

The Killers

(A Social Drama)



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Prologue

Beyond the calculated rhythm of the drums...

The harmonious tune of the Wazobian National Anthem vibrates intermittently in the auditorium to punctuate the serene atmosphere. Consequently, Nine radiant Dancers swing to the tune of the Anthem from the Auditorium and move to the stage, talking generally and joyously about "The Annual Independence Competition". Lights bring in Ahmed, Emeka and Lanwa donning Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba costumes respectively. Obviously, they are the leaders of the Nine Dancers. Through choreographed movements, they sing and dance to the song of "We Match on":

With the fullness of joy
And the wonderful gift of nature,
We match on in unity
Not minding our tribulations
To build a giant nation...

Drummer One: (Smiling, drumming and talking at the Orchestra Pit) Clearly, this is a good song. But don't forget that most of the celebrated annual carnivals are within the socio-cultural terrain of different people of the world, changing and taking different forms...

Drummer Two: (Cuts in) We should therefore join the amicable Dancers on stage to celebrate our annual legacy, the Annual Independence Competition with a short dance competition before we begin to untie the riddles in today's night...

Drummer One: The enviable night of "The Killers". (Drumming the special number of "Àwa Làgbà" and concluding it with "Kówókówó" professionally):

Àwa làgbà x2ce:	We are the elders-the-leaders x2ce
Adire funfun làgbà adire:	White fowl is the leader of all fowls
Àwa làgbà x2ce:	We are the elders-the-leaders x2ce
Adire funfun làgbà adire:	White fowl is the leader of all fowls.
Kówókówó x2ce:	Let it fall x2ce

Àràbà ò wó mó:
Ojú ti irókò:
Kówókówó:

Àràbà trees no longer falling
Shame to iókò tree
Let it fall

Drummer Two: (Dancing) Thank you my celebrated Drummer. Without your sound of wisdom and your proverbial voice, this world will be a difficult place to live. I have never doubted your skills and dexterity. They make my day, revive my culture and in spite of the power of globalisation, your sound swells my head and turns me into a new baby. Look, you are giving me a great fun!

Drummer One: You have done well but save the remaining dance for the real Dancers on stage...

Dancers: We are waiting. Let us make a profound meaning out of your sound.

Drummers: We concur and we are certain that the audience too can no longer wait for the majestic night of "The Killers".

(A brief dance competition between the Dancers of Emeke, Lanwa and Ahmed. The dance of one group overlaps into the other and a Golden Trophy and Bundles of Naira Notes are conspicuously displayed on the table. The Orchestra supplies related local songs in three major Wazobian languages).

Ahmed: (Jubilating) Yes, we should win. *Walaitala! i*, we have the best spectacle and should win...

Emeka: You think that jumping up and down like hungry monkeys is all about dance? Besides, your dance is uncoordinated and untheatrical. The audience reacted spontaneously while we were dancing. We are the winner... the ultimate winner...

Ahmed: (Charging at Emeka) And you think that violent stamping of feet like elephants makes you people good dancers? Why can't you accept that we have won?

Lanwa: Won what? No! I arranged my songs and dance movements better. Head or tail, we shall win. In the beginning (Demonstrating) we were slow, moving majestically to the

rhythm of breeze. Later, we were up, bending our buttocks in the process and finally, I say, finally, we moved down, deep to earth (Looking at the audience amorously, he sings “*Bériwá e yòmó wa*”):

Bériwá e yòmó wa:	Be happy with us when you see us
Sèsè lomodé yò méye:	With deep joy – the little child felicitates with bird
Sèsè x2ce:	With deep joy x2ce
Sèsè lomodé yò méye:	With deep joy – the little child felicitates with bird
Sèsè 2ce:	With deep joy x2ce

All: No way! (As the Three Lead Dancers rush to pick the Golden Trophy, Efik, Nupe and Edo Lead Dancers run to the stage and confusion sets in with echoes of yes and no).

Efik Lead Dancer: (Mimicking) Yoruba...Igbo, Igbo...Yoruba. Hausa...Yoruba. Hausa...Igbo...Yoruba, this cultural conspiracy against the minority must stop (Dancing). Minority rights must be guaranteed.

Nupe Lead Dancer: (Dancing) Create an enabling environment for competition and see if the lion will not tame the dog or if the lizard will not be made food for cat. Enough of these grand deceptions!

Edo Lead Dancer: Or if the child will not prostrate to his father. Enough of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa's cultural stereotype. (Shaking) No tribe under the sun is culturally richer than Edo. We are the heart of culture and...

All: No!

Edo Lead Dancer: Why?

All: (Agitating) We say no. Let all of us dance separately and allow the audience to judge.

Lanwa: What tune and what music are we going to dance to?

Emeka: *Ikolo*, the drum of the knowledgeable.

All: No!

Ahmed: *Goje*, a string of joy.

All: No!

Lanwa: Then, *Bàtá*, a fast rhythmic tempo of the fiery king.

All: No! (Fighting, general brandishing of pistols, confusion. Follow-spot picks Narrator One from the middle of the Auditorium coughing and nodding to the stage. The Dancers freeze on stage).

Part One

Those who have ears...

Narrator One: Those metallic smiles must stop. They must stop immediately! I want those pretentious dances and music to stop (Walking to the Orchestra). All those pretenses buried and hidden under your fingernails must be removed (The Drummers hiss at the Narrator and he moves swiftly to harass the Dancers on stage). Why, why must you dance in the face of agonies and crises? Yet you are already bleating like castrated animals. Why must you laugh and hiss when the nation is on fire? Are you people not aware that the avengers are on the loose? (The Dancers hiss at him and he drives them out of the stage, nods and looks indifferently at the audience. He speaks affectionately and demonstrates his actions). Yes, we have watched so many of them and together we have all screamed with laughter, we laughed. We clapped to the rhythmical movement of body, we clapped. We smiled to the artistic ingenuity of actors, we smiled. This is the majestic night of truth, a night where there is no place to hide... a night you should not see our discussions as mere effusions or our drama as mere illusions...

Narrator Two: (Walking slowly to the stage from the crash door). I know that you have loads of metaphors on your head which you want to deliver but let me help you to talk part of your talk, to help you to open the sealed ears of the complacent with scathing words and to sound a note of warning to the

agents of violence...

Narrator One: (Smiling at Narrator Two) Welcome and thank you for showing great concern in the affairs of Wazobia land. Don't just help me to talk part of my talk, add, in the profoundest sense, your own language for laughter is not love. If you want to be comical, be ... but don't allow that to affect the crucial issue at hand. If your voice is, however, going to be lyrical, be ... but code and colour your thoughts in punching satire. Be rich in thoughts, be fast in speaking, be clear in delivery and be audible in pronunciation. Speak the modern English accentlessly yet do not corrupt the local dialects that you will encounter in this play. Be what you should be: a profound weaver of modern story, of reality.

Narrator Two: (Clearing his voice and jiggling round the stage) Theatre historians told us that the performers of Shakespeare and Moliere passed the acting litmus test, I shall pass yours meritoriously today...

Narrator One: What are you waiting for then? Talk to my people about the evil called violence. Let them know that peace radiates progress and prosperity while violence is a noxious stench of destruction, the last call to death.

Narrator Two: (Speaking to the audience) Mothers of my father's country, put on your thinking caps. Those stale news sonorously delivered before by Newscasters about killing and kidnapping, bombing and burning which we fictionally watched as films are now a reality in our country ...

Narrator One: (Agitated) But we laugh and smile, smile and laugh and in the face of violence we remain indifferent, unpatriotic and sentimental to the unethical tragic wailing. Put on your thinking caps.

Narrator Two: Children of my mother's womb,
The pride of my father's land...
Your grievances may be genuine,
You may be robbed and punished...

You may be suffering unjust cause,
 Don't put a spoke in your wheel by taking
 The laws into your hands...
 Seeking redress through the legal means
 Does not make you a coward—the real
 Coward is the one that hides to
 Destroy, to kill and punish
 This is the truth which fears no colour
 Oh yes, adjust yourselves to the night of
 The Killers by turning a new leaf.

Narrator One: Let us all turn a new leaf... (Rancorous voices of “Enough is Enough” and “We no go gree” echo from the auditorium. The Two Drummers run to the stage with their drums).

Drummers: (Low voice) They are at it again!

Narrators: Who?

Drummers: The local rascals calling themselves students' leaders.

All: (Talking to the audience and running backstage) The play will resume after this brief interlude. We must live so as to tell you this story!

Unionism as gangsterism

Students carry various dangerous instruments to the stage, singing solidarity songs and discussing their catalogue of woes. Five Students and the S.U.G. President drag some University Workers to the stage, beating them, giving them raw yam to eat and urine to drink, a celebration of confusion.

S.U.G. President: Great Wazobian Students!

Students: Great...

S.U.G. President: Greatest Wazobian Students!

Students: Great...

S.U.G. President: Ever conscious, ever militant, ever articulate Wazobian Students!

Students: Great!

S.U.G. President: I want to yarn!

Students: Yarn!!

S.U.G. President: I want to elucidate!

Students: Elucidate!!

S.U.G. President: I want to vibrate!

Students: Vibrate!!

S.U.G. President: I want to inform!

Students: Inform!!

S.U.G. President: The time has come

The moment is today
We have to decide today
Change our destiny today and
Continue to live happily today
Everything must be done today

Reasonable time has been wasted on consultations with the university administrators. So, after the consideration of our positions...confrontation is the only way out. We will damage vehicles and create general pandemonium in the university community. "Aluta Continua, Victoria Ascerta". (Various Aluta songs violently rush out of the Students' mouths. While they are running out of the stage, the Orchestra sings):

Jaw-jaw-Jaw
Wazobians not
War-war-war (2ce)
Talk-talk-talk
Wazobians Don't
Fight war.
Jaw-jaw-Jaw
Wazobians not
War-war-war!

Narrator One: (In the middle of the auditorium, walks slowly to the stage) Are these university students or bandits?

Orchestra: We don't know! But your uncle's son is one of them...

Narrator One: How do these notorious gangsters gained admission into the university in the first place? Is the society not considering the risk profile of these misfits to the growth of our educational system?

Orchestra: We don't know! But the last child of your mother is one of them...

Narrator One: Okay, how do they manage to hijack the students' leadership? How?

Orchestra: We don't know! But your wife's sister is one of them...

Narrator One: Can you then break out of your conspiracy to sing with me?

Orchestra: We will join you to sing!

Narrator One: Whenever these students sing "*Aluta! Aluta!!*" to energise their zest for destruction, don't join them but rather, sing a newly created and progressive song to cool their restlessness and unnecessary radicalism (Singing '*Aloha-Aloha*' with the Orchestra):

Hi-Hi-Oh!

Aloha-Aloha

Hi-Hi-Oh!

Aloha-Aloha

Aloha continues - victory is certain!

Hi-Hi-Oh!

Aloha-Aloha!

Can't reason prevail?

In a commando-like, four heavily armed but neatly dressed Kidnappers fire indiscriminately to secure themselves. Frantic plea of "Don't kill us", "We will pay the ransom demanded", and "Niger-Delta will be better" in sorrowful American English echo from the backstage.

Azome: (Instructing Omare) Go and silence that criminal leader of the American Expatriates' Workers calling himself Chief Stephen Gold.

Omare: (Deadly) To mock our traditional institution, he said that he is the second-in-command to the King of Bonny Kingdom. (Runs backstage) Consider him dead!

Alaibe: (Shouting and screaming) They have turned our plights into political rhetoric. Every ruler now and then usually promises us heaven on earth and when they ascend the throne, we are easily forgotten like unripe paw-paw. In fact, there was a particular President who ruled the Wazobian nation like an estate although with so many reform programmes that eventually reformed the masses to their early graves. He called us ungrateful wretch for daring to fight. He threatened to kill us and warned our leaders to learn from Saro Wiwa's political suicide. Above all (Laughing) he said that he saw hope for a united Wazobia...

Ekpebide: Can there be hope for a united Wazobia without social justice? Is social justice not the basic tonic for an egalitarian society? Hope, whose hope?

Tarila: (Facing Ekpebide) Throw that question to the audience who have conspired to kill the truth!

Ekpebide: (Resisting) But they don't know us!

Azome: (Sarcastic) They do. They know that we are the third class citizens in the Wazobian project, the natural owners of their main source of income. Don't give a devil's verdict, they know us...

