up like I was pulling a tree from out of the ground and I took the bus to the New Start centre.

There was a line of about five people ahead of me, women of course...always women

EDDY: Stella...

STELLA: ...Listen to me. Then I went in and the first thing I thought about was whether I had made the right choice, whether I was wrong to doubt you but I had to. When they told me the result was positive I looked to the ground and saw the carpet. I wanted to pull out that carpet out so bad. I thought it might help me somehow. Then I saw a shiny pen on the desk I swear to you I almost picked it up and stabbed the doctor who gave the results between the eyes.

EDDY: You want to blame other people for you actions.

STELLA: What actions Eddy?

EDDY: What do you do when I leave the house? Mmmmhhh? Those hours I'm away what do you do?

STELLA: I'm right here waiting...waiting...waiting. I don't even talk to our neighbours because of you. Because you don't want me to. I wait for you to come back so I can talk to you, my only friend.

EDDY: We're not friends. I'm your husband, you're my wife. Be clear on that.

STELLA: And you wouldn't look at me as a friend because that would mean that we could be equals.

EDDY: Of course we're not equals. We're not equals and we'll never be.

STELLA: We're not going to be equals.

EDDY: Exactly.

STELLA: We're not going to be equals because I'm tired of this mess. This being with you. I just want one thing from you.

EDDY: Mess? You see our marriage as a mess?

STELLA: I want one thing.

EDDY: You don't get to tell me what you want.

STELLA: Eddy! (Eddy looks at her in astonishment) One thing. That one thing is a why. Why didn't you tell me that you had it before we got married?

EDDY: You're crazy if you think I'm telling you anything. This is nonsense. You should be grateful I haven't strangled that tiny neck of yours by now.

STELLA: Your first wife, let's talk about her.

EDDY: What does she have to do with this?

STELLA: Everything. How did she die? And how come everyone in your family is so discrete about the whole issue?

EDDY: Because that's the past, we don't live in the past. And you...you should be like us instead of resurrecting the past you should be thinking about the future right now.

STELLA: We always need to look over our shoulder to make sure that nothing from behind us is going to disturb our journey.

EDDY: No! You just don't want to face the fact that you did wrong. You have an illness and you possibly may have infected me.

STELLA: I want to make sense of this issue, not to disrupt the bones of the dead. I would appreciate your help.

EDDY: You're not going to get anything from me because you have all of the answers.

STELLA: Are you sure you don't want to help me?

EDDY: If you have common sense you don't need me to answer that question for you.

STELLA: *(Pause)* Fine. *(She appears to walk away but turns back to him)* But there is just one more, just one more thing I have to say. Will you give me the chance? *(Eddy glares at her in approval)* I'm pregnant.

EDDY: Don't lie to me.

STELLA: I've never lied to you and I'm not going to start now *(Stella hands Eddy a paper)* When they tested me they also did a pregnancy test. Five years, five years and you thought I couldn't have a child now look.

EDDY: You're having a child.

STELLA: Your child.

EDDY: I can't believe it.

STELLA: Neither could I.

EDDY *(Smiles widely):* We're going to be parents Stella. We're going to be parents.

STELLA: No. We're not going to be parents.

EDDY: You're having my son Stella. We're having a son.

STELLA: Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

EDDY: You don't seem very pleased about the news.

STELLA: Because there isn't going to be a baby. There isn't going to be a son or a daughter. I'm not having this child.

EDDY: What are you saying?

STELLA: I'm not having this child. Why would I? For you? Because I know by a long shot that this is not for 'us'. I'm not going to give you this child after what you've done to me. That would be rewarding you for hurting me. I'm not going to reward you for that. No. I have the power now my darling, the hunted dove now has the sling in her control. This child is never going to know how warm the sun is. I'm terminating the pregnancy the moment I leave this place.

EDDY: You're sick. You're seriously sick.

STELLA: At least I'm not going to betray someone that I claimed to love. This child is not going to see the light of day and that's it. Period.

EDDY: That's my son.

STELLA: Don't be so certain, you're the one who thinks that I'm cheating on you.

EDDY: I said that to shut you up. I didn't mean any of it.

STELLA: You sounded very serious to me.

EDDY: I didn't mean any of it.

STELLA: Then tell me what you meant. Tell me what you want to say. How do you even know it's your son? I've been around haven't I?

EDDY: What's gotten into you? I don't know the woman who is in front of me right now. This is scary!

STELLA: At least you know what scares you, as for me I don't know what scares me at all.

EDDY: Who is this woman?

STELLA: I've never hidden who I was from you Eddy, never and you know that.

EDDY: Then who are you? Who is this woman who is saying that she is going to give up my child? I certainly don't know her.

STELLA: She's always been here. She just needed the right man. No, the worst man to be with her so she can finally come out.

EDDY: I'm not a bad person. I tried to love you the best way that I knew how. I loved you enough not to tell you what was living inside of me because I knew what that would mean. I would have lost you.

STELLA (*Pause*): That's all I needed.

EDDY: What now?

STELLA: Nothing has changed. I already knew the truth. I just wanted you to say it. (*Begins to exit*)

EDDY (*Pulls Stella towards him*): My first wife.

STELLA: Now you want to talk about her, I don't want to talk about it anymore, I already know.

EDDY: You're going to listen to me whether you like it or not. (*Pulls Stella towards him*) I buried her, I infected her but I didn't do any of it on purpose. I don't know where I got it from myself. Back then it was just a lot of women, a lot of women but she was the one that I came back to every night. She was just like you. And I loved her and when she got sick I knew what it was, my family knew but I didn't want to talk about it. Then soon after she was buried, you could say her killer was by her grave as well. Then a few months down the line I met you. You were just like her. I thought to myself this is the woman that I'm going to...to...die with. Not this woman here who is speaking like this.

STELLA: I didn't need to hear that. But now I know you're worse than I thought, I was a substitute and you were my love. It's done Eddy. I've made up my mind.

EDDY: No Stella. You can't.

STELLA: I'm leaving and this baby is already as good as dead.

EDDY: Stella you can't! (*The two of them struggle. Eddy locks Stella in an embrace and brings her to the ground. He is begging her not to leave while Stella is screaming for him to leave her alone.*) Not my son, not you Stella. Say you'll stay! Say you'll stay (*The two of them look deeply into each other's eye. It is uncertain whether Stella will change her mind*)

THE END

Adebola

by

Beatrice Oluwaseun Wende

Cast:

Adebola:	Main character and aspiring actress.
Mr. Adebisi:	Adebola's father
Mrs. Adebisi:	Adebola's mother
Dorcas:	Adebola's best friend
Mr. Kudus:	Play director
Micah:	Adebola's co-star
Bernard Onoriode:	Award-winning playwright
Extras:	Stage hands

Act I
SCENE ONE

SETTING:

The stage is set to portray a tastefully furnished modern living room. Voices filter to the audience from off-stage. The sources of the noise are soon revealed to be two women. Enter ADEBOLA and MRS. ADEBISI. Their voices are loud, as MRS. ADEBISI follows ADEBOLA to the centre of the stage.

MRS. ADEBISI:

I can't believe you would do this to us. Your father and I are highly disappointed in you.

ADEBOLA does not say anything. She stops walking and turns to face her mother.

MRS. ADEBISI: (CONT'D)

So, you are suddenly mute now? I thought you had a lot to say back inside.

ADEBOLA:

(Sighs) Why don't you want to be happy for me?

MRS. ADEBISI:

Hehehehe...

She claps her hands mockingly.

MRS ADEBISI: (CONT'D)

You want me to be happy for you? Right after you wasted our money for seven years? Ehn, Adebola. Bikonu, no vex me this evening.

ADEBOLA:

Mummy now. You of all people should know I never meant to do that on purpose.

MRS ADEBISI:

(Shouts) I don't know anything oh. Ehn ehn.

(Adebola moves closer to her mother and lays a hand on her shoulder softly.)

ADEBOLA

Mummy now. Stop shouting.

MRS ADEBISI

Hehe, I should stop shouting. So, you're saying your own mother is shouting abi?

ADEBOLA

Oya, mummy sorry. Calm down, let's talk.

MRS. ADEBISI

She rolls her eyes

So, what else do you want to say in your defence, eh? We paid through our teeth to put you through medical school. Paid exorbitant fees, bought all those ridiculously big textbooks, and indulged all your extra requirements for comfort, but...

ADEBOLA

...and I appreciate that Mummy. I do.

MRS. ADEBISI

Do you really? Because if you did, you won't say you want to throw away all those years because of a foolish longing.

