

The Smart Game

(A 'Neo-alienation' Script)



AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye

On the Aesthetics of 'Neo-alienation' Style and Theatre

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), the eminently radical and meticulously fertile German playwright – director bestrides the world theatre like a colossus during and after his time. Paradoxically, this larger-than-life theatre icon has been variously described as “a difficult phenomenon”, “the founder of modern theatre” and “a complex phenomenon”. We are also of the opinion that Brecht deserves all these favourable and unfavourable comments. In fact, Brecht is to us, a radical phenomenon and an unrepentant theatre revolutionary.

As a playwright, Bertolt Brecht wrote with radical passion, a passion borne out of Marxist ideology which is contextually nurtured by psychology and sociology in theatrical presentations. No doubt, Brecht theatre can be likened to a manufacturing house that constantly manufactures experimental artistic products. Using his sharp poetic license, Brecht also recreates history through his ceaseless dramatic reflections on historicity, calling on men to learn from their past historical errors of judgment instead of getting drenched in them. Some of his plays, which have become celebrated classics include: *Galileo*, *The Measures Taken*, *Mother Courage*, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Seven Deadly Sins of the Lower Middle Class*, *Three Penny Opera*, *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* and so on.

Interestingly, the following are some of the major aesthetic attractions of Bertolt Brecht's theatre which till today, stand the test of time: the epic theatre attractions (a module for decompartmentalised staging), the alienation effect attractions which has been described as (Verfremdungseffekt, disassociation, defamiliarisation, distancing, estrangement and disbelievability), simultaneous running of scenes together through the use of slide projector and neon light to emphasize disbelievability and the functional use of narrator, music, song and dance in one holistic theatrical motif. Brecht theatre is cleverly an antithesis to the Aristotelian call for “emotional involvement of the audience and the actors” in performance and it is clearly anti-Stanislavskian in acting. His theatre allows for heavy use of 'devices' and makes the audience to “ask questions” by appealing to reason instead of emotion. Brecht is deservedly a theatrical illuminati.

Fortunately, the vibrancy of the literary theatre tradition in Nigeria is partly due to its culture of borrowing from other world theatres and the sheer exploration of the diversified indigenous theatre forms. One of the major theatres that influenced the Nigerian literary theatre tradition, however, is the Brechtian theatre tradition. Brecht's epic theatre has a semblance of the indigenous African festival theatre which often takes place in cyclical, yet glamorized episodic stage. In fact, it has been variously reported that Brecht was an African in German skin, whereas Brecht himself was also pro-European, pro-Asian and pro-American to capture his ever dynamic and iconic global theatre. From Wole Soyinka (the radical pace-setter), Ola Rotimi (the master of the theatre-in-the-round), Femi Osofisan (the Nigerian unapologetic pro-Brechtian dramatist) to Olu Obafemi, Ahmed Yerima, Felix Okolo and most of the pro-Osofisan playwrights, the Nigerian theatre dramatists have also accepted the utilitarian essence of the radically productive Brecht's theatrical ideas in the Nigerian theatre.

The Nigerian theatre is a conglomeration of many experimental theatres. Most of these experimental theatres also celebrate the richness of the Nigerian multicultural aesthetics. Notable Nigerian dramatists have also played significant roles in the Nigerian experimental theatre terrain. Chief among them, in the last fifty years, are the Ogunde's operatic theatre experiment, Soyinka's supposed ritual theatre which is abundantly theorised in "The Fourth Stage", J. P. Clark's neo-classical theatre and ritual hypothesis, Rotimian festival theatre (a module for theatre-in-the-round), Adelugba's Daoism – a passport for excellence in theatre directing, Osofisan's "fabulous", "malleable" and "theatre of poverty" in the Grotowskian mode, Obafemi's socialist reformation's contextual aesthetics, Kofoworola's unity integrative model, Steve Abba's popular theatre style, Ukala's folkism, Nasiru's Marxist symphony with total theatre idiom, Segun Oyekunle and Tunde Fatunde's theatre on the wheel of pidgin – a motif for the aesthetics of mass appeal, Ayo Akinwale's new cyclical festival theatre aesthetics, Yerima's demythologisation, factionalisation and multicultural theatre, Sunday Ododo's facequerade theatre – a new experimental model that expands and celebrates the masklessness of the masquerade theatre aesthetics, Inih Ebong's cosmo-human theatre, Effiong Johnson's theatre of poverty and many more from young theatre directors in Nigeria are

particularly worthy of mentioning.

The 'Neo-alienation' style, why? A product of the frenzy of the mind or an attempt to hang Bertolt Brecht? No and like all adventures, the 'Neo-alienation' style started as a dream. It is a product of theatrical inspiration, the undying love for Brechtian aesthetics and other glaring loopholes created by Brecht's alienation effect. The 'Neo-alienation' style is a new theatre style that necessarily revisits, remoulds and reworks Brecht's alienation effect. It seeks to recreate the African festival theatre and the epic theatre of Western world into one unique performance motif where the artistic director is in total control of the theatre. He must, however, never be tempted to play God in the theatre as once reasoned by Peter Brook.

The 'Neo-alienation' style is not a dirge for the death of dialogue in the theatre. For dialogue is the essence of the theatre but the 'Neo-alienation' style is a theatre that gradually seeks for the decline of long dialogue or wordy plays in performance – a theatre in which every spoken word is capable of numerous meanings.

In the theatre of 'Neo-alienation', pictures are not turned into rituals but they must be arranged positively with other physical actions such as nodding, frowning, laughing, weeping and fighting. This theatre resists alienation effect with theme songs such as "Don't alienate yourself", "Believe our actors", "Theatre is the house of truth" and so on. In this theatre, there must be experimental attractions and deliberate moment of uncommon creativity, the metaphors, the conjectures and the radical demystification of conventions to significantly accommodate new icons within the African and Western theatrical aesthetics.

In our humble search for theatrical identity, we are concerned with new theatrical ideas or a medley of theatrical idioms and we are mostly concerned with pictures – aesthetic pictures, artistic pictures, didactic pictures and eclectic pictures that communicate. Pictures that further advance the frontiers of language, pictures that query, that command and speak, pictures that take the place of the spoken words. We see pictures as language and language is the essence of the theatre. In our 'Neo-alienation' style, theatre language must extend into a semiotic field which Ferdinand de Saussure and Umberto Eco say consists of "Zoology, Olfactory signs, tactile communication, paralinguistics, medicine, kinesics and proxemics" and so on and that theatre language which John Russell Brown "romanticized into semiology".

We know that metaphors pierce into human souls and of course, other figures of speech created by playwrights are themselves superlative ingredients of the theatre. We believe and accept to make a meaning out of the created and assembled pictures. The theatrical potentials of every movement, every step, running, crawling, jumping, pulling, drilling, pounding, fishing, weaving, cooking, eating and so on must be meticulously calculated and imaginatively created in a theatre where every improvisation must be creatively done with precision.

As conceptualised, the 'Neo-alienation' theatre is a theatre of contrast and that which must create an alternative vision in stage iconography. This theatre, to all intents and purposes, relies heavily on the *theatre of performance* rather than the *theatre of literature*. The 'Neo-alienation' theatre is a realistic reworking of the robust African festival theatre, which aesthetically celebrates the total theatre idiom while benefitting at the same time from the Aristotelian empathy as creatively adopted by the former Moscow theatre wizard, Stanislavski. It is also a theatre of multiple actions. It has twelve aesthetic possibilities which we have valourised within its main structure. They are:

1. The Aesthetic of Theme Song of Audience / Players' Systemic Fraternisation
2. Multiple Role-playing Aesthetics
3. The Aesthetics of Artistic Deconstruction
4. The Aesthetics of Human Props and Demystification
5. The Multiple Narrators' Aesthetics
6. The Aesthetics of De-technicalisation
7. On-the-Stage Make-up and Costuming Aesthetics
8. The Aesthetics of Complete Instrumentation on Stage
9. Photographic / Captions' Aesthetics
10. The Modern Operatic Aesthetics
11. Trado-modern Dance Aesthetics and
12. The Critical Recalling Curtain Call Aesthetics.

These twelve aesthetics under the 'Neo-alienation' style are workable and realistic theatrical aesthetics which prospective directors are free to experiment with. As a directorial style, the 'Neo-alienation' style can be used to direct any play if a prospective director can internalise the icons above carefully and understand the sub-text within the 'Neo-alienation' style's main text.

The 'Neo-alienation' style, we think, has been successfully used as a directorial style to direct Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* on the 10th and 11th of March, 2004 at Africa Hall of the University of Ilorin, Mini-Campus, Ilorin, Nigeria and at the French Cultural Centre, Alliance Française, Ilorin on the 31st of July, 2004 to mark Wole Soyinka's seventieth birthday.

For example, the "Aesthetics of Theme Song of Audience/Players' Systemic Fraternisation" calls for a systemic carnival-like fraternisation. This includes the mandatory use of theme song and other catchy phrases at the beginning of the play, the shaking of audience hands and the distribution of handbills where every dramatic action from the sound of the first gong to the first spoken word should be taken as a special creative truth. No illusion.

Everything happening in the theatre should be seen as "the exact picture of the original". The audiences are also temporarily and aesthetically admonished to suspend their disbelief. Furthermore, performers in the 'Neo-alienation' style must assimilate themselves into the dramatic actions and events without losing their thinking caps in the performance. There must be room for easy transformation of the performers into numerous roles. The theatre, in its profundity, must thus be transformed into a house of realistic happenings. We also have three types of audiences in this theatre. The first is the conventional *primary audience* who pay to watch the performance, the second being the *stage audience* who will stay permanently on the stage (to engage in the activation and re-activation) of many roles in the production. Some of the stage audience will work with stage orchestra as communicators and curious silence listeners and the last audience type are the *player audience* who will join the primary audience to perform as audience members and come back to the stage. Players must be on the stage throughout the production to mount, dismount, create and distort the flow of the performance through multiple theatrical actions. The main dramatic action of the moment must, however, be emphasised while other sub-actions must be theatrically crafted to avoid unnecessary distractions. The 'Neo-alienation' theatre is about the truth and it must speak the truth contextually and aesthetically in the theatre.

As a theatrical style, the 'Neo-alienation' style actually led to the writing and production of this script, *The Smart Game*. This play was originally written for the Department of the Performing Arts'

Lunch Time Production, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria which is meant to showcase new theatrical innovation and experimentation. The production of this play was the third in the series of the Lunch Time theatrical menu. The play was first presented to intellectual audience including journalists on the 8th of July, 2002 at the Drama Studio of the Performing Arts Department at 12.00p.m to 1.45p.m and at Africa Hall of the University at 8.00p.m to 9.47p.m on the same day. *The Smart Game* (through the 'Neo-alienation' style) has been intellectually scrutinised and the reactions (mostly positive) from committed theatre scholars were words on the marble. This play was also performed on the 26th of October, 2002 at Alliance Française, Ilorin to a mixed-grill audience of Nigerians and Europeans. It must be stated here that *The Smart Game* is NOT an adaptation of Brechtian plays but a recreation of Brecht's aesthetic resources.

Theatre scholars and dramatists in particular should, however, take note of the interconnection of one theatre performance style to the others as there cannot be a theatrical autonomy in production articulation. We appreciate the contributions of the proponents of past theatrical and directorial styles and we also say, with a high sense of humility, that the 'Neo-alienation' style and theatre is growing gradually to adulthood. In this regard, theatre directors and practitioners are free to give this style a trial. The 'Neo-alienation' style and theatre is a celebration of the Brechtian theatrical tradition and also our humble struggle to re-invent its aesthetics. This brief comment should, however, not be seen as an unnecessary authorial arrogance of intellectualism but as a candid reflection and extension of the Brechtian aesthetics – a new search for theatrical revolution. We cannot continue to make a career in the "culture of mass conformism", instead, we must engage in the re-writing and the reconstruction of our known and unknown theatrical heritage. We also welcome our literary critics to do their work, not on the superficial gate of destruction or on artificial canopy of sweeping condemnation but on the black and white gate of developmental criticism.

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Playwright/Director,
Ilorin, Nigeria, 6th September, 2008.