Ekpebide: (To the audience) You call us kidnappers...

Alaibe: But we are the forgotten souls from the Niger-Delta...

Azome: You said that we are bandits and rouges but...

Ekpebide: We only demanded for the control of our resources...

Alaibe: After years of environmental degradation and...

Azome: Political suppression that has rubbished Machiavelli's expanse of deceptions in his monarchical splendor, after...

Ekpebide: After years of systemic elimination of our true leaders through divide and rule, a deliberate continuation of the Lugardian political manifesto!

Alaibe: We live in the creeks where we cannot afford the luxury of lives. But...

Azome: (Points to the audience) Most of you said that we must unite like a bunch of broom so as to defend the Wazobian project...

Alaibe: That we must be hungry and angry with words and actions of unity... Wazobian project....

Azome: Whose project? Whose unity?

Ekpebide: (Slowly) Your actions and misdeeds have coloured you people in the toga of disunity. Call a white spade a white spade and avoid unnecessary diplomatic niceties, Niger-Delta stinks.

Azome: (Calling) Omare! Do your work before I build my anger and bring one of those awaiting death out for public execution!

Omare: (Loud sound of gun shot is heard backstage and Omare speaks from backstage) Dead already. He begged me but I went ballistic. (Dragging Mr. Wood to the stage) He is one of the termites that has built castle in our land while we rot away, hemmed down by poverty and rejected like rags.

Alaibe: (Facing Mr. Wood) Why is your company not environmentally friendly? Why are your workers not equally treated?

Mr. Wood: (Shivering) We are trying...

Azome: Silence him!

Orchestra: (Running to the stage) Free him! Mr. Wood must live!! No more violence, peace must reign.

Azome: (Crying and running to stop the Orchestra, he sings Peter

Tosh's song slowly and other Kidnappers emotionally join him in singing the song): "Everybody is crying out for peace, no one is crying out for justice. I don't want no peace, I mind equal right and justice". Mr. Wood must die! (They drag Mr. Wood to the backstage. The Orchestra retaliates with another song):

Chorus: Don't do it
Wazobians don't do it
Stop those things
Wazobians stop those things...

Solo: I am shaking
You are fearing
We are weeping
For the killing
And the burning
For the looting
And the bombing...

Chorus: Don't do it
Wazobians don't do it.

Narrator Two: (Moving through the auditorium, sober) Can't reason prevail? Two wrongs can never make a right, never! Or is killing the white innocent workers the solution to the Niger-Delta problem? I want answers...

Narrator One: (Joining Narrator Two) Has any war ever been fought and won on the battle-field? We want social justice, equity and decency but can't we meet genuinely at the conference table to iron out these problems? My message is clear, violence begets violence and we say no to violence. (Rumbling in the house).

Killing to sell God

An Imam leads Muslim Worshippers through the right crash door to the stage. They recite *Kalimat Shahaadat*:

Ash-hadu allaa ilaaha illaa Allah

Wahadahu laa shareeka llahu

Wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan

'Abduhu wa rasuuluhu

*Laa ilaaha illaa Allah
Allahu akbar kabeeran.*

(At the same time, a Clergyman leads Christian Worshipers through the left crash door to the stage. They recite the *Lord's Prayer*):

*Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive
Every one that is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver
Us from evil.*

Clergyman: (Preaching) For God so loved the world that he gave his only beloved son to whom...

Imam: (Preaching) Belief in the supremacy and oneness of the Almighty Allah, pray five times daily, don't associate any other god with Allah and...

(Charged atmosphere. The two groups mock each other, daggers are drawn. Special drum sound announces the majestic entrance of the Cult Leader and his members who threaten the Christian and Muslim Worshipers. Fighting resumes momentarily while the Orchestra sings "Don't Kill Them" to re-invent the chaotic situation):

*Don't kill them my brothers
Don't kill them (2ce)
Let them live
My brothers
Let them live...
Don't kill them my brothers
Don't kill them.*

(Dim lights and flicker).

Money, the root of all evils

Two Drummers drag each other with their drums through the auditorium to the stage.

Drummer One: All that I know is that you cannot take all the money given to us...

Drummer Two: Why? Don't you know that I entered the professional market of drumming before you?

Drummer One: The world is a market place and we have just come to trade. This is a professional matter, give me my money!

Drummer Two: Professionalism indeed (Throws his drum up and catches it stylishly). You are a drummer of yesterday. I must take all the money!

Drummer One: You can drum, I can drum better. I can make proverbs, idioms and figurative expressions with my drum. You must give me my money (Drumming incessantly. Shortly drums are dropped and the two Drummers engage in traditional wrestling. The Orchestra sings "*Akítì lóle jà*"):

Mo ní tá ló le jà?: I want to know who can fight?

Akítì lóle jà: It is Akítì who can fight

Ìjà ló le jà: Fight alone he can fight

Akítì lóle jà: It is Akítì who can fight

Ìjà ló le jà: Fight alone he can fight

Mo ní tá ló le jà?: I want to know who can fight?

Akítì lóle jà: It is Akítì who can fight

Narrator One: (Walking slowly to the stage) Stop and don't move. Human greed is a stigma that has selfishness as its brother. I preach fairness, unity and egalitarianism but you clamour for violence...

Drummer One: Egalitarianism! Fairness!! What manner of unity? Is it the one that one man will assume that he is the Alpha and Omega? Or unity which is anchored on the crest of social justice, equality and fairness?

Narrator One: Swallow the rest. You can drum, he is also a drummer. Wait until you reach another man's farm before

you conclude that your father has the largest farm! (Goes to the Orchestra and takes three musical instruments to the stage. The two Drummers look on disdainfully) I have travelled far and wide. (To the audience) *Ndigbo Kwenu?*

All: *Kwezoeenu!!*

Narrator One: I understand the *Ikolo* language of the Ndigbo (Ikolo is played and Emeka dances from the auditorium to the stage).

Emeka: (Giving money to Narrator One) What I love most is seeing people of other tribes celebrating my culture as if they are my tribesmen. I read through them, the universality of the Igbo culture.

Narrator One: *Wayo Allah! Ubangiji Allah!! Mutane Arewa!*

All: *Hee! Eee!! Heeei! Mu gode Muna gesheka.*

Narrator One: (Plays calabash or *Goje* to the admiration of Ahmed who dances from the auditorium to the stage) That is my young Mallam from the North.

Ahmed: You are a detribalised Wazobian. You are tolerant and patriotic. Allah, I like people like you (Gives money to Narrator One).

Narrator One: *Èdá Omo Odùduwà! Odù tó dá Ìwà!!*

All: *Oo! Ooo!! OOOo!*

Narrator One: (*Gangan* drum is played and Lanwa enters through the crash door and sprays Narrator One with money) My great Brother from the West, you are welcome.

Lanwa: Your drum is indeed speaking. It is the symbol of our cultural existence. The tune is absolutely wonderful, linguistically entertaining and emotionally arousing. You are great (Narrator One gives some money to the Drummers).

All: You are great ... you are born great.

Narrator One: To be great is my aspiration for all. Call Wazobia a

child of necessity, it must survive. Borrow new lexicon from your various languages, restructure your semantics or better still, give it a new paradigm, it must survive. If you call that amalgamation a political hara-kiri or condemn the creator of regionalism, parliamentarianism and federalism, this baby despised by her people must grow. (Voice rising and walking away) We want to begin another dance, the dance of survival, of peace and progress without violence...

Drummer One: Old man, what about the agony of the civil war? The cry of marginalisation, economic exploitation, educational domination, and...

Narrator Two: (Speaking from the auditorium to the stage. He carries two big bags containing costumes) And What? Speak more and hit the nail on the head! Tell us more about our monumental failures...

Drummer One: The unanswered fears of the minority...

Narrator Two: And what...

Ahmed: The extreme struggle for political power...

Narrator Two: Is that all?

Emeka: No! And the Khaki men, including the politicians who speak in tongues and...

Lanwa: The settlement syndrome which has made life difficult for the masses.

Narrator Two: Thank you all. We are all part of the systemic rots and together we must use our clout to cleanse the system. I know that things have turned upside down and are waiting to be salvaged and re-ordered. (Mimicking) The leaders are bad – the leaders are bad... our leaders are bad – our leaders are bad...what about the followers? If the leaders are bad – the followers are also bad! Bad followers will definitely produce bad leaders. In our land, our streets are the relics of our glorious past. The lame leads the blind and the dumb in the game of survival. Our forefathers are angry because there

is no peace in the land. (Looks round the actors and gives them their costumes in a big bag he is holding. He assists in dressing them up) You (Pointing and walking towards Emeka) should act as Major General. (Pulls Lanwa out) The role of an Executive Messenger will fit you. Ahmed and the two Drummers should act as the Director, Deputy Director and the General Manager respectively. I will act as the Diviner with the assistance of my friend, Narrator One (Background music plays casually).

Emeka: Our costumes are befitting. A writer once said that “the more quickly and peaceably we all get on, the better. The better for ourselves the better for our neighbours”.

Ahmed: What of the syndrome of violence which has taken over the entire world? (All the Players except Narrator Two exit).

Narrator Two: That is why we need to be culturally, socially and educationally engineered about the joy of peace. Yes, Pope John Paul II recounted during the First World War that: (The speech below echoes from the loud speaker) “Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence is a crime against humanity, for it destroys the very fabric of society... (Narrator Two kneels down gradually) on my knees I beg you to turn away from the part of violence”.

Part Two

Movement one

Slow sounds of background music rhythmically emerge. Centre stage is the Director's office.

Messenger: (Advertising) Wazobia Merit International! In cargo packaging we lead. In technical manpower we are masters! (Pacing up and down) Our staff strength is equal to none...

Director: (Enters through the backstage and laughs at the Messenger) How are you?

Messenger: (Surprised) Good morning, sir...

Director: Call the Deputy Director and the General Manager for me.

Messenger: Yes, sir (Disappears through the backstage).

Director: (Goes through the files) The Wazobian government with one draconian decree or the other. Well, God is always in control! (The Deputy Director and the General Manager enter through the backstage).

Deputy Director: Good morning, sir.

Director: Morning to you.

General Manager: I salute o, *Oga*!

Director: Morning, General Manager! Things are not easy as expected...

Deputy Director: What is the problem again, sir?

Director: It is the changing parable of the world. The world is a struggling place, a difficult place to live. We roll in our mothers' wombs for months and after birth, the child dramatically learns how to cry, when hungry, he becomes psychologically and emotionally disoriented. When the mother undergoes one expedition or the other, the child ululates like a woman under labour, whispers like a hunger-driven prisoner and nods like a lizard under intense heat. Life is a metamorphosis of struggle (Pensive). We Must work hard so as to meet the revenue target set for us by the Wazobian government.

General Manager: (Casual) Is that all?

Deputy Director: Twenty billion naira is a huge target to meet!

General Manager: I thought that we have other pressing matters to discuss. Let us move beyond the curiosity of that letter...

Director: Don't you know that generating revenue is our sole business here? The memo that I received from the office of the secretary to the Wazobian government needs a serious

examination. I believe you have all read it...

General Manager: That memo is meant for them, not for this corporation!

Director: It is purely meant for us. As executive directors, we should direct well and should not be dictators. We are all managers and should be men of honour not idlers. As builders, we must not destroy. During our undergraduate days, we wore the regalia of critics, shouting that criticism is a universal culture, condemning our leaders to the dustbin, antagonising them and accusing them of inefficiency and mismanagement. Now, I am proposing that redundant workers should be flushed out and that we must meet the revenue target set for us...

Deputy Director: You are right, sir. At school, we were baptised with philosophies and theoretical postulations. We adored Karl Marx and were in love with Aristotelian postulations. We must allow those postulations to move, speak and guide us.

General Manager: Well spoken. I could re-collect when the Director and I were reading Economics at the University...

Director: Yes, my Manager. That lecture you gave to the Ford Foundation Youth Wing when you were the President of National Association of Economics' Students was a fire of intellectualism, a weapon for youthful enlightenment and a package for social welfare. That lecture was deep, too close to reality.

General Manager: Thank you my Director. Then, I was the President, now, you are my Director how time changes!

Deputy Director: (Curious) You mean that you and the General Manager schooled together?

Director: Yes. That is to tell you why I exercised my discretion during the interview.