ADEBOLA

Folds her hands on her chest and pouts.

Acting is not a foolish longing. It has been my lifelong dream, until you and Dad forced me to suppress it, just to fulfil your lifelong dream of having a doctor in the family.

MRS. ADEBISI sits down on one of the chairs on stage. She places a hand on her forehead and pretends to feel faint.

MRS. ADEBISI

Oh my! This girl is finally going to kill me. So, now you're blaming your father and I for this misguided devotion to your childhood fantasy?

ADEBOLA

Kneels beside her mother

Please mummy, stop seeing things from that point of view.

MRS. ADEBISI

(Shouts)

Yeh!

She suddenly leaps from her seat, startling ADEBOLA in the process. ADEBOLA falls gently, but MRS. ADEBISI pays her no heed as she paces the centre of the stage.

MRS. ADEBISI (CONT'D)

She raises her voice,

Millions! Adebola, Millions! That is what you want to waste like that.

ADEBOLA opens her mouth to speak, but a voice from off-stage interrupts her. Enters MR. ADEBISI.

MR. ADEBISI

What is happening here? Why are you people trying to bring down my roof eh? I could hear you two shouting and almost beating each other from two streets away.

ADEBOLA

Welcome Daddy. It was...

MRS. ADEBISI

Moves to stand between MR. ADEBISI and ADEBOLA

It was Adebola oh. Your daughter said she would not rest unless she sends me to an early grave.

ADEBOLA

Haba Mummy.

MRS. ADEBISI

(Hisses)

Haba gini? Did I lie? Were you not trying to kill me?

ADEBOLA

Turns to face her father.

Daddy, that's not what happened oh.

MR. ADEBISI

Then, tell me what happened.

ADEBOLA is quiet. She looks at her mother expectantly, but MRS. ADEBISI does not say anything. MR. ADEBISI looks expectant.

MR. ADEBISI (CONT'D)
My friend, I don't have all day.

MRS. ADEBISI
Your lovely daughter has decided to throw our sacrifices to our faces. She said she never asked us to send her to medical school, and that she was not going to practice medicine. She said she wants to be the next Patience Ozokwor.

MR. ADEBISI

Looks incredulous

A witch?

MRS. ADEBISI
An Actress.

MR. ADEBISI
Oh oh. I see.

Turns to stare at ADEBOLA.

Bola. Ngbo? Is that so?

ADEBOLA
Well, I did not put it that way.

MR. ADEBISI
But that is the summary, *abi*?

ADEBOLA nods.

MR. ADEBISI (CONT'D)
Well, you can only lead your flock to the stream. You cannot force them to take a sip. I have led you in the path that I felt would be most beneficial to you, but if that is not enough for you, then do as you please.

ADEBOLA

Tries to hold on to MR. ADEBISI, but he dodges her attempt.

Daddy please.

MR. ADEBISI
Chiamaka!

MRS. ADEBISI

Honey?

MR. ADEBISI

Please, come and serve me my food,

MRS. ADEBISI

With all pleasure!

MR. ADEBISI and MRS. ADEBISI exit stage. ADEBOLA is left looking forlorn on the stage. She appears to be deep in thoughts. Her countenance displays unhappiness. After a few more moments of inner soliloquy, she sighs audibly, and exits stage also.

Curtains Close

ACT I
SCENE TWO

The setting of the stage is still the same. Enter Adebola and DORCAS. Dorcas is a chubby young woman. She is a bit shorter than Adebola. There is considerable distance between them as Adebola moves faster than her. When Adebola gets to the centre of the stage, she sits on one chair, and waits for Dorcas to catch up.

DORCAS

Slightly out of breath

You cannot even wait for me. All the way from the theatre, you dey waka as if person dey pursue you.

She takes a seat beside ADEBOLA. ADEBOLA is not paying attention though. She's going through her bag, frantically searching for something.

DORCAS (CONT'D)

Adebola!

ADEBOLA

(Startled)

Yes?

DORCAS

Na you I dey follow talk now. Calm down, I'm sure you aced the audition better than any other person.

ADEBOLA

When someone like Halimat Waya auditioned?

DORCAS

You too like to dey sell yourself short. Halimat has got nothing on you. She has simply been in the game longer than you.

ADEBOLA

You really think so?

DORCAS

Yes, I think so. If the worst happens, you'll be her understudy.

ADEBOLA

The only chance an understudy has, to appear on stage is if the main actor is unavailable. How is Bernard Onoriode supposed to notice me for his new play then?

DORCAS

Well, we can always accidentally push Halimat into a well.

ADEBOLA

Looks mortified.

Dorcas!

DORCAS

(Snorts)

I'm kidding. On a more serious note though, Bernard Onoriode's plays only feature the best of the best. He's an award winning playwright for a reason. You, my dear friend, are super talented. Just take your time, and your light will soon shine.

ADEBOLA

You really think so?

DORCAS

Why not open the letter yourself and see?

Adebola brings out a folded piece of paper from her handbag. She unfolds it, straightens it, and peruses the contents of the paper. Her face is impassive for a moment, but she suddenly screams and bolts out of her seat. Dorcas follows suit, and tries to calm an excited Adebola.

ADEBOLA

(Screams)

I got it.

DORCAS

Any decibel higher, and you would actually blow up my ear drums.

ADEBOLA

(Smiles with guilt.)

Sorry. I am just so happy.

DORCAS

I know, and I am happy for you. You deserved it. You rehearsed for weeks.

With a dazed smile on her face, Adebola returns to the seat she vacated, while Dorcas remains on her feet.

ADEBOLA

Wow. I'm actually going to play Oluronbi in the Royal Theatre. This feels so surreal. Do you know how important and popular that folklore is?

DORCAS

Yes. I'm not Yoruba, but I know the story like the back of my hands.

ADEBOLA

What if I mess it up Dorcas? What if I'm not good enough for that role?

DORCAS

Come on Adebola. You and I know Kudus Olanrewaju would not have selected you to play the lead if you were not good enough. Especially when Halimat Waya auditioned for the same role. I know you'll do just fine.

She walks closer to ADEBOLA and taps her on the shoulder.

DORCAS (CONT'D)

Don't fret too much. When will the rehearsals begin?

ADEBOLA

(Stands)

Tomorrow.

DORCAS

All the more reason to pull yourself together. Come, let's go share the good news with your parents.

ADEBOLA

They are not interested.

DORCAS

We'll tell them nonetheless.

DORCAS holds ADEBOLA's hands and pulls her off the stage in slow, measured movements.

ACT II
SCENE ONE

The curtain rises to reveal the stage setting. It is set to imitate a busy theatre stage. The EXTRAS are working on the stage props in preparation for the opening night. ADEBOLA is sitting on a low stool at the centre of the stage, while MICAH sits on the floor beside her.

MICAH

Mr. Kudus is not happy with you.

ADEBOLA

Covers her face with her palms and groans.

I know.

MICAH

Then, why are you refusing to give him what he wants?

ADEBOLA

Looks at him with contempt.

You actually expect me to acquiesce to his ridiculous demands? This wasn't stated in the original script.

MICAH

Raises the bound pieces of paper on his laps.

The script was revised, and that's normal.

ADEBOLA

There is nothing normal about this. It wasn't even in the original folklore.

MICAH

You think the original Oluronbi story is more than five minutes max? Of course, embellishments are needed.

ADEBOLA

Well, why does it have to be of this particular kind?

MICAH

Adebola, stop acting like a child and...

A loud voice coming on stage interrupts him. Enters MR. KUDUS. He is wearing a director's earpiece and hold a copy of the bound papers in his hand. His strides are purposeful as he makes a beeline for ADEBOLA. ADEBOLA scrambles to her feet when she sights him, while MICAH maintains his position.

MR. KUDUS

Where is she? Where is that girl that wants to jeopardize my years of hard work?
Adebola!

ADEBOLA

Yes sir!

MR. KUDUS

Did I ask you to sleep with me before I gave you the role?

ADEBOLA

Shakes her head.

No sir!

MR. KUDUS

Then, why are you trying to sabotage me?

ADEBOLA

I am not trying to sabotage you sir, I am just not comfortable with the idea of going nude on stage. The world will be watching.

MR. KUDUS

And so? The world will be watching, so what? Don't you understand what drives sponsors and commercialism in this business?

ADEBOLA

I just feel the play would be okay without that scene.

MR. KUDUS

Since when are you a play director? Look here young Missus. I made Halimat Waya your understudy, and she's only a call away from replacing you. Honestly, I blame myself. I don't know what I was thinking, before I casted a newbie as my lead actress. I should have made you an understudy instead.

