

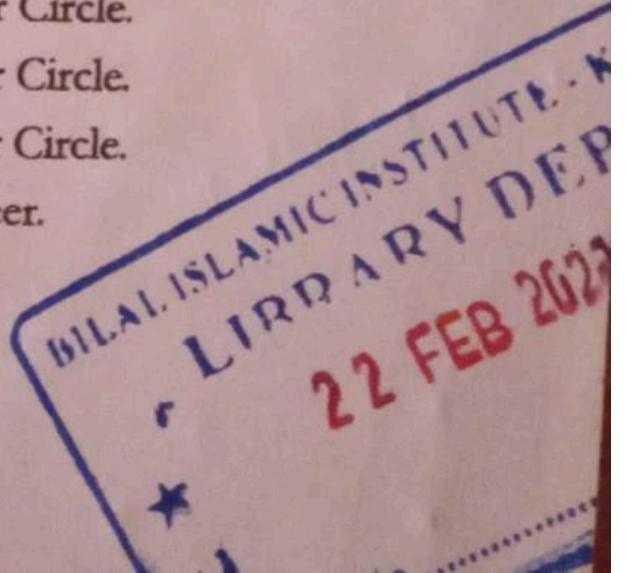
The Return of Mgofu

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sasa
sema

Characters

Thori:	A messenger from the ancestors
Thoriwa:	Thori's wife before, also a messenger from the ancestors.
Kadesa:	Leader of the exiles from Mndika after the first madness, now settled in Nderema.
Mude:	A trusted soldier of Mwami Rocho, leader of the Democratic Republic of Nderema.
Bizia:	Kadesa's son, also hunter and guard at the shrine of peace.
Matia:	Bizia's brother, also hunter and guard at the shrine of peace.
Nora:	Mgofu Ngoda's expectant wife.
Adonija:	A 'Good Samaritan' with a disturbed mind.
Scout 1:	An undercover agent from Mndika.
Scout 2:	The 2 nd undercover agent from Mndika.
Mhando:	Head of the nation of Mndika.
Sariku:	State Hostess and usher at Mhando's residence.
Mizra:	Master of Ceremonies and usher at Mhando's residence.
Mtange:	A member of Mhando's Inner Circle.
Mdanya:	A member of Mhando's Inner Circle.
Mnavi:	A member of Mhando's Inner Circle.
Mgofu Ngoda:	Son of the Great half blind Seer.
Nora U:	Mgofu's daughter. Two creatures of the mime Stage audience



ACT ONE

Scene One.

Messengers from beyond

The scene is an open air market. The audience comprises of sellers and buyers. It is late afternoon. Strange angelic music as an old man, Thori, enters pushing a woman, Thoriwa, in a wheelchair. The manner of their costumes should be suggestive of the spiritual world. Thori pushes the wheelchair to a convenient place and begins surveying the environment. After sometime, he turns and addresses Thoriwa.

Thori: Thoriwa. We have been here before...I think.

Thoriwa: (Straining from the wheelchair) Here? No, never. What makes you think we have?

Thori: The way they are staring at us. I think they know who we are. They have either seen us before or they see themselves in us.

Thoriwa: (Laughs generously) Seen us before? No, never. Maybe they have heard about us, a man pushing a woman in a wheelchair.

Thori: Yes, or a woman pushing a man in a wheelchair. (Yawns loudly) I'm dog tired.

Thoriwa:

Tired? Thor, you haven't even pushed me half the distance I've pushed you.

Thor:

That means we've overdone it today. We need to take a break. The rabbit saved her life by resting under the paw tree.

Thoriwa:

No. We've not overdone anything. One can't overdo a good deed. As messengers of those who went long before us, we can't overdo anything.

Thor:

So you really think we should stop here and talk to them?

Thoriwa:

These creatures here. They call themselves people (*laughs smirkingly*).

Thoriwa:

Yes, let's talk to them. We have to. Go right ahead and do the introduction.

Thor:

(Walks slowly forward, surveying the audience with his eyes.) These ones are busy. Don't you see how serious they look?

Thoriwa:

Serious? They are merely acting responsible.

Thor:

Responsible? Since when?

Thoriwa:

Mind you, what happened was not their fault. (*Pause*) Introduce yourself and then introduce me.

Thor:

(Introduces himself after some hesitation.) They call me Thor, seed of the old paw paw tree.

Thor:

They used to, now they don't. They used to call you Thor.

Thoriwa:

(Stringing his shoulder.) Yes, that's what they used to call me. This woman here was Thoriwa. We are messengers of those who went before us, our ancestors.

Thoriwa:

Where we come from, we are not used to walking long distances. That is why we are taking turns to ride in this machine. Give some mechanical advantage, you know.

Thor:

That's right. (*Pause*) You could say that Thoriwa and I are fused seed of the paw paw tree...

Thoriwa:

(Outburst) Werel! You and I were husband and wife. Don't forget that. Now, we are not. Maybe comrades in arms. That is what we are.

Thor:

(Quite angry.) What did you just say?

Thoriwa:

Comrades in arms.

Thor:

Withdraw it.

Thoriwa:

What? Comrades in arms?

Thorit:

(Hyperventilating) Yes, arms indeed
Arms means weapons. Weapons for
breaking into people's houses and
doing sickening things. Makes me want
to lose my memory. Do you want me
to lose my memory or do we go on
with our mission?

Thorwa:

Thorit:

Sorry never did anyone any good.
These people can't even say sorry on
behalf of their grandfathers, can they?

Thorwa:

No, they can't. (addressing the audience)
I smell some educated thief here . . .

silently training your eyes on my breasts!

(Taunting breasts) He used to own them.

Thorit and I were man and wife. But that
was before our people lost their heads.

Before they began spitting on the
village well so that no one could have
water. Yes, people who had co-existed
for long began pointing accusing
fingers at one another. (Thorwa and
Thorit get into a mock struggle. *My land . . .*
My cat . . . My maize . . . can be heard in the
struggle).

Thorit:
(Nodding his head) People who had

performed rituals sang, danced and
laughed together. Yes, they farted
without parting their buttocks.
A pity indeed. People who had even
borrowed salt from one another began
shaking hands with madness.

Thorit:

(Gesticulating) Someone said it: The only
thing necessary for evil to triumph is
for good people to do nothing. Yes,
they opened their heads. They allowed
madness in. Soon they began to warm
themselves with the fire of their
neighbours' burning skeletons. Good
people did nothing!

Thorwa:
Thorit and myself served in the local
shrine then. We had no children of our
own. We were good keepers of other
people's children at the shrine though.
Oh! how! the children loved the stories
we told them.

Thorit:
They loved the games too, don't forget
that.

Thorwa:
We lived happily in the three ridges until
that night (looking downcast). A deranged
man or woman set a neighbour's house

on fire. No one bothered to know who

had done it and why. No one... Many houses were burnt to ashes that night.

Children, mothers, fathers...everyone ran northwards, others eastwards, while the majority simply ran around in circles. Where were they to run to?

(Putting his hands on Thorinwa's shoulder.)

Thorinwa and I ran to the shrine. We had the keys. There were many other people in the shrine compound. We opened the gate to the great cave and let them in. All huddled together in unnatural silence.

(Almost whispering to herself) But before we opened the cave, something even more unnatural happened that night. When Thorin and I got to the shrine compound, the first family we recognized was that of Mgofu Ngoda, the old, half-blind seer. A fire was beginning to glow in his half blind eyes. (She gets angry.) What does this portend for us? I remember wondering. We had a saying among our people, "Do not

make blind eyes weep; it is the mother of all taboos."