Rumbling Tongue

As the drum rolls affectionately from the open space in the Orchestra Pit, a creatively dramatic, lively and visible Orchestra populated by eager and enthusiastic Thespians contest for space in the Auditorium. They are singing and distributing the handbills of the **First Song of the Play** to the audience to ring the bell of the audience/players' systemic fraternisation. Simultaneously, Two Masked Players, donning white cardboards with the major inscriptions of the song clearly written on the front and back of the cardboards, move slowly and dramatically to the rhythm of the song and beat to the stage. This is overtaken by discordant noise in the Auditorium by Three Players who are strategically placed. They move to the stage gradually.

Player One: Honey is very sweet and nobody can contest this fact. So sweet that its taste is unrivalled but the road to its acquisition is always fraught with dangers, laced with thorns and...

Player Two: The face of the masquerade, open it to us and let us know whether the character behind the masque is an angelic spirit or a deadly spirit of evil – disturbing the crossroads and the people of the crossroads.

Player Three: In the sociology of African culture, delays are dangerous and unspoken words can lead to suspicion...

Player One: While spoken ones end up as words on the marble. (*Speaking to the audience*) Ladies and gentlemen in the house, as you can see, we are willing scholars in search of knowledge but the more we search, the more the confusion especially on the so called ideology of feminism, of womanism nurtured by the radical feminist of the right, the left and the gentle womanist of the centre!

Player Three: What about it? -

Player One: I strongly believe that feminism, especially the one coloured in African garb is fustian and quite anti-African: my

thesis is that, man is the head of the house. For the power of the masquerade goes beyond its mask.

Player Two: Even from the religious perspectives, the Quran and the Bible also say that man is superior to woman. Woman must therefore bow and be submissive to man so as to obey God's law!

Player Three: Rubbish! Nonsense!! Outright rubbish!!!

Player Two: (*Charging*) The unwritten law of our fore-fathers is also unambiguous for it sees marriage as a fulfilment of cultural obligation and marriage institution as an educational institution where the man calls the shots...

Player Three: But unfortunately nowadays, men are bad, wicked, unloving, clearly inhuman...

Player Two: No and no! Women are terrible, ungodly and...

Player One: Materialistic, untrustworthy, uncaring, ungrateful, impatient...

Player Three: Men are dangerous serpents.

Player Two: No and no! Women are evils, dubious, bitches, snakes, sorry... chameleons of numerous colours (*The Three Players drag themselves to stage-right shouting while Player Three runs back to stage-left to beat the Two Masked Players out of the stage*).

Player One: And look at a certified fool hiding under the contentious issue of feminism, just like other uncountable concepts and theories, to turn himself to an unfortunate destroyer...

Player Two: Wearing the mask of violence in the process. Thinking, quite sadly, that he is the smartest human being who has ready made answers to all problems.

Player Three: (*From backstage*) What about it? Let me be!

Player One: Your fire is burning fast but can it cross the river? It will soon consume you, Mr. Smart! If you fail to look ahead, you will be hooked behind. (*Facing Player Two*) I think we are too harsh on him, we should learn to be civil while making...

Player Two: You may wish to join him and be consumed in the river of life.

Player One: Why not? Must you also robe yourself in the toga of the complex syndrome? (*This argument is punctuated by the Second Song of the Play* which brings the ENTIRE Orchestra – now as Dancers and Drummers to the stage dancing to a good rhythmic choreographic concept. The Drummers, as part of the 'Neo-alienation' aesthetics, must play varieties of sounds, alternating between slow rhythm and fast tempo throughout the performance and using the talking drum or its alternative to make proverbs, punctuate the play, advance its plot and comment on important action in the play).

Lead Drummer: (*Distorting the lyric of the Second Song of the Play*) Don't mind me for expressing my dissatisfaction about your slow song and the unrhythmical movement of your dance steps. Like birds, you should have sung well...

Dancers: (*Pushing the Lead Drummer*) Whose fault if we should ask?

Lead Drummer: Yours of course!

Dancers: No! You set the pace and dictate the tune, you drum for us and we dance...

Lead Drummer: Okay. Just dance more and sing well. Let this opening glee convince our audience of our readiness for another theatre experience and as the Lead Drummer, I will be willing to join you as the Lead Dancer (*Leads the dance*).

Dancers: Good.

(Vibrant and energetic dance movements are enacted. The Lead Drummer falls and other Dancers beat him).

Lead Drummer: Don't kill me and beat me no more. What I want is perfection and like the critics piercing at our Performing Artists, I have now discovered that the tiger is rare in the forest...

Gbenga: *(Demonstrating)* Yes, the tiger with all its might. Can we then re-enact the story of the tiger and reflect on our childhood days?

Players: Yes! *(Three Yorùbá children's theatre of: Ekùn méran-mèe, Bofúbafulù o-ooo and Emá wèyìn o-wèyìn are enacted in overlapping order).*

Gbenga: Now that we have finished with the children's theatre with its natural fangs, shall we then start the story of the superwoman?

Nike: *(Angry)* Stop that today. There is no single storyteller or narrator today. Everybody is everything for everybody here is a narrator, a commentator, a linker of story and I don't see anything sensible in re-enacting the story of the superwoman when the metaphor of the superman torments us everyday.

Kike: Before we decide on what to do, let us go to the backstage to carry standing mirror, make-up kits, costumes, props and other useful items that we will use for the chosen story. The next man or woman in the chosen play is a narrator, costumier, property man, actor and actress, everything.

(A Drummer raises the Song of Affluence³ as some Dancers bring in various props and costumes while others are chorusing the song, some are miming and playing various games).

Adin: There is a virus in the land and it can send one into a state of dementia. It has two bulbs which are either pointed at daybreak or falling at sunset. She urinates through the back

and goes about with unshaven head. It is the story of the bad superwoman that we should re-enact today. (*Charging*) The Dog and the Tiger, no matter how friendly, do not hunt on the same field...

Nike: There is a demon in my house, he is a wicked dictator whose mother carried for nine months and nourished for three years. We should therefore, tell the story of the Superman with two testicles!

Kike: We need a consensus then, between the story of the superwoman and the superman. Or should we tell the two stories together?

Gbenga: Stop directing our affairs. I have a suggestion to...

All: Make it...

Gbenga: Let us... (*Thinking*)

Bola: Fool! Let us narrate the story of the cat with nine lives.

All: No!

Gbenga: (*Pulling Bola*) Imbecile, you now know the fool between us...

Kike: What about the story of the masquerade with a disappearing wand? (*Demonstrates*).

All: No!

Tunji: Or the story of the crowning of the elephant.

All: Let us hear the song of your story first!

Tunji: (*Sings the Song of the Elephant⁴ which the Players echo*)
Good song I supposed?

All: Yes, Tunji...

Akin: That song is good. The story of the song mocked bad leaders

in the credo of criminality, greed and discontentment. The story is deeply rooted in the Yoruba folkloric tradition. Can we then tell...

Bola: The theatre of the immediate, my people. We need the theatre of the immediate today...

Kike: What about the theatre of Abacha, of Babangida, of Obasanjo...

All: Good but not today...

Akin: The theatre of democracy...

All: Interesting but our people are yet to know the meaning of democracy!

Tunji: The story of the Olálomí heroine...

All: (*Hilarious reactions*) Móremí Àjànsorò!

Gbenga: No! (*Banging the stage*).

All: Why, Mr. no?

Gbenga: Are you not tired of enacting and re-enacting the heroic deeds of that woman?

All: No! We are not. We want to know more about her courageous exploits...

Gbenga: Móremí had returned from the red sea triumphantly. Crowned, renewed, rewarded and worshiped but look at what is happening to her shrine at Olálomí?

All: Tell us what is happening to her shrine at Olálomí?

Gbenga: Destroyed, rebuilt and destroyed. Reconstructed and re-destroyed by restless religious fanatics...

Hassan: The Almighty Allah forbids us from worshiping idols. We

have no quarrel with that woman. In fact, she is our heroin too but that shrine is too close to the Masjid, our praying house. That Islam is a religion of peace should never be abused, be warned.

Akin: (*Charging*) The Masjid or the shrine, which one was first built? Have you lost your sense of history?

Hassan: To worship Allah, the Almighty or a fetish goddess, which one will you choose? Take warning for I am not noted for cold complicity! Learn to study a people's religion and psychology before jumping into hasty conclusion...

Akin: Let that shrine be. Let Móremí rest in peace!

Hassan: Face the reality, my brother! If Móremí should be living with us now, she would have been a committed muminat or a passionate church worker! Think about the current tide, any tradition that refuses to consider the swinging pendulum of its people will die...

Akin: Are you saying that we are people without history? If modernisation, globalisation, Islam and Christianity are not anti-culture, are you saying that traditional religions are anti-culture?

Hassan: Don't miss the point, young man. We cannot serve God and mammon at the same time. Tell me the name of the religion that is being practiced inside Móremí shrine? The present shrine of Móremí is an abode for ritualists.

Akin: Concoctions from your imagination, I guess? Or are ritualists and traditionalists not part of our social system? Don't they have a right to live?

Hassan: They have a right to live but should one religion disturb the other? Don't you know that culture is a reflector?

Akin: Freedom of religion, my brother...

Hassan: Take your shrine elsewhere, the advocate of ungodly religion!

Akin: And what are the Godly religions in your own shallow estimation?

Hassan: Islam and Christianity for now in Nigeria. The other religions are idle and dying. Where they exist, they cover themselves in darkness – marauding in the night and in limbo during daytime. Islam is, Islam will and Islam...

Akin: Your thought is pathetically shallow. The Western education that you have acquired will soon take everything away from you, think.

Hassan: It is you who should think! Olálomí town is populated by good Christians and Muslims...

Akin: (*Charging*) Let the shrine be! Stop protecting a borrowed and imported religion at the expense of the authentic African culture. Note that there is culture and there is religion, one should not disturb the other.

Hassan: You are lettered but you are not educated. You are civilized but the best that can come from you is mediocrity. Why are you behaving like a bandit? The shrine must be relocated elsewhere. Be rational and critical so as to avoid unnecessary religio-cultural upheavals...

Akin: Beware of rubbish pronouncements, else I will burn you alive.

Hassan: Burn me alive?

Akin: Yes! (*Akin and Hassan are fighting. There is an obvious division within the Players with support either for Hassan or Akin. Tunji stands out.*)

Tunji: (*Floquently*) Stop everybody! You people have succeeded in frittering our precious time away through uncomplimentary

acerbic tirades on a matter that demands the best of understanding from the two contending groups. Móremí can be celebrated through different ways and Islam abhors such bizarre scenario within its praying vicinity. It is also totally against Islamic culture and this issue is often exploited for other pecuniary socio-political reasons. The Masjid must retain its holiness and there are numerous centres of attraction at Olálomí where Móremí's shrine can be located. I am not judging, I am only appealing for sanity. The play has not even started and you people are already fighting? Ironically, you are children of the same mother! Let us try to build Olálomí community without self-inflicted tension. Be informed that genuine development can only come through peaceful co-existence where due respect is given to our leaders. Name dropping, blackmail and flagrant breach of law will move us back...

All: Thank you but what next?

Tunji: I am withdrawing the story of Móremí for another day and that day I shall title the play, "The Courage of Móremí" to further fire our zeal for patriotism...

All: (*Jubilating*) Good...

Tunji: But now, I will want us to narrate the theatre of one Ajuba woman of the 1990s as a sad development and commentary on our immediate environment and a sharp contrast to that of Móremí. Ajuba is the capital of Airegin, the most populous country in Acirfa.

All: Go on and tell us the title of your story...

Tunji: The...

Kike: Stop talking and remember that no narrator is needed here. Remember also that we are all familiar with that unfortunate incident.

Akin: (*Mimicking*) I suggest, 'Not my Fault'!

All: No!

Hassan: What about 'I Hate Poverty'!

All: No... Mr. Poverty!

Bola: (*Thinking*) "The Smart Game"

All: Yes, "The Smart Game"! "The Smart Game"!!

Bola: I will play the Ajuba woman but call me Madam Ebun.

All: Madam Ebun, get into your costumes.