ADEBOLA

I'm so sorry sir. I promise I'm a good actress.

MR. KUDUS

I honestly thought you had prospects. Bernard Onoriode will be here on opening night to scout for the lead actors for his next play. I thought you had a shot but you don't.

ADEBOLA tries to speak, but he raises a hand to silence her.

MR. KUDUS (CONT'D)

He only deals with serious actors, and you are obviously not in that category. What's in your body that the world hasn't seen before?

ADEBOLA

Looks reproachful

I'm really sorry sir.

MR KUDUS

You have a week to compose yourself. After that, and you're still undecided, say goodbye to your acting career.

He doesn't wait to hear her response. He turns around and marches off the stage with the same strides. All activities on stage pauses suddenly. ADEBOLA is the only mobile character. She moves forward, almost at the edge of the stage.

ADEBOLA

(Sighs)

Maybe this path isn't mine. Maybe father was right. Maybe mother knew best. Why else would this be my portion? Or is he right, and there is nothing sacred about my body? My passion and my career are on the line if I do not do what he wants. Wait a minute. Are they worth my dignity as a proud African woman? Maybe this path isn't mine. Maybe father was right. Maybe mother knew best.

Activities resume as she finishes her monologue. ADEBOLA looks defeated as the curtains fall.

Curtains Close

ACT II
SCENE TWO

The setting is back to default. MR. ADEBISI and MRS. ADEBISI are seating on the chairs. MR. ADEBISI is reading a newspaper, while MRS. ADEBISI is eating from a transparent bottle of groundnuts.

Enter ADEBOLA. She looks tired as she occupies the last seat.

ADEBOLA

Daddy good evening. Mummy. Good evening.

MR. ADEBISI

Welcome.

MRS. ADEBISI is quiet.

MR. ADEBISI (CONT'D)

How was today's rehearsals? You look tired.

ADEBOLA

The director is very demanding. He needs everything to be perfect, and he...

A loud crunching sound cuts in. It is coming from MRS. ADEBISI as she chews her groundnut. MR. ADEBISI and ADEBOLA pause to look at her, while MR. ADEBISI shakes his head with mirth on his face.

MR. ADEBISI

Folding his Newspaper.

Ehn ehn Adebola. What is this news I hear about your play?

ADEBOLA

What is that sir?

MR. ADEBISI

That you have to take off your dress in one of the scenes of the play.

ADEBOLA is silent. The only audible sound comes from MRS. ADEBISI's chewing.

MR. ADEBISI (CONT'D)

I see the papers did not lie then.

ADEBOLA shakes her head.

MR. ADEBISI (CONT'D)

So, are you going to do it?

ADEBOLA is quiet.

MR. ADEBISI (CONT'D)

Adebola. You have come quite far in your acting career in such a little time. I will not lie and say I am not pained that you chose prancing like a donkey on stage over being a doctor. But, if it is what makes you happy, then go ahead. Unfortunately, I won't watch you throw caution to the wind because of a career. Where is your dignity as a woman Adebola?

ADEBOLA

Scrambles off the chair and kneels beside her father.

Daddy, I'm really sorry. I told him I was not going to do it, but when he threatened to cut me off, I started having conflicted thoughts.

MR. ADEBISI

I am not of those parents that will blame everything on the west and corrupting our African traditions. All I'll ask is that you remember the home that you come from. We ask that you respect the sacrifices your mother and I have made over you for years now. Remember that, before you throw away your pride for crumbs.

ADEBOLA

(Sniffs)

I'm so sorry Daddy.

(Pats her head)

It's alright. Clean your tears and stand up.

ADEBOLA stands up while wiping her face.

MR. ADEBISI (CONT'D)

Come on, go inside, freshen up and find something to eat.

ADEBOLA

Thank you daddy.

She exits stage.

MR. ADEBISI

Looks at MRS. ADEBISI.

Chiamaka!

MRS. ADEBISI

What?

She continues eating as curtains fall on stage.

ACT II
SCENE THREE

The stage looks like a theatre stage again. Extras are still working on props. ADEBOLA is standing at the centre of the stage. She's singing. BERNARD ONORIODE is by the side, looking from the shadows. When ADEBOLA finishes her song, a few Extras clap, but BERNARD's clap overshadows theirs. ADEBOLA turns to look at him in surprise and awe.

ADEBOLA

Oh my! Mr. Bernard Onoriode.

BERNARD ONORIODE

Bernard will do please.

He extends a hand and she shakes it.

ADEBOLA

I can't believe you are here. We were told you'll only be coming for the opening night.

BERNARD ONORIODE

That's correct, but I wanted to see the actress that said no to Kudus.

ADEBOLA'S smile falls.

ADEBOLA

He's going to replace me once the week is over.

BERNARD ONORIODE

While you resume a bigger job.

ADEBOLA

A bigger job? Where?

BERNARD ONORIODE

With me of course. I want you to star as Queen Moremi in my new play, 'Moremi untold'.

ADEBOLA

She is shell shocked while BERNARD laughs at her obvious surprise.

Please tell me this is not a dream

BERNARD ONORIODE

(Chuckles)

Not at all. You have an amazing voice, and in the world of musical plays, you will become an asset. All you need is extra training, which I am ready to give.

ADEBOLA

*She screams, alerting the Extras. She jumps up and down before engulfing **BERNARD** in a hug. She realizes her error and she pulls back, clearing her throat in the process.*

ADEBOLA (CONT'D)

Sorry sir.

BERNARD ONORIODE

No harm done. Congratulations ADEBOLA.

***BERNARD** walks off the stage while **ADEBOLA** continues jubilation with the stage hands as curtains fall.*

(Blackout)

The Kind Killer

By

Achiro P. Olwoch

A murderer shows compassion to a family that he is supposed to kill.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

This is a one man show...Nata tells her story...

NATA:

I sat in a small dilapidated latrine clutching my small child. I was pregnant with my other child. I was so worried that at any one time the latrine would collapse...but this was the only place that was safe for me and my child.

She moves around the stage...

NATA

(Speaking slowly)

My husband had been cut down, right before my eyes. Let me tell you the story from the beginning.

She sits in the middle of the stage...

NATA

You see...his friend Kabalata from next door came and knocked at our door. We were watching cartoons with my little son. Well, I was the one watching, my husband was seated with his laptop typing away like the world was about to end.

(Slowly)

In a way, I guess it did end for him. When Kabalata knocked at the door, I jumped up to open it. What I saw...

...he was holding a machete in his hand. It was bloody...there were people running all over the place behind him...there was chaos and screaming and death...I was so confused.

My son came behind me and started to cry...Kabalata put his finger to his mouth...silence... he was saying. I stepped back and picked up my son. Kabalata entered the house slowly... wielding his bloody machete. My husband stood up from where he was seated and walked up to him. He said nothing...he just gestured to me to leave the room. He faced Kabalata... that was the last time I saw my husband standing and alive.

Nata is in the middle of the stage...cradling her child...and humming a tune...it is as if she is rocking her child to sleep. She lays the child in the middle of the stage and covers him with a 'lesu' piece of cloth that she is wearing around her waist.

She watches over her child like a hawk as he sleeps...

(CONTINUED)

NATA:

Kabalata killed my husband...he cut him down in cold blood. The he came to the room where I was hiding...he had tears in his eyes. I was terrified...his machette was dripping with blood. Blood I knew was from my husband. He just stood there...tears...a bloody machette... there was screaming everywhere else around...but not in my house...right at that moment there was such a silence...such a cold feeling it was like someone was rubbing an ice block all over my body. Even my child would not cry. He tried to but all that came out was a muffled sound...it was as if the sound had gotten stuck in his throat on the way out.

There is silence...deathly silence...

Nata continues to speak slowly...

NATA:

Now we are living in his house...we hide in the out door latrine during the day and in the night, he collects us under the shadow of night and hides us in his house. It is a hut actually.. you see he used to be our shamba boy. He used to come and cut the grass around our compound. Now I am at his mercy...I live in his hut and sleep on a mat on the cold muddy floor...and I hide away in his latrine during the day. Saying that tables turn is an understatement.

Nata walks around the stage...

NATA

I did ask him once...why he took my husband and left me and my child. He said that he had to prove that he has 'worked' that day. Work! That us what they call the killings... the massacre...work! They equate it to clearing a shamba...cutting away weeds. Weasals... that is what they call us, just because we belong to another political group...or because we do not follow their political group. My husband worked for the government...he was their enemy. Why did he save me? Why didn't he cut me down too?