Thorin: (Looking dolefully) We asked Mgofu and his family to get into the sacred cave but

the old seer simply shook his grey head waved goodbye and said: The strongest oak of the forest is not the one that is protected from the storm and hidden from the sun. It's the one that stands in the open where it is compelled to struggle for existence against the winds and rains and the scorching sun.

Suddenly...suddenly, Mgofu Ngoda got hold of the hand of his youngest wife, Mora and the two walked off into the night. Mgofu left the rest of his family right there.

(Almost in a whisper.) In the sacred cave, those who are given to whispering whispered and said that Mgofu's youngest wife was with child (Pause) That night... the dreadful eternal darkness caught up with all of us. To think the sacred cave would be safe was unwise. That same night they followed

us to the shrine. "Get out," they shouted. "We have come to protect you. Those who obeyed were killed. Those who chose to stay in the cave were burnt to death. Thoriwa and I were among those who chose to obey. Our spirits were among the first ones to escape into the mist. (Pointing at the *rizzi*) So you see, we don't belong here. We belong where we have come from. But don't get us wrong, we are not bitter. The soiled water can still be distilled to freshness. We believe in forgiveness. Forgive and you shall be forgiven.

Thori:

(Holding Thoriwa's hand and looking at her.)
Forget and you shall be forgotten. I can't forget you dear. (to the audience)

Isn't she something to behold? Yes, very forgiving. It's impossible to forget the good times we had growing up here, in the three ridges of Mndika. Mndika! (Holding his head) The name of the sacred place before the madness.

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Thorriwa: Yes, that was the end of a people's memory. But Thori and I are different. We have failed to forget.

(Lights dim as musical instruments establish the sadness of the moment. Soft singing voices accompany the musical instruments.)

Thori:

(After the musical interlude.) When we got to where we now live, those who left before us gave us a new home. The half-blind old seer had arrived before us. But his expectant wife was not there. The old seer had left her behind. Nora, the old seer's expectant wife's story has been told and told again in the three ridges of Mndika and beyond. Oh... how stories can spread, faster than the wind. How she and her old husband walked and walked until they reached the southern border of Mndika and Nderema.

Thori:

(Pointing at the audience) Prepare yourselves to be transported to Kadesa's shrine, in the forest of ogres in the northern part of Nderema. (Pause) The story of how Kadesa and several other people had been exiled from Mndika, their

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motherland, is well known across the ridges. They crossed the border.

Authorities of Nderema allowed them to settle in a thick forest near the border. That had been Mndika's first madness. By the time of Mndika's second madness, Kadesa had grown quite old.

(Nodding in agreement.) Yes, old but still strong-willed. It's not the age of the dog in the fight, it's the age of the fight in the dog. Kadesa had established a popular shrine for exiles in the northern part of Nderema. She was priestess of the shrine. As your minds proceed to Nderema, Thori and I will move to the next market. *(She sits in the chair and addresses Thori.)* Thori, come. Tired or not, we have a mission on our hands. *(Thori walks to the wheelchair and pushes it off as lights fade.)*

ACT ONE

Scene Two

Shrine of Peace 1

Dawn at Kadesa's Shrine, also known as 'Farewell to Ogres'. In front of a grass-thatched structure that stretches beyond our view is a small mound. A little distance away from the mound sits Mude on a stool. He wears military fatigues. In the background are small round tents for refugees from Mndika. A cock is heard crowing. The crowing is followed by the sound of rhythmic drums from the structure. Kadesa, priestess of the shrine emerges from the structure and walks to the rhythm of the drums towards the mound. She carries a small pot held high above her head. On seeing her, Mude kneels down next to the stool, facing her. Drums stop. Kadesa climbs the mound and, with her back to us, holds communion with unseen spirits. The communion may be chanted or spoken in vernacular. After the communion, she turns and addresses Mude.

Kadesa:

You are an early riser, aren't you?

Frogs haven't burrowed yet to usher in the sun yet you are already here.

Mude:

Yes, I am. It was His Excellency's idea.

"Be there before cockcrow." That was his golden rule.

Kadesa: Welcome to the shrine of Katigali.

Mude: Thank you, Priestess and Mother of many. Just what does it mean? The name I mean?

Kadesa: (*Wearing a serious look on her face*) It's a reminder. A reminder of the madness we witnessed at the old paw paw trees shade before we fled to this refugee camp. It means, farewell to the ogres that wanted to devour their own brood. Our people behaved like deranged animals, killing one another like ruthless brutes. (*Reflects*) So we said farewell to them, farewell to the ogres. It was sad. It's still sad. You were lucky, very lucky. And that's why we have been sent here.

Kadesa: We?

Mude: Yes, I'm not alone.

Kadesa: (*In doubt*) That's strange. You left your many duties and came here because we are lucky? Let's hear what your visitor's bag holds for us.

Mude:

I came to warn you. They are at it again. Reliable whispers are that the second madness has broken out in Mndika. You will need protection.

Kadesa: (*Looking puzzled*) Protection? Why? From whom?

Mude: Houses are burning. People are maiming one another and blaming it all on you. Those torching houses are said to be your followers; they claim to have been trained here before your very eyes. And does Mwami Rocho, he who tills the royal grounds, believe the whispers? Of course not. When the wise close their eyes, they open their ears. When did this madness begin?

Kadesa: Two nights ago.

Mude: Two nights ago? (*Sighs deeply*) I'm growing too old for this job. I saw it all but dismissed it as a bad dream.

Mude: You saw what?

Kadesa: Yes... You know I'm a born vegetarian.

Mude: That is common knowledge here, Mother.

Kadesa: Two nights ago I ate meat.

Mude:

At meat? How? Why?
Kadesa:

In a dream. I should have thought
more about it.

Mude:

What I'm telling you is real. It's going on
right now. The camp needs protection.
We don't want to be taken unawares
again.

Kadesa:

Mwami Rocho's consideration is wise.
(*Suddenly, Bizia, spear in hand rushes in. He
stops and looks suspiciously at Mude who has
already drawn a pistol.*)

Bizia:

Kadesa:

Mude, don't you remember him? No, not
likely. You were too young then. Mude
is a good man, sent by Mwami Rocho
to warn us. What is the matter? Why are
you trembling like a chicken. Burn not
(*beckoning her.*) Please come. The thin
edge of the wedge is dangerous.

Kadesa:

Speak, I told you Mude is a good man.
It is a foolish bird that soils its own
nest.

Bizia:

Kadesa:

Strangers?

Bizia:

Yes, two. And Matia is a fool. He's
leading them here. (Mude makes a gesture
indicating that he is going to hide behind the
grass-thatched structure. He leaves.)

Kadesa:

Stop trembling like that. Does your late
father's blood not flow in your veins?
Your brother knows better than bring
dangerous people here. What kind of
strangers are they?

Bizia:

Kadesa:

(A thin smile crosses her lips.) The shrine
is for life, remember that. Perhaps they
are just passing. Probably want some
water to drink.

Bizia:

(Somewhat taken aback) Passing by? No
Mother, her time has come. She can
hardly walk.

Kadesa:

In that case, go right back and help
them to bring her here. Life is worth
much more than love.

Bizia:

(Hesitantly) What? Bring her where?
Here?

Kadesa:

Bizia: She's sick. Charity sees the need, not
the cause. We make a life by giving the
key to tomorrow and the day after.
I said hurry. This is no time for you
to prove yourself a man. There is
tomorrow and the day after.