Deputy Director: I can now understand better. I was resolute that nobody would be employed as the General Manager without

Mind you, I was once a student leader in a foreign university and by the special grace of my living God, I remain the Director today. Be satisfied with your job.

General Manager: (Hesitates and shifts to another topic). Our expatriate partners have supplied those mechanical instruments!

Deputy Director: Better. Within the shortest time, operation will now resume at Warri branch of the corporation.

Director: That will give us additional revenue and a morale booster to the political contractors. I have booked with Wazobia Airline first to Kano, then to London via Amsterdam for a two day Leadership Training Course organised by the European Union for corporation directors.

All: Safe journey and God's blessing to you.

(Light fades gradually to illuminate Movement two).

Movement two

Props and costumes of a Yorùbá diviner. The Diviner sits at stage-right to perform some rituals. He speaks panegyrically.

Diviner: I laboured and laboured before I understood *Ifá*. I covered wretchedness before overcoming wretchedness. Ègbá language is not Òyó language, Òyó language is not Ègbá language, honour to Òrúnmìlà... Òrúnmìlà, let my blessings come (He bends forward and casts the cowries):

Iwájú opón:	The front of the oracle tray
Èyìn opón:	The back of the oracle tray
Olùmú lótùn:	Secret of the right
Olùkànràn lósi:	Secret of the left
Mó fíre pe ibi:	Don't call good for bad
Mó fíbi pe ire:	Or call bad for good
Mó fòlòlò pohùn:	Make yourself clearer
Ohun tí Ifá báwí ni oso:	Say what the oracle says.

(A knock)

Diviner: Enter

Messenger: Good evening, Baba!

Diviner: Good evening, my son.

Messenger: I am here because I want to succeed in life...

Diviner: Just like that? Then do the right thing and your success will know no bound.

Messenger: (The Messenger hums to a Two-hundred Naira Note and gives it to the Diviner who places it in the oracle tray) I must succeed.

Diviner: (Casts the cowries and speaks slowly) What? What can make you succeed in life is fame and wealth. Young man, your problem is money. (Casts the cowries with rapt attention) *Hunhun!* Very clear. I now see very clearly. *Ìwòrì Méjì?* Can you perform all the rituals?

Messenger: Just tell me. I will perform all the rituals better than you think. I am ready to say bye-bye to poverty...

Diviner: How old are you?

Messenger: Thirty-two years old...

Diviner: Can you get a fresh dead body?

Messenger: (Taken aback) A...fresh dead body? I... I will get it.

Diviner: It is done more secretly. Parley with those mortuary attendants, you will get a fresh dead body even at a cheaper rate.

Messenger: What is going to happen next?

Diviner: (Teasing) You are seated yet you are running.

Messenger: No. I am not. Can't you see my buttocks firmly rooted to your mat?

Diviner: Next time, learn how to hold your breath. There is danger in

speaking too much...

Messenger: Okay, Baba. I concur (Holding his mouth).

Diviner: We shall go to the forest-of-cult for rituals (Gives a lyrical rendition):

Ìbà ògún:

Ojú kíí pón alágbèdè:

Kó firin dúdú ro pupa:

Ojú kíí pón Olókun:

Ojú kíí pón Olósà:

Tòtún tòsì:

Leyelé fí nkóre wolé:

Adífá fún Òrúnmìlà:

Nígba tí ó nse iráhùn owó:

Àwon awo rè ní kó fomodé rúbo:

Praise to Ògún

Poverty will never grip the blacksmith

To use black iron to cast red iron

Poverty will never grip Olókun

Poverty will never grip Olósà

On both sides

The Pigeon comes home with wealth

Honour to Òrúnmìlà

When he needed money

His diviners demanded a little child

for sacrifice

Orchestra: Òrúnmìlà rúbo àrúyè: Òrúnmìlà carried out a successful sacrifice

Diviner: Wón ní kó feyelé rúbo: They demanded Pigeon for sacrifice

Orchestra: Òrúnmìlà rúbo àrúyè: Òrúnmìlà carried out a successful sacrifice

(The Diviner is singing and dancing to the song of "Bóbá wolúgbón")

Bóbá wolúgbón: If it pleases Olúgbón

Moní kó jí re: Let him wake up very well

Bóbá warèsà: If it pleases Arèsà

Kó lo sí isà ilè: Let him bury himself deep inside the earth

Bí èmi Fárínú: If I Fárínú

Bá ti jí o: Has woken up

Àbùsé bùsé (2ce): No more quarrel (2ce)

Messenger: (Surprised) Well done Baba! But Olúgbón and Arèsà are strong traditional personalities in Yoruba history of the past and the present?

Diviner: Now, I have grown beyond Olúgbón and Arèsà combined

Messenger: I don't know that you are this powerful and...

Diviner: I will be expecting you tomorrow. Go home and thi

deeply about the pains and dangers in the rituals for money.

(A knock)

Major General: Good afternoon, Baba...

Diviner: Afternoon to you, Officer.

Major General: Thank you. (Stares at the Messenger) Mr. Man, you work at Wazobia Merit International?

Messenger: Yes, sir.

Major General: Is the Director back?

Messenger: He will be back tomorrow.

Major General: What about the General Manager?

Messenger: He is around in the corporation staff quarters.

Major General: What is the number of his quarters?

Messenger: Block 4...

Major General: Do you know me?

Messenger: (Thinking) Yes, I do. I saw you with the President when he paid a short visit to our corporation last year. You were too aggressive and autocratic while controlling the surging crowd.

Major General: Good. I am Major General Andy. I will see you briefly at the office of the Director tomorrow. However (Pulling Lanwa's ear) never use the word autocracy again in your life. Our training partly depends on it!

Messenger: Yes, sir.

Major General: Take care of yourself (Gives money to the Messenger who leaves).

Diviner: From the way you interrogated that boy, I thought he had offended you...

Major General: No, Baba. We will use him. He is going to be an

instrument to the caucus. He is very smart...

Diviner: Your bulletproof charm is ready. (Digs into his bag and gives the charm to Major General) For your information, Ogún has blessed this charm...

Major General: (Suspicious) Baba, are you sure that this charm will work?

Diviner: By the special grace of God, Òrúnmilà and the uncountable metaphysical forces...

Major General: (Trickishly) Where did you say I... what am I saying, how do I use it?

Diviner: Tie it round your buttocks.

Major General: How? Baba, can you demonstrate how I am going to use it to me?

Diviner: (Takes the charm and ties it round his buttocks) Just like this.

Major General: And you think that bullets will not turn your body into shreds? (Smartly, he takes out a short pistol and attempts shooting at the Diviner severally without success).

Diviner: (Arrogantly) Impossible! No one uses the child of the cult to worship the cult. (Trance-like) Thank you my father, thank you for remembering that I am a child of the cult. I will never have pain. No pain will stop the offspring of Banana from ripping I cannot have pain. (The Orchestra turns the Diviner's words into song):

Ara ò gbodò romí:	I can never have pain
Èmi ò gbodò rí inira:	I must not have pain
Ìran ògèdè kíí sunkún àti dè:	No pain will stop the offspring of Banana from ripping
Ara ò gbodò romí o:	I can never have pain

Diviner: (Facing the Orchestra and the audience to sing and re-creates the same song for participatory effect) Tell me that it will come to pass...

Orchestra: *Á se !*

Diviner: (Singing) *Ara ò gbodò ro yín*

Orchestra: *Á se !*

Diviner: (Singing) *Èyin ò gbodò rí ìnira*

Orchestra: *Á se !*

Diviner: (Singing and dancing) Tell me that it will come to pass...

Orchestra: *Á se !*

Diviner: (Singing) *Íran ò gèdè kù sunkún àti dè, ara ò gbodò ro yín o*

Orchestra: *Á se !*

Major General: (Prostrating) Sorry Baba, I thought that you are one of those liars calling themselves diviners, I have seen it myself, it works. (Submissively) Forgive me.

Diviner: (Confidently) There you are! Because of Westernisation and the bastardisation of our heritage, you think that everybody will be submitting to the wave of corruption in the society?

Major General: Not so, Baba...

Diviner: How then, Major General?

Major General: Forgive me, Baba.

Diviner: Tradition is immutable. If you agree that culture is dynamic and non-static then, we must guard our tradition jealously. It is the tradition of my great grandfather who was a great diviner that we must be sincere and honest. That tradition is what I will not allow the weeping economy to change.

Major General: Sorry, Baba. But is our economy weeping?

Diviner: Our economy is not only weeping, it is dripping blood. However, for placing me on a doubtful list, you will pay more...

Major General: I am ready. (Laughing) Money is not my problem.

Production History

This play was first performed at the Little Play House of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Uyo, Nigeria on the 16th and 17th of April, 1998. It was directed by the Playwright with Anna Okon working as the Stage Manager. Some minor corrections have, however, been effected in this edition. The play has the following cast for the Uni-Uyo performances:

Drummer One/ Director/Ghost	Ugochi Ogan
Drummer Two/Deputy Director	Utibe Ubiam
Emeka/Major General	AniekanUmoh/Kusua Senam
Ahmed/General Manager	Angela Mbaba
Lanwa/Messenger	Enobong Umoh
Narrator One /Diviner	James Oyebanji
SUG President	Dominic Idio/Christopher John
Business Man	Asuquo Mbosowo
Cult Leader	Aniefiok Udombang
Contractor	Kusua Senam
Mr. Lover Lover	Godspower Isaac
Executive Director	David Umoh
King	Aniefiok Udombang
Tribal Politicians:	Elechi Ifeanyi, Etim Ekpeyong and Samuel Ukpong
Doctor	Dominic Idio
Prison Controller	Helen Akpan
Assassin	Chinyere Anosike
Bank Manager	Naomi Inyang

Bukola Arikenbi, Kemi Ayorinde, Okuawan Etim, Jessica Ikpo, Esther Akwang, Juliet Madubike, Udoka Aniche, Ekaete Friday, Esther Agomuo, Grace Ogoke, Esther Ozurigbo, Daisy Iroham, David Mandu, Chinyere Nwagboso, Osuigwe Obiageri, Uma Mkpanam, Andy Emeka, Victoria Inyang, Dominic Peter, Christopher John and other committed Students acted as Students, Political Assassin, Muslim and Christian Worshippers, Clergyman, Imam, Boys, Members of the Audience, University Workers, Mimers, Policemen, Dancers, Lead Dancers, Kidnappers, Drummers and the Orchestra.

Characters in the Play

Major Characters

Drummer One / Director / Ghost

Drummer Two / Deputy Director

Emeka / Major General

Ahmed / General Manager

Lanwa / Messenger

Narrator One / Diviner

Narrator Two / Diviner

Supporting Characters

SUG President, Azome, Omare, Alaibe, Ekpebide, Mr. Wood, Clergyman, Imam, Cult Leader, Contractor, Mr. Lover Lover, Executive Director, Political Assassin, Tribal Politicians, Doctor, Prison Controller, Assassin, Bank Manager, Students, University Workers, Muslim and Christian Worshippers, Boys, Members of the Audience, Mimers, Lead Dancers, Kidnappers, Dancers, Policemen, Drummers and the Orchestra.

Prologue

Beyond the calculated rhythm of the drums...

The harmonious tune of the Wazobian National Anthem vibrates intermittently in the auditorium to punctuate the serene atmosphere. Consequently, Nine radiant Dancers swing to the tune of the Anthem from the Auditorium and move to the stage, talking generally and joyously about "The Annual Independence Competition". Lights bring in Ahmed, Emeka and Lanwa donning Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba costumes respectively. Obviously, they are the leaders of the Nine Dancers. Through choreographed movements, they sing and dance to the song of "We Match on":

With the fullness of joy
And the wonderful gift of nature,
We match on in unity
Not minding our tribulations
To build a giant nation...

Drummer One: (Smiling, drumming and talking at the Orchestra Pit) Clearly, this is a good song. But don't forget that most of the celebrated annual carnivals are within the socio-cultural terrain of different people of the world, changing and taking different forms...

Drummer Two: (Cuts in) We should therefore join the amicable Dancers on stage to celebrate our annual legacy, the Annual Independence Competition with a short dance competition before we begin to untie the riddles in today's night...