NATA

They meet in his hut. The killers...they meet in Kabalata's hut...they are so many. Some times they are too many to gather in his hut so they sit under the mango tree in his compound. I can hear each and every word they say...the latrine is behind the mango tree. It is an old broken down latrine...no one uses it anymore. That is why it is the safest place for me to hide. It is smelly and full of all the flies the world has to offer but it is safe. It is either living in filth or dying like a dog. Some days I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NATA (cont'd)

think that it would be better to die. Better to die than watch my child sit and be covered with flies amidst the stench and all the filth.

She clutches her child...

NATA

Kabalata says that he spared me because he loves me. He killed my husband and spared me...because he loves me. Am I supposed to feel fortunate...or lucky? I should have let him kill me too. I should have let him end my life. But my child...now I have two. Kabalata made me his wife. I was a beauty queen once...the pride of Gulu...and now I am carrying the bastard child of a rebel! A mere shamba boy. Oh how the tables have turned on me.

She holds her head in shame...

NATA

They meet under the tree to count how many more people they have cut down...how many more weasels they have killed. They talk about people like they are talking about cockroaches. These are their friends...their own people. We all speak the same language but somehow, we have become weasels! They walked around the whole village, one house after another cutting people down. As if they were cutting papyrus trees. Man, woman, or child, they did not care. As long as you were not with them, you fell at their feet with the slice of a machette!

She stands up and she is angry...

NATA

(Raised voice)

They are the ones who are weasels. They are the ones who are killing their fellow man in the name of liberation. What are they liberating? We are just in the village...far away from the statehouse in Kampala. How is it that we are to blame about the bad governance in our country? How are we to blame when there is no safe drinking water in their houses? Are we God? They call us weasels! They...they are the ones who are the weasels!

She sits down...rubs her stomach...

NATA

This is the child of a weasel! A real weasel...not me. What am I supposed to tell it when it comes into this world? That I was raped to submission by its Father? That its father killed the love of my life?

She smiles...

(CONTINUED)

NATA

I met George, my husband when I had just been crowned Miss Tourism Northern Uganda. I was the gem of the North...he was a doctor, fresh from the University. The son of the Mayor of Gulu. He was talk, dark and handsome, a typical Acholi man. The pride of his father...the pride of the land. And he chose me...we were a power couple. Very beautiful to look at and every other person's envy. You think Beyonce and J-Zay are a power couple, ask people! Ask people about Atim and George...ask them. They will tell you about real icons.

Her smile fades...

NATA

Still, being an icon made no difference to those weasels. They came like a flood, the ones that you do not see coming. One minute we were watching cartoons and the next my George was no more. Now, I am carrying the child of a rebel...I let him have me every time he wants. That is the only way that I can guarantee that my other child...my only child...George's child will stay alive. He is the only thing I have that reminds me of George. The only thing that gives me hope.

She looks at the audience...

NATA

You must think that I am a heartless person. My mother says that 'all children are a gift from God'. God? Where was he when my husband was being killed by a shamba boy? Where was God, when I was being raped everyday? Is this some kind of cruel joke that this so called -God is playing on me? Is he punishing me for being beautiful? (*Slowly as she rubs her belly*) This child...this child will never be MY child...it will just be one of those ones that are found by the dustbin. I will not even leave it at the mission or the hospital...no...if I could tear it out of my body, I would! (*Angry*) Call me heartless if you like! Call me a self centered bitch! I do not care. If you want you wan sit between my legs when this thing is being born, so that you can catch it...and keep it. Keep this weasel for yourself!

She turns her back to the audience...turns to her other child...cradles him.

She hums a tune and soothes him. When it seems like he is asleep again...she lays him down and faces the audience. She looks shy or ashamed... she looks down as she speaks...

NATA

So maybe I am being unreasonable. Kabalata is dead now. He took me and my son to a clearing and left us

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NATA: (*cont'd*)

there. The army was going to bomb the rebel settlement where we were...he went back there. He went back so that he could die with his fellow weasels...the other rebels. He left me and my child in the clearing...he said we would be safe. The army found us there...it was just us. Me and my son and this child in my belly. They brought us here...now they are asking me all these questions. Making me talk about my life. Making me tell all the stories that I want to forget. Do you have any idea what it is like to relive a past you want to forget? Do you know what it feels like to stand naked in front of a stranger and let them judge you? Let them decide whether you are telling the truth or not?

Nata walks around...she is now looking piercingly into the audience...

NATA:

I am tired and I want to go home now. Please tell them that I need to go home now.

She sits down exhausted...disraught...

NATA:

(*Slowly*) Rehabilitation...(light laugh) they say that this is a rehabilitation center. They are going to rehabilitate us...former rebels and rebels wives and make us fit to mingle back into the society. I am tired...I have told my story a thousand times. Did you know that even people from outside Uganda come to this centre? They come to look at us and talk to us...as if we are a tourist attraction. How does talking to me help you? Do you think it helps me? (*Softly*) My case worker says that talking helps...helps who? I have talked until the saliva in my mouth is finished. And all it has done for me is replay my story over and over again... until I do not feel anymore. I do not feel anything anymore. Maybe that is what they mean help us...not to have feelings.

*She stands up and leans against the side of one of the pillars of the stage...
as if observing the rest of the stage...*

NATA:

Kabalata hid me from the other rebels before he decided to take me into the bush with him. He said that in the bush no one would hunt me or my child. He said that in the bush I would not have to hide in the latrine. He said that in the bush I have become one of them so there is no need to kill me. In the bush he made me his wife.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NATA: (cont'd)

There were other women in the bush. They were not women actually, they were young girls... all of them wives. Some of them as young as 10. At 22, I was the oldest wife in the bush. The one the other young women came to. They asked me what to do to make it stop hurting. Do not fight...that is all I could say. I was not a virgin when Kabalata got me but it hurt worse than my first time with George. It felt like my intestines were going to come out of my mouth...so what was I supposed to tell these young girls? That the pain would stop some day? Don't fight...that is all I could say. Just let them take your innocence like an animal!

Nata picks up her child...

NATA:

I am done...they say I am lucky. (*Laughs*) Lucky...that is the word they used. Lucky they say, because Kabalata took me to the clearing. They say that he was kind...kind enough to let me live even when he knew about the air strikes that were about to take place. (*Laughs*) Kind...that is the word they used to describe him. It is a good thing I did not die in the bush...what would have been the point of stepping over my dead husband and hiding in a latrine if it was going to end in the bush? Tomorrow is another day. Aha...I am done!

THE END

THE BEAUTY CEREMONY

by

Akwasi Addai

SETTING & SYNOPSIS:

The Beauty Ceremony is set in a fictitious African society called Makumba. Due to its bad history, Makumba had reformed into a matriarchal system, and as a result women now possess the power and authority in the land. The story leads up to a traditional ceremony in which they (the women) reveal themselves finally after prolonged periods of isolation.

ACT ONE

(Over darkness we hear WAR NOISES as A VOICE narrates the story of Makumba...)

NARRATOR: When long ago the nation of Makumba was ruled by Kings, their reign was marred with wars and atrocities.

(THUNDER CLAPS!! SWORDS CLANG!! WARRIORS SQUEAL!! WOMEN & CHILDREN WAIL!! HOUSES BURN DOWN!!)

NARRATOR: Makumba fell due to a Great Invasion in the hands of the evil King Agorkoli, who waged a tyranny so fierce it almost wiped out all of womankind. The gods raised new generations of female leaders who fought and restored the balance. By their revolution, they overtook the old Kingdom of Makumba and initiated a new empire.

(The war noises build up to a climax, and the lights come up to reveal a FARMLAND. We see a YOUNG MAN planting SEEDS with a HOE and a MATCHET. Next to him lies a BASKET filled with FOOD STUFFS)

NARRATOR: Kabiru was ranked amongst the second men of the clan. He had not spent seven days and seven nights in the evil forest as custom required of the First Men. Neither was he a great wrestler...but he was an expert in hunting and farming.

(Kabiru warms a pot of stew over a LOG OF FIRE and cuts some plantains into small pieces. A voice speaks behind him)

HAKEEM: Just the man I was looking for.

(Kabiru looks behind, sees Hakeem, they shake hands with a manly grip)

KABIRU: You have found me eating.

HAKEEM: And I shall eat with you.

(Kabiru removes the stew from fire and replaces it with the plantains to roast. Hakeem reveals a GOURD of PALM WINE)

KABIRU: I didn't know you had palm wine.

HAKEEM: Now you know.

(They bring out their calabash and pour libation before drinking. They continue their conversation after they are done drinking.)