Kadesa:

Bizia: Even the other one is unfit to step
here...
The other one? Which other one?
The man. He's got the moon's burden
on his head. What he says does not
make any sense. (emphatic) He is mad!

Kadesa: (Trying to calm him down) Go and help
them over. (They stare at each other briefly
before Bizia turns and exits)

Kadesa: (Emerging from his hiding place) That is a

Kadesa:

young man with a good head over his
shoulders. Well tutored in the school
of caution.

That one has a heart of stone. Same

as our kinsmen back in Mndika. His
father was an exceptional human being.
(Pause) Always had a kind word for
everyone he met. (Burns into a ponderous
rendition.) Ah, even as he lay dying

next to the ashes of what used to be
our place of worship, he turned to me
and said, "If they can burn a place of
worship, they are beyond redemption."

Mude:

Kadesa: Bad memories.

Yes, he didn't seem to realise they
didn't need prayers. Ogres do not need

prayers.

(A different kind of drum rhythm fills the
air, submerging in Matia and Bizia with Nora,
the expectant woman. A seemingly confused
man, Adonija, follows them closely. He has
a come around his neck. Kadesa addresses
Matia and Bizia.) Take her in. (As the
woman is led in, Kadesa addresses Adonija.)

Kadesa: Who are you?

Adonija:

Me? Adonija, I'm a witness. (He points at the cutters around his neck.) See, I have evidence here. The ogres are all here! Ogres and thieves! They wanted my soil as well. Thieves!

Kadesa:

You look tired. Sit on that stool. (Hobbles to the stool and sits.)

Adonija:

The calabash broke in my own arms. Who? Who died in your arms?

Adonija:

Mgofu Mgofu Ngoda died in my arms. If nothing is done, wild animals will feed on his body.

Kadesa:

(Aside to Mude.) He doesn't know what he's talking about.

Mude:

He needs time. Give him time. Don't throw the old bucket away before you know where else you can store your water.

Adonija:

They all say that I don't know what I'm talking about. (Addressing the audience.) People, surely, do I look like I've got a leaking bucket for a head? Gone bananas? (Gives him to a stool.) You are tired. Sit there and relax. I

Matia:

Yes, Mother. (Kadesa enters the shrine while Matia and Bizia walk towards Mude.)

Mude:

You two will have to be more careful than before. With the animosity in Mndika, this grove will not be safe. Our soldiers have strict instructions. No one is to cross the border.

Matia:

You are right. This man says they are at it again.

Bizia:

Fighting against Experience is the teacher of fools indeed.

Mude:

Should they try to force their way in, they will have only themselves to blame. Dogs will always sniff the stranger in a crowd.

Matia:

But why bar them? They are running away from danger.

Mude:

That may be true, but the neighbour's snakebite does not stop you from dancing your moon dance. We are

will ask them to bring you something to eat. (She walks towards the shrine where Matia and Bizia are returning from.) Are they taking care of our harbinger of good news?

not involved in Mndika's insecurity.

(*Sarcastically*) We try to encourage good neighbourhood.

Matia:

Mude:

What is good neighbourhood?
Count yourselves lucky. We allowed the first wave of exiles and have lived to regret it. If a man deceives me once, shame on him, if he deceives me twice, shame on me. That's what I say!

Bizla:

Mude:

But your people have also settled in Mndika, haven't they?

Mude: Those were Nderema's original trouble makers. They were criminals.

Matia:

Criminals? (*In disbelief*) Our people have contributed a lot to Nderema's development.

Mude:

That's why we resolved to embrace your lot. But remember, no basket carries all the goods from a sack. We've had enough.

Matia:

(*Looking closely at Mude*) But why do I think I have seen you before? You certainly look familiar.

Mude:

You have a fair memory. I've been here before. When the first madness broke

out in your motherland, I was among the soldiers who guarded you when you crossed the border. You were mere toddlers then.

Bizla: He's called Mude.

Matia: How do you know?

Bizla: Good memory.

Mude: Yes, your mother jogged your memory a little while ago.

Bizla: And I've just remembered. (*The cry of a new born baby is heard from the shrine.*

Matia and Bizla exchange knowing glances. *Mude betrays no emotion.*)

Matia: That's him. I knew it. I knew Mgofu would be back. You know Mgofu didn't die! Mgofu is back!

Adonija: Our kinsman, sit down.

Matia: Oh, I'm so happy. Better birth than

death. Have you ever seen someone at their moment of departure from this world?

Adonija: What kind of question is that?

(*To the audience*) Have you? Have you ever seen someone die? Aah, but what

Matia: *Matia's name is written on the left side of the page.*
Mude: *Mude's name is written on the right side of the page.*

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is the use, you will probably think I'm crazy if I tell you. (Paz) I have evidence here. I saw them kill one another because of soil. It's all here I secretly recorded some of their meetings. There were preachers, priests and a chief. They were all there, plotting to shed the blood of their brothers and sisters.

Bizia: What is your name?

Adonija:

Name? I have already answered that question. Everything starts with a name, and then you are either friend or foe. What is in a name? Father, Pastor or Chief, what do they mean? What is in a name? I have already answered that question. Everything starts with a name, and then you are either friend or foe. What is in a name? Father, Pastor or Chief, what do they mean? What is in a name? They hunted one another like mad dogs. They destroyed our good name. This time I said no, not again. I will not be party to this again. So I decided to become Mgofu Ngoda's eyes.

(To Mude.) Does that make any sense to you?

Mude:

Yes, it does. It means someone somewhere has driven this man to the fringes of existence. That is how we transform people to be animals. We learnt that at the academy.

Adonija:

You don't seem to have graduated yet, and you might never. (Turning to the rest) Mgofu Ngoda died. He died in my arms, but the old python renews itself with horns and thistles. Mgofu has just come back to us.

Bizia: How do you know?

Adonija:

How do I know? The pumpkin never says, 'worms have eaten my belly'. When you graduate in the academy of life - you will hear the baby cry. But you and good Adonija here are still waiting to graduate. (Paz)

Before he died in my arms, Mgofu Ngoda promised to return soon. That was him.

(Pleasant beat of drums is heard from the shrine, followed by the ululation of several women. Kadesa emerges from the shrine beaming with happiness. She addresses Matia and Bizia. Adonija appears to be dozing off.)

We have a rare visitor. One who portends well for the future of our motherland. You two had better go and come back with a male dick-dick.

Matia: What?

Kadesa: Do you remember stories of the old Seer of Modika, Mgofu Ngoda?

Matia: Yes, I do.

Kadesa: (Pointing towards the shrine.) That's Mgofu Ngoda's son. The mother is Nora, Mgofu Ngoda's youngest wife. It was never a waste to water the bean plant at the doorstep.

Mude: What about the old man himself?

Where's he?

Kadesa: It's sad, very sad. Mgofu Ngoda collapsed and died soon after they crossed the border.

Mude: In that case, how mad is this madman of yours?

Kadesa: Madmen make sense every now and then. Let him be. Luckily, the late Mgofu left a name for his son. He knew it would be a boy. (Pause.) That child must be given his father's name before we bury the old seer. You two, take that man inside. Ask the women to get him something to eat and then do as I said. (As soon as Biziia and Matia

start moving towards him, Adonija acts as if he is talking in his sleep.)