Drummer One: The enviable night of "The Killers". (Drumming the special number of "Àwa Làgbà" and concluding it with "Kówókówó" professionally):

Àwa làgbà x2ce:	We are the elders-the-leaders x2ce
Adire funfun làgbà adire:	White fowl is the leader of all fowls
Àwa làgbà x2ce:	We are the elders-the-leaders x2ce
Adire funfun làgbà adire:	White fowl is the leader of all fowls.
Kówókówó x2ce:	Let it fall x2ce

Àràbà ò wó mó:	Àràbà tree is no longer falling
Ojú tí irókò:	Shame to irókò tree
Kówókówó:	Let it fall

Drummer Two: (Dancing) Thank you my celebrated Drummer. Without your sound of wisdom and your proverbial voice, this world will be a difficult place to live. I have never doubted your skills and dexterity. They make my day, revive my culture and in spite of the power of globalisation, your sound swells my head and turns me into a new baby. Look, you are giving me a great fun!

Drummer One: You have done well but save the remaining dance for the real Dancers on stage...

Dancers: We are waiting. Let us make a profound meaning out of your sound.

Drummers: We concur and we are certain that the audience too can no longer wait for the majestic night of "The Killers".

(A brief dance competition between the Dancers of Emeka, Lanwa and Ahmed. The dance of one group overlaps into the other and a Golden Trophy and Bundles of Naira Notes are conspicuously displayed on the table. The Orchestra supplies related local songs in three major Wazobian languages).

Ahmed: (Jubilating) Yes, we should win. *Walaitalahi*, we have the best spectacle and should win...

Emeka: You think that jumping up and down like hungry monkeys is all about dance? Besides, your dance is uncoordinated and untheatrical. The audience reacted spontaneously while we were dancing. We are the winner... the ultimate winner...

Ahmed: (Charging at Emeka) And you think that violent stamping of feet like elephants makes you people good dancers? Why can't you accept that we have won?

Lanwa: Won what? No! I arranged my songs and dance movements better. Head or tail, we shall win. In the beginning (Demonstrating) we were slow, moving majestically to the

rhythm of breeze. Later, we were up, bending our buttocks in the process and finally, I say, finally, we moved down, deep to earth (Looking at the audience amorously, he sings “*Bériwá e yòmó wa*”):

Bériwá e yòmó wa:	Be happy with us when you see us
Sèsè lomodé yò méye:	With deep joy – the little child felicitates with bird
Sèsè x2ce:	With deep joy x2ce
Sèsè lomodé yò méye:	With deep joy – the little child felicitates with bird
Sèsè 2ce:	With deep joy x2ce

All: No way! (As the Three Lead Dancers rush to pick the Golden Trophy, Efik, Nupe and Edo Lead Dancers run to the stage and confusion sets in with echoes of yes and no).

Efik Lead Dancer: (Mimicking) Yoruba...Igbo, Igbo...Yoruba. Hausa...Yoruba. Hausa...Igbo...Yoruba, this cultural conspiracy against the minority must stop (Dancing). Minority rights must be guaranteed.

Nupe Lead Dancer: (Dancing) Create an enabling environment for competition and see if the lion will not tame the dog or if the lizard will not be made food for cat. Enough of these grand deceptions!

Edo Lead Dancer: Or if the child will not prostrate to his father. Enough of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa's cultural stereotype. (Shaking) No tribe under the sun is culturally richer than Edo. We are the heart of culture and...

All: No!

Edo Lead Dancer: Why?

All: (Agitating) We say no. Let all of us dance separately and allow the audience to judge.

Lanwa: What tune and what music are we going to dance to?

Emeka: *Ikolo*, the drum of the knowledgeable.

All: No!

Ahmed: *Goje*, a string of joy.

All: No!

Lanwa: Then, *Bàtá*, a fast rhythmic tempo of the fiery king.

All: No! (Fighting, general brandishing of pistols, confusion. Follow-spot picks Narrator One from the middle of the Auditorium coughing and nodding to the stage. The Dancers freeze on stage).

Part One

Those who have ears...

Narrator One: Those metallic smiles must stop. They must stop immediately! I want those pretentious dances and music to stop (Walking to the Orchestra). All those pretenses buried and hidden under your fingernails must be removed (The Drummers hiss at the Narrator and he moves swiftly to harass the Dancers on stage). Why, why must you dance in the face of agonies and crises? Yet you are already bleating like castrated animals. Why must you laugh and hiss when the nation is on fire? Are you people not aware that the avengers are on the loose? (The Dancers hiss at him and he drives them out of the stage, nods and looks indifferently at the audience. He speaks affectionately and demonstrates his actions). Yes, we have watched so many of them and together we have all screamed with laughter, we laughed. We clapped to the rhythmical movement of body, we clapped. We smiled to the artistic ingenuity of actors, we smiled. This is the majestic night of truth, a night where there is no place to hide... a night you should not see our discussions as mere effusions or our drama as mere illusions...

Narrator Two: (Walking slowly to the stage from the crash door). I know that you have loads of metaphors on your head which you want to deliver but let me help you to talk part of your talk, to help you to open the sealed ears of the complacent with scathing words and to sound a note of warning to the

agents of violence...

Narrator One: (Smiling at Narrator Two) Welcome and thank you for showing great concern in the affairs of Wazobia land. Don't just help me to talk part of my talk, add, in the profoundest sense, your own language for laughter is not love. If you want to be comical, be ... but don't allow that to affect the crucial issue at hand. If your voice is, however, going to be lyrical, be ... but code and colour your thoughts in punching satire. Be rich in thoughts, be fast in speaking, be clear in delivery and be audible in pronunciation. Speak the modern English accentlessly yet do not corrupt the local dialects that you will encounter in this play. Be what you should be: a profound weaver of modern story, of reality.

Narrator Two: (Clearing his voice and jiggling round the stage) Theatre historians told us that the performers of Shakespeare and Moliere passed the acting litmus test, I shall pass yours meritoriously today...

Narrator One: What are you waiting for then? Talk to my people about the evil called violence. Let them know that peace radiates progress and prosperity while violence is a noxious stench of destruction, the last call to death.

Narrator Two: (Speaking to the audience) Mothers of my father's country, put on your thinking caps. Those stale news sonorously delivered before by Newscasters about killing and kidnaping, bombing and burning which we fictionally watched as films are now a reality in our country ...

Narrator One: (Agitated) But we laugh and smile, smile and laugh and in the face of violence we remain indifferent, unpatriotic and sentimental to the unethical tragic wailing. Put on your thinking caps.

Narrator Two: Children of my mother's womb,
The pride of my father's land...
Your grievances may be genuine,
You may be robbed and punished...

You may be suffering unjust cause,
 Don't put a spoke in your wheel by taking
 The laws into your hands...
 Seeking redress through the legal means
 Does not make you a coward – the real
 Coward is the one that hides to
 Destroy, to kill and punish
 This is the truth which fears no colour
 Oh yes, adjust yourselves to the night of
 The Killers by turning a new leaf.

Narrator One: Let us all turn a new leaf... (Rancorous voices of “Enough is Enough” and “We no go gree” echo from the auditorium. The Two Drummers run to the stage with their drums).

Drummers: (Low voice) They are at it again!

Narrators: Who?

Drummers: The local rascals calling themselves students' leaders.

All: (Talking to the audience and running backstage) The play will resume after this brief interlude. We must live so as to tell you this story!

Unionism as gangsterism

Students carry various dangerous instruments to the stage, singing solidarity songs and discussing their catalogue of woes. Five Students and the S.U.G. President drag some University Workers to the stage, beating them, giving them raw yam to eat and urine to drink, a celebration of confusion.

S.U.G. President: Great Wazobian Students!

Students: Great...

S.U.G. President: Greatest Wazobian Students!

Students: Great...

S.U.G. President: Ever conscious, ever militant, ever articulate Wazobian Students!

Students: Great!

S.U.G. President: I want to yarn!

Students: Yarn!!

S.U.G. President: I want to elucidate!

Students: Elucidate!!

S.U.G. President: I want to vibrate!

Students: Vibrate!!

S.U.G. President: I want to inform!

Students: Inform!!

S.U.G. President: The time has come

The moment is today

We have to decide today

Change our destiny today and

Continue to live happily today

Everything must be done today

Reasonable time has been wasted on consultations with the university administrators. So, after the consideration of our positions...confrontation is the only way out. We will damage vehicles and create general pandemonium in the university community. "Aluta Continua, Victoria Ascerta". (Various Aluta songs violently rush out of the Students' mouths. While they are running out of the stage, the Orchestra sings):

Jaw-jaw-Jaw

Wazobians not

War-war-war (2ce)

Talk-talk-talk

Wazobians Don't

Fight war.

Jaw-jaw-Jaw

Wazobians not

War-war-war!

Narrator One: (In the middle of the auditorium, walks slowly to the stage) Are these university students or bandits?

Orchestra: We don't know! But your uncle's son is one of them...

Narrator One: How do these notorious gangsters gained admission into the university in the first place? Is the society not considering the risk profile of these misfits to the growth of our educational system?

Orchestra: We don't know! But the last child of your mother is one of them...

Narrator One: Okay, how do they manage to hijack the students' leadership? How?

Orchestra: We don't know! But your wife's sister is one of them...

Narrator One: Can you then break out of your conspiracy to sing with me?

Orchestra: We will join you to sing!

Narrator One: Whenever these students sing "*Aluta! Aluta!!*" to energise their zest for destruction, don't join them but rather, sing a newly created and progressive song to cool their restlessness and unnecessary radicalism (Singing '*Aloha-Aloha*' with the Orchestra):

Hi-Hi-Oh!

Aloha-Aloha

Hi-Hi-Oh!

Aloha-Aloha

Aloha continues - victory is certain!

Hi-Hi-Oh!

Aloha-Aloha!

Can't reason prevail?

In a commando-like, four heavily armed but neatly dressed Kidnappers fire indiscriminately to secure themselves. Frantic plea of "Don't kill us", "We will pay the ransom demanded", and "Niger-Delta will be better" in sorrowful American English echo from the backstage.

Azome: (Instructing Omare) Go and silence that criminal leader of the American Expatriates' Workers calling himself Chief Stephen Gold.

Omare: (Deadly) To mock our traditional institution, he said that he is the second-in-command to the King of Bonny Kingdom. (Runs backstage) Consider him dead!

Alaibe: (Shouting and screaming) They have turned our plights into political rhetoric. Every ruler now and then usually promises us heaven on earth and when they ascend the throne, we are easily forgotten like unripe paw-paw. In fact, there was a particular President who ruled the Wazobian nation like an estate although with so many reform programmes that eventually reformed the masses to their early graves. He called us ungrateful wretch for daring to fight. He threatened to kill us and warned our leaders to learn from Saro Wiwa's political suicide. Above all (Laughing) he said that he saw hope for a united Wazobia...

Ekpebide: Can there be hope for a united Wazobia without social justice? Is social justice not the basic tonic for an egalitarian society? Hope, whose hope?

Tarila: (Facing Ekpebide) Throw that question to the audience who have conspired to kill the truth!

Ekpebide: (Resisting) But they don't know us!

Azome: (Sarcastic) They do. They know that we are the third class citizens in the Wazobian project, the natural owners of their main source of income. Don't give a devil's verdict, they know us ...

Ekpebide: (To the audience) You call us kidnappers...

Alaibe: But we are the forgotten souls from the Niger-Delta...

Azome: You said that we are bandits and rouges but...

Ekpebide: We only demanded for the control of our resources...

Alaibe: After years of environmental degradation and...

Azome: Political suppression that has rubbished Machiavelli's expanse of deceptions in his monarchical splendor, after...

Ekpebide: After years of systemic elimination of our true leaders through divide and rule, a deliberate continuation of the Lugardian political manifesto!

Alaibe: We live in the creeks where we cannot afford the luxury of lives. But...

Azome: (Points to the audience) Most of you said that we must unite like a bunch of broom so as to defend the Wazobian project...

Alaibe: That we must be hungry and angry with words and actions of unity... Wazobian project....

Azome: Whose project? Whose unity?

Ekpebide: (Slowly) Your actions and misdeeds have coloured you people in the toga of disunity. Call a white spade a white spade and avoid unnecessary diplomatic niceties, Niger-Delta stinks.

Azome: (Calling) Omare! Do your work before I build my anger and bring one of those awaiting death out for public execution!

Omare: (Loud sound of gun shot is heard backstage and Omare speaks from backstage) Dead already. He begged me but I went ballistic. (Dragging Mr. Wood to the stage) He is one of the termites that has built castle in our land while we rot away, hemmed down by poverty and rejected like rags.