Bola: You will soon see natural actions that will make you green with envy from me (*Changing into costumes*).

Akin: I am the husband of the Ajuba woman but call me, Mr. Oloriebi.

All: Mr. Oloriebi, carry on with your role.

Kike and Gbenga: (*Walking out of the stage*) We are your children and we are going to the school...

Oloriebi: I am your father and don't come home late from school. The rest of you should (*Pointing to stage-left*) watch the play and comment on it. (*Spreading a mat*) However, you must not create dull moment and every improvisation must be creatively done with precision.

Players: (*Singing and dancing to the Song of it is Different*) The play has just started but remember that the...

Player One: Theatre is the house of truth...

Player Two: And what you are about to see...

Player Three: To see and to watch

Player Four: Is nothing but the truth

Player Five: And the essence of our being...

Player One: Bury your head in deep thought

Player Two: Learn greatly still

Player Three: Do not alienate yourself

Player Four: And you should not be too emotionally drenched as...

Player Five: You learn from this artistic experience!

The Genesis

Ebun is coughing, grinding pepper and singing the **Song of Meat**^o at stage-right as Oloricbi looks on.

Ebun: May the good things of life never evade me...

Oloricbi: Amen!

Ebun: The good things of the life are meant for the rich and not the poor church rat like you!

Oloricbi: Everyday the same story. Is it that I am lazy or that I refused to do my work? I have tilled and cultivated hectares of land. The money will not just be enough.

Ebun: (*Charging*) Who forced you to marry me? You should have opted out for a pauper like yourself who will be happy to glorify you in poverty and not (*Demonstrates*) a beautiful woman like me who has no rival in the entire community.

Player Two: And what you are about to see...

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Oloriebi: Stop boasting like a tortoise and shun the pride of peacock. Remember that if you fail to fall for handsome and hardworking man like me, you stand to be defiled by useless people.

Ebun: (*Bragging*) This conspiracy of silence from me must stop today. I have decided to end my nightmare, now.

Players: (*At stage-left*) Speak what is in your mind and break the egg.

Ebun: Where is your power, hardworking man?

Players: Make more noise...

Ebun: Look at your house...

Players: A dump-hill!

Ebun: See what you put on...

Players: A rag of a cloth.

Ebun: Even my dowry was paid for you by your father and my father in his ignorance...

Players: (*Angrily*) Ebun, speak no evil of the dead, *haba!* There is wisdom in your union.

Oloriebi: My father and your father wanted us to be the spring that will water the existing relationship between the two families and you gladly accepted and I did not object either.

Players: Then, your parents complied with the custom and upheld the tradition of our people.

Ebun: (*Bringing out her property from the backstage*) I will leave your house of sorrow today.

Oloriebi: Our house or my house? I am used to your troubles, they strengthen me and make me to work harder but remember that...

Players: You too can work with your husband to end this circle of poverty.

Ebun: All your friends are proud owners of cars and houses, some of them even give cars to their fathers, mothers and their concubines and you are here celebrating poverty.

Oloriebi: Continue to abuse me, crazy daughter of a bitch with a cursed tongue of flame.

Ebun: I took that from your mother and you, the acclaimed son of a defeated warrior...

Oloriebi: In the town of madmen, the only sane man...

Players: Is the madman

Oloriebi: (*Pounces on Ebun who groans*) I am a dove with passion but your calculated and deliberate insults have turned me into an unwilling hyena with red eyes and poisonous claws.

Player One: Who will settle this quarrel today?

Player Two: Let me do that because Oloriebi is my good friend.

Players: Do that immediately!

Player Two: (*Running to meet the couple at stage-right*) Enough or have you people suddenly forgotten the razzmatazz and glitz on the day of your marriage when the whole community of Ajuba was bubbling with zeal?

Oloriebi: No!

Player Two: What if your grown up children enter the house now?

Oloriebi: Thank you.

Ebun: Warn the son of the devil for me because I cannot be used to soothe his broken ego.

Player Two: It is all right. But Ebun you are guilty...

Players: The quarrel between husband and wife, let no one judge.

Player Two: Okay! I don't want to be the sacrificial lamb. I am here as a mediator and I appeal that the two of you should resolve to live together in peace. (*Walks back to meet other Players*).

Ebun: Thank you (*Grinding pepper*).

Oloriebi: (*Holds Ebun as he sings the **Song of the Singing Bead**⁷ which other Players echo*) You are my sister, my mother, my wife, everything...

Ebun: Leave me alone. (*Pushing Oloriebi*) Those beads are now very expensive and remember that they are my dignity, the accessories of love or have you forgotten that the buttock is the ultimate house of enjoyment?

Oloriebi: It will not be too bad then if the ultimate joy of the buttock is tasted especially in this cold weather when the birds cling to the tree as animals hide under the bosom of their mothers (*Moves closer to Ebun*).

Ebun: (*Pushing Oloriebi*) Is your organ still dangling?

Oloriebi: Why not?

Ebun: I thought that you have lost it to poverty.

Oloriebi: (*Rebuilding self-confidence*) Impossible!

Ebun: You think that countless numbers of sexual escapades is all about manhood?

Oloriebi: What is it then?

Ebun: Money, car, good house, gifts and other good things of life are the constant tonic of affection that you need to be able to water the seed of love and reclaim back the confidence and trust of love... shine your eyes...

Oloriebi: The game of love knows no barrier...

Ebun: And must the tide of poverty swing to your side always?

Oloriebi: (*Romantically*) Let me roll in and out so as to continue the game of life, where sorrow is temporarily suspended. A game where heaven is lived on earth, where emotion is mixed with passion, where the layer of human skin is soft, a game where human blood circulates and moves slowly, slowly still...

Ebun: Once bitten...

Players: Twice shy!

Ebun: Every season has its song and there is a new song for the season, let me sing it slowly for you...

Oloriebi: Do. Sing your song on time. My spirit is high and I can no longer wait. There might be some lessons to learn from your song.

Ebun: (*Sings and dances to the Song of the Rich Man⁸ as she mocks Oloriebi*) I need a chorus for this song and you are so appointed.

Oloriebi: (*Beating Ebun*) No food for lazy man...

Players: (*Laughing*) But your wife is a woman!

Ebun: He did not know his right from his left. Thank you for correcting him!

Players: But can't you obey your husband?

Oloriebi: I have spent the last patience in my veins, what is left is that of wickedness (*Beating Ebun*).

Players: Beat her!

Oloriebi: Everyday you stay at home to cook and to abuse me, you this good-for-nothing useless woman, united we are one and divided we perish.

Players: Beat her. Teach her lessons. She will not learn. Beat the lazy woman!

Ebun: (*Groaning*) You must kill me today.

Oloriebi: (*Running out*) I must leave for the farm immediately.

Player One: (*Runs to meet Oloriebi with farming equipment*) The tiller of the earth, don't forget your working equipment. Your wife will not learn but soon, she will dance with the masquerade of evil.

Oloriebi: (*Collects the farming equipment as he meets Kike on the walkway*) Thank you my good friend.

Player One: Peace should begin with the head of the house. Remember that all men have their trying period. This is your own time and you will survive it! (*Walks back to meet other Players*).

Oloriebi: (*Noticing Kike*) Why are you at home so early?

Kike: (*Rude*) The school fees, Baba?

Oloriebi: Who are you addressing like that?

Kike: I am only telling you that our teachers have sent me out of

school because my two years' school fees have not been paid.

Oloriebi: (*Sad*) I will sell some yam tubers the next market day to meet some crucial financial challenges and since your mother will not follow me to the farm, you and your brother should meet me at the farm so that we can bring the yam tubers to the house.

Kike: I am hungry. I don't think that I can come to the farm today.

Oloriebi: (*Ignoring Kike and walking away*) You and your brother must come to the farm when he returns from school.

Kike: (*Entering the house*) Why are we so poor, Mama?

Ebun: Can't you greet me first? Or didn't you meet your father on the way to his farm?

Kike: Yes, I did!

Ebun: Can't you ask him why he is poor? As for me, I am not poor!

Kike: This hardship is too much...

Gbenga: (*Entering and shouting*) Mama, can't you help Baba with his work on the farm so that we can pay our school fees in time?

Ebun: Close your mouth if you have nothing to say!

Gbenga: Well, our teachers have sent me out of school the third time this year alone. I want you to remember that I am now in SS1 while my mates are writing their final year examinations in their various universities.

Kike: Why this long story?

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Kike: Why this long story?

Gbenga: (*Beating Kike*) Shut your mouth up! I have warned you times without number that you should not talk to me as you used to do to our parents, spoilt child.

Kike: (*Charging back at Gbenga*) Mr big mouth, is telling Mama to work on the farm the solution? You this fool, idiot...

Ebun: (*Separating them*) Two of you should leave my sight immediately. As for you Gbenga, you are completely like your father, arrogant.

Gbenga: (*Talking and walking away*) I know that I am hungry and angry but I want to go back to school to learn about life and I will not stay at home to be pecked at and rot away. I am going to the farm to help Baba.

Kike: (*Clapping and mocking Gbenga*) You belong to the bush and the animals living there are your friends. Go and meet them and don't forget to greet them for me. Stupid, nonsense, idiot...

Ebun: (*Angry*) Leave my sight.

Kike: (*Runs backstage*) Yes, Ma!

Ebun: (*Reflecting*) What should I do to remedy this terrible financial mess?

Player One: You and your daughter should sleep in the house!

Ebun: (*Slowly*) What is the next line of action for me?

Player Two: Learn how to trade and start trading!

Ebun: (*Facing the audience*) Can't someone help me? I am confused and I want direction!

Player Three: Be a good wife and join your husband on the farm to help him.

Ebun: (*Sarcastic*) No! Just tell me what to do.

Player Four: (*Shouting*) Aren't you a beautiful woman?

Ebun: (*Happy*) Yes, I am!

Player Four: Then, sell your pants and move with the rich.

(*Ebun repeats "sell your pants and move with the rich" intermittently as the Players deliberate on the next dramatic action in mime*).

It Takes two to Tango

Noisy but brief reflections from the Players.

Nike: All right my curious actors...

All: What Next?

Nike: (*Changing into an expensive attire*) It is my turn to play my part...

All: Play it well then.

Nike: (*Walking to stage-right, Ebun's house*) Good God, for the mother of the house is in the house.

Ebun: (*Surprised*) You have changed for good, Nike.

Nike: (*Sits*) The partridges are equal except those on top of heaps. The tide of life is on my side and I grabbed it smartly.

Ebun: Your secret?

Nike: (*Teasing*) My husband...

Ebun: Stop joking or is he now a robber, a ritualist or something?

Nike: No...
My Lovers,
My benefactors,
Whose hands of passion put life into me,
Turned me into a baby and changed my life for the better...

Ebun: Your lovers?

Nike: Those whose love made this world a golden environment for me. They are the ones who now control my life...

Ebun: And what about your husband?

Nike: (*Showing off*) Groaning in the wind,
Sleeping like a fool,
Reduced to a robot,
Insulted and discarded,
Scorned and molested.

Ebun: How?

Nike: (*Walking around*) At first, it was a war of ego. A big habit loaded with suspicion and aggression and as time passed by, he accepted my dance and even agreed to sing for me. He eats from the leftovers and his ego was reduced, rubbished and smartly deflated.

Ebun: (*Thinking*) The leftovers...

Nike: (*Mocking*) Look at yourself,

Players: A withering flower.

Nike: Forgotten and dumped!

Players: Cursed and courted by poverty.

Nike: And me – my honourable self, a blossoming flower, constantly watered by those who know how to enjoy the world.

Ebun: (*Repeating*) Those who know how to enjoy the world?

Nike: Yes!

Ebun: Wait a minute, your bait is golden, I might be the next fish. But how will I conceal the secret from my husband...

Nike: It is a smart game. At first, you must pretend.

Ebun: And when the game is discovered?

Nike: Then be indifferent to the attitude of humanity.

Ebun: When am I going to meet those who know how to enjoy the world?

Nike: Let's go to my house first. There I will show you my current colour. I will change your shoe. Put gold into your neck and tie a high brow storey or face the husband headgear for you. I will then put you into the market of life!