Adonija: Thank you for giving me this chance Mister Chairman. As you all know, my uncle is the best blacksmith around here. With your permission I could ask him to make enough bows and arrows for the job. (Listens to others before he speaks.) I beg your pardon? Yes, you are right, he will need funding. (Pause) Fifty thousand will not be enough, for the weapons, Mister Chairman. I suggest one hundred and fifty. (Listens to others.) Thank you very much Mister Chairman. Yes . . . you can't fight with

us . . . come for the spoils . . . yes . . . (He is about to go back to normal sleep when he suddenly relapses into sleep talk.) That is a very good idea, the radio. The radio would be an effective tool (Listens to other voice.) Nol Nol Nol Not national. We must go local. I mean vernacular, mother tongue. Yes, mother tongue, vernacular. (He relapses into sleep.)

Biziia: What moon spill is this...?

Kadesa:

No. Let him be. You two go and do as I said. Go and return with a male dick.

(The two younger have.)

Mude: Do you intend to have Mgofu buried here?

Kadesa:

With Mwami Rocho's permission, yes. Mwami must be informed immediately. Will you do that for me?

Mude: Yes, I will.

Kadesa: And the body too. The body must be recovered and preserved without delay. That shall be done with haste. Where exactly is it?

Mude: The body is in good hands. It lies in the house of a man who knew him well. The man is Joshua Ndii, the head of the shrine at Namirembe.

Mude: Thank you, mother of many. I am off but I shall, well... we shall soon return. Instruct your people to be careful. *(Pointing at Adomja)* Be careful of this one as well. Better a fool than a knave, they say.

Kadesa: That I shall. *(Mude exits and Kadesa walks slowly into the shrine, as lights fade slowly.)*

ACT ONE

Scene Three

The Return of Messengers

(Strange angelic music is heard as lights come up slowly. Thoriwa enters pushing Thor in a wheelchair. She places the wheelchair at a convenient place and walks towards the audience to address it.)

Thoriwa: You have seen and heard for yourselves.

Mgofu Ngoda died and was given a dignified burial at Kadesa's camp in Nderema. But Nora, Ngoda's youngest wife brought her husband's memory back to the people. She bore him a son and called him Mgofu Ngoda. The new Mgofu Ngoda grew up at Kadesa's shrine and became a seer in his own right.

Today, the people of Nderema do not see him as a stranger. It's the goat who bleated twice to say he had found a new home and the dog barked at him.

Mgofu knows no other home. Do they
love him because he was born there?
No! He is a fertile ground to grow their
bear plants. He offers them invaluable
advice whenever occasion demands.

*Links at Thoriza as if seeking permission
to continue!* That's why Kadesa's shrine is
revered to this very day. Mgofu Ngoda
is the head of the shrine.

Thoriza: The stone that was ignored in Modika
has become the cornerstone in Nderema.

Thor: Now, it seems is the time for you
people of Modika to look back. *Law
mammy!* Yes, your eyes and ears need to
open. Soon you may choose to mourn
those whom your fathers and your

grandfathers sent to their smoldering
graves. You have your current leader,
Mwami Mhando to thank. The young
leader, it seems, has a good head above

his shoulders.

Thoriza: He, Mwami Mhando, knows good
leadership. Good leadership is planted
in the hearts of men and women of
good will. It's not the sugarcane that

made the toothless Odowa kill the
farmer. Others enjoyed the sweet sap.
Good leadership is not snatched away
through the political intrigues of selfish
minds.

Thor: Listen to Mwami Mhando. Discuss,
consult and agree with his council of
leaders and his wise counsel or you
will be punished for the sins of your
forefathers. It is experience that trains
the squirrel to know where the grains
can be scooped. Listen to your leaders.

Thoriza: That's all.
Shall we leave or have we forgotten
something?

Thor: Yes my wife... fellow messenger we have
done what we came to do. To shut the
doors through which history repeats
itself. If the sons and daughters of
Modika choose to reopen those doors,
that will be beyond us. As the saying goes,
he who does not listen well is doomed to
say, 'I wish I knew.'

Thoriwa:

We are the hosts as well as the visitors
We come and leave in peace. (Strange,
angelic music fills the air. Thoris stands up from
the wheelchair and gestures to Thoriwa to take
his place. Thoriwa shakes her head vigorously,
declining the offer. Thoris reluctantly sits in the
wheelchair as before. Thoriwa wheels Thoris
away as lights fade.)

ACT TWO

Scene One

Return of Scouts
At Mbando Mbando's consultation chamber. Mbando keeps
the two scouts in as they talk

Mbando: It's good you are back. Did you travel
well?

Scout 1: Very well, Your Excellency.

Scout 1: And did you visit the shrine?

Mbando: Yes, we did.

Scout 2: We went pretty close to it, but we did
not actually enter the compound.

Scout 1: So, it's indeed true that the son of the
half-blind seer lives?

Mbando: Yes, Your Excellency, Mgofu Ngoda,
for that is also his name, is very
much alive. Through our contact, we
managed to get a few pictures of him.
(He hands some pictures to Mbando)

Mbando: (After looking at the pictures.) Ah...good. It
should satisfy the doubting Thomases.
He's a dignified old man isn't he?

Scout 2:

Yes he is. The authorities in Nderema have looked after him well. His eyes betray the tiredness of one who has spent most of his life staring. Staring at the brightness of the problems that humanity causes itself.

Scout 1:

Your Excellency, we did not expect to find out what we eventually did.

Mgofu Ngoda is revered in the whole of Nderema. He's not only a seer like the ones before him but also a healer as well. His shrine is always filled with people wishing to be treated of one ailment or another.

Scout 2:

It is even said that when he calls rain, the rain comes.

Mhando:

Mmmh . . . that's why it rains more there than here. What does he use, herbs or roots?

Scout 2: Words, Your Excellency. Mgofu Ngoda uses words to heal the sick.

Scout 1: And that is not all. We also found out that his son is the personal assistant to Nderema's Prime Minister. He is also a qualified and well respected medical doctor.

Mhando:

And his wife? Is Mgofu's wife alive?

Scout 2:

He lost his wife four years ago.

Mhando:

Children?

Scout 2:

Only two, the personal assistant and a girl. The girl is at the University of Southampton, studying International Relations.

Mhando:

The University of Southampton? God, what a welcome coincidence!

Scout 2:

Welcome coincidence?

Mhando:

Yes. The University of Southampton, is where my nephew studied for his Masters degree.

Scout 1:

What's her name?

Scout 2:

Nora Ulivaho. That's her.

Mhando:

That's a curious name.

Scout 2:

It means, "The one who will be there." I wonder where?

Mhando:

(Sounding slightly nervous.) We learnt that unlike her brother, she has always been keen to visit Mndika.

Scout 1:

She's certainly welcome to do so. What kind of woman do they say she is? Proud and arrogant or humble and intelligent? Intelligent, humble and motherly.

Scout 1:

Those who talked about her said so.

Scout 2:

In fact, those who talked about her kept referring to her as Princess Ulivaho.

Mbando:

We should invite the old man and the daughter to our Remembrance Day festivities. Would they come?

Scout 2:

It's possible Your Excellency, but his daughter is away.

Scout 1:

Although Mgofu is very old, they say he's quite strong. He's adventurous too, so we were told. He might come.

Mbando:

(Gratifying to the Ma) We will invite Mgofu Ngoda. Thank you, you two for opening the door for us. It will be for the good of all Mdikans if he comes. I must now talk to Mama Enos about this. (Shakes their hands and sees them to the door.) Goodnight.

(Off stage) Goodnight, Your Excellency.

(Lightly shake sleepy.)