HAKEEM: So what gifts are you presenting at the ceremony?

KABIRU: What ceremony?

HAKEEM (perplexed): I have nothing to say to you

(Their food is ready. Just when they're about to eat, another voice approaches them, whistling)

KABIRU: (*MUTOMBO*): This man is fond of showing up when food is ready.

MUTOMBO: (*enters smiling*): I have caught you eating...

(*MUTOMBO waits for their response but they ignore him, he joins them regardless*)

HAKHEEM: I was just asking Kabiru what gifts he had prepared for tomorrow's ceremony.

MUTOMBO: (*already chewing fish*): I see.

HAKHEEM: And what about you? What have you prepared?

MUTOMBO: Let us talk about other things, my friend.

HAKHEEM: Ah! What is there to talk about other than the great ceremony of our Queen?

MUTOMBO: You and who's Queen? Maybe you should speak for yourself, my friend.

HAKHEEM: Ah-ah! What do you mean? Is she not our Queen? I thought you of all people would be dying to meet her daughters by now.

MUTOMBO: Dying to meet who?! Mtcheew!!

KABIRU: (*to HAKHEEM*): Perhaps you are the one who can't wait to see them.

HAKHEEM: (*laughs*): In this Makumba it is every man's dream to taste the forbidden fruit of any of the Queen's daughters! Even you, Kabiru. Am I lying?

(*He gives KABIRU a naughty look*)

KABIRU: You are only exposing yourself Hakeem.

(*HAKHEEM bursts into laughter*)

MUTOMBO: But how can one dream of any woman at all whom he only sees once a year?

HAKHEEM: Oooh-oooh, what is this man's problem? And where does it end with your bitterness? Erh? Whether you like it or fim, they are our women!

MUTOMBO: You are always talking like a fool! I am not bitter. I was just making a point. Besides, why should I care? They do not put food on my table, neither do they provide food for my penis.

HAKHEEM: Don't be such a dog Mutombo. Real men of Makumba are pure and chaste men. We do not spit on the face of our custom by fraternising with unclean women from the distant lands. If you continue with this behaviour you shall forever remain a second man.

MUTOMBO: And you shall forever remain a mindless buffoon who cannot think for himself. You think I care for becoming a first man? I am not defined by you, nor the doctrines of those witches who have been washing your brains since you were a toddler. Wake up my brother, you are sleeping!

KABIRU: Let us not behave like angry fowls. We are all adults here, and if we must disagree, it should be without malice. Come on, the food is getting cold.

(They eat in silence for some time)

MUTOMBO: Tell me, Kabiru, do you consider yourself a lesser man than the first men?

KABIRU: I am a man of my own. I choose to live by the hoe and matchet, they choose to live by the sword and shield. But we are both vital for survival.

MUTOMBO: Stop speaking in parables and answer the question Kabiru, yes or no?

KABIRU: No, I am not a lesser man.

MUTOMBO: But in the eyes of Makumba, you are a lesser man. So what makes them more of men than yourself? Why are the first men more suitable to produce offspring with Queen Nzinga's daughters than any of us? Do we not also have something between our legs? Or is their something's longer than ours?

HAKHEEM: It is not a question of the size of our somethings.

MUTOMBO: What is it a question of then? Erh?

HAKHEEM: The first men are given the title by their own merit and brute strength. They have all gone through the fire and spent seven days and nights in the evil forest. Not forgetting how they all abide by our oath of chastity, something you are obviously lacking in, Mutombo.

KABIRU (to HAKHEEM): So are you less of a man than they are?

MUTOMBO: Ask him again Kabiru! Any of us can commit to the sword and go through the fire if we want to. They are not special!

HAKHEEM: If it's so easy why don't you go for it then? Erh?

MUTOMBO: Even if I do, it would be by my own will, not the false hope of getting to taste the forbidden fruit.

(KABIRU fills one of the calabashes with cold water. The men drink from the calabash as they eat)

MUTOMBO: What I wish I knew was the way to the land of the spirits so I can quarrel with our fore fathers for allowing these women to have their way with our kingdom.

KABIRU: I don't think they just allowed the women to have their way. We've all heard stories about what happened in those days. There are more than meets the eye to these events, they're all shrouded in mystery.

HAKHEEM: Oh-oh! My friend, there are no mysteries in those events.

MUTOMBO: How do you know? Were you there? Was any of us alive when our women decided to bend no more to the will of our Kings? You speak of matters that are older than seven generations. I shall not be afraid to say that not even the first men nor Queen Nzinga herself can tell us about these events.

HAKHEEM (*perplexed*): May the Great Mawu forbid the abomination coming out of your mouth! Have you forgotten our history already?

KABIRU: What history do you speak of, Hakeem?

HAKHEEM: Don't ask me that question. Are you saying we have no history? Didn't the sages speak of Agorkoli's warriors who invaded our lands in the dead of night, setting fire to our homes and carrying our women into slavery? What was said of our Kings and fathers then? Did they not surrender? Or is that a mystery too?

KABIRU: That is the story we've been told since our boyhood days.

HAKHEEM: Er-herh? And what is your point? That they are all lies?

KABIRU: No one is saying that.

HAKHEEM: So what are you saying, Kabiru?

KABIRU: All I am saying is, let us be open-minded about these things. It is not a crime to question the pillars of our thinking. There are always two sides to every story. What is life, after all, if not a quest for more knowledge?

HAKHEEM: Had it not been for the blood and toil of warriors like Yaa Asantewaa or the sacrifice of great medicine women like Adina who united our clans and installed our deity, we would not even be having this conversation, let alone a quest for more knowledge.

KABIRU: If they loved their people so much, why did they abandon their men and separate themselves from them like the sky from the earth?

(*HAKHEEM breaks into laughter*)

HAKHEEM: Don't make me laugh, Kabiru. If things were so bad our mothers had to ensure the survival of our nation, why not? In consoling a woman whose baby has died at birth, is she not told to dry her eyes as it is better the water is spilled than the pot broken?

(*There is a long pause in which Kabiru and Mutombo reflect on what HAKHEEM has just said*)

MUTOMBO: If war knocks on our door right now, will your Queen wield her sword or will she expect her first men to fight for her?

HAKEEM: The Queens of Makumba have already proved themselves worthy of the throne.

MUTOMBO: Not this Queen! And not in the face of war, my friend! The only thing they've proved is their mastery of seduction. They used it against our fathers, and they're using it against us now! You're just too blind to see it!

HAKEEM: I don't appreciate your tone Mutombo! Must I remind you we took an oath to serve and protect Queen Nzinga?

(**MUTOMBO** rises with anger! **HAKEEM** rises too! Both men square up to each other)

MUTOMBO: To hell with the Queen and her daughters! (*spits in disgust*) They lock themselves up in that whorehouse and leave us down here to rot in the name of the gods! All they are good for is a good fuck!!!

(**HAKEEM** is stung to fury! A fierce battle ensues. **KABIRU** attempts to stop the fight as the lights fade into a total blackout)

End of Act One

Act Two

(The lights come up on Makumba's village square: a CROWD OF YOUNG MEN are huddled in a circle under the shade of a COTTON TREE. There are DRUMMERS holding the field. Also present are the ELDERS of the village. It's an atmosphere of merriment.)

NARRATOR: The Beauty Ceremony was in full swing. All the men of Makumba turned out on the ilo, in anticipation of their Queen's arrival.

(KABIRU enters stage, walking towards the crowd)

NARRATOR: Kabiru's sight was blocked by the crowd. He climbed onto a branch of the ancient cotton tree for a better view.

(KABIRU climbs the tree and sees a GROUP OF FIRST MEN carrying SPEARS and SHIELDS, dancing behind the crowd into the circle. Everyone claps for them and the drums rise to a frenzy)

NARRATOR: Kabiru was jealous of the first men. What at all made them more eligible than he? Was it the fertility of one's seed, or the brute strength one displayed? A planter must by nature sow his seeds on the land. The trouble with the regime was that most of the land was made off-limits, and only a handful of planters had access to the available lands. Now the landlords tried to persuade the rest of the planters that this was the will of the gods. And they expected everyone to speak with one voice without being dismayed.

(The TRUMPET is blown. Everyone surge towards QUEEN NZINGA and her MAGISTRATES who've just arrived in PALANQUINS carried by her ROYAL BODYGUARDS. The Queen wears a shimmering GOLDEN CROWN, her magistrates dressed in equally elegant garb. The royal body guards secure a way to her THRONE on a DAIS, where she and her magistrates sit. One of the elders approaches QUEEN NZINGA and bows)

ONUKPA: Greetings my Queen.