Ebun: (*Thanking Nike*) May God bless you. Let us go quickly so that I can return before my husband returns from the farm.

Nike: Okay.

(*As they leave the stage, the Players sing a lyric from Sunny Ade's repertory: 'Egbé Kíni wón dá Sílè'*).

Those who put their Fingers into the Cobra's Mouth...

Gbenga and Oloriebi enter through the walkway with heavy loads on their heads. They are discussing and unloading.

Gbenga: Baba, you just have to be very careful. Chief Olowolayemo has the money and he can do anything he likes with us.

Oloriebi: You are a small boy. However, I must let you know that the land belongs to my forefathers and even if I lose my life defending it, they will be happy to receive me in heaven.

Player One: Take time and be careful. Capitalists operate like bulldozers and they can uproot any obstacle to money-making. Son of a farmer, be careful!

Gbenga: Baba but remember that death should not be your portion now...

Oloriebi: (*Arranging the loads*) Check if your mother is in the house.

Gbenga: Yes, Baba (*Walking to the backstage and Kike's voice is heard*).

Kike: Let me sleep if you choose not to rest.

Gbenga: Wake up from slumber, spoilt child.

Kike: Leave me alone. After all, I am not complaining about the weight of my neck.

Gbenga: (*Beating Kike*) You will definitely regret your laziness.

Players: The wool spun by the mother will be imitated by the child. Drag her out and let the idiot learn.

Oloriebi: (*Shouting*) Leave her alone.

Gbenga: (*Walking slowly to the stage*) Mama is out!

Oloriebi: What did you expect from an idle hand? Slowly and slowly, she will destroy herself.

Gbenga: Can't you report Chief Olowolayemo to members of the Local Council?

Oloriebi: The Council is Olowolayemo and Olowolayemo is the Council – powerful as ever. Throw a cutlass up countless times and bare it will lay its face.

Gbenga: What should we do then?

Player One: Nothing. Wait a little and see what our only Chief, the lion of the forest, will do to take that land away from your father!

Oloriebi: Blood will flow and people will die, riot will start and the whole town will be in trouble.

Player One: (*Calling*) Tunji...

Tunji: Yes!

Player Three: It is your turn to play your part as Chief Olowolayemo, the unbroken rock of our time, a strong pillar in the capitalist's club...

Player One: Change quickly into your robes and let the earth swallow the arrogant son of a farmer who has no respect...

Olowolayemo: (*Calling Four Players*) Four of you should tell Oloriebi that if the glittering gold rusts, the silver has no chance of survival. (*Four Players, acting as Thugs, sing and dance to the Song of the Disobedient Man*¹⁰ *while Olowolayemo gives money to them*) Slowly, mildly yet brutally I suggest, teach the disobedient farmer a lesson of life and tell him that if his forefathers were too weak to stop my great fathers from expanding their frontiers and from making so much money, he is too weak to stop my expansionist's desire. The fate of small gods who are in the habit of abusing Sàngó can be imagined!

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Thugs: (*Wearing hoods*) Like obedient servants, we shall tame the spider in his own web and tell him that the butterfly that dances near the house of thorns is tired of living. We shall re-enact a play of death for him (*They move to Oloriebi's house*).

Gbenga: (*Stopping the Thugs*) Stop and move back...

Oloriebi: Leave them alone, for they work for Olowolayemo.

Gbenga: (*Raising his cutlass*) Let me teach these fools some lessons.

Thugs: (*Laughing, mocking and dancing to the Song of the Disobedient Man*) Slowly, slowly we must start with the son (*The Thugs are beating Gbenga while Oloriebi runs backstage*).

Gbenga: (*Struggling to talk*) Aren't you people human beings?

Thug One: We are here to warn your father to leave our master's land...

Gbenga: Can't you be sincere?

Thug Two: We can't!

Gbenga: That land belongs to my father and not Chief Olowolayemo.

Thug Three: Shut up! Who makes you a historian? Conquerors all over the world are the owners of land. They are behind known and unknown empires...

Oloriebi: (*Enters with a dane-gun but he is overpowered*) Until you snuff life out of me before I forgo what belongs to me.

Thug Four: Comrades...

Thugs: Yes!

Thug Four: Have you all forgotten what Chief told us to do?

Thugs: What if you may remind us?

Thug Four: (*Demonstrates*) Slowly, mildly yet brutally...

Thug One: You are correct (*Raising the Song of the Disobedient Man which the Thugs echo. They beat Oloriebi and Gbenga mercilessly before tying two of them*).

Kike: (*Enters from the backstage*) Why the noise, Gbenga?

Thug One: What a pretty damsel! This must be a special gift from God to me today.

Kike: (*Surprised and kneels*) I am very sorry, please.
It is Gbenga that I am talking to...

Thug One: (*Moving closer*) We are not here to hurt a beautiful girl like you but if you can play along and let me roll in and roll out, to lubricate your vessel and drop some oil...

Thug Two: Impossible. Watch your tongue from saying rubbish...

Thug One: Why? Can't you see that this lady is dangerously beautiful, irresistible, specially created...

Thug Three: But that is not part of our bargain. It is also against our ethics. Kill your emotion now or can you use a mere hand to kill an elephant?

Thug One: (*Holding Kike*) In a deadly adventure like this, no rule, no law – nothing. Please, let this girl wake my dead passion so that I can feel like a man growing in love.

Thug Four: Let us go, their neighbours may suspect us and

overpower us (*Dragging Thug One, other Thugs follow him to stage-left*).

Thug One: (*Following other Thugs, he speaks emotionally*) Young lady, I await your love and I do hope to put you in my affectionate lap, caress you and make you grow and glow to womanhood.

Gbenga: (*Groaning*) What are you waiting for Kike?

Kike: (*Standing*) I don't know what to do.

Oloriebi: Go and bring the knife to cut this rope.

Kike: Yes, Baba! (*Runs to backstage*).

Gbenga: How I wish these Thugs can be apprehended...

Oloriebi: By who?

Gbenga: The law enforcement agents.

Oloriebi: You will soon grow to know that the law is a dirge after meal. It is meant for the rich – a commodity for the highest bidder. It changes at the will of the rich and the powerful...

Gbenga: But I know that some honest police officers still exist except that they are very few.

Oloriebi: (*Calling*) Kike!

Kike: (*Talking from the backstage*) I cannot find the knife...

Oloriebi: Then come here and use the cutlass to untie us.

Kike: But the knife will be better.

Gbenga: Are you sick?

Kike: Not at all!

Gbenga: Then come out!

Kike: (*Walks in reluctantly*) Kill me, I am waiting.

Oloriebi: Take (*Points with his mouth*) that cutlass and untie us.

Kike: (*Picks the cutlass*) But it is too big...

Gbenga: Just do that.

Kike: Okay (*She unties Oloriebi*). Should I untie Gbenga too?

Oloriebi: (*Slaps Kike*) Do that idiot!

Kike: Yes, Baba (*Unties Gbenga*).

Gbenga: (*Beating Kike*) You are wicked and before you destroy me, I will kill you. Why are you so weak? You have saw-dust in your head?

Kike: (*Fighting back*) Your mouth can now pick maize, lazy boy. Next time, I will send for the Thugs to teach you how to be mute.

Oloriebi: Where is your mother?

Kike: I was sleeping and I don't know where she is!

Gbenga: Baba, we must take care of ourselves first.

Oloriebi: You are right (*They walk to backstage as action resumes at stage-left*).

A Bar Inside Hotel De Love

Miming session for the arrangement of human beings as chairs and tables at stage-left. This is overtaken by Ebenezer Obey's popular lyric of **Alowo Ma Jaye**¹¹. Chief Olowolayemo is conspicuously placed in the Bar. Customers are busy drinking and dancing while Prostitutes, in sodomic dresses, come in and go out with their customers. A bubbling scenario for the children of the night.

Surveyor Wale: Chief Olowolayemo, we have no strong document to legally proof your ownership of that land...

Olowolayemo: Does Oloriebi know his right from his left?

Surveyor Wale: Interested sympathisers might take up his case for him...

Olowolayemo: You mean the Chiefs or some of the poverty-stricken people of this community?

Surveyor Wale: Young lawyers who are craving to be known and those among them who love controversial case may take the matter up for the sake of the monumental reactions it will generate.

Olowolayemo: Good. But let me tell you that Oloriebi has no Certificate-of-Occupancy. So, Oloriebi cannot lay claim to that land!

Surveyor Wale: But it is his father's land!

Olowolayemo: (*Angry*) Look, you work in the Government's Ministry of Land and I want the C-of-O to that land. Can you get it for me or not?

Surveyor Wale: But...

Olowolayemo: Can you? I just want an echo not a voice...

Surveyor Wale: Yes, Chief! But you have to increase the charges...

Olowolayemo: To how much?

Surveyor Wale: To two hundred thousand naira...

Olowolayemo: (*Writing a cheque*) I will pay you four hundred and fifty thousand naira because I want an express job.

Surveyor Wale: (*Smiling*) I will come to your house with the C. of O. next week.

(*Ebun and Nike, who are expensively dressed, enter the Bar. A brief mime between the duo and Two Players acting as Bar Attendants.*)

Olowolayemo: Wale, you had better wait to taste from the two pieces of meat coming (*Points to Ebun and Nike*).

Surveyor Wale: Thank you, Chief. The only problem is that I don't like married women. Besides, these ones coming are too old and they may be terrible...

Olowolayemo: So you prefer young ladies in skimpy and sexy dresses?

Surveyor Wale: Exactly.

Olowolayemo: They are too dangerous on bed, untrustworthy and...

Surveyor Wale: Never satisfied. They are sex machines, if you care to accept my tag.

Olowolayemo: Some are lesbians on campus while others belong to the Jezebel's cult...

Nike: (*Looking for attention*) Good evening, our only Chief Olowolayemo!

Surveyor Wale: Yes, Chief! But you have to increase the charges...

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Nike: (*Looking for attention*) Good evening, our only Chief Olowolayemo!

Olowolayemo: Welcome but why did you stay far away from us?

Nike: Courtesy demands that we should do that. I guess you are discussing a serious business matter with Surveyor Wale.

Surveyor Wale: Your guess is right but let your friend too sit together with us so that we can rock the weather together...

Nike: *(Standing up to meet Chief Olowolayemo and Surveyor Wale)*
I don't trust you, Surveyor Wale!

Surveyor Wale: Why? *(Walking towards the Bar Attendants).*

Nike: You don't need old cargoes like us, instead you prefer girls of your daughter's age for the game of nose-pushing.

Olowolayemo: Surveyor Wale will surprise you today. *(Whispering)*
I want Ebun so as to spite Oloriebi and from the look of things,
I am very certain that you and Surveyor Wale can dig it right now!

Nike: After you have crossed my bridge?

Olowolayemo: Selfishness kills. I'll give you one hundred thousand naira for this assignment!

Nike: No problem. *(Calling)* Ebun, please come down here.

Ebun: *(Timid and walking slowly towards Nike)* Good day to you people here!

Olowolayemo: Welcome. I do hope that Nike has told you more about my caring attitude? My larger than life...

Ebun: She did. But are you not Chief Olowolayemo?

Olowolayemo: You are meeting the tiger of the forest, the simple

man that people choose to hate. So many jesters, in the market of envy, who robbed themselves in complex syndrome are lying against me...

Ebun: (*Laughing*) Just steer clear of my husband's land first.

Nike: Are you trying to embarrass Chief or what?

Ebun: I am only trying to plead for his mercy...

Surveyor Wale: Look, leave them alone and let me see you inside so that we can see each other.

Nike: (*Conferring with Chief Olowolayemo*) Should I follow him?

Olowolayemo: Do. But let him use condom and you must kiss him not!

Nike: Trust me. He will have half of the total part (*Joining Surveyor Wale*).

Surveyor Wale: Are we set? I will teach you a new method today. Believe me, you will beg me today!

Nike: Have you eaten enough, else you had mistaken me for those kids who have no experience? Don't talk, let your body do the talking.

Surveyor Wale: (*Holds Nike as they leave for backstage*) Let us go and see who will blink first.