ACT TWO

Scene Two

The Inner Circle

A veranda outside Mammi Mbando's consultation chamber. Sariku ushers two middle-aged men in. Mizra is waiting for them. Mbando sits in an adjacent chamber in deep thought.

Sariku:

Elders of the inner circle are here as requested, Elder Mtange and Elder Mdanya.

Mizra:

Come right inside elders. Please take seats and recover your breath. You are home.

Mtange &

Mdanya:

We thank you. (Sariku exits as Mizra enters Mbando's Chamber.)

Mtange:

(Whispering) She's a real daughter of the land, isn't she?

Mdanya:

My eyes are also satisfied. She will certainly make a fine wife for somebody's son one of these days.

Mtange:

You have taken those words from my

mouth. It's a pity that her real parents will not be there on that day.

And why will they not be there?

Mdanya: That means you don't really know who she is.

Mtange: But I do. Is she not Kabarage's eldest daughter?

No, she isn't. Mdanya, you must have a very short memory. Kabarage's eldest daughter is betrothed to Mwami Mhando's nephew. This one is the late Msiega's daughter? Don't you remember that sickening story of Msiega and his wife?

Mdanya: Oh, that sickening story ... but I do. May that never happen again in our time. (*In a somber mood*) What's this about land that makes us kill one another like rogues and vagabonds?

Mtange: That is not for an individual to answer. (*Pause*) Mwami Mhando was so incensed. No... so touched. He adopted that angel soon after the brutal murder of her parents.

Mdanya: Yes, I remember that. No wonder the people want Mwami Mhando to stay on.

Mtange:

(*Turns to face Mdanya*) And that's the only thing we, Mandikans can talk about proudly; talk with our heads held high. Very true. Leaders are being forced to quit against their will. Yet here we are asking ours to stay. That's indeed something to be proud of. (*The door to the chamber opens and Miza steps into the veranda*)

Miza:

Mwami Mhando is ready to receive you. (*She ushered them into the chamber*)

Mhando: Welcome elders, come right in and sit down. (*The two sit. The chamber door opens and Sariku enters carrying a tray with nuts and drinks. She and Miza serve the elders*)

Sariku: Elders, permit me to say a short prayer for what is now before us.

Mhando: You have done well, Sariku. You may proceed.

(*Praying*) Our Lord, you who rules the earth and the skies, on behalf of all of us, I thank you for what you have put in front of us. May it work to relax our elder's minds so that they may talk to one another as people to people.

All:

Mhando:

(Laughing) Mizra and Sariku, why do you two insist on calling our youthful leaders elders? (The elder laugh. Sariku and Mizra appear confused.)

Sariku:

It's the tradition, isn't it? All leaders on the continent have always been called elders, haven't they?

Mhando:

That is what I told Mama Enos last night. She insisted that it was wrong.

Mtange:

You know . . . I think Mama Enos is right. Why should a forty year old be called an elder? Why?

Mhando:

It's not cast in stone, you know. We can change it. (To Sariku and Mizra.) You are free to leave. (The two leave.)

Mtange:

Did you say we can do away with the term elders?

Mhando:

No. There are those who deserve to be called elders. Age, experience and wisdom dictate that. But should we be called elders just because we happen to be the leaders of the day?

Mdanya:

Your Excellency don't forget it is you who gave us those titles last year.

Let it be so.

ESFI, Elder of Sate for Exceptional Leadership and . . .

(Laughing) I admit it. That was a mistake. For some of you it should have been ETFS. Elder of Theft from the Sate. (All burst out laughing.) But back to the name, we are servants of the people not their leaders or elders.

We'll need to think about the change of titles just like we did with other proposed changes (Pause). How about Suja for servant of the people? Short and pointed. Mdanya, what do you think?

Mdanya:

If you ask me, it sounds right! And impressive too.

Mtange:

Mhando:

Actually it does. So Suja Mtange, how are the people of your household?

Mtange:

Still breathing. Your majesty. We thank the one above for that.

Mhando:

That's as it should be. Suja Mdanya, are your people well?

Mdanya:

Well they are, Your majesty. And as Mizra . . . I mean Suja Mtange says we thank our creator for it.

Mhando: That is so. And that is why we still have something to eat and drink after what our land has recently been through.

Mtange: Yes, Mdika is no longer the land we knew. It's either drought or floods.

Mhando: (Edging Mtange) And when it is neither floods nor drought it is trivial debates.

Mtange: True. True, well said.

Mhando:

(In a pensive mood) Floods and drought. What could be the cause? Is it not the blood of the brothers and sisters that was shed by those that gave birth to us?

Mtange: It's difficult to sleep well these days.

Mhando: That is the naked truth. But let's partake of these bites and drinks while they last. In any case, we are merely acknowledging what one of our ancestors said many years ago; 'Words spoken on a dry throat do not roll off the tongue.'

Mdanya:

True, very true indeed. (The Syjas sip

their drinks in silence.

Mhando:

(After clearing his throat,) Members of my Inner Circle, I know you are wondering why I called you urgently, this morning

Suja Mtange and Suja Mdanya, I'm a very disturbed man.

Disturbed? That's disturbing. What is the matter, Your majesty?

I'm your leader. Therefore Mdika's problems will always be my problems.

(Long pause) Why is it that our people do not learn from the past?

Mdanya: Your majesty, we have lived with this problem all along. What is so special about it now? Why should it disturb

you now?

(Trying to control his anger) I will pretend not to have heard those words, Suja

Mdanya. Do you...so you think because we have lived with these problems we should now ignore them completely?

Raise our hands to the skies and say we are defeated?

Mdanya:

Forgive me your majesty, it was a slip of the tongue.

Mhando:

(Angry) A slip of the tongue... When our crops are not withering in the fields, they are drowning in roaring floods. And while we live with all these

uncertainties, the neighbours around us sing in jubilation because their granaries are bursting with plenty. Why I ask you, why? Is it because of the one above?

Mtange: No. Work of the one above? It's us. No, it can't be. It must be us. That has never crossed my mind before. Look at the size of Mdika, four times the size of Suguta to the west. But just yesterday, they beat us again, four to one. Now is this a matter to blame our creator for?

Mdanya: (Apologetically) I said it was a slip of the tongue. I didn't sleep well last night. This is not the first time Suguta has shamed us in our very backyard. When famine strikes us, it is Suguta we rely on, and now their children are beginning to fill our schools.

Mhando: But why?

Mtange: Well, perhaps it is because their land is more fertile than ours. But that is not our fault. They were given that land by colonialists. They were left

with large factories, good roads, big jobs in international organizations and all. So how can anyone blame us? Were we not discriminated against? And that is no slip of the tongue.

(Pausing up and down.) Your majesty, it's true what Suja Mdanya has said. But he is forgetting one thing. The colonialist left us many, many years ago. For how long shall we continue to blame them for our shortcomings? For how long shall we blame the people of Suguta for our woes? Yes, for how long shall we blame fate for where we are?

Mhando: Control yourself Suja Mtange. These matters demand long hours of meditation. So be patient, Suja Mdanya. Have you thought deeply about what is wrong with us? (Going towards Mtange.) The people of Suguta have larger acres of fertile land than us, but what about our other neighbours? Do they have more fertile land than we do? Answer me, do they?

Mtange: No, they do not.

(Raising his voice) Then why is it that

every time famine strikes us it's they who come to our rescue? Why is it that when we compete with the people of Suguta they always beat us? Suja Mdanya, tell me. The problem is in our minds. Yes, yes... The problem is in our People's minds. (*Pause*) Our people just don't believe in themselves. That's partly why I called the two of you here this morning.