Alaibe: (Facing Mr. Wood) Why is your company not environmentally friendly? Why are your workers not equally treated?

Mr. Wood: (Shivering) We are trying...

Azome: Silence him!

Orchestra: (Running to the stage) Free him! Mr. Wood must live!! No more violence, peace must reign.

Azome: (Crying and running to stop the Orchestra, he sings Peter

Tosh's song slowly and other Kidnappers emotionally join him in singing the song): "Everybody is crying out for peace, no one is crying out for justice. I don't want no peace, I mind equal right and justice". Mr. Wood must die! (They drag Mr. Wood to the backstage. The Orchestra retaliates with another song):

Chorus: Don't do it
Wazobians don't do it
Stop those things
Wazobians stop those things...

Solo: I am shaking
You are fearing
We are weeping
For the killing
And the burning
For the looting
And the bombing...

Chorus: Don't do it
Wazobians don't do it.

Narrator Two: (Moving through the auditorium, sober) Can't reason prevail? Two wrongs can never make a right, never! Or is killing the white innocent workers the solution to the Niger-Delta problem? I want answers...

Narrator One: (Joining Narrator Two) Has any war ever been fought and won on the battle-field? We want social justice, equity and decency but can't we meet genuinely at the conference table to iron out these problems? My message is clear, violence begets violence and we say no to violence. (Rumbling in the house).

Killing to sell God

An Imam leads Muslim Worshipers through the right crash door to the stage. They recite *Kalimat Shahaadat*:

Ash-hadu allaa ilaaha illaa Allah

Wahadahu laa shareeka llahu

Wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan

'Abduhu wa rasuuluhu

*Laa ilaaha illaa Allah
Allahu akbar kabeeran.*

(At the same time, a Clergyman leads Christian Worshippers through the left crash door to the stage. They recite the *Lord's Prayer*):

*Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive
Every one that is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver
Us from evil.*

Clergyman: (Preaching) For God so loved the world that he gave his only beloved son to whom...

Imam: (Preaching) Belief in the supremacy and oneness of the Almighty Allah, pray five times daily, don't associate any other god with Allah and...

(Charged atmosphere. The two groups mock each other, daggers are drawn. Special drum sound announces the majestic entrance of the Cult Leader and his members who threaten the Christian and Muslim Worshipers. Fighting resumes momentarily while the Orchestra sings "Don't Kill Them" to re-invent the chaotic situation):

Don't kill them my brothers
Don't kill them (2ce)
Let them live
My brothers
Let them live...
Don't kill them my brothers
Don't kill them.

(Dim lights and flicker).

Money, the root of all evils

Two Drummers drag each other with their drums through the auditorium to the stage.

Drummer One: All that I know is that you cannot take all the money given to us...

Drummer Two: Why? Don't you know that I entered the professional market of drumming before you?

Drummer One: The world is a market place and we have just come to trade. This is a professional matter, give me my money!

Drummer Two: Professionalism indeed (Throws his drum up and catches it stylishly). You are a drummer of yesterday. I must take all the money!

Drummer One: You can drum, I can drum better. I can make proverbs, idioms and figurative expressions with my drum. You must give me my money (Drumming incessantly. Shortly drums are dropped and the two Drummers engage in traditional wrestling. The Orchestra sings "*Akítì lólejà*"):

Mo ní tá ló lejà?: I want to know who can fight?

Akítì lólejà: It is Akítì who can fight

Ìjà ló lejà: Fight alone he can fight

Akítì lólejà: It is Akítì who can fight

Ìjà ló lejà: Fight alone he can fight

Mo ní tá ló lejà?: I want to know who can fight?

Akítì lólejà: It is Akítì who can fight

Narrator One: (Walking slowly to the stage) Stop and don't move. Human greed is a stigma that has selfishness as its brother. I preach fairness, unity and egalitarianism but you clamour for violence...

Drummer One: Egalitarianism! Fairness!! What manner of unity? Is it the one that one man will assume that he is the Alpha and Omega? Or unity which is anchored on the crest of social justice, equality and fairness?

Narrator One: Swallow the rest. You can drum, he is also a drummer. Wait until you reach another man's farm before

you conclude that your father has the largest farm! (Goes to the Orchestra and takes three musical instruments to the stage. The two Drummers look on disdainfully) I have travelled far and wide. (To the audience) *Ndigbo Kwenu?*

All: *Kwezoeenu!!*

Narrator One: I understand the *Ikolo* language of the Ndigbo (Ikolo is played and Emeka dances from the auditorium to the stage).

Emeka: (Giving money to Narrator One) What I love most is seeing people of other tribes celebrating my culture as if they are my tribesmen. I read through them, the universality of the Igbo culture.

Narrator One: *Wayo Allah! Ubangiji Allah!! Mutane Arewa!*

All: *Hee! Eee!! Heeei! Mu gode Muna gesheka.*

Narrator One: (Plays calabash or *Goje* to the admiration of Ahmed who dances from the auditorium to the stage) That is my young Mailam from the North.

Ahmed: You are a detribalised Wazobian. You are tolerant and patriotic. Allah, I like people like you (Gives money to Narrator One).

Narrator One: *Èdá Omo Odùduwà! Odù tó dá Ìwà!!*

All: *Oo! Ooo!! OOOo!*

Narrator One: (*Gangan* drum is played and Lanwa enters through the crash door and sprays Narrator One with money) My great Brother from the West, you are welcome.

Lanwa: Your drum is indeed speaking. It is the symbol of our cultural existence. The tune is absolutely wonderful, linguistically entertaining and emotionally arousing. You are great (Narrator One gives some money to the Drummers).

All: You are great ... you are born great.

Narrator One: To be great is my aspiration for all. Call Wazobia a

child of necessity, it must survive. Borrow new lexicon from your various languages, restructure your semantics or better still, give it a new paradigm, it must survive. If you call that amalgamation a political hara-kiri or condemn the creator of regionalism, parliamentarianism and federalism, this baby despised by her people must grow. (Voice rising and walking away) We want to begin another dance, the dance of survival, of peace and progress without violence...

immer One: Old man, what about the agony of the civil war? The cry of marginalisation, economic exploitation, educational domination, and...

rator Two: (Speaking from the auditorium to the stage. He carries two big bags containing costumes) And What? Speak more and hit the nail on the head! Tell us more about our monumental failures...

immer One: The unanswered fears of the minority...

rator Two: And what...

ned: The extreme struggle for political power...

rator Two: Is that all?

aka: No! And the Khaki men, including the politicians who speak in tongues and...

wa: The settlement syndrome which has made life difficult for the masses.

rator Two: Thank you all. We are all part of the systemic rots and together we must use our clout to cleanse the system. I know that things have turned upside down and are waiting to be salvaged and re-ordered. (Mimicking) The leaders are bad – the leaders are bad... our leaders are bad – our leaders are bad...what about the followers? If the leaders are bad – the followers are also bad! Bad followers will definitely produce bad leaders. In our land, our streets are the relics of our glorious past. The lame leads the blind and the dumb in the game of survival. Our forefathers are angry because there

is no peace in the land. (Looks round the actors and gives them their costumes in a big bag he is holding. He assists in dressing them up) You (Pointing and walking towards Emeka) should act as Major General. (Pulls Lanwa out) The role of an Executive Messenger will fit you. Ahmed and the two Drummers should act as the Director, Deputy Director and the General Manager respectively. I will act as the Diviner with the assistance of my friend, Narrator One (Background music plays casually).

Emeka: Our costumes are befitting. A writer once said that “the more quickly and peaceably we all get on, the better. The better for ourselves the better for our neighbours”.

Ahmed: What of the syndrome of violence which has taken over the entire world? (All the Players except Narrator Two exit).

Narrator Two: That is why we need to be culturally, socially and educationally engineered about the joy of peace. Yes, Pope John Paul II recounted during the First World War that: (The speech below echoes from the loud speaker) “Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence is a crime against humanity, for it destroys the very fabric of society... (Narrator Two kneels down gradually) on my knees I beg you to turn away from the part of violence”.

Part Two

Movement one

Slow sounds of background music rhythmically emerge. Centre stage is the Director's office.

Messenger: (Advertising) Wazobia Merit International! In cargo packaging we lead. In technical manpower we are masters! (Pacing up and down) Our staff strength is equal to none...

Director: (Enters through the backstage and laughs at the Messenger) How are you?

Messenger: (Surprised) Good morning, sir...

Director: Call the Deputy Director and the General Manager for me.

Messenger: Yes, sir (Disappears through the backstage).

Director: (Goes through the files) The Wazobian government with one draconian decree or the other. Well, God is always in control! (The Deputy Director and the General Manager enter through the backstage).

Deputy Director: Good morning, sir.

Director: Morning to you.

General Manager: I salute o, *Oga!*

Director: Morning, General Manager! Things are not easy as expected...

Deputy Director: What is the problem again, sir?

Director: It is the changing parable of the world. The world is a struggling place, a difficult place to live. We roll in our mothers' wombs for months and after birth, the child dramatically learns how to cry, when hungry, he becomes psychologically and emotionally disoriented. When the mother undergoes one expedition or the other, the child ululates like a woman under labour, whispers like a hunger-driven prisoner and nods like a lizard under intense heat. Life is a metamorphosis of struggle (Pensive). We Must work hard so as to meet the revenue target set for us by the Wazobian government.

General Manager: (Casual) Is that all?

Deputy Director: Twenty billion naira is a huge target to meet!

General Manager: I thought that we have other pressing matters to discuss. Let us move beyond the curiosity of that letter...

Director: Don't you know that generating revenue is our sole business here? The memo that I received from the office of the secretary to the Wazobian government needs a serious

examination. I believe you have all read it...

General Manager: That memo is meant for them, not for this corporation!

Director: It is purely meant for us. As executive directors, we should direct well and should not be dictators. We are all managers and should be men of honour not idlers. As builders, we must not destroy. During our undergraduate days, we wore the regalia of critics, shouting that criticism is a universal culture, condemning our leaders to the dustbin, antagonising them and accusing them of inefficiency and mismanagement. Now, I am proposing that redundant workers should be flushed out and that we must meet the revenue target set for us...

Deputy Director: You are right, sir. At school, we were baptised with philosophies and theoretical postulations. We adored Karl Marx and were in love with Aristotelian postulations. We must allow those postulations to move, speak and guide us.

General Manager: Well spoken. I could re-collect when the Director and I were reading Economics at the University...

Director: Yes, my Manager. That lecture you gave to the Ford Foundation Youth Wing when you were the President of National Association of Economics' Students was a fire of intellectualism, a weapon for youthful enlightenment and a package for social welfare. That lecture was deep, too close to reality.

General Manager: Thank you my Director. Then, I was the President, now, you are my Director how time changes!

Deputy Director: (Curious) You mean that you and the General Manager schooled together?

Director: Yes. That is to tell you why I exercised my discretion during the interview.

Deputy Director: I can now understand better. I was resolute that nobody would be employed as the General Manager without

five years of post managerial experience...

General Manager: (Teasingly) Our Director was one of my boys at National University. It was family matters; I mean, it was chieftaincy struggles that wasted my time. If not...

Director: (Sarcastic) We all have various problems before settling down here. I went into historical excursion so that we would know how close we are and how we should not disappoint ourselves. Wazobia Merit International's fortune is dwindling and we need to be tactical in redeeming the image of the corporation.

General Manager: There is limit to diplomacy, Mr. Director. I still remember how I won the National Association of Economics' Students' election as the President in spite of the confrontation and the sheer display of political naivety by your class...

Director: But I voted for you because I was intimidated. You should also remember that I led the University Peace Corps, so, let us build this corporation. Let us rescue it from falling...

General Manager: You know very well that, I led so many things...

Director: Including the Capon of the dreaded National University's Buccaneers...

General Manager: Mr. Director...

Deputy Director: You have an uneventful past ...

General Manager: Yes, I belong to the other side but that was in the past and mind you nobody can dare us then, we are strong still, not until I met Pastor Tiko Fire, the man with a speech of fire...

Deputy Director: Speech of fire? Pastor Tiko Fire combined so many things into one. He is simply a major customer in the house of diviners, herbalists and traditionalists. Speech of fire? No! He used to cast spell on his congregation and there is no difference between him and the celebrated Imam Dan

Kudu who was a notorious homosexual before he was assassinated by the victims he duped. He also won many souls to Islam! Many souls indeed!!