Olowolayemo: (*Lovely*) Your marriage to Oloriebi was an expensive error or can't you check yourself out? A pretty woman caged by an ugly vulture and massaged by a poisonous serpent.

Ebun: I know but my husband's land first...

Olowolayemo: Don't worry. I will assist him because you are involved.

Ebun: In what way am I involved?

Olowolayemo: I want to pull you off poverty. Change your life and make you to be a real woman who lacks nothing.

Ebun: No problem. But how will my husband not discover our game?

Olowolayemo: He will never know. You just have to be smart when you are playing the smart game.

Ebun: My heart is willing and my entire body is ready for you. Olanike had told me the details about your heaven on earth enjoyment and I am longing to be part of it.

Olowolayemo: (*Writing a cheque*) Go to the bank tomorrow and cash this three hundred thousand naira for a start!

Ebun: But you know that I dropped out of school in primary two...

Olowolayemo: Can you sign or write your name?

Ebun: (*Laughing*) Not like that. I can do all that.

Olowolayemo: Good. Then your problem is solved (*Gives the cheque to Ebun*). However, let me appreciate the stuff of your wonderland.

Ebun: It is made up of gold which has not been adequately utilised by my husband, whose fate had forced me into (*Ebun and Olowolayemo walk backstage cuddling each other romantically*).

Player Two: (*Clapping*) Such is life especially when the rich takes the wife of the poor! To worsen the situation, they fouled our

mother has disappointed everybody at my sister's party today.

Oloriebi: What is the problem, Nike?

Nike: She was drunk and nobody sent her to do that!

Gbenga: So my mother was drunk in your sister's party? (*Runs backstage*).

Kike: (*Washing Ebum's face*) Wake up mother and come to life, stop slumbering for you are in your house...

Oloriebi: (*To Nike*) Have I not warned you to stop coming to my house?

Nike: But Ebum is my childhood friend and we are inseparable twins.

Oloriebi: (*Holds Ebum tightly*) Now and in your own interest, tell me what went wrong?

Gbenga: (*Enters with a big cutlass and runs after Nike*) Your sister's party, you this harlot! Or you think that the whole people of Ajuba do not know your antics?

Nike: (*Blabbing and running round for protection*) What are my antics?

Gbenga: A professional prostitute, a confirmed sex worker and a smart recruiting agent...

Oloriebi: Stop Gbenga, she is your mother's friend...

Gbenga: Or my mother's enemy!

Kike: What is your problem, stupid boy?

Nike: (*Running out of the stage*) I made a proposal and your mother

accepted the deal, sooner, you will reap abundantly from the proceeds of our nights.

Gbenga: (*Dragging Ebun*) Let me drag her in.

Oloriebi: (*Beating Ebun*) Where did you go, drunkard?

Ebun: (*Coming gradually to life*) Nike's sister's party and I drank too much.

Kike: (*Consoling her*) Don't talk too much, Mama!

Gbenga: (*Beating Kike*) Close your mouth, useless girl! Sooner, you will join her to trade in the night!

Oloriebi: (*Angry*) You are a disgrace to womanhood...

Ebun: (*Begging*) Sorry, the owner of my head. Forgive me if I have offended you, I am only assisting a childhood friend of mine.
(*Kneeling*) Sincerely speaking, I didn't know that the wine could be that dangerous to first timer like me, I consumed more than enough...

Players: Say the truth and let the devil be shamed.

Oloriebi: From now on...

Ebun: Yes, my husband...

Oloriebi: No more outing without my knowledge...

Ebun: (*Holding Oloriebi*) Yes, the apple of my eyes...

Oloriebi: And you must avoid that strange bed fellow of yours, who disrespects her husband and turns her children into beggars...

Ebun: (*Smiling*) My only hope, your words are law, they must be

obeyed (*She holds Oloriebi as they walk backstage*).

Players: (*Clapping and nodding their heads*) Women are full of tricks. Oloriebi has been tricked.

Player Five: So what is the way out, actors?

All: Let Nike and Olowolayemo decide for us.

Player Six: We are waiting.

Player Three: I am Player Three for now and not Nike and if you people want me to act as Nike, the most fashionable woman in this community who hawks her body about, tell me.

Tunji: If you don't want to distort our storyline or rubbish our dramaturgy, then I am Tunji, the young actor who suggested that we should perform this play, let us continue with our story!

Back to Hotel De Love

Ribaldry and satirical jokes envelop the stage. Play alternates between Olowolayemo's house and Hotel De Love.

Player Seven: Okay. Let us set the Bar Scene (*Miming session, the Bar is neatly set and arranged*).

Ebun: (*Ebun walks slowly and talks faintly from the backstage of her house to the Orchestra Pit to meet Olowolayemo at the Bar*) My God, they are all sleeping. If I can come back from Hotel De Love before they will wake up then the better for me. This beating is just too much!

Player Seven: Don't worry for Chief Olowolayemo is waiting for you!

Olowolayemo: Where is Ebun?

Player Seven: Coming to meet you already!

Ebun: What is your own business?

Player Seven: I am trying to make things easy...

Ebun: I am just sad, too sad

Olowolayemo: (*Holding a cup of glass*) I have been expecting you but why frowning? What are your problems for people like me have grown more than any problem?

Ebun: Many things. But you are too proud.

Olowolayemo: List them and they are solved. Forget the issue of pride! Have you seen somebody with a very deep purse who is not proud?

Ebun: Beating, humiliation and open disgrace from my husband and by my own son. I am now fishing in a stormy water.

Olowolayemo: Why?

Ebun: The wine given to me yesterday was too alcoholic and besides, we came home lately and we created a bad scenario with Nike escaping narrowly from the madness of my boy and the verbal missiles of my husband.

Olowolayemo: But you said that your husband is your ordained lover!

Ebun: Now he hates me like a rotten rag. He despises me like a desperate commando and it is quite certain that I am now gambling with my marriage! (*Crying*).

Olowolayemo: (*Consoling her*) But in a game of gamble you may be the winner if you are smart to outwit your enemy...

Ebun: (*Angry*) My husband is not my enemy but the one that destiny has made to inherit my life.

Olowolayemo: Okay. But what exactly do you want me to do for you? You have to be recharged socially.

Ebun: Tell me or advise me, how will the father of my children love me again?

Olowolayemo: Love is courted through passion and when affection is sincerely shown, it will be appreciated back because human psyche works according to feelings and emotions.

Ebun: How will he love me again?

Olowolayemo: Two ways? The first I have told you. The second one is that you should offer libation to the god of love and turn his liability to asset, he will then travel inside you for days and for nights, non-stop.

Ebun: Good. But... (*Total freeze at stage-left, Oloriebi shouts from the backstage of stage-right, his house*).

Oloriebi: (*From backstage*) Gbenga, where is your mother?

Gbenga: (*From backstage*) Let us check the parlour.

Oloriebi: (*Coming out*) Where is she hiding?

Gbenga: (*Coming out and looking round*) Not a needle is found? Again and again, mother has gone. Gone far away into the city, into the night and lost to the warm embrace of Nike's men since she can no longer cope with the sorrow of poverty.

Oloriebi: (*Still searching*) She has entered the market of prostitution where many roads lead to hell.

Ebun: (*Angry*) My husband is not my enemy but the one that destiny has made to inherit my life.

Olowolayemo: Okay. But what exactly do you want me to do for you? You have to be recharged socially.

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Oloriebi: (*From backstage*) Gbenga, where is your mother?

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Oloriebi: (*Still searching*) She has entered the market of prostitution where many roads lead to hell.

Gbenga: Baba, can I disown this distraught mother of mine?

Kike: (*Shouting from backstage*) Stupid boy, idiot.

Gbenga: That to me!

Kike: (*Enters*) Mad boy with a bad mouth, useless and uncultured boy who turns his mother into a toy and condemns her everyday (*Fighting with Gbenga*).

Gbenga: You provoke me with your smelly mouth? Why don't you go out with her and let us have our peace here? (*Beating Kike*) Enough of your madness in this house!

Oloriebi: Stop and let me see who will blink between the two of you, children of a wayward woman! (*Total freeze as action rolls to Hotel De Love*).

Ebun: (*Emotionally*) I want to dance but time is my enemy. I want your arms around me but the tide is against me and when we meet tomorrow, heaven will fall and your laziness will be exposed.

Olowolayemo: (*Singing*) I am on top of the world. I am the courted lion of the forest who knows the game better.

Ebun: We shall see and your eyes will see hell. You will pant and I will smile while the echoes of your lazy songs will be heard on bed. When you drop yourself inside me, it will be war of love where women are winners.

Olowolayemo: A good musician you are and since your provocation is now tempting my golden stick, let me (*Holds Ebun*) make your day a new day.

Ebun: Not now or have you forgotten my husband? It is time to go home (*Walks to the Orchestra Pit, then to stage-right gradually*).

Olowolayemo: Be smart at home (*Players, who manage a little space on the stage-left, now occupy the entire stage-left*).

Ebun: (*Tiptoeing*) God, I hope that they are still sleeping...

Oloriebi: (*Hiding*) Nobody should move and no noise should be heard if your mother enters.

Kike: (*Runs to Ebun*) Mother, see them there (*Points*) they are hiding for you.

Gbenga: Stupid girl...

Oloriebi: The game is up and the day has broken. Everyday is for the thief and a day is for the owner. I see your love as the elixir of my life but behold, my death, I guess, is hidden inside your bosom (*Beating Ebun*).

Ebun: (*Resisting*) Everyday and every time you talk and talk like a parrot and I plead like a slave. If I may ask, tell me your worth as a man? I have feared you too much and tonight I fear no more! If a man is poor, there is nothing that he can do about it. Pride or ego, you may call it anything, the important thing is that you should stop monitoring my present state of transition! The fact is that I have grown beyond you. I now belong elsewhere, to the other side of life...

Kike: (*Happy*) Talk sense into their blocked heads. As for Gbenga, he has forgotten that you are his mother and if not for respect, I would have started my own trouble afresh with Baba...

Gbenga: (*Laughing hysterically*) Let the rat jump at the cat for the day of reckoning is near.

Oloriebi: (*Runs backstage and comes out with a gun which Kike hijacks*) An insult in my own house...

Kike: (*Giving the gun to Ebun*) Take, Mama, for today is our day to

reclaim our rights as women under men's claw of chauvinism...

Gbenga: Only for a brief moment as that will not last in Africa...

Ebun: (*Pointing his gun at Oloriebi*) Don't just move otherwise, I will make a meal out of your meat and for the last time, don't ever query my movement when you cannot play your role as my husband.

Gbenga: (*Hijacks and points the gun at Ebun*) Rhetoric from you all and as for me, I don't trade with words. If you are not careful Mama, I will waste you and let me warn you for the last time...

Oloriebi: (*Collects the gun diplomatically from Gbenga*) Caution my son, for your Mother has found her lost voice in the jungle of prostitution. Caution my son, the game is getting dangerous and the gun knows nobody (*Walks backstage with the gun*).

Ebun: (*Beating Gbenga*) What an effrontery! You think that you are now a man already and the only thing you can do is to raise your hands against me, your Mother?

Oloriebi: (*Runs backstage and comes out with horsewhip which he uses on Ebun*) You have created scars of sorrow in my heart and I must teach you some hard lessons today...

Ebun: (*Runs round the stage-right until she grabs the horsewhip*) I am in the house today, ready to die defending womanhood.

(*Beating Oloriebi as Gbenga slaps Kike. All the Players freeze*).

A Plan Within a Plan

Player Four is chanting lyrically to announce himself and his alter ego at stage-left.

Player Four: I divine into the future but like most diviners, I cannot divine for myself. (*Changes into Diviner's costumes, walks to the tip of the stage as Olowolayemo joins him*).

Olowolayemo: Greetings to you, the representative of the oracles?

Babalawo: Welcome, Chief Olowolayemo, you who own the good things of life...

Olowolayemo: My people say that the triumph of the cult solely depends on collective responsibility.

Babalawo: You are correct, if not, we exist as nothing and become pawns in the hands of ordinary mortals. (*Casting and looking deeply at the oracle tray*) A rat calls an elephant for a duel, worst still, in the terrain of the elephant, an insult...