Mtange: The question your majesty, is this, "Can we solve the problem?"

Mdanya: Of course (*Appearing excited*) The way I see it, the question we should be asking ourselves is how we can solve the problem. *Mbando and Mtange look at Mdanya in disbelief.*

Mbando: You see, in the past, the people of Suguta were no better than us. You will remember stories told by our grandparents about them. We beat them in sports, wars... they envied us. A daughter of Suguta getting married to a son of Mbiko, was great honour. Suddenly, things began to change.

Things began to change when one day, (*gesticulating*) our forefathers woke up and began pointing accusing fingers at one another. Yes, things began to change when our fore-parents, our ancestors could no longer sit down together, when they could no longer talk to one another as people to people. Yes, that was the beginning. How could we forget that? And those same ancestors used to say that memory is the granary in which the wise store their wisdom.

Mdanya: (*Almost beside himself*) I have not forgotten. They are our kith and kin yes, but they were undermining us. (*With a grating voice*) Undermining their kith and kin? Suja Mdanya, how can you, in broad daylight, broadcast what you can't prove?

Mtange: Your Majesty, I ask for forgiveness.

Mbando: (*Stands, surveys the room*) I don't know whether I was right to want to involve you in this matter. I think I'm mistaken. (*Attempts to elaborate the issue to Mdanya*)

A time came when our ancestors didn't only use their mouths to throw words at one another, they soon began to use their hands to fight one another. This had never happened before. It was unheard of. So what happened? The Great Blind Seer of Mndika, Mndika's symbol of well-being as they called him, was forced to go into exile in Nderema.

Mtange: Short memory. That is what we have. Mgofu Ngoda! That was the seer's name.

Mhando: Mgofu Ngoda could not stand the madness, so he decided to go south, in search of sanity.

Mdanya: Precisely, I now remember.

Mhando: You remember the great seer?

Mdanya: (Laughs) No. Not him. I remember the stories.

Mhando: Mgofu Ngoda is long dead. But a son of his is still alive.

Mdanya: Rumours... your majesty rumours... I have heard them too.

Mtange: What if they are true?

Mhando:

(Angry) I said a son of the great seer is alive. Didn't you hear me? He too is called Mgofu Ngoda.

(Shocked) How do you know?

Mhando:

The ears of any self respecting nation are many.

Mtange: Your majesty, something heavy is bothering your mind. What is it? (Looks around as if searching for an intruder.)

Mhando:

I've told you that I'm disturbed. I have been experiencing sleepless nights over this matter. (Leaving his voice) How could our forefathers disgrace themselves by sending the great seer into exile... How?

Why is it that our people do things they know they should not be doing?

They call it 'impunity'.

(To Mtange) I call it an offshoot of kleptomania. Suja Mtange, you read my mind. That's what is disturbing me. You see, about one week ago, I had a strange dream. I was walking on a lonely path, no people, no animals, no insects; only grass and trees. Suddenly, out of nowhere, I saw a man walking towards me, going in the opposite direction. (Paces restlessly) An old man.

Mdanya:

Two men walking towards each other on a lonely road. (Mhando and Mtange look at Mdanya reproachfully)

Mtange:

Suja Mdanya, When will you learn to be a good listener?

Mdanya:

I've been listening.

Mhando:

He wants to make sure that he heard me right, not so?

Mdanya:

Exactly, Your Excellency, that is the naked truth.

Mhando:

(Demonstrating) The man kept walking towards me. I towards him. The strange thing though, the distance between us didn't seem to decrease. This went on for a long time. Then suddenly, the man lifted himself up and like a great big bird he began flying away towards the south.

Mtange:

Mhando:

(In disbelief) Very strange indeed.

After a short while, the great man-bird turned. It began to fly back towards when I now stood, we struck. It was as if the bird had suddenly remembered something. It stopped directly above my head, flapping its great wings to

Mdanya:

(Relieved) It's a good thing it was only a dream...

Mtange:

Only a dream? No, Suja Mdanya. When those who have gone before us return to speak to us they do not use the tongues we know. The dream is clearly the voice of one who has already left us. We are lucky that such spirits still have time for us. With the ears of wisdom, let's listen.

(With finality) Wise words indeed. The one I paid dowry for said as much.

Mhando:

Oh! We swallowed saliva and forgot. How is she?

Mtange:

Mama Enos is a strong woman. She's in great pain, still fighting.

Mdanya:

The one above will take good care of her.

Mtange:

May it be so, Your Majesty.

remain balanced. At last, it opened its mouth, "Ndika's salvation, may be shared with Nderema" and off it went.

(Authorised) Off, it went? Where?

(Laughs) How was I to know? It just vanished into thin air. That's when I woke up to discover that I had been

Mdanya:

dreaming.

Mhando:

After I went back to sleep, the same dream recurred.

Mtange:

The same... same dream? It's a pity there is no seer to unravel the meaning of the dream.

Mhando:

The following morning, I called two of our most trusted scouts and sent them to Nderema. (*Mtange and Mdanya exchange glances.*) Yes, they came back yesterday, with news that indeed Mgofu Ngoda's son is alive in Nderema. He's old but alive. That is why I sent for you this morning.

Mdanya:

(*Confused*) You sent for us to tell us that one of Mgofu Ngoda's descendants is alive?

Mhando:

That's what I've just said. The people of Nderema are enjoying the fruits of our own folly. They have been milking the wisdom of our own kinsman because of our own foolishness. They say, the man is very like those who have gone before him. With closed eyes, he sees the inside of things.

Mtange:

(*After a pregnant pause.*) Mwami Mhando,

Mhando:

I see where your thoughts are headed... To plan to kidnap the seer from Nderema.

No. Not... on my life. Good neighborliness forbids that. Besides, no violence shall be witnessed in Mndika while I'm still your leader. (Pause) We need lasting peace. To achieve lasting peace, (*slower, big voice*) our people will need a strong reminder of where the rain began to beat us. Our people need to be made to touch the scars of bad governance. That is why I want us to invite Mgofu Ngoda's son to return home. He belongs here. He should come back to his motherland. I want him to return to Mndika to live with us.

Mdanya:

Too little too late. Haven't you just said he is very old?

Yes, that is why the matter is urgent. We need to act fast.

Mhando:

I would not advise it. I do not see how Mndika will benefit from the return of an old man.

Mhando:

Suja Mdanya, when correcting a wrong,

it's not prudent to think of benefits. The benefits are in correcting the wrong.

(Pause) We have no chance. Mgofu, being as old as you say he is, he will not agree to come to Mindika. Your Excellency, you know how stubborn old people can be.

Mhando: There is nothing wrong with trying.

That may be true, Mwami. But are we

not likely to reopen old wounds?

(Pacing up and about) It will be an opportunity. Yes, an opportunity to dress the old wounds once and for all. We shall put our heads together one more time, before we send emissaries to Nderema. Henceforth, our people must say farewell to the madness that made our forefathers shed one another's blood.

Mtange: That will not be easy.

Mhando:

Suja Mtange, if it was easy, we would have done it yesterday. (Pause) The second reason I sent for you has to do with the people's request that I stay

on as Mindika's leader. (There is silence and suspense as they await Mhando's next words.) As you know, the mother of my children has not been well for quite some time now. (Sujas nod their heads in agreement.) Whenever I have said to you Sujas that a matter was heavy and that we needed to sleep on it, what I really meant was that we needed to consult the ones for whom we have paid down. Mama Enos can no longer assist me to determine the true nature of things around us.