General Manager: Blasphemy! Insults and to the men of God?

Director: The story of your being born-again is a stark yet a palpable reality of man's spiritual transformation and it moved me. I was instantly waiting to have you work here, change totally.

Deputy Director: I must be frank with you sir, the General Manager is treating his work with levity. He is arrogant and often treats official matters personally...

General Manager: Let me go! (Rises) Stop ranting and face the reality of life! We have talked about our past academic socialisation process with a view to promoting the corporation. Now, you (pointing to the Deputy Director) have exhibited your own craft victimisation.

Director: Sit down! No word is too big for the mouth to say, sit down.

General Manager: (Sits) If I am not wanted in this meeting, let me go. I cannot stomach any insult from a lame dog.

Director: Insults? Official matters remain official. The first child of a capitalist is profit. This is our country and remember that we are hired by a capitalist government and must do our duty conscientiously so that the nation can grow. (Voice rising) General Manager, brace up. I have received many petitions against your corrupt and questionable character but I deliberately ignored them. (Speaks sententiously) We are your masters. To be gainfully employed is one thing, the second is job satisfaction. If you are not satisfied with Wazobia Merit International, you can opt out...

Deputy Director: America is there, Japan is okay. Holland may be your choice while Britain may be a better place. We work here. The Director was talking about our undergraduate days...

Director: You jumped up, shouting that you were my President.

Mind you, I was once a student leader in a foreign university and by the special grace of my living God, I remain the Director today. Be satisfied with your job.

General Manager: (Hesitates and shifts to another topic). Our expatriate partners have supplied those mechanical instruments!

Deputy Director: Better. Within the shortest time, operation will now resume at Warri branch of the corporation.

Director: That will give us additional revenue and a morale booster to the political contractors. I have booked with Wazobia Airline first to Kano, then to London via Amsterdam for a two day Leadership Training Course organised by the European Union for corporation directors.

All: Safe journey and God's blessing to you.

(Light fades gradually to illuminate Movement two).

Movement two

Props and costumes of a Yorùbá diviner. The Diviner sits at stage-right to perform some rituals. He speaks panegyrically.

Diviner: I laboured and laboured before I understood *Ifá*. I covered wretchedness before overcoming wretchedness. Ègbá language is not Òyó language, Òyó language is not Ègbá language, honour to Òrúnmìlà... Òrúnmìlà, let my blessings come (He bends forward and casts the cowries):

Iwájú opón:	The front of the oracle tray
Èyìn opón:	The back of the oracle tray
Olùmú lótùn:	Secret of the right
Olùkànràn lósi:	Secret of the left
Mó fire pe ibi:	Don't call good for bad
Mó fíbi pe ire:	Or call bad for good
Mó fòlòlò pohùn:	Make yourself clearer
Ohun tí Ifá báwí ni oso:	Say what the oracle says.

(A knock)

Diviner: Enter

Messenger: Good evening, Baba!

Diviner: Good evening, my son.

Messenger: I am here because I want to succeed in life...

Diviner: Just like that? Then do the right thing and your success will know no bound.

Messenger: (The Messenger hums to a Two-hundred Naira Note and gives it to the Diviner who places it in the oracle tray) I must succeed.

Diviner: (Casts the cowries and speaks slowly) What? What can make you succeed in life is fame and wealth. Young man, your problem is money. (Casts the cowries with rapt attention) *Hunhun!* Very clear. I now see very clearly. *Ìwòrì Méjì?* Can you perform all the rituals?

Messenger: Just tell me. I will perform all the rituals better than you think. I am ready to say bye-bye to poverty...

Diviner: How old are you?

Messenger: Thirty-two years old...

Diviner: Can you get a fresh dead body?

Messenger: (Taken aback) A... fresh dead body? I... I will get it.

Diviner: It is done more secretly. Parley with those mortuary attendants, you will get a fresh dead body even at a cheaper rate.

Messenger: What is going to happen next?

Diviner: (Teasing) You are seated yet you are running.

Messenger: No. I am not. Can't you see my buttocks firmly rooted to your mat?

Diviner: Next time, learn how to hold your breath. There is danger in

Diviner: How much did I tell you to pay initially?

Major General: Twenty thousand Naira.

Diviner: How many times did you attempt shooting at me?

Major General: Three times...

Diviner: Pay sixty thousand Naira before you can have the charm back.

Major General: Money is not the problem, Baba. (Gives money to the Diviner) I will bring some of my colleagues to you so that you can produce many bulletproof charms for them and thus make your millions by collecting heavy money from them!

Diviner: (Giving the charm to Major General) Don't bring anybody to this place. Let them come on their own volition. I don't want to be seen as contributing to military rule. If you are all fortified, you will just be using the guns that the *oyinbos* give to you indiscriminately. Democracy will suffer and the civilians will be the worst for it. Violence will be the order of the day! Don't bring anybody to me.

Major General: Demo what?

Diviner: Democracy!

Major General: Look, Baba, I just want you to make your own millions! Democracy is what everybody prays for yet nobody will follow its rules and regulations.

Diviner: I know but I am satisfied with the little money with me. What is in that money that you people accumulate illegally? The god of money is really missing road. He is entering the house of stone-looking syndicates who have no feeling for the masses...

Major General: Oh, Baba, what about our last discussion?

Diviner: You mean the soap for promotion?

Major General: Exactly.

Diviner: Are you not satisfied with your present rank and position?
You are now a Major General, though untested, what else do you want?

Major General: I am eyeing Lieutenant General, then General and finally, Field Marshal, the ultimate.

Diviner: Well, come for the soap when the next moon is out.

Major General: Thanks. (Remembering) My gun, Baba?

Diviner: Your gun is here, take it and be careful with it.

(Background music, for bridge).

Movement three

Wazobia Merit International is the place of action. The Three Directors meet.

Deputy Director: We were planning to meet you at the airport when you came in. We are glad that you are back.

Director: I thank you all.

Deputy Director: How was the Leadership Training like?

Director: Men, we have a very long way to go. We have many things to learn from the Western world although they may not agree, they too have many things to learn from us. Talk of the statistical analysis of the personnel operation or the operational model of transactions, in fact, our country is truly a developing nation.

General Manager: What did you learn again? I am deeply interested...

Director: Pragmatic organisation, revolution of the thinking process and social psychology. Objective rationalisation, tactical decision model, labour mobility and dislodgement and so on.

Deputy Director: Do you have the papers presented?

Director: Yes.

Deputy Director: I will like to have copies.

General Manager: Including me too.

Director: Where is the Messenger?

General Manager: He is in my office sorting out some documents with my own messenger.

Deputy Director: Tell him to see me immediately.

(Deputy Director and General Manager leave).

Director: Our country and corruption! (Goes through the files)

(Major General enters unnoticed).

Major General: Greetings and thank God that you are back.

Director: Welcome. But how did you know that I am back?

Major General: We own the pilot and the plane that conveyed you to London and we have the entire world in our...

Director: Major General Andy, how is barracks life?

Major General: Not bad.

Director: What about your boys?

Major General: They are feeling fine!

Director: The President did not spread the annual bonanza to the civil servants...

Major General: (Furious) What bonanza?

Director: The Peugeot of a thing... the car gifts!

Major General: What is so bad in that? What about the civilians and the syndrome of unspent budget? Well, the civil servants should find ways of settling themselves. Those cars are to cool guys' nerves in the barracks...

Director: I see, to check their restlessness!

Major General: Exactly.

Director: Any message from the Presidency?

Major General: (Business-like) You received two letters from the caucus, you ignored them. I phoned you thrice, you did not comply. Have you deposited money into those accounts?

Director: No.

Major General: Why?

Director: It is not easy. My religion. My conscience. My God will...

Major General: Religion, conscience and God? These are carefully selected universal concepts...

Director: Yes...

Major General: In two days time, you will give a thorough definition to religion, conscience and God.

Director: No. You can't intimidate me! It is people like you that destroy this country.

Major General: (Laughs briefly) Ours is joy and pride. Pride and power, the power of ruling. The nation must be ruled. This is our country, it is not meant for you alone.

Director: (To the audience) I condemn the agent of corruption because they loot the treasury, kill and incarcerate us.

Major General: (Dances casually) *Whaaa o!* You kill yourselves and put yourselves in perpetual bondage. Have you forgotten how you ended the First Republic?

Director: How? Tell me, the historian in camouflage uniform...

Major General: Vandalisation, killing, maiming, embezzlement, corruption and tribal affiliation and...

Director: And what about the Second Republic?

Major General: (Paces up) Rogues! The ballot fraud, you suddenly forgot the monumental rigging of elections which simply gave room to the selection of candidates...

Director: Yes, continue...

Major General: And the squander-mania of our money. At Jos, it was reported and has since been a reference point by many artists that a bank manager was instructed to go and bring money in the night for the centennial wedding ceremony between....

Director: I am listening. That incident showed that most of our politicians have no human face...

Major General: Is your memory so short? What about the illegal rice deal? The empty treasury that we have is caused by who?

Director: (Nods) The politicians.

Major General: Can you still remember what happened in the Wazobia House of Assembly during the inconclusive Third Republic?

Director: No!

Major General: Our senators simply decreed that the military should continue.

Director: Go on...

Major General: The twenty-first century Wazobia saw, the ascension to the throne, of a super military-civilian whose only ideas and thoughts were the best. He monopolised superior logic under the guise of nationalistic fervour. He is a military man forever.

Director: No and no! Speak well of that great leader for he succeeded in cleaning the mess left by your men. He was a bridge builder, the creator of modern Wazobia. He simply redefined the Wazobian political space...

Major General: The creator of modern what? With the accusations and counter-accusations of the systemic looting of the nation's treasury between him and the Vice-President? Have you suddenly forgotten his do or die political desperation?

Have you forgotten the Ghana-must-go political banality for corruption, PTDF, the Library Project of the century financed through unorthodox donations and deductions from the state treasuries and the diplomatic and systemic elimination of opposition members through assassination? Bola Ige, the colourful Kaduna Boy who personified the best of Yoruba culture, urbane, a giant who is eminently endowed and oratorically gifted...

Director: Go on...

Major General: A chess was played and it was hatched that Bola Ige star must dim so that the South-Western States can fall to the party of the day and...

Director: And this is our country! Politicians have failed to offer solution, your men too fend for their pockets. Still, we need leaders not rulers. Leadership problem is the crux of the matter, the crux of our nation as celebrated through the Achebean philosophy. Zik of Africa once talked about diarchy but I hate teleguided democracy, because it is a political trick for selection. We called for genuine plebiscite on the national question, yet you see that as cosmetic shouting and unnecessary struggle for power. Because of political power, we now have soldiers with extreme political minds and civilians in corrupt regalia. In the past, your men usually galvanised and disturbed us by new government under the theme of correction after midnight rendezvous. Let our democracy grow! (Sarcastic) Civilians...trash. Military... nonsense. I see the military men as vultures who now oppress the civilian populace. I know that you have guns but stop coordinating and churning out martial music on our radio... no more fellow Wazobians. It is democracy till the end-time!

Major General: You are just being epigrammatic. You are nothing but a bloody civilian. You are too critical to be a government worker! Wazobian politicians are nothing but deceptive messiahs. They have forgotten that ethnic loyalty is

antithetical to a federal state and will lead to monolithic domination, an unpatriotic way of compensating ethnic heroes and a suicidal attempt at secession.

Director: What do we need then?

Major General: (Laughs briefly) If your people will start the show...

Director: If your men will allow us to start the show!

Major General: As I was saying, what we need is good government. Remember also that we are not ready to leave the political scene. Even if we go, it is going to be temporal. There must be a way of compensating us politically and the only way is through good government. Your ambassadors of politics have nothing to offer.

Director: (Angry) Whatever, they are politicians and that is why they belong to the political class. Your people are soldiers, that is why they belong to the military class. If everything political in the Western context fails, then we better device a democratic structure that will be African, bearing in mind our world-view.

Major General: Good. You are actually talking about the *Africanisation* of the democratic process...

Director: Yes. But that will be a leap towards cultural feudalism with its saturated dictatorial madness...

Major General: You are talking of a rework of the new democratic order within the context of resource control, confederalism and African socialism.

Director: Yes, you are correct Major General Andy...

Major General: But you must remember that this will be a carryover of the failed political adventure of the Igbo.

Director: A bad and sentimental reference point, my brother. Let us give it a trial...