QUEEN NZINGA: Rise up, soldier.

ONUKPA: We stand by you with honour, my Queen.

QUEEN NZINGA: Speak on.

ONUKPA: Please accept our humble offerings. I speak for all men of Makumba in saying that one does not come before royalty with empty hands.

(The First Men approach QUEEN NZINGA and place their GIFTS before her. Her bodyguards now move amongst the rest of the crowd, collecting each man's gift)

QUEEN NZINGA: You have done well, Onukpa. You are no stranger to this land, one of the few remaining pillars of Makumba who has witnessed its changing seasons and customs. You are honoured.

ONUOKPA: The honour is yours, my Queen.

(QUEEN NZINGA stands in front of her throne to address her people. She makes a gesture of salutation, and the whole gathering cheers)

QUEEN NZINGA: Soldiers of Makumba, I salute you!

THE WHOLE GATHERING: Daaaaaaah-eeeh!

QUEEN NZINGA: Our people say there is nothing new under the sun (*beat*). The reason I have summoned you here is not because our eyes are hungry for a spectacle. We are all familiar with the rites of this ceremony. It is good for you to know the history of your land. That is why we shall continue to chew the cud until the gods say ‘stop’.

(A brief murmur of approval sweeps through the crowd)

QUEEN NZINGA: There was a time when the women of Makumba were twice as many as the men. When the beauty of the land was equal to the beauty of its womenfolk, and even the youngest penis could boast of chewing bearded meat. Today, not every man can say the same. In those days a section of the King’s army were women. Some served as high priestesses and rainmakers, others fought as fiercely as the men against Agorkoli’s invaders who raided our lands, killing our women and children. Now every child of Makumba knows the carelessness with which its old Kings wielded their power. Some of you may ask: why does she bear so much hatred against our forefathers? I do not bear any ill-will against your fathers. They were my fathers too. But I am not afraid to say that we are living in a world of their ruin. Next time you wonder about my regard for your forefathers, remember that today, for every twenty-seven men of Makumba, there is only one woman. Soldiers of Makumba, I salute you.

(There is a FLASH OF LIGHTNING and THUNDER!! The whole stage goes dark for a moment. When the lights come back, we see that the high priestess of Makumba, CHITALA, and a number of YOUNG MAIDENS have magically appeared out of nowhere)

(CHITALA wears a smoked raffia skirt, the left half of her body painted white from head to toe. The Queen’s daughters wear GOLD BANGLES and ANKLETS, with strings of WAIST BEADS from their waist down to their pubis. Their NECKLACES hung like coils above their breasts, and their bodies gleam with black ink patterns on their skins)

(CHITALA runs forward and points her IRON STAFF at the drummers)

CHITALA: Speak on!! The gods hear what you say!!

(The drummers beat the drums again, and the Queen’s daughters sing and dance over a FLUTE. CHITALA waves her staff and begins to entertain us with traditional performance, paying homage to the legends of Makumba. The performance continues in hushed tones as our Narrator’s voice comes in)

NARRATOR: The Queen's daughters sang and danced over a flute, and all the men waved their hands to honour them.

(KABIRU appears mesmerized by something)

NARRATOR: One girl stood out amongst the maidens. Her name was Makeda. *(beat)* Her breasts stood erect with an upward curve. She wore many strands of waist beads, and from behind they covered her whole waist and the upper part of her buttocks.

(SPOTLIGHT on the girl in question, MAKEDA. KABIRU comes down from the tree to have a closer look at her)

NARRATOR: Of course Kabiru noticed all this after he had worked his way through the heart of the crowd and reached a position from which he could clearly see all the faces on the dais.

(KABIRU is now within Makeda's spotlight. Every other light and everyone else around them fades totally into the dark, leaving the two illuminated on stage. Her dancing takes on an erotic edge. KABIRU is spellbound)

NARRATOR: More than her finely cut face and graceful carriage was her unbelievable resemblance to the woman he'd been seeing in his dreams...

(Their spotlight fades into a total blackout)

(When the lights come back, the Queen's daughters sit in a big circle, and all the first men kneel in their centre. CHITALA stands next to them, holding her ancestral staff)

CHITALA (to the first men): Do you vow to protect your Queen's daughters from all calamity?

ALL THE FIRST MEN: We do.

CHITALA: Do you vow to prevent the dark days of Makumba from repeating itself?

ALL THE FIRST MEN: We do.

CHITALA: Swear on this staff of my mother's.

ALL THE FIRST MEN: We swear.

CHITALA (to Makeda): Bring me the kukuo.

(Makeda hands one of the MAGIC POTS to Chitala, who now reveals some sticky substance, a KNIFE and MEDICINAL HERBS. She gathers the substance and herbs into the pot, then cuts the skin of each initiate, allowing their blood to spill into it before grinding all this into a paste.

CHITALA then puts a morsel in each of their mouths, after which she recites an incantation, hitting the earth with her staff. The pot is immediately filled with BLUE-WHITE FLAMES)

ALL THE FIRST MEN: None.

ONUKPA: Answer truthfully.

CHITALA: None?

ALL THE FIRST MEN: None.

(Nothing happens. CHITALA gives QUEEN NZINGA a shrewd look)

QUEEN NZINGA: Onukpa, is it me your men are lying to?

(ONUKPA and the other elders apologise to the Queen, meanwhile MAKEDA who's been staring noticeably at KABIRU whispers something in CHITALA's ear)

CHITALA: Makeda has some interesting news, my Queen. It appears there is a pure blood amongst us.

(MAKEDA points in KABIRU's direction. Immediately, he pushes away from the crowd. Some eager hands stop him and bring him back to the centre. CHITALA waves the pot around his head and, using the knife, lets his blood spill into the pot. She grinds a little, makes him swallow a morsel, then recites the incantation, hitting the earth with her staff. The pot becomes filled with blue-white flames)

CHITALA: Remember to answer truthfully. *(then)* How many women have you laid with since you hit puberty?

KABIRU: None.

(All of a sudden the blue white flames turn red with sparks flying from it. Then a TONGUE OF FLAME SHOOTS INTO THE AIR and the whole gathering gasps!!)

CHITALA: Hehehehehehe!!! It seems the gods want to play. My Queen, you can see it for yourself. *(points at KABIRU)* In this body lies a virgin candidate chosen by the gods themselves. The kukuo never lies.

(There is an uproar amongst the first men. How can a common second man go off with their prize? ONUKPA speaks on their behalf)

ONUKPA: He is not a first man! He has no right to bear offspring with the Queen's daughters!

(QUEEN NZINGA rises angrily!)

QUEEN NZINGA: You seem to speak with a lost tongue, Onukpa! How dare you?! Since when was it your place to determine who has right to bear offspring?!

(The whole assembly goes quiet. Queen Nzinga consults her magistrates inaudibly, then she addresses her people :)

QUEEN NZINGA: I have discussed with my counsel, and this is how we decide to settle the matter: the rightful candidate would be determined through combat. First man or no first man, if this young man is truly the chosen one, the gods would fight by his side.

(The beating of the drums and singing of the flutes begin again. Kabiru is to wrestle a heavily-built first man with a brutal face. The two men face each other as the Queen's bodyguards clear a space for them. When the fight begins, they appear equally matched in each other's grip for a while. Then Kabiru tries swinging his leg over his opponent's head. Quick as lightning, he goes down on one knee, flings Kabiru over and slams him down to the ground. The crowd bursts into a thunderous roar! Makeda covers her eyes as blows upon blows keep landing on Kabiru's face. We may or may not see her rushing to Kabiru's aid as his opponent is swept off and carried shoulder-high by his supporters. The lights gradually fade into a total blackout)

THE END

THE CAESAR OF IVORY

by

Onis Sampson

CAST LIST:

CHUKS : a major trader and dealer in African Elephant tusk and ivory

JUDE : a trader in African Elephant tusk and ivory who works for Chuks

SADE : works for Chuks in the warehouse

LOCATION/TIME: Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo/2012

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A little room at the outskirts of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. JUDE, a young man is sitting on a plastic chair reading a book. The room is sparsely furnished. A small sleeping mat, plastic cup and a small jerrycan of water are huddle by the wall. And few clothes hangs on nails on the wall.

The scene opens with the spotlight beaming on him, his legs crossed. He doesn't look relaxed. He changes his posture at intervals.

JUDE: *(Muttering)* Haruna has been right all this while. I've involved myself in senseless self-slaughter. But I think, in a way, I can still remedy things. I'm young, educated and have street smartness.

(Looks into the paper.)