Mdanya: It's all in the hands of the one above. She and I have discussed this matter at length. Last night, we concluded our discussion on whether I should stay on or not. Mama Enos prevailed upon me to heed the people's wish. She gave two conditions for the agreement... The

first one is to spare no effort in trying to bring Mgofu Ngoda back, even if it's for only a few hours. (Mtange and Mdanya look at each other, surprised) The second condition will surprise you even

ACT THREE

Scene One

more. Mama Enos wants me to get a second wife before I start my second term of office. What do you think?

Mtange: Your Excellency, we will need to sleep over that one.

Mdanya: But there is no need for that. Your Excellency, the idea of getting a second wife came from the First Lady. It is an excellent idea. In fact, I would suggest that we Sujas express our solidarity with you by following in your footsteps. Your Excellency, as I said, we will need to sleep over this one. Suja Mdanya's wife is not unwell.

Mhando: Very well then, we shall settle it at our next meeting, it should be in two days time. That's all. Thank you for your promptness. (Suja Mtange and Mdanya stand up and are escorted out by Mhando.) Good day.

Sujas: (Off stage) Good day, Your Excellency.

(Lights fade.)

Ngoda: People of my motherland, welcome once again. I trust that you had a restful night.

Dawn is breaking at Mogusu Ngoda's Shrine. This is a new brick structure that has replaced the grass-thatched structure of Kadeka's days. In front of the structure that stretches beyond sits two emissaries, Mtange and Mnari, from Mndika. On the opposite side, a dignified lady sits on a stool. In the background as before, are small, round tents for exiles from Mndika. A cock is beard crowing, followed by the sound of rhythmic drums from the structure. Mogusu Ngoda emerges from the structure and walks to the rhythm of the drums towards the dais. He carries a small totem held high above his head. He is frail and walks unsteadily, but is dignified. On seeing him, the two emissaries, prompted by Nors, kneel down next to their stools, facing him. Drums stop. Mogusu climbs onto the dais and, with his back to the audience, holds communion with his spirits.

Mtange &

(Together) Yes! Mgofu, we slept well.

Mnavi:

Ngoda:

That's good. Nora, my daughter, returned from her studies last night, just after you retired to bed. She has been away for three years.

Nora:

Mtange &

Mnavi:

I greet you, people of our motherland. We greet you too our daughter.

Ngoda:

Nora... We named her after the woman who gave birth to me right here at this shrine. (Visibly moved) That was soon after my father's death. He was buried under that fig tree over there, where the sick sit. My mother is buried there too. And when my time comes, which is not too far away, I too shall be laid to rest there. Nora here is my witness. Not so Ulivaho?

Nora:

Ngoda:

Mtange:

I thank you.

(Cutting in) Allow us to stand by your

father's graveside for a few moments. That's granted. My late father was a man of Ndika. Where is the wisdom in denying your request? (Mtange and

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Nora:

Ngoda:

Mtange:

I thank you.

(Cutting in) Allow us to stand by your

father's graveside for a few moments. That's granted. My late father was a man of Ndika. Where is the wisdom in denying your request? (Mtange and

Mnavi:

Ngoda:

We thank you for that. Quite often, we make a mistake. A mistake of thinking that we learn from the wisdom of hindsight. No! No, we don't.

Mnavi:

Ngoda:

And do we not? No, we don't. My people, what we actually learn from is the ignorance of our understanding. Probably the appreciation of the future too. We think wrongly about the future. The turning point can only be reached by our children and their children.

Mtange:

Ngoda:

'A profound thought, indeed. (Contemplating) I've been thinking deeply about what we discussed last night. If your youthful leader is thinking of bringing women closer to the seat of rule, you should support him. That is surely the future... Nderema took that path several years ago. Now see where they are.

Mwami Mhando already has a list of deserving women whom he wishes to join the Inner Circle of Elders now known as Sujas, for servants.

Mnavi:

I think he intends to reveal their names on Remembrance Day.

Ngoda:

(Looking excited) That's music to my ears. I shall pray for it. You see, tradition is only good when it helps a nation to improve the human condition of its people. Many will resist change out of ignorance and selfishness.

Mtange:

Ngoda:

We have many such leaders in Mndika. They are all over, but they too will change because this thing called change is part of our nature. Like the proverb goes; one who battles willingly with cold water doesn't feel the cold. The spirit of change is a breath of fresh air. Last night, in spite of Nora's tiredness, we discussed your request at great length.

Mnavi:

Ngoda:

We thank you for that. It's not easy to know what to do. If you two stood at the spot where I now stand in this matter, where would you lean? (Silence as Mgofu looks at the emissary.) Think about it now. Think about it as you travel back to Mndika. You shall have our answer after the fourteen days of mourning are over.

Mtange:

(A bit confused) Fourteen days of mourning? Who is being mourned?

Ngoda:

You did not tell me that Mwani Mhando's wife was bedridden.

Mtange:

We are sorry Mgofu, we swallowed saliva and forgot.

Ngoda:

So you do not know that she's no more?

Mtange:

No more?

Ngoda:

(Hit face salt.) She died yesterday as you travelled. She has already been buried according to tradition. I don't understand why you in Mndika bury the dead before you mourn them.

Mnavi:

It's unfortunate. We discussed this very matter in the Elders' Council last month.

Mnavi:

What Am I heating you right? You discussed the death of your leader's wife last month?

Mnavi:

No, No, I'm sorry. What I mean to say is that we discussed the mourning of our dead after we have buried them.

Ngoda:

I'm listening. We agreed to hold a referendum with the view to changing the practice.

Mtange:

Yes, we wanted our people to make a choice. To mourn our dead before burying them or vice versa.

Ngoda:

(Thinking and pausing and about) It's unfortunate. Very unfortunate indeed that those who look behind while the rest are moving forward have robbed your young leader the right to bury his wife properly.

Mtange:
Ngoda:

Our eyes are opening

In my thinking, I have no doubt that he had her in mind when he proposed the change. A change that should have happened many years ago. Who knows? Our attitude towards death would have changed for the better. Maybe...

Mtange:

(Introducing) Murimi Nshando is slowly leading us there. And he wants to hand

over the flywhisk after his second term. We have already written the rules to that effect.

Ngoda:

We have heard many good things spoken about your young leader. Strong, intelligent and passionate. He will get over the loss and move on.

Mgofu Ngoda:

forgive me for asking. How did you learn of...

(Exhibiting a sense of achievement)

Ngoda:

My son is the Prime Minister's chief advisor. He's also His Excellency's personal doctor.

Mtange:
Ngoda:

We thank you for the information. Perhaps because of what has happened, you will be kind enough to allow us to return to Madika right away.

Ngoda:

That shall be done. As soon as you have had the morning meal.

Mtange:
Ngoda:

Thank you. Come, let's go inside then. *(They walk into the shrine.)*

ACT THREE

Scene Two

Enigma of Remembrance Day

A public meeting place appropriately adorned in bunting befitting a national day. A section of dignified guests can be seen seated on the dais. They include the Chief Guest, Mgofu Ngoda and his daughter Nora U; Mavami Mbando, an empty chair to represent his late wife, Mlange and Mnari. The rest of those on the dais cannot be seen. The activities of the day are in progress. Just before the curtain opens, there is a prolonged applause for the 2nd last performance during the entertainment programme. Mizra, the Mistress of ceremonies walks in, still clapping enthusiastically.