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Major General: Remember also that this is our country where dog-eat-dog. If your people do not want our romance with politics, your politicians should behave themselves like serious statesmen so that we can successfully and professionally face our military duties...

Director: (Resolute) Just tell your people to give the civilians enough time to learn. Stability will definitely lead to perfection...

Major General: (Authoritatively) Enough of riddles and jokes. Between life and death choose one. And for the last time Mr. Director, money must be deposited into those accounts! Put money into those accounts!! I can no longer tolerate your yes and no. I am not here for a discussion on politics. I am here because of money!

(Messenger enters).

Major General: Evening boy!

Messenger: Thank you, sir. (Looking at the Director) Welcome sir.

Major General: Boy, I will see you anytime from now to give you your new year's gift.

Messenger: I will be expecting it sir.

Major General: See you tomorrow (Leaves).

Director: My God!

Messenger: What is the problem sir?

Director: Nothing is the matter (Gives documents to the Messenger). Take them to the office of the Deputy Director.

Messenger: I will (Leaves).

Director: Should I do as commanded? Should I not? This is a big riddle. My name! My life!! (Stands) My life! My name!! How? What should I do? No, I will not. I am expecting the worst to happen. Martin Luther King Junior, yes, that powerful orator said: (The following echoes from the loud speaker) "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he

stands at the times of comfort and convenience but where he stands at the times of challenge and controversy". No, I will not sacrifice my name to please some Generals. No! No and no!! (Lights zoom to the General Manager's House).

Movement four

Stage-left, the General Manager's house. Background music emerges briefly. The play later rolls to the Diviner's house at stage-right for overlapping dramatic transition.

General Manager: (Restless and sad) Small-small rats now gather to teach the elephant how to dance, not in this land. Small-small boys of yesterday now gang up to tell me what is official and what is not! I must do something! (Clapping) Wonders shall never end. The Director who was my junior at the University, the Deputy Director who is a graduate of a third generation and an unknown university and who is far younger than I? I must do something. The Deputy Director and the Director, the Director and the Deputy Director, these insults from mere boys must stop. Yes, I must do something (A knock) Come in (Major General and the Messenger enter).

Messenger: Good evening, sir.

General Manager: Evening.

Major General: You look worried?

General Manager: Thank you, Officer. It is Wazobia Merit International that defeated me and I am psychologically disturbed.

Major General: How?

General Manager: Those boys there are growing wings.

Major General: How their wings will be clipped is the reason why we are here.

General Manager: In the presence of this boy? (Points to the Messenger).

Major General: (Laughs hysterically) We are coming from my house, he is now part of us. He has been settled.

General Manager: Is the President involved?

Major General: No. The much-mouthed collective cum social interest is nothing but individual interest. If you say that the President is involved, you are right. The right thing is that big men use the name of the President for so many mischievous things. Most of the President's friends are unrepentant impersonators. Well, we must clip the wings of those boys!

General Manager: Can you repeat that?

Major General: The President is totally innocent of most of the allegations levied against him. Highly placed people use the name of their executives for personal gains.

Messenger: Tell us the roles to play...

Major General: You are to switch off the central power system of the corporation...

(Actors freeze at stage-left. The Diviner, holding Eagle's feather, gives instructions to the Deputy Director at stage-right).

Diviner: Whenever you want to sleep, recite the following incantations: (The Deputy Director repeats after the Diviner) At the devil's forest, in the house of death, surrounded by vampires, touch me not.

(Play resumes at the General Manager's house).

General Manager: After switching off the central power system, what next?

Major General: Don't dance in circles, be smart. Disconnect the phone lines and be fast because of the GSM revolution.

General Manager: And then?

Major General: Put your initiatives to work as you have seen in war films.

General Manager: What about the Messenger?

(All the Actors freeze).

Diviner: Mortals can neither eat chameleon nor cook pawpaw for food. Chimpanzee has no time to powder its young ones, I am an ant.

Deputy Director: (Resisting) I am not an ant.

Diviner: (Angry) You are an ant this time, a cult ant...

Deputy Director: No! I am not an ant. I am Dikko Usman Danladi...

Diviner: Yes! You are an ant that dances to overcome the big elephants of the human race. (Deputy Director repeats after the Diviner) I have drunk from *Olókun*, bathed with the sacred *Olósà*, all mortals must bow before me.

(Gives the Eagle's feather to the Deputy Director, freeze).

Major General: (Points to the Messenger) You will perform the real action.

Messenger: Where will I hide the pistol?

Major General: Eat it or hide it inside your nose, fool.

General Manager: Boy, are you sure you can go for the kill?

Messenger: Yes, I can.

Major General: Do it and get additional three hundred thousand Naira or you waste your own life instead.

General Manager: I trust him now. Officer, let us not disperse without planning how to organise one guerrilla attack or the other for the Deputy Director too.

Major General: I think he can be persuaded to obey instructions.

General Manager: They are birds of a feather, they flock to block our ways.

Messenger: They are the same thing!

Major General: I know what we are going to do. One-killer-bullet for the Director and acid for his second-in-command. After the operation at Wazobia Merit International, we will then...

Messenger: (Jumps up) Officer, I know where to track the Deputy Director down. He used to go to the house of one diviner at *Òkè-Ojà*, if I can get acid, I will position myself and allow him to pass; mind you, he will not pass freely.

(Freeze).

Deputy Director: What next?

Diviner: You are going to *Òyó* in haste, don't you know that *Alááfin*, the second to the oracle and the Lord of the Kingdom goes nowhere?

Deputy Director: It is so, you are correct, Baba!

Diviner: Put it under your pillow for seven days and bring it back to me. No evil will harm you. No witch will disturb you.

(Freeze).

Major General: Acid is no problem at all. After the operation at your organisation, come back to my house for further directives.

General Manager: We must take an oath.

Messenger: No need.

Major General: Why?

Messenger: Remember that I have not made money.

(Lights fade gradually at General Manager's house to brighten the Diviner's house).

Deputy Director: Thank you, Baba. The General Manager of my place of work is particularly desperate to put an end to my life.

Diviner: Never! With that feather which I sincerely give to you you have been initiated into the cult. Mortals must bow before you. They must be submissive to you. Go your way, you have

been fortified.

(As the Deputy Director takes his exit, Follow-spot picks the Messenger with a load on his head from the crash door and the two men meet at the Apron).

Messenger: Good evening to you sir...

Deputy Director: Where are you going to?

Messenger: Where you are coming from!

Deputy Director: Where am I coming from?

Messenger: The place I am going!

Deputy Director: Which place are you going?

Messenger: The place you are coming from!

Deputy Director: What is on your head?

Messenger: Sir, why are you asking me so many questions?

Deputy Director: I just want to know.

Messenger: Because of what?

Deputy Director: You look suspicious.

Messenger: *Oga*, this is not Wazobia Merit International. So, the question of suspicion doesn't arise. I am going to Baba's house, the place you are coming from to give him yam. If I lost my freedom to Wazobia Merit International, I should have my freedom here.

Deputy Director: Sorry, oh! (Leaves. Lights on stage, the Messenger enters).

Diviner: Welcome my boy!

Messenger: Thank you, Baba.

Diviner: Are you through?

Messenger: Absolutely (Takes a big item covered with four white

clothes out).

Diviner: Good. (Opens it cautiously) It is very fresh.

Messenger: The baby was not responding to treatment so, he was injected yesterday.

Diviner: Too bad (Carries the item inside and comes back). What is your real name?

Messenger: Lànwá Adéríbigbé Owóyokùn.

Diviner: Can you sleep on the grave?

Messenger: No... Yes. I mean to say yes.

Diviner: You will not be doing that in vain but because of money.

Messenger: Yes, I will. Remember that I haven't made money.

Diviner: Can you keep mute if you see a ghost?

Messenger: Yes. Every wretched person is a ghost...

Diviner: What about a snake with nine human heads?

Messenger: I will cope. Inasmuch as I will not be hurt...

Diviner: Lànwá Adéríbigbé Owóyokùn!

Messenger: Yes, Baba! You are calling my full names.

Diviner: Can you sleep with a camel?

Messenger: What kind of sleep? Will I sleep with the animal inside the same house or the real sleep? (Demonstrates).

Diviner: The real sleep. The sleep that has to do with passion. The sleep of life.

Messenger: Why will I be doing that? When there are beautiful ...

Diviner: Because of money!

Messenger: I will. I have no choice. I just want money...

Diviner: How many children have you?

Messenger: Three.

Diviner: Are they males?

Messenger: Why such question, Baba?

Diviner: The reason is that after that ritual of passion, your sperm will not be fertile again.

Messenger: (Voice rising) One will be useless. The real life is in women. With one becoming impotent, it is going to be the beginning of the end. Secondly, all my children are females. I need a male who is going to inherit the wealth that I might have accumulated from this...

Diviner: Long stories. Can you? All these are because of money and as you have rightly said, you haven't made money.

Messenger: I will try if there is no alternative.

Diviner: Good. Can you eat human flesh mixed with other medicinal items?

Messenger: If there is no crime in it, I can!

Diviner: Can you, I mean, can you drink human blood?

Messenger: I can, because I haven't made money.

Diviner: Verbally, you are tested and trusted. By this time next week, we shall begin the rituals.

Messenger: What is my bill?

Diviner: Remember that you haven't made money!

Movement five

Wazobia Merit International, the centre of attraction wears a silent mood.

Director: (Writing) Twenty million Naira! I cannot give such a huge amount of money to a coterie of generals in the army who have no constituency. It is going to be a loss to this corporation. (Rises) I fear for this country. This is our country

where socialists and religious redemptionists have all been humiliated. (Smartly, the Messenger and the General Manager enter and leave after a careful examination). He said that I should pick between life and death? But my conscience will not allow me (Martin Luther King Junior's speech re-echoes from the loud speaker again).

Director: (Reflecting) "Where he stands at times of challenge and controversy". (The Messenger enters and coughs) Where have you been?

Messenger: I was working in the General Manager's office.

Director: (Points) Re-arrange those files.

Messenger: Yes, sir. (Leaves and enters shortly) I am back, sir.

Director: What are you looking for? I told you to re-arrange those files.

Messenger: Sorry sir, I will.

Director: Meanwhile, what did that ideological prostitute discuss with you? I am talking of Major General Andy.

Messenger: Nothing...

Director: I dreamt that you are planning evil.

Messenger: Against who? When did you become a prophet, sir?

Director: Be careful, the kingdom of God is near...

Messenger: But not today. (Leaves) I am coming back, sir!

Director: What are you up to?

Messenger: (Coughing to the stage) This is your friend's picture. (The Messenger shows Major General Andy's picture to the Director).

Director: And what is that supposed to mean?

Messenger: It means operation bye-bye!

Director: Are you resigning or what? Can you tell me the relevance

of that picture to your statement?

Messenger: Operation bye-bye! (Holding pistol firmly) Major General Andy is your killer not me, I am only acting on instruction (As he shoots at the Director twice, there is darkness on stage). If you are an enemy of money, my group and I will not allow you to stop us under the guise of reformist proposition from making our millions.

Director: (Screams) And I saw it coming, I saw it. God, please forgive my sins, *oooh!* (Slumps).

Messenger: Men, I must disappear! The idiot is dead and I must see the Senior Technical Officer immediately. (Runs out. Lights bring the Deputy Director and the General Manager to the stage).

Deputy Director: General Manager, what is wrong with our phone lines?

General Manager: Yours too? I tried mine but...

Deputy Director: Where is the Messenger?

General Manager: He was in my office when power failed, I then sent him to the office of the Senior Technical Officer. Where is the Director?

Deputy Director: I thought that he is in the rest room?

General Manager: Not at all. His table looks disorganised. Where do you think he is?

Deputy Director: (Sights the body of the Director) What? God! My God!! The Director has been murdered.

General Manager: Murdered? By who? (Casual) Such is life!

Deputy Director: (Sober and weak) Violence is a waste. It is done because of distortions and distractions. Violence deludes us of our conscience. It is a deadly judgement without trial (Weeping) Violence is the relic of our unfortunate society done by vampires. The Director is gone (Sings a short ditty).

General Manager: Why are you crying?

Deputy Director: Why wouldn't I cry?

General Manager: You must stop pretending. Are you not going to be the Acting Director?

Deputy Director: Is that why I should be happy?

General Manager: Then, be sad forever!