This material is quite illuminating. I never knew it was possible for animals to go extinct in these modern times. They're supposed to be procreating, isn't that what they're supposed to do?

(He stands up, a perplexed look on his face.)

It is going to be worth it, now that I have finally joined forces with Haruna in stealth way. It would be worth it because the one whom I worked for all these years has done little to nothing for me. If he likes he calls me a double-crosser, I don't care – that's if he'd ever get to find out anyway. All I need to do is show Haruna and his men a map, get my money wired into a foreign account and zoom, vanish into thin air. And that's what I've done. Thank God I've received part payment. When the deal is done, I will get the balance.

(He does an excited dance.)

Perhaps, I could travel to some Asian country with my money. Japan, China, somewhere full of glamour and relax a while. It is going to be worth it, joining forces against these lords who whisk life out of a helpless elephant because of tusk and ivory. Staggering figures... *(Shakes his head as he stares into the paper.)*

Over 38.8 tonnes of illegal ivory was ceased worldwide in 2011! And they're saying that's over four thousand elephants. Well, I'm no activist to start any campaign. The best I can do is get my tip for helping Haruna and his agency fight this trade I've known for over five years now.

SCENE TWO

A room in a warehouse for tusk and ivories in Lubumbashi. It is evening of the same day. The arrangement of objects is in disproportionate form. Dust and spider webs can be seen at some angles of the room. The look is formless and may be imperceptible to the audience due to perspective and distance.

Stacked in one corner of the room are elephant tusks and ivories. A black cloth that blends seamlessly with the dark room is placed on the tusks and ivories although some of them jut out through torn areas of the material. Ideally, the cloth covers a good portion of the tusks and ivories; stage props considerations is consequently simplified and there is room for improvisation. The tusks and ivories need not be original nor modified ones, either. White sticks or batons can be adapted for same.

In the middle of the room is a wooden bench. A figure is asleep on the bench.

SADE, a young woman in her early twenties walks in. Without any inundation on the specifics of her dressing, the picture she represents is that of a roughly dressed street urchin.

SADE : *(taps the figure lying on the bench, Chuks, an old man)* Hello, boss...,boss. There's serious trouble going on.

CHUKS : *(stretches his body before getting up.)* What's the matter young lady? Why don't you let me rest a little longer?

SADE: No...o, you can't rest. Not today. There's fire on the mountain.

CHUKS : *(Cleaning his eyes with the back of his thumb)* So what's the problem?

SADE: You remember that Haruna guy who you told me tried coming to the warehouse sometime at the beginning of the year?

CHUKS: Yes. Of course I do. We rarely let in strangers here.

SADE: Good. Our own Jude is in talks with him.

CHUKS: Is that a problem? Perhaps, Jude wants to do a side business with him.

SADE: More than that, boss. He is making an irresistible offer to Jude so he could take him down to the warehouse. The Haruna guy is actually a spy.

CHUKS: Are you sure of what you are saying?

SADE: Very sure sir. Just as I know my name. I started suspecting Jude the moment he would pick some strange phone calls and go to a secret corner to answer them. One day, I bugged his phone.

CHUKS: You what?

SADE: In the circumstance, boss I had to do that because he wasn't sounding like one still loyal to you. He was flouting our rules.

(Chuks stands up from the bench and paces up and down for a while. From backstage an elephant's trumpet comes in.)

CHUKS: Those elephants again with their noises! A little while and I'll get them silent. About the bugging issue, I'm not comfortable with you talking about bugging your superior. I've been in this ivory business for more than thirty years. Five of those years I've done with Jude. If he would've stabbed me, I would have known. I am not a novice in this business who would fold his hands and allow another jeopardise his business.

(As he harangues he goes to drag out a tusk demonstrating his point.)

This is the only business I know. If anyone comes between me and my business I take him down. I'm ready to kill. Where is Jude now?

SADE: The last I heard of him was the call I intercepted where he was discussing with Haruna about increasing the pay for him to lead Haruna and his team here.

CHUKS: We're smarter than that. Where's this damn phone of yours? I suppose you recorded the conversation?

SADE: Yes I did. I have full clip of all the conversations from day one of this incidence.

CHUKS: Okay, but just the most recent you talked about – at least, for now. Before then, did he say anything about me?

SADE: How, sir?

CHUKS: Don't be dumb! Did he complain about me in anyway?

SADE: A lot, sir. That you don't treat him, right. That you've never done him well in any deal. He was fond of saying he brought most of the contacts in previous deals but you'd always cheat him out.

CHUKS: Arrant nonsense! Did the ingrate say that of me? Did he dare open his dark mouth to say such ignoble things of me? Indeed the whole world has gone mad. Taking with me traitors left and right who sniff in malice and jealousy.

(He returns to sit on the bench.)

SADE: That's not all, boss. I think we're not the only one likely to be scuttled in his devious plans.

CHUKS: How do you mean that?

SADE: Biggie Wiggie, Lambaba, Faro The Horn and other cartels are likely to be busted by this Haruna guy's team.

CHUKS: Where's this recorded conversation you talked about?

SADE: Right here in my phone.

CHUKS: Let me have it.

(She brings out her phone, taps some buttons and hands over the phone to him.)

SADE: Just tap the play button, sir.

(Chucks puts the phone on his ear as he listens. Few seconds after, not up to thirty seconds, he hands over the phone to Sade. A well pronounced anger beams on his face. He runs into vituperations.)

CHUKS: Who does he think he is? The bloody fool! We'll see. Before he tries to do anything funny to bring my downfall I'll make sure I take him down. You don't play fire games with a mafia and live to tell the tale. No! Not just possible. He's supposed to be here by this time.

SADE: Yes, but I can't tell why he isn't here.

CHUKS: He never told you anything?

SADE: No, he didn't.

CHUKS: Get two workers quickly to go and pick the van from the mechanic. I need that delivery van here in less than an hour.

SADE: Alright, sir.

(She makes way to leave just as Jude enters.)

JUDE: Good evening, sir.

CHUKS : *(Smiling.)* Ah! My good friend, Jude. How are you doing today?

JUDE: I'm fine, sir.

(*SADE had stopped at the doorway the moment Jude entered.*)

I'm sorry sir. I've had to do some work in my house. My roof has some leakage so I had to attend to it.

CHUKS: Oh, you don't need to worry about nothing. If it's you, I can understand very well.

JUDE: Thank you, sir.

CHUKS: I like you for one thing, Jude. You're a diligent and loyal worker. You don't ever grumble with your work. And no matter what, you make sure you report at work even when you're not too strong.

JUDE: All these encomiums for me, sir. I'm honoured.

CHUKS: And you have a sacrificial heart. Like a saint, even. I still wonder what you thought you were doing when you risked your life trying to save me during the last police raid on us in Kinshasa.

JUDE: I am more concerned with duty first before any other thing, sir.

CHUKS: I see. For acts like that I sit down every now and then and begin to think about the future of our ivory business and always think of a better way to reward you.

JUDE: I'm honoured, sir.

SADE: (*startles*) Sir?

CHUKS: Yes, Sade.

SADE : (*Surprise at Chuks' change of attitude.*) But sir?

CHUKS: Sit down, Sade. I know what I'm doing.

JUDE (*charily*) What's going on here?

CHUKS: Oh, it's nothing much. Just some imperialist swine trying to infiltrate my business.

JUDE : (*Bemuses*) You're talking in parables, sir.

CHUKS: Is that not how the world speaks these days? No one comes out straight. They talk to you indirectly.

JUDE : (*chortles*) That's true, sir. I see.

CHUKS: There's nothing for you to see, young man. Absolutely nothing. You think I don't treat you right, isn't it? I've always given you what is due in all the deals we've done together, right? Who was the man who took the lion's share of our last deal?

(The sound of an elephant comes in again from the background.)

JUDE: It's not like that, sir...

CHUKS: How is it then!

JUDE: I've never said such things to your face.

(Looks at Sade who is sitting quietly on the edge of the bench.)

Judas!

SADE: Judas senior.

CHUKS: Keep your traps shut. Stop all your ranting before me. What is this I hear about you, Jude?

JUDE: What about me, sir?

CHUKS: You and Haruna.

JUDE: (startles) I don't seem to get you, big boss.

CHUKS: Cut all those fake praise shit. I'm okay if you address me as the cutthroat business man, a ruthless mogul. Are these not the new names you've put on me like a woman wearing a see-through dress?

JUDE: It's tough making out your meaning, sir. I think I'll come back when you're pretty much composed.