Mizra: Thank you, thank you, ladies and gentlemen, I think they deserve another round of applause, let's give them one. (There is more clapping andulation from the audience, which extends beyond the sight lines of the audience in the auditorium.) Thank you. Thank you very much. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

we shall now have the last item on the entertainment programme. The item is a self explanatory mimed action.

(Two creatures with human features except for the horns on their heads enter. They are joined at their necks with a long rope. As soon as they enter, each is attracted by a totem placed at opposite ends of the stage. Since the rope is not long enough and they are moving in opposite directions, each narrowly misses the totem of the totem ahead. The struggle to achieve their target is mimed to the accompaniment of appropriate sound effects. Exhausted, they sit down to rest. Eventually they fall asleep. Suddenly, one of them appears to dream and sleep walk. He stands up, furiously trying to remove the horns from his head. When he finally succeeds, he shakes his head vigorously as if to confirm that he no longer has horns. Gradually he calms down and begins to survey his environment. He sees his colleague and is fascinated by the sight. He feels his neck and realizes that he too has a rope round his neck. He panics but manages to undo the rope and throw it away. Quickly he dashes to his

colleague and pulls the bonds off. The colleague behaves as if he has just come out of a trance. The free one now helps to remove the rope from his colleague's neck. As soon as they are both free, they rush to the nearest totem and are about to fight over it when they suddenly realize the futility of their action. One of them releases the totem allowing the other to pass it but the other, feeling embarrassed, hands it back to his colleague. The one with the totem appears to remember the second totem and signals to his colleague to go and pick it up. Once each has a totem, they shake hands and embrace. They are about to walk off hand in hand when a happy dance tune fills the air. Pleasantly surprised, the two dance themselves lame before they exit to the applause of the audience.

NOTE:

Depending on the creative ingenuity of the director and the cast, this scene should be an unforgettable mimed dramatization of what may be gained from unity of purpose.

Mizra:

(Clapping enthusiastically with everyone else.) Well, well, well, let us give them another round of applause. (*The audience claps enthusiastically*) Thank you, thank you very much. That, ladies and gentlemen, brings us to the end of the entertainment part of our programme. I shall now call the chief hostess, Dora Sariku to lead us through the remaining part of the programme. (*Audience claps. Sariku replaces Mizra.*)

Sariku:

Thank you, Mizra. Ladies and gentlemen, it's now my pleasure to humbly request His Excellency, Mwami Mhando to introduce our chief Guest. (*Mhando stands up amid much clapping and goes to the microphone*)

Mhando:

Mndika *jan!*

Crowd:

Jan!

Mhando:

Mndika *Ngijo!*

Crowd:

Ngijo!

Mhando:

Mndika *Nggo!*

Crowd:

Nggo!

Mhando:

Thank you. Thank you very much. Those who have gone before us used

to say. If a child washes his hands clean, he may be allowed to eat with elders'. Today, we sons and daughters of Mndika have washed our hands. And that is why we are here about to eat with one of the greatest elders of this region. (*Clapping and ululating.*)

Mhando: Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, the great elder that I talk of is none other than Mgofu Ngoda, the son of the great blind seer of Mndika, whom you have heard so much about.

(*With difficulty, Mgofu Ngoda stands up and waves to the crowd, receiving a thunderous applause in the process. Mgofu sits down.*)

Mgofu Ngoda did not travel alone; he came with his beautiful daughter, Nora Ulivaho. (*Nora stands up and waves to the crowd, also receiving a thunderous applause.*) Great son of Mndika, Mgofu Ngoda, and your beautiful daughter, Nora Ulivaho, I once again extend a warm welcome to both of you. I thank you most sincerely for accepting to grace this occasion of Mndika's Remembrance

Day. Last night, you met our leaders and you saw the enthusiasm with which they received you. We will not mince our words. No, to do so would be to defeat the very purpose for which we set this aside as Remembrance Day. Honourable, Mgofu Ngoda, this is a

day set aside for honouring our brothers and sisters, our fathers and mothers who lost their lives at the hands of those

who gave birth to us. It's a day when we remember those who fled from our motherland to live as refugees in neighbouring countries. This day, what you have witnessed and are witnessing is our way of saying, NEVER AGAIN.

(*Crowd applauds.*) Ladies and gentlemen, although he's a little tired, it is now my pleasure to welcome Mgofu Ngoda to share a few words. (*As crowd applauds, Mgofu Ngoda beckons Muami Mhando.*) After a short whispered conversation, Muami Mhando raises his hand and the crowd keeps quiet)

Mhando: Mgofu Ngivid
Crowd: Ngivid!

Mhando:

Ladies and gentlemen, Mgofu Ngoda wishes Nora Ulivaho to say a few words. (Nora stands up and addresses the crowd.)

Nora U.:

Crowd:

Nora U.:

Crowd:

Nora U.:

"Mndika Ngivo!"

Ngivo!

Mndika Ngivo!

Ngivo!

Ngivo!

People of our motherland, I greet you and greet you again. (There is wild clapping and *shlulation*.) Thank you for the opportunity to address you. Last night, my father and I were asked to consider

coming back here for another visit in the near future. It's not difficult to see why that request was made. From our short stay here, it has become obvious that your current leaders wish to break clean from the past. (Crowd claps.) Most of your leaders want Mndika to return to oneness and to wholeness. My father is still strong, but quite old. I cannot; therefore, guarantee his return. However, I promise that I shall return to honour the invitation on behalf of my father. (There is wild clapping and

shlulation) Thank you. Thank you very much. (There is more clapping. Nora takes her seat as Mgofu stands to address the gathering. He surveys the audience in silence for some time before he speaks.)

Mgofu:

I'm home. (Cheer) Yes, I'm home. And home, as you know, is where a man returns to sow his best seed. (More cheer) At my age, what is my best seed? Ladies and gentlemen, my best seed for you is a request for all of you to respect human blood. Respect it with all your sensibilities.

I'm strong I am strong in spirit but frail in body. When your leader, His Excellency, Mwani Mhando invited me, I knew I would come. My presence here fills me with great joy. I also represent many who feel the way I do. Oh, how I wish I was stronger, then perhaps I would have joined in the unity dances of last night. (Mgofu begins to cough uncomfortably. Nora leaves her chair and goes to sit in the one that has been empty all along, next to Mwani Mhando. She whispers something to Mwani Mhando as the crowd for some reason applauds)

Scene starting with Mgofu. Mgofu turns towards the ~~the~~ Blood is every man's heritage. How not to waste it is by being mindful of other people's welfare. Who in this world is not searching for happiness? Who? (A big grin spreads on his face.) I'm home. (He bends forward and begins to cough uncontrollably. Nora and Nsami Mbando stand up concerned. Nsami Mbando beckons for assistance. State operatives, moving fast and efficiently move in and get hold of Mgofu before he falls. There is complete silence. The State operatives carry Mgofu off. Nora and Mbando are temporarily unsure of whether to follow or stay. Before they make a move, Thorin and Thorina enter from opposite sides of the stage.

Thorina:

All freeze.

Thorina:

In this slice of life that we have shared, whether Mgofu Ngoda's return ended in death or whether it did not is not the matter. The matter is that the possibility was always there.

Thorin:

So it cannot be that that wheelchair we have been riding in was part of the original plan. And so, those with ears let them hear. (Thorin and Thorina

more close to each other, bold hands and bow. They form the centre of the curtain call buildup. Mbando and Nora follow. They too bold hands and bow. The rest may follow in whatever order, provided that Mgofu Ngoda appears last.

THE END