Olowolayemo: The oracle speaks my mind, Baba!

Babalawo: If the rich man takes the wife of the poor man, there is no crime at all. What do you want me to do for Oloriebi? A warning? A punishment? Or...

Olowolayemo: None of the above. Let his wife wear the unseen mask of 'touch-and-die'!

Babalawo: That will be too drastic!

Olowolayemo: (*Furious*) What is the price?

Babalawo: Ten thousand naira. A promise to keep the secret and a vow to appease the gods against their anger...

Olowolayemo: No problem as long as I inherit Ebun and feed fat on the disputed land.

Babalawo: (*Gives a black substance to Olowolayemo*) Look, you

have to be very careful. You must not sleep with Ebun for sixteen days and you must device smart ways of convincing and confusing her about the need to rub her golden layer with that black substance in your hand.

Olowolayemo: No problem inasmuch as she will not be harmed.
(*Gives money to the Diviner*) I am grateful, Baba.

Babalawo: (*Counting*) I only demanded for ten thousand naira and this is fifty thousand naira...

Olowolayemo: No problem with that.

Babalawo: (*Moves back to the Players*) Thank you!

Olowolayemo: (*To the audience*) Ladies and gentlemen in the house, I am in love and the stainless beauty of Ebun has captivated me. I want you all to roll your eyes to the house of Oloriebi while I wait patiently here like a dove for her. But before then, join me to sing the song of those who own the world.
(*Olowolayemo sings the Song of Those who own the World*¹³ and dances as Ebun and Oloriebi resume their rat race at stage-right).

Ebun: I must run away so as to avoid untimely death. However, the head of your family must hear that you are now the chairman of the women battering association of this community (*Runs out to meet Olowolayemo*).

Oloriebi: Go and never return! Children, let us go and sleep
(*Oloriebi, Gbenga and Kike walk to the backstage*).

Devil Meets Devil for the Game of Death

Part of stage-left, Olowolayemo's Office. Players demarcate the Office from other acting areas with their bodies.

Olowolayemo: You are the daughter of your father...

Ebun: Why?

Olowolayemo: You are right on call. I just mentioned your name.

Ebun: Chief, the game is getting deadly, too deadly. My husband and I are now sworn enemies and the tide may not be in my favour unless something is urgently done to rescue my marriage from collapse...

Olowolayemo: He beats you or what?

Ebun: Everything. He beats me, hates me and turns my only son against me.

Olowolayemo: Are you joking or something?

Ebun: My husband's love for me has taken a flight to the desert. Further still to the top of mountain hatred where, to me, it is undeservingly watching the face of the Lord.

Olowolayemo: Then pull it back...

Ebun: Through what?

Olowolayemo: The power of wind.

Ebun: Why wind and how?

Olowolayemo: Love is a wind...

Ebun: What can I do?

Olowolayemo: Are your neighbours and family members aware of the confusion in your house?

Ebun: Not yet.

Olowolayemo: Good. Do you want your husband to love you like before?

Ebun: Yes! Why not?

Olowolayemo: (*Raising a black substance*) Then, listen to me. This black substance is medicine for love. When you reach your house, apply it to your sacred highland and let your husband touch you once or twice...

Ebun: (*Curious*) What will then happen?

Olowolayemo: Forever, the love between the two of you will be boundless and spontaneous but I am afraid...

Ebun: Of what?

Olowolayemo: That you may not love me again!

Ebun: Impossible! Your love now runs in my veins!

Olowolayemo: Is it possible for a woman to love two men equally?

Ebun: Why not? Or are you a mind reader?

Olowolayemo: (*Gives the black substance to Ebun reluctantly*) Well, if that is the only way to help you, I will not mind sacrificing my own ambition of marrying you...

Ebun: Nothing of such will happen! Just trust me, I will remain yours forever in love and affection, in the sun and in the rain...

Players: In the night and at daybreak...

Olowolayemo: Don't mind those intruders.

Players: In the night and at daybreak!

Ebun: Trust me!

Players: (*Mocking*) In the sun and in the rain, in the night and at daybreak!

Olowolayemo: Go home and see me tomorrow.

Players: In the sun and in the rain.

(*Ebun walks to stage-right while Olowolayemo joins the Players as they dismantle the human props used for his Office*).

The Deed is Done

Bridge music. Kike and Gbenga are on their way to the school as Ebun enters.

Ebun: I have reported your Dad to those who own him and I am sure that they will call him to order before he turns this house into disorder.

Gbenga: (*Walking away*) Sooner or later, the fish will begin to rot from the head and the devilish wisdom of the serpent will be exposed to its consternation. Take warning, Mama!

Kike: (*Greets Ebun, happy and walks away*) Mama, don't mind the careless boy whose tongue lolls in and out, disrespectfully to his mother.

Oloriebi: (*Coming out*) Whose voice is that?

Ebun: (*Kneels*) Mine of course, I am your wife and you cannot throw away the bathe water with the baby or have you forgotten so soon my undoubted love for you? What about my indescribable innocence? Raw – you met me in the house and you clear my path to womanhood – I am still your wife...

Oloriebi: Love is a gift, I give you and you give me. You humble me, humble you must I. The trust of love is thus rebuilt.

Players: Don't take her plea, Oloriebi...

Ebun: Patience, the owner of my head or have you forgotten that a patient dog will eat the fattest bone? Patience, for patience is the father of everything.

Players: (*Brief dance*) He that marries beauty marries death.

Ebun: Don't mind those intruders whose only duty is to poke-nose into...

Player Four: Don't listen to her for she has eaten the forbidden fruit. Anyway, there is nothing like poke-nose rather it is nose-poke!

Ebun: (*Begging and crying*) When love is lost, everything is lost and when everything is lost nothing is left. Man is thus left to be motionless like a statue – a mere carcass, a relic of his essence.

Oloriebi: (*Beating Ebun*) What is the use of a beautiful peacock without a good character? Like a parrot, you talk and talk endlessly but you forget that all your evils will be requited...

Ebun: (*Pleading*) Put life into me and move closer to me. Draw me into your golden arms and let the good thing in you make me a new born. Refresh my life and draw me closer like always...

Players: Run away for your life is threatened, Oloriebi!

Oloriebi: (*Sober, holds Ebun*) You are still my wife and as my wife, you have won today and be a gallant winner who follows the rules of the game as dictated by the umpire of the game to the letter. Be smart. Be wise. Be more humble...

Ebun: (*Happy*) Your words are unambiguous to me for they rekindle my lost hope and bring back my glory, turn my head on, for I will run no more...

Oloriebi: (*Moving round*) No more Nike's house...

Ebun: (*Running and kneeling to beg Oloriebi*) Yes, the owner of my head.

Oloriebi: No more night outings...

Ebun: Yes, the father of my children.

Oloriebi: No more insult and laziness...

Ebun: Work is good and insult is a taboo to one's husband (*Ebun sings the **Song of Re-marriage**¹⁴ and drags Oloriebi to the backstage slowly while all the Players sing and dance to the same song*).

Player Two: Honestly speaking, I like Chief Olowolayemo for he knows how to enjoy this world to the fullest...

Player Three: Why wouldn't you like him, evil one? Well, Oloriebi is my man although he is very poor.

Player Four: You have no brain, you are too dull to think. The Chief is my man and Oloriebi will soon learn his lessons.

Player Three: You are stupid for those derogatory remarks about me...

Player Four: (*Pushing Player Three*) You are a fool for the second time or have you heard that a rich man will accept defeat, especially if it is a fight between him and a wretched man who swims in abject poverty? Since your boat is not ready to take water of knowledge, you will sink!

Player Six: Enough! Let the song and the dance continue.

Player Seven: No!

Player One: Why?

Player Seven: Who is wrong between Olowolayemo and Oloriebi?

Player Six: (*Mocking*) You of course! (*Player Six and Seven run round other Players as Oloriebi and Ebun's murmuring are heard backstage*).

Oloriebi: (*Groaning*) I will jump!

Ebun: Don't jump...

Oloriebi: I sincerely want to jump!

Ebun: Jump not!

Oloriebi: (*Runs to the stage*) I must jump!

Ebun: (*Holds Oloriebi*) Why must you jump when we are climbing the seventh mountain of love?

Oloriebi: (*Shouting*) I must jump!

Ebun: Why must you jump?

Players: (*Sing-song*) If he jumps, death will come and his chapter will close...!

Oloriebi: (*Uneasy*) Let me jump...

Ebun: Don't jump.

(*Oloriebi forcefully frees himself, jumps seven times and slumps. Ebun shouts for help and Four Players move in as Townspeople*).

Players: What is the matter with you, Ebun?

Ebun: (*Points at Oloriebi's corpse*) He slumps and speaks no more!

Players: What befalls him to make him to slump and speak no more?

Ebun: (*Weeping*) I don't know.

(*Gbenga and Kike enter*)

Gbenga: (*Surprised*) Why these strange faces in our house?

Ebun: (*Apologetically*) Your father is dead!

Gbenga: You killed him to please yourself...

Kike: (*Weeping*) Stupid boy, must you talk rubbish?

Gbenga: (*Weeping and holding Oloriebi's corpse*) What manner of death, Baba?

Players: Weep not for he is gone and now you are the father of the house...

Gbenga: So sudden and unannounced?

Players: Take heart (*Humming a short dirge*). Such is life.

(*The Players carry Oloriebi's corpse to the backstage and walk back to stage-left while Gbenga runs backstage to pick a cutlass. Ebun runs to stage-left panting and waiting for Olowolayemo as Player Five speaks*).

Player Five: Slowly, as termites eat the house, slowly, human days on earth tick away. Oloriebi was buried with rain of curses by the people of Ajuba but life continues. The fowl is on top of a cord, and both the fowl and the cord are unsteady, floating!

Players: We fear for Gbenga...

Player Five: Let the play resume (*All the Players move to upstage-left*).

Pay Day

Olowolayemo's makeshift Office. Chairs and tables should not be used, rather photoramic/captions' aesthetics should be explored in creating the makeshift Office. Olowolayemo engages Ebun in a hot discussion.

Ebun: (*Shouting*) No, your secret is exposed!

Olowolayemo: Secret of what? When our love adventure is growing...

Ebun: (*Holds Olowolayemo by the neck*) You killed my husband!

Olowolayemo: No! Your husband is nothing to me...

Ebun: (*Pushing Olowolayemo*) Your medicine for love has really worked...

Olowolayemo: You are talking rubbish. I hope there is no more beating at home?

Ebun: Not at all. Except that my husband has gone to the world beyond.

Olowolayemo: (*Casual*) So I was told...

Ebun: Are you sure that your hands are clean?

Olowolayemo: Why must I kill him? Why? He is nothing to me...

Ebun: (*Speaking aside*) Why can't I use my brain? His medicine for love is still with me and I can use it on him too. Ebun, use your brain. You love your husband and love Olowolayemo's money, use your brain! Olowolayemo has no respect for human beings, he must pay the price...

Olowolayemo: You are saying something?

Ebun: Nothing!

Olowolayemo: You need some money

Ebun: Yes!

Olowolayemo: Like how much?

Ebun: Nine hundred thousand naira!

Olowolayemo: Cash or cheque? Why not one million naira?

Ebun: Cash!

Olowolayemo: (*Pulling the 'human-made' drawer*) Take and complain no more...

Ebun: Can I use your toilet?

Olowolayemo: Why not?

Ebun: (*Walking to the backstage*) Thank you!

Olowolayemo: (*Looking at Ebun*) This woman is naturally beautiful and I will not mind doing it right here since all my staff have gone home.

Ebun: (*Coming out*) I really missed you, Chief Olowolayemo.

Olowolayemo: You speak my mind. I really missed you too.

Ebun: The wind of your love blows slowly on me and I can no longer wait to have you. Can we go out?

Olowolayemo: On the floor or on the table! Anywhere, for I am ripe and may burst anytime. Come and tenderly too, give your love to me! You are the only reason why I am still living.

Ebun: The comfort will be missing or don't you know that people are looking at us raptly?