Deputy Director: I must see my Imam immediately (Storms out).

General Manager: (To the audience) Don't mind the pretender. He is going to the house of the most powerful Diviner in town not to the house of his Imam!

Movement six

A space in the Orchestra Pit, the Messenger moves left and right, curiously.

Messenger: (With a keg of liquid substance) Or am I seeing double? No! I saw him in black suit driving recklessly towards this street (Looks round and positions himself with the audience).

Deputy Director: (The Deputy Director nods as he walks to the Apron) If the Director can be killed just like that, then what is my fate? (Messenger walks up to him).

Messenger: (Rude) *Oga*, it is my time to ask questions. Where are you going?

Deputy Director: What kind of stupid question is that!

Messenger: Okay, where are you coming from?

Deputy Director: Are you insane?

Messenger: *Oga*, why is it that we normally meet on this road?

Deputy Director: Perhaps I should ask you that!

Messenger: May be I am trailing you.

Deputy Director: Why should you?

Messenger: (Laughing) Blame Major General Andy not me! (Pours the liquid substance on the Deputy Director and shoots at him, exits).

Deputy Director: Why...are...yoooooooo doooing thiiiiis to meeee. (Slumps).

Diviner: (Inside) These children will not let someone sleep, so much noise (Yawning). Is the Deputy Director not coming again? (Sights the body of the Deputy Director at the Apron and examines it affectionately). Mortals with their cruel deeds. Men with their heartless actions. To think of it, it was done in the front of my house. Is it to land me in trouble or to give me a bad name? (Runs backstage and enter with a horn) The sky is thickly clouded and water dealer is trading in death. The chameleon has given birth, whether its child knows how to dance or not is left in the hands of its child. The snail is angry and pushes out its protective fluid. The day a cobra is angry, it throws its poisonous stone out. The anger of the earth makes it to reject passage. Wherever needle pinches becomes spoilt. Palm tree is angry and throws down its children. I practised occult at Alará's house and I am forgiven. I rendered incantation at Ajerò's palace and I am blessed. From now on, my speech is law! They will be doing themselves. "Àwon ara won ni ó maa sera won, àwon ara won!" (Dances as the Orchestra continuously echoes the last line of his lyric with him): "Àwon ara won ni ó maa sera won, àwon ara won"! They bring sorrow, I say not in this house. "Àwon ara won ni won ó maa sera won, àwon ara won"! Thousands of enemies call me for a duel. "Àwon ara won ni won ó maa sera won, awon ara won"! My night is my morning and a like rising sun at daybreak - my matter has become dance and song (He moves down to the Orchestra Pit and reacts to the vibrating tune of the incessant drumming).

Narrator Two: (Walks from the Auditorium to meet the Diviner) Go away and you shouldn't draw my wrath this night or was it not you and I who agreed to tell our stories?

Diviner: No. I argued that reproducing unfounded stories might blur our audience's vision. I then proposed to you that we should perform a theatre of reality where our audience will be able to see themselves in our dramatic actions, where they will be psychologically attached to our play without losing their sense of reasoning...

Narrator Two: Yes. But your present action has negated the tragic mood of the moment. You are singing and dancing when the Deputy Director's body awaits burial.

Diviner: Sorry for that but I am dancing and singing to express my existence and essence in this world of nothingness, beclouded by wickedness through heartlessness. Or don't I have a right to deconstruct?

Narrator Two: Yes, you have a right but why not a short dirge, at least to honour our honest hero, the Deputy Director and allow our audience to accept the reality of death in our lives?

Diviner: Yes but you have to start the dirge. As for me, I have been consumed by cultic songs. My comic interlude, for your information, is an extension of the tragic canon.

Narrator Two: Is our play a tragedy?

Diviner: Leave that to critics. We may, however, end this play as a melodrama.

Narrator Two: Meaning that you too will be consumed before the end of the play...

Diviner: No! The split image, I represent so many things in this play. Meanwhile, let us send the Deputy Director to the *ultimate house* where nobody will go and return.

(The Orchestra sings a short dirge, as the Deputy Director's corpse is carried away by some of them. Diviner and Narrator Two are exchanging clothes).

Narrator Two: (Adjusting his clothes) Am I still Narrator Two, the weaver of modern story?

Orchestra: No!

Diviner: (Laughing) That was before. I am leaving you behind to face the music. I am now Narrator One while you are now the Diviner...

Narrator Two: Give me a second. (Facing the audience) Our story has not changed but we, the story tellers often change. I trust that you people will accept this little adjustment within the context of dramatic reality. Telling stories is our world, don't mock us with it. I am now the Diviner...

Orchestra: Yes. We accept you as the Diviner who will complete this play...

Narrator One: And I am now Narrator One, the proverbial cat with nine lives...

Orchestra: You are now Narrator One, the white wizard who has deep knowledge for occultism...

Diviner: I will beat Narrator One to his game. Nothing is impossible in the theatre, nothing. I will surely beat Narrator One...

Orchestra: Till then. Remember that a dog that will bite will not bark!

(A sharp transition to Movement seven).

Movement seven

General Manager's house. The Death Dealers are discussing.

General Manager: I have my fears.

Messenger: What are they?

General Manager: My main concern is that the Laakadiri Hussain panel set-up to investigate the demise of the two uncompromising Directors is working at a fast pace.

Messenger: If we have intelligent people among members of the panel, we should have been apprehended. I am disappointed, General Manager. You looked depressed during the last

interrogation.

General Manager: Why should I not? The chairman in particular was interrogating me too closely. Besides, my conscience was at war with me and that perhaps led to my dejection. I was morally disturbed.

Major General: (Counting money) Cowards! Cowards, the two of you. When you eventually become the Director, Mr. Man, who is going to be socially elevated and be giving out contracts?

General Manager: Me of course.

Major General: If I am involved, who is going to take the lion share? And to think of it, are you not going to be killed if you did not cover up our covert actions? You better forget the story of morality and a disturbed conscience. Be strong! Be courageous!! (Counting money).

Messenger: Thank you, Officer. (Facing the General Manager) You are only a collaborator, I am the one that executed our plans. Do you think that it is easy to kill? Harden up and stop behaving like a school pupil, your fate is in your own hands. If you like, expose yourself and be doomed!

General Manager: Not in this land! Accepted that Major General Andy is questioning me that is rational. When has it become of you to despise me? Not in this land! Mind you you better think of what to say? How to say it? And when to say it?

Messenger: What, how and when are words for asking questions. The fact is that you must control yourself, we are all criminals...

General Manager: Criminals?

Messenger: Criminals I say.

General Manager: Do you know the hangman's name?

Messenger: What is your hangman's name?

General Manager: Do you know the situation in the deciduous forest?

Messenger: Tell me the situation...

General Manager: Do you know your last name?

Messenger: (Furious) Stop speaking in parables. What is the name of your hangman? Tell me the situation in a deciduous forest?

General Manager: You are a struggling sibling. If not, you ought to have taken things easy with yourself. You are too desperate. The hangman's name is wickedness and you are now a confirmed hangman.

Messenger: (Charging) Fool you are! We all trade in nefarious activities. I will waste you before you... (Points a pistol at the General Manager).

Major General: Enough. Let no one speak again. Before, there was a glaring class distinction between us, now we are the same and must be ready to defend ourselves to the last man. As for that lizard calling himself chairman of the investigative panel, I will take care of him.

General Manager: Thanks. What are you going to do in ensuring that I become the next director?

Major General: Now you are talking. I will see my men to lobby for you.

General Manager: Officer, please treat that matter urgently...

Major General: Are you afraid?

General Manager: Not at all. But I envisage a situation whereby the government may appoint a sole administrator instead of me.

Major General: Your source?

General Manager: Initially, a powerful ethnic block has accused the government of tribalism in the way some of the President's men are handling the affairs of the corporation. The corporation's location, the management staff and...

Major General: Favouritism or nepotism, the fact is that I know my people and my people know me. If the government can descend so low in deciding on the type of people that should head any organisation without considering merit, then they know their people and have their reasons.

Messenger: Who is the government? Are they not part of us? Even if you are the president of this country today, you will do worse things.

Major General: The era of meritocracy is gone. The period we are now, is a period of social pretensions. For corruption is now a stigma to the poor and a way of life for the rich. Most of those who are fighting corruption are themselves agents of corruption. So, don't be deceived.

Messenger: What is my own gain apart from the monetary aspect?

Major General: Are you not a "WASC" holder?

Messenger: Yes, I am.

Major General: You can become the personal assistant to our new director-to-be. All we need to do is to re-brand you...

General Manager: Not me! I can't work with this devil.

(Angelic intervention, the atmosphere is tensed. The Director appears in a ghost-like manner from the wing, humming).

Messenger: *Oga* General Manager, are your children at home?

General Manager: No. They travelled with their mother to the village.

Messenger: Can't you hear that someone is humming?

Major General: (Shivering) I am cold.

General Manager: My head appears to have doubled in size! (On sighting the ghost, he hides under the table).

Ghost: The truth will not die. In heaven, there is no place for liars and traitors. No room for oppressors and aggressors but a place

for the truth. Your masquerade has walked himself naked to the market, giving clothes to him is a rumble. Wail for yourselves. Your criminal actions now disturb your mental reasoning. That is why you don't walk again like dignified men but lament about like widows. Sadly enough, like locusts you selfishly conspired to kill me. Mr. Manager, we both underwent the same academic excursion and I helped you, still you killed me. I wriggled myself out of your modern stealing and I was dealt with. Officer, thank you. Your action will lead you to your anachronistic destruction. Mr. Hangman, your love for money will end you disastrously. Remember that the truth will not die (Disappears).

Messenger: (Attempts to crawl) God! God!! (The song of "Stop the Violence Action" goes on solemnly in the background):

Stop the violence action
 Stop the violence madness...
 These are the men
 Who kill our people
 And they should be made
 To stop the killing...
 Stop the violence madness
 Stop the violence action.

General Manager: (Stammering) Pleaeese, forgiveee me!

Major General: My God! My God, my God!! I am in a mess...

Messenger: My head, my father, my head! (They stand up one after the other, while the song of "Be your Brother's Keeper" goes on):

Be your brother's keeper
 Be your sister's keeper...
 Set the Kingdom rolling
 Set Wazobia moving...
 These are the devils
 Who set the house on fire
 For they should be told
 To stop the burning...

Be your brother's keeper
Be your sister's keeper...

General Manager: Messenger!

Messenger: Yes

General Manager: Officer...

Major General: What is it?

General Manager: See what you have landed me into?

Major General: Shaarap! (Slaps the General Manager and pushes bundles of Naira notes to him). That is the remaining five hundred thousand Naira...act well your own part (Runs out).

Messenger: General Manager, your house is not fortified at all. If it is in my house, the ghost wouldn't have entered. I am strong and my house is fortified.

General Manager: We have been invaded by a power that is more than us, so keeping mute will be better. The Director has gone through a heavenly transformation. He has left us behind. Indeed, no place for liars in heaven.

Messenger: Let me go for a ritual bath. Meanwhile, keep my money intact. Remember that I haven't made money (Exits).

General Manager: Lànwá Adéríbigbé Owóyokùn or what do you call yourself? (Mimes the action of the ghost briefly) Yes, I was sitting down, then we began to talk about Laakadiri panel, my psychological weakness, my becoming the next director...the personal assistant to the director, money, money, money...power and power make us all to trade in violence!

(Using their hands as musical accompaniment, the Orchestra sings "Talk o Talk o" to comment on the mood of the moment):

Talk o Talk o
We don talk
Them don talk

We are still talking
 Violence no good o...
 We don talk
 Them don talk
 We are still talking

Movement eight

Ray of light establishes the Messenger from the Auditorium. He is flamboyantly dressed and carries a big cassette player in his hand. He exudes all the paraphernalia of a drunkard.

Messenger: My people, great people of my father's land (A brief dance). My people, great people of my mother's land. I...am not a drunkard, I am serious, I am not a drunkard. It is only four kegs of Iyá Sèlíá's wine that is making me happy. Or don't you people want to be entertained? (Drops the tape in front of the Apron and speaks to the audience) Why are you all humming? Why? Great people of Wazobia, the cloth I am wearing is very expensive. I bought them with twenty thousand dollars from America and London and my tailors are from Jamaica and South Africa including the people's republic of Kumasi and the federating kingdom of Abéòkúta

(The Diviner comes out to meet the