CHUKS: How dare you! You who want to wreck my business empire. If you try it, you'll die. I know your family house; your parents, your good-for-nothing brothers who sit at a corner piping hashish to the body of their god. Well, that's a secondary consideration.

JUDE: I still don't get you, sir. Haruna and I have been friends. He's a Fulani as I am, so we go back in time. That explains the closeness. If you talk about deals with Haruna, recall it was your very self who endorsed these deals or do you seem to forget so soon?

CHUKS: Don't talk to me in that manner! I'm not your child or little boy whom you would address in such a condescending manner.

JUDE: I'm sorry for my unruly behaviour, big boss.

CHUKS: But you perfectly understand all I've been saying. So like a lawyer cross examining a witness in all those their court drama I used to watch when I was a little boy, let me ask you the ultimate question, when are they coming?

JUDE: I don't know.

CHUKS: But you're the master-strategist here.

JUDE: I don't know what you're talking about.

CHUKS: Oh please, cut the thrash before I smash this tusk on your head. You just admitted now.

JUDE: How?

SADE: Were you not the one who just said 'I don't know'?

CHUKS: Prod him on. It seems his memory is no longer active.

CHUKS: It seems I'll have to speak the only language you understand. I've been too soft on you. Sade, are the bodyguards at their post down the corridor?

SADE: I think they are.

CHUKS: Not 'I think'. Go and confirm. Now!

(SADE visibly shaken by his outburst scurries out.)

JUDE: What are you trying to do?

CHUKS: Oh that? Just playing amateur CIA roles for now. You know we're all recruits.

(CHUKS bends down to pour some water into his glass cup. Jude begins to make his way backward. CHUKS notices him and begins a guffaw for some seconds.)

CHUKS: What's the matter, boy?

JUDE : *(Anxiety)* What are you accusing me of?

(Enters SADE.)

SADE: They are there as usual—at their duty post.

JUDE: What's going on here?

CHUKS: Come with me, Jude. Let's ask the guards some questions.

JUDE: No problem, if you say questions.

(They go out except for SADE)

SADE: I don't know what this Jude guy means by extinction of elephants. We've been killing cows for thousands of years and eating them and they've never gone extinct. Is it an elephant that will go extinct, vanish some day? The big elephant, prime minister of the forest, a little lower than the lion who is the ceremonial president!

(JUDE's shouting trails in. It is obvious he's being beaten and tortured to get the truth out of him.)

What! Big boss has ordered his guards to beat the poor boy. I never knew it would get to this point.

(JUDE's voice trails in again. The elephant sound continues from the background too. JUDE is ushered in by CHUKS. His hands are tied with a strong rope.)

CHUKS: Now repeat what you told me and the guards.

JUDE: *(stammers.)* I.... I, only said Haruna wants to know this address... He mailed me some materials about some endangered animal species. I concentrated on the section dealing with sale of the African elephant tusk and ivory because that is what we do.

CHUKS: Don't bore us with all that book thrash. When did they say they're coming?

JUDE: I don't know, big boss.

CHUKS: Don't big boss me, traitor! I ask again, when are they coming?

JUDE: *(Frightens.)* Tonight, sir.

CHUKS: So you've given them a map to this place.

JUDE: Yes, sir.

CHUKS: You're a dead man, Jude.

SADE: Mercy, boss.

CHUKS: Quiet! I value a pound of my ivories over a traitor's life—if you don't know.

(The roaring of the elephants come from backstage again.)

CHUKS: (CONTD) Sade, go out now. Tell one or two of the workers to get the big van from the mechanic in an hour's time, latest. Go! Go! Go! We'll have to hurry up with the killing of the two elephants brought in last night. Tell the workers to get the tusk out quickly. We'll leave the meat for now. We have no time for that now.

(SADE goes out)

You, you will smell your mother's cunt today! Where's the money you were paid?

JUDE: They've not paid. I swear to God—on my life, too.

CHUKS: Wait while I get my pistol.

JUDE: I'll talk... I'll talk...

CHUKS: Okay. I'm listening.

JUDE: Twenty thousand Dollars.

CHUKS: You betrayed me for twenty thousand Dollars? *(Holds JUDE by the neck, shaking him extremely.)*

Mere twenty thousand Dollars! You're cheap. You deserve a pauper's death.

(He walks up to the pile of tusk and ivories covered with a cloth and begins to rummage through for his pistol. Behind him, JUDE succeeds in taking off the rope from his hands. He tiptoes back a bit and sprints out through a backdoor on stage right. CHUKS turns and sees him running. He sees his pistol almost at same time. He gives shouts of alarm and chases after him. Gun sounds open up as a corollary. The drone of guns and elephants trumpeting from the background proceed again mingling with the voices of panic. Sade enters and leaves immediately. Lights slowly fade).

THE END

CONTRIBUTORS NOTE

Abuchi Modilim is an Igbo-born storyteller and playwright. His writing has appeared in Kalahari Review and is forthcoming on No Tokens Journal. He is the curator of *Enyo: An Anthology of Contemporary African Plays*. Currently, he is studying English and literary studies with a minor in Theatre and film studies, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Ifunanya Madufor is an Igbo storyteller who seeks love and consolation from African literature and cinema. Fascinated by the new wave of Igbo cultural renaissance, she has gone on to develop interests in its literature, philosophy, cosmology and mysticism.

Achiro Patricia Olwoch hails from Gulu, in Northern Uganda and she is a writer and film maker. Achiro was born in exile in Nairobi and grew up in the UK. She studied International Travel at the School of Travel and was the best student overall in her year. After that she studied United Nations Peace Keeping Operations and graduated top of her class. She worked in the airline industry for six years before she started her writing and film making career.

Achiro is a very fast learner and writing is her passion. She has a good sense of imagination and even though she bases her writing on real life situations, she adds a twist of imagination to each and every story. She writes because she would like to make a difference in her community through the different stories that she has to tell.

Patricia has written four feature film scripts so far; fifteen short films and shot four documentaries. Her books and films are all based on real life situations.

She created and was the sole writer of the Award winning TV series- 'Coffee Shop' that aired on one of the biggest television stations in Uganda. It won the Best TV Series Award at the Ugandan Film Awards 2016.

In 2016 her short documentary *My Prison Diary* was screened at the Kalasha Film Festival; One of her short films 'The Surrogate' premiered at the Slum Film Festival 2017 in Nairobi and was nominated for three awards; Best film, Africa, Best score, Best Film Gender and Equality. It won the award for Best film Africa.

The same film was screened at the UTADA International Women's Film Festival and it has been nominated for the Awards of Best film East Africa and Best film Social Change.

More about Achiro and her works can be found on her website: www.achropolwoch.com

Onis Sampson is a Nigerian lawyer and an award-winning writer. Among several other writing prizes and recognitions for his works, he was long-listed for the British Council-sponsored 2017 Lagos Theatre Festival Playwriting Prize for his play, *The Metropolitan Playboy*; he was part of the long-list of 89 poets in the 2019 Erbacce Poetry Prize which recorded over 8, 000 entries worldwide. His short story, "Road to the Prayer House" was one of 30 stories out of 400 submitted short stories liked by the team of readers for the 2019 Writivism Short Story Prize. Also in 2019, he was a finalist in the 2019 Inspire Us Short Story Contest for his short story, "An Unassuming Woman."

His works appear or are forthcoming in Ake Review, Vinyl Poetry, Erbacce, Praxis Mag, Tuck Magazine, Authorpedia, African Eyeball anthology, African Writer, Kalahari Review, and elsewhere.

Akwasi Addai is an all-round writer and musician who has endured an all-embracing creative journey through various forms of writing including (but not limited to) screenwriting, fiction and song writing. Akwasi now operates on a freelance basis, writing by gigs while endeavouring on a passionate journey for creative freedom with no limits. He goes by the stage name Akwasi Marley, and has recently released his debut studio album '*Renegade*', available on all major stores.

Kudzai Mhangwa was born and raised in Harare, Zimbabwe. He writes poetry, plays, short stories and essays and is also an amateur actor.

His work has been featured in House of Mutapa, Thinking Out Loud, Atrebla Magazine, Ka'edi Africa, All Poetry and elsewhere. In 2018 he won the best locally written play at the National One-Act Play festival in Zimbabwe.

Beatrice Oluwaseun Wende is a student of the University of Benin, Edo State. She loves writing, and has published an ebook. She also has a blog where she publishes some of her short stories and articles.

In 2017, she made top ten in the Homevida Scriptwriting competition. She emerged winner of the 2019 Crater Litfest short story competition, and 1st runner up in the 2020 creative writer's challenge.