Olowolayemo: Where then? I care not for the audience! Let the chicken roasts.

Ebun: The toilet, for I also fear that some of your workers might still enter.

Olowolayemo: But the smell...

Ebun: (*Dragging Olowolayemo to the backstage*) What smell? When it is a game of life, a silent prayer of comfort? Our blood must flow together to inject new zest in us! Come, strongly too, to anoint me with your love. Like always, let today's encounter be a wonderful encounter...

Olowolayemo: I am growing old. How I wish I can re-live my younger days? How I wish I can still move swiftly – swiftly to permanently write my name in your heart...

Ebun: My blood will renew your life (*Bridge Music of illicit love*).

Olowolayemo: (*From Backstage*) You are so sweet. In spite of the fact that I am surrounded by a bevy of damsels, I can't just resist your charm. You learn so fast and for now, Nike can't match your creativity on the bed. You are simply fantastic!

Ebun: (*Whispering*) I want more.

Player Two: (*Moving round the stage*) Death is crying for death...

Player Three: (*Sad*) And mourners are mourning themselves.

Player Four: Let's not cry more than the bereaved. Let us watch events more keenly. We are indeed passing through tortuous phase.

Players : Okay. We concur.

Olowolayemo: (*Entering the stage, sweating*) Only death will separate you and me.

Ebun: (*Smiling to the stage*) Why death when the game is becoming more and more interesting? Why should God allow us to die?

Olowolayemo: Can you query God? There is wisdom in dying. Those before us died, we will die and those after us will also die... I am seeing death...

Players: What is the colour of death? Red, black, white or yellow that you are seeing?

Ebun: For once, our Players strike a cord in me. Answer them, Chief Olowolayemo. What colour of death are you seeing?

Olowolayemo: Death has many colours. For everybody wears the mask of death about.

Ebun: Including you, a well-known Capitalist?

Olowolayemi: Death is the only thing that money cannot buy.

Ebun: Let us go back to the toilet and have more funs...

Olowolayemo: (*Falling gradually*) I am feeling dizzy...

Ebun: (*Panting*) You need some water or something?

Olowolayemo: Not really!

Ebun: Tablets or what?

Olowolayemo: (*Uneasy*) Nothing. But I need something that will give me strength. My bones are fast becoming weak. I have

performed in many great events but something is definitely wrong with me today. My health is failing me!

Ebun: Can I go to my house to bring food for you?

Olowolayemo: (*Rolling*) Wait for me or did you use the medicine for love on your secret island?

Ebun: Yes!

Olowolayemo: (*Shouting*) Please run to the market square and call Fagbemi for me...

Ebun: Why? Where? Who is Fagbemi?

Olowolayemo: (*Weak*) I want to jump... Fagbemi.

Ebun: (*Holding him*) Don't jump.

Olowolayemo: (*Struggling*) Let me jump!

Players: Let him jump. He must jump. It is his time to jump.

Ebun: (*Pleading*) Don't jump!

Olowolayemo: Ebun, I must jump for the medicine that I gave to you is not medicine for love but '*Maagun*', 'touch-and-die'.

Ebun: Why did you do such a thing? Why are you so ruthless?

Olowolayemo: For economic and social reasons. Your husband must die so that I can inherit his land and your love too intoxicates me (*Olowolayemo jumps up thrice, slumps and the Players sing the **Song of the Wicked Man**¹⁵ from Sunny Ade's repertory*).

Don't Arrest me

Ebun packs bundles of Naira notes into her bag and looks at Olowolayemo's corpse carelessly.

Ebun: You can now go and meet my husband who is resting with God's angels. Help me to beg him and tell him to forgive me but I will never forgive you...

(Four Players now in Police uniform pounce on Ebun).

First Policeman: We are here to arrest you!

Ebun: For what?

Second Policeman: On the account of the death of your husband!

Ebun: Why arresting me for his death?

Third Policeman: Your son, Gbenga reported you to us!

Ebun: That what?

Fourth Policeman: Close your mouth!

First Policeman: *(Discovering Olowolayemo's corpse)* Another casualty is here!

Second Policeman: Who again?

First Policeman: Chief Olowolayemo is dead!

Fourth Policeman: *(Pouncing on Ebun)* How many men will you kill because of your beauty? Speak, deadly and cruel angel of beauty!

Ebun: *(Pleading)* Let me confess before you take me to the station.

Players: Confess!

Ebun: (*Sobbing*) It all started as fun and I enjoyed every moment that I had with Chief Olowolayemo...

Second Policeman: Go on with your confession, wicked soul.

Ebun: I love my husband but Nike lured me into the game of prostitution.

Third Policeman: What happened next?

Ebun: My husband was poor but I wanted to help myself, help him and help my children.

Players: Is prostitution the only alternative to helping yourself and your family?

First Policeman: Allow her to talk or I will arrest all of you.

Players: (*General laughter*) Even without committing any crime?

Fourth Policeman: Continue...

Ebun: (*Sad*) It wasn't deliberate. Chief gave me a supposed medicine for love to make my husband to stop the ceaseless battering and love me more but the medicine for love turned out to be 'Mágùn'!

Players: Woman!

Ebun: (*Sober*) My husband died but I was determined to find out what killed him...

First Policeman: What killed him?

Ebun: *Oga na Mágùn* given to me by Chief...

Second Policeman: What killed Chief then?

Ebun: (*Crying*) The same 'Mágìn' killed Chief and I want the law to catch up with me for I take full responsibility for my irresponsibility!

Third Policeman: (*Dragging Ebun out of the stage*) Let us go to the station where you will document all your confessions!

Don't Doubt it: AIDS is Real!

Nike is coughing, vomiting, urinating and rolling on the floor. She practically battles to survive. Some Players mime her past escapades, while others sympathise with her.

Nike: (*Slowly*) Don't pity me for I am the architect of my own misfortunes. My mountain is poverty and I thought that I can climb it through prostitution. I expand my business, sell my pants indiscriminately, change tactics and only last year, (*Crying*) my doctor confirmed the worst. He said that I am HIV-positive! I am now awaiting death.

Players: (*Attempting to run away*) What are we waiting for? We must go and leave Madam Nike to her fate.

Nike: As I speak to you now, my husband is in the hospital and I am certain that I would have infected well over one hundred men.

Player Three: Let her die, wicked woman.

Player One: Let us not stigmatise her, she is part of us.

Player Four: Anti-retroviral drugs will assist her to survive the dreaded pandemic. Let us not stigmatic her.

Player Five: (*Fighting himself*) No! No!! And no!!! HIV is fake, AIDS is an illusion. A fantasy, a story concocted by white men to control African population...

Player Six: Be wise – AIDS is real or have you no brain?

Player Five: Big mouth, what is your own?

(Total freeze on stage as Three Players move to the Orchestra Pit to strategise).

Player Two: After graduating with a first class honours in accountancy, I searched and combed the entire country for work and without any, can we form an NGO?

Player Eight: They said that your certificate is a fake one, is it true?

Player Two: Must you believe everything that you heard? I obtained my certificate from Toronto, simple! Mind you, I am not a politician and so nobody will be able to scrutinise me like they did to our former Speaker...

Player Seven: I lost my own job purely on account of Federal Character – the Government said that my own people are too many in the Ministry of Merit and Excellence that I worked for. So, I agree totally that we should form an NGO but an NGO on what?

Player Eight: *(Thinking)* An NGO on HIV and AIDS control will give us quick millions. However, your appointment did not follow the due process and all that...

Player Seven: I know but what about you? Have you forgotten that a case of stealing is still hanging on your neck?

Player Eight: Liar! Who told you? Clean your mouth! Stealing? Where and when?

Player Seven: You know that we know that what is certain is that you ran away from USA to save your head!

Player Eight: Rubbish! What name should we call our NGO on HIV and AIDS?

Player Two: WATA!

Player Seven: What is the full meaning of WATA?

Player Eight: Wazobia Action Time on Aids!

All: Very good – you are a genius.

*(Three Players, donning WATA's Vests join The Three Players in the Orchestra Pit, assist them to change their clothes to that of WATA members and begin to distribute handbills about the reality of AIDS to the audience. As the **Song of HIV**¹⁶ comes under slowly, Nike is being carried round the auditorium coughing and vomiting).*

Kike: *(Cat-walking)*. Did you people want to hear the truth and nothing but the truth?

Gbenga: Nothing but the truth...

Kike: My words may be unpalatable to your ears...

Gbenga: What else can you hide? Your antecedents are quite familiar to our audience. You have no place to hide. We know you as the wayward and later, a promiscuous Daughter of Ebun, my dying Mother...

Kike: *(Coughing)* You people want to hear the truth?

All: Yes!

Gbenga: Words are poisonous than bullets. When words are adequately uttered with deep linguistic colouration and precision, devoid of emotional and arrogant pronouncements, the owner of a gun will find it difficult to shoot for words are superior to guns. Say the truth, my unfortunate Sister!

Kike: *(Cat-walking)* Most of us are sexy. We finally graduate to

become sexmaniacs and sadomasochists, contradicting rather radically, the best of African culture and the dictates of the Almighty God for the American sex culture. And on sex, we are more American than the Americans themselves.

All: Go ahead. Speak the truth. Let our people learn!

Kike: (*Clearing her throat as Four other Pretty Ladies join her to mime her words*) We are ladies of the day because hiding under the cover of the night to hawk our bodies is no longer fashionable, it is outdated. But we have, as willing instruments, men, whose rods are too hot to stay within...

Gbenga: My Sister, oh my Sister!

Kike: Interestingly still, we have no Sabbath day. Everyday is for seduction and our trade has no permanent strategy. We operate by flying many colours. As megalomaniacs, we have broken the faith of the supposed men of God who often melt and weep under our bosom...

Gbenga: Oh, the child of my Mother!

Kike: We often paint any city that we enter red and we move like horrendous hurricane to spread the virus of HIV. We have disempowered so many!

Gbenga: Oh, my Sister! Oh, my blood Sister!!

Kike: (*Ignoring Gbenga*) Worst still, the younger ones among us are tender but poisonous. We generally give our boobs out to willing hyenas in men's masks to suck. We also help, as others, to spread the gospel of end-time, a cul-de-sac.

Gbenga: Oh, my Sister, the only Daughter of my Mother!

Kike: We await death because our colleagues in the trade of sex are

dying daily from the brutal claws of AIDS.

All: Why trading in prostitution?

Kike: Most of you will think it is because of money, but you miss the point. Mine is an inheritance from my mother. I made so much money but I can't just leave this trade. Most of my friends have hot pants and they can't do without men, money or no money. Others in our unfortunate association see this trade as 'belonging', those who have 'arrived' and 'belonged' to the higher social level of the society. This is the tragedy of our social amnesia.

All: What is the way out of this malaise?

Kike: Self-awareness through education. The strengthening of religious and cultural instructions, voluntary HIV test to confirm HIV status, adequate medication, condemnation of stigmatisation...

All: What about the need to adequately fund NGOs on HIV and AIDS?

Kike: (*Weeping*) Our sorrow, their joy. Their joy, our sorrow!

All: What are you talking about?

Kike: Our sorrow, their joy!

Our Sorrow, Their Joy

WATA members commune at stage-left. They are identified through WATA's Vests that they wear.

Player Two/WATA Member: The cheques have been coming in, I supposed?

Player Three/WATA Member: Trust Airegins, they are merciful people.

Player Eight/WATA Member: (*Opening the file in his hand*) At the last count, we have received sixteen cheques, cashed nine and the money in our accounts, from International, National and Local Donors is now seven hundred million naira!

Player Seven/WATA Member: Since six of us are the founding members of WATA, I am of the opinion that we should retain one hundred million naira for staffing, campaign expenses and other logistics, while the remaining six hundred million naira should be shared equally among the six of us...

Player Eight/WATA Member: No suggestion could have been better! (*Song of HIV now briefly rents the air and this is overtaken by the arrangement of human beings, as chairs and tables for a conference. Nike is dragged back to the stage and WATA members lead the impressive campaign on AIDS, sharing lines between the stage audience and the live audience while an Old Man, among the Players, in white attire, conspicuously displays expensive Airegins clothes of the major ethnic groupings which he dramatically puts on WATA members after line rendition*).

Player Seven/WATA Member: My good people of Airegin, I greet you!

All: We greet you too!

Player Seven/WATA Member: It has been confirmed by experienced health workers and a gifted scientist that AIDS is real...

Player Three/WATA Member: As a full blooded African man who believes in African metaphysics, African myth of creation, African myth of death and destiny, African philosophy and

African socialism, I did not believe in HIV but my good people of Airegin, Madam Nike's case is a clear testimony, she has been infected by the deadly virus of HIV and believe me, AIDS is real.

All: (*Nodding*) AIDS is real?

Player Eight/WATA Member: Yes. I must remind you of Reid's publication of the 1970s and secondly of course, the much celebrated Global 2000 report and importantly as well, the Visna Theory...

All: What is Visna Theory?

Player Eight/WATA Member: "Visna is a virus that affects the central nervous system of sheep, robbing their body of immunity with accompanying symptoms of progressive weakness, shortness of breath. A sagging withers and a dropping head with a resultant paresis and paralysis of the skeletal muscles and then..."

Player Six/WATA Member: And then death. I must also tell you people that there have been serious research efforts to foreground the historical origin of HIV. In fact, the "Visna Theory was the focus of studies in the late 1950s in several centres including Fort Detrick, Maryland". Paradoxically, we joked initially with that theory...

Player Three/WATA Member: HIV goes beyond blasphemy, Western rhetoric or supernatural attacks and whether the claim of Michael Gottlieb and Dr. Robert Gallo that identified "this disease in a white homosexual" is real or not, there is a base-line and the base-line is that...

Player Six/WATA Member: AIDS is real and its cure has not been found.

Nike: (*Struggling to come to life*) Very well then, your people have,

African socialism, I did not believe in HIV but my good people of Airegin, Madam Nike's case is a clear testimony, she has been infected by the deadly virus of HIV and believe me, AIDS is real.

All: (*Nodding*) AIDS is real?

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Nike: (*Struggling to come to life*) Very well then, your people have,

however, made millions of naira from me and uncountable people infected with HIV...

Player Eight/WATA Member: (*To the audience*) Don't mind her, she is presently going through a serious psychological disorder as a result of the destruction of her immune system...

Nike: (*Dragging herself to meet Player Eight, she is furious*) Sàngó will strike you hundred times. Ògún will kill you and your meat will be used to feed his dogs!

All: Why the curses? Madam, why?

Nike: (*Clearing her throat*) Our sadness, my people, is these people's joy. I went to my Medical Doctor one day and he gave me so many drugs and even prescribed that I should use them immediately.

All: So, what is the problem?

WATA Members: (*Panting*) Ignore this lunatic!

All: Allow her to speak!

Nike: I was curious but I took all the drugs...

All: Go on. Tell us your stories!

Nike: I nearly lost my life in the process. However, my elder sister took me to the clinic of her family doctor who later transferred my case to one of the National HIV Centres at Nadabi...

WATA Members: (*Campaigning*) AIDS is real. Abstinence is the best solution. If you cannot, then condomise.

All: (*Rampaging at WATA members*) Shut up, all of you. Madam Nike, speak on!

Nike: It was confirmed that WATA members who have been using me as an instrument of money-making, collided with their anointed Medical Doctor to kill me through overdose! They have poisoned and injected many of us to death through many cruel ways!

All: (*Exasperated*) What? Why are people so wicked!

Nike: In fact, they video-tape us everyday and send the cassette abroad to collect money from sincere and humanity – oriented sponsors but when money is received on our behalf, the same money is used to speed up our death.

All: Is it true, WATA members?

WATA Members: (*Slowly*) Man must survive...

Old Man: (*Moving round*) Man must survive on another man's blood? Only for a season...

All: Baba, say what you want to say!

Old Man: Some NGOs on HIV and AIDS are good and they still uphold...

All: No, Baba! Majority of them are populated by thieves playing the smart game...

Nike: Whether NGO, OGN, GNO or government O, most of them, with due respect to a very few, are usually made up of smart robbers, playing the smart game by wearing the mask of purity. We are living in the dark times! Surveyor Wale and eleven brilliant University undergraduate girl friends of his died of AIDS last year. The company of cobras that I am part of is rapidly giving way to death, a ruthless soul-taker. Ebun, unknown to her, is awaiting death, a ripe and ready instrument for the grave. AIDS is real. No cure has been found and I await my death...

WATA Members: (*Beating Nike and the Old Man*) Two of you will die today! Must you people expose us?

All: (*Overpowering WATA members*) Instead, it is you people who

will die! (*General confusion, fighting*).

Old Man: (*Pleading*) Stop this nonsense, everybody!

WATA Members: Useless Old Man. You are the one who set this ball of confusion rolling!

All: (*Pushing WATA members out of the stage*) You people belong elsewhere, not here, go out!

Old Man: Let me make a few remarks. There must be restitution before forgiveness...

All: You are correct!

Player Eight: (*Gradually removing his clothes as one of the WATA members*) One day, solution and permanent cure will be found to HIV and AIDS and that time, this play of yours will have no place in the hearts of our distinguished audience...

Old Man: No and no! This satire will still be relevant. HIV or no HIV, the message here goes beyond AIDS alone.

Player Eight: Tell me, just one other message of this play...

All: Evils of prostitution...

WATA Members: And what?

All: The danger of keeping bad company!

WATA Members: And what?

All: The virus of bribery and corruption, the case of Chief Olowolayemo and Surveyor Wale.

WATA Members: And so what?

All: The danger of playing the smart game with people's lives which is the crux of the matter!

WATA Members: No and no! (*Confusion, fighting, abuse and unfounded innuendoes rap through idiomatic mannerisms*).

Old Man: Stop fighting and let us end this play.

All: Who are we to say no to you!

Lead Drummer: (*Facing the audience and drumming proverbially*). We hope that we have sufficiently entertained you?

All: Not only the audience, we have entertained ourselves too!

Lead Drummer: Let us move on to the critical recalling curtain call aesthetics.

And the Critical Recalling Curtain Call Aesthetics

Celebration time. Players are running on a spot. Dramatic actions here must be weaved through high tempo and rhythm without giving it 'a mechanical speed'.

Nike: (*Jumping and coordinating*) To end this play, I think that we have to return to the basis.

All: We are with you totally, tell us what to do!

Nike: Where is Chief Olowolayemo?

Olowolayemo: (*Ghost-like. He enters from backstage*) I am here and I thought that I have played my own part. Why are you calling me again? Do you still want us to continue our illicit affairs?

Nike: Die and let us accept the fact that Ebun has just used 'Maagun' on you...

Olowolayemo: (*Somersaulting and crowing intermittently*) Ebun, please go and call Fagbemi for me for I must not die.

Ebun: (*Walking like a necrophilia in front of other Players*) It is pay back time, greet my husband for me when you reach heaven...

Fourth Policeman: (*Dragging Ebun*) Let us go to the station so that you can document your confession...

Hassan: (*Stopping the Policemen and Ebun*) So, ladies and gentlemen, our community of Ajuba lost two people to greed, discontentment, poverty and beauty and as you sit down there watching us tell this true life story with numerous theatrical embellishments and technical trappings, there are many Ebuns among you...

Ebun: (*Laughing and taking a bow*) Stop disgracing me openly for the play has ended. Ebun is now languishing in jail after contacting the dreaded HIV virus...

Hassan: (*Smiling and pointing at the audience*) Majority of you do worse things than Nike the professional married prostitute in our play...

Nike: (*Holds Ebun and bowing*) Don't call a dog a bad name simply because you want to hang it, I am only acting my part, and if I succeeded in convincing Ebun to join the trade of prostitution then, Ebun is an accomplice in the fact of...

Players: Prostitution!

Hassan: The rich men among you too should beware for greed kills.

Olowolayemo: (*Waking up*) Life is sweet, very sweet and the inferno in hell is terrible. Still, we are in the majority compared with the few people who are in heaven. (*Voice rising*) The devil has used me and made me to believe that money is everything! Now, I know better (sings the **Song of those who own the World and takes a bow**).

Oloriebi: (*Enters from backstage with a whip*) Heaven was a good place to be but where is Ebun?

Ebun: (*Pleading*) The only sweet thing in my life, the father of my children, forgive me! Renew me! Refresh me! Re-marry me!

Oloriebi: (*Moving round*) No more Nike's house for she is a prostitute...

Ebun: Yes, the owner of my head.

Oloriebi: Love is a gift...

Ebun: I give you, you give me.

Oloriebi: You humble me, humble you must I (*Oloriebi and Ebun sing the **Song of the Singing Beads** and bow. Kike and Gbenga run to the stage*).

Kike: Stupid boy...

Gbenga: Stupid girl. I am going to the farm.

Kike: Greet the animals there for me! (*Kike and Gbenga hug each other and bow*).

Olowolayemo: I need the C-of-O to that land!

Surveyor Wale: Impossible!

Olowolayemo: I will give you four hundred and fifty thousand naira for this job...

Surveyor Wale: You will have the C. of O. next week (*Smiles and takes a bow*).

Thug Four: Slowly, mildly yet brutally, the Chief suggests...

Thug One: (*Hugging Kike*) We are not here to hurt a pretty girl like you (*The Four Thugs sing the **Song of the Disobedient Man**, dance to it and bow*).

Babalawo: You must not sleep with Ebun for seven days and you must be very smart to play this smart game (*He sings the **Song of the Dishonest Ifa Corpus**¹⁷ and takes a bow*).

Old Man: (*Laughing*) *Ceteris paribus...*

All: (*In celebration mood*) All things being equal...

Old Man: *Que sera sera...*

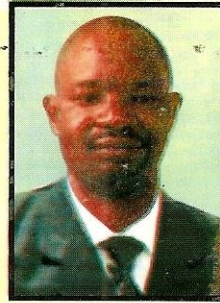
All: What will be will be...

Old Man: And after the dark tunnel, there will always be light at the end of the day for a joyful celebration. Let us reflect very critically about the beauty of history. We can learn, unlearn and relearn from it. The future has always been our hope but we often forget that today is the future. Since today started from yesterday, hopefully or hopelessly, the future will be determined by the events of today and beyond the fantasy of this satirical pun, *que sera sera...*

All: (*Forming an arc, they hold themselves, jump up in unison and bow*) What will be will be! For all wagging tongues will cease one day!

END

AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye's *The Smart Game* is an experimental re-invention and reconstruction of the Brechtian theatre. Within the creative resources of verbal and non-verbal theatricals, this play critically revives the dying culture of experimental theatre in the Nigerian theatre. Adeoye's dramaturgy is simply effective, successful, affordable yet didactic. His narration, though coloured in multi-rhythmic aesthetics is also intellectually gripping and satirically captivating. Deliberately created with linguistic and poetic uniqueness that alternates between crisp prose and sharp poetry, Adeoye has clearly shown that he is a humble writer of a few but philosophically penetrating words.



In this play, the topical issues of bribery and corruption, laziness and poverty, prostitution and H.I.V. health hazard and so on are weaved through the single tread and motif of man's inhumanity to man. Thus, this play is strongly recommended as a resource material for students, dramatists and scholars of life and letter. Let there be no out-pouring of emotions, the point of focus should never be lost. The society, our society is saturated with uncountable Olowolayemos, Ebuns, Nikes, Kikes and the notorious WATA members disturbing us. However, the playwright's call for a stoppage to these social banalities should never be ignored in our march towards a prosperous society.



A Nigerian, from Osun State, AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye is a vibrant scholar, a willing researcher, social crusader, public analyst, television presenter, playwright and experimental director who has directed numerous plays in the African (Ngugian, Fugardian, Rotimian, Soyinkaerian, Osofisanerian) and Western theatre traditions round the Nigerian nation.

Adeoye holds two Master Degrees and a Ph.D in Theatre Arts from the prestigious University of Ibadan. He has published locally, nationally and internationally. He is a member of many social and academically related organisations such as (SONTA, ASAN, NAPSAS, ANA, IFT – International Federation of Translators) and so on. He is also happily married and blessed with wonderful children.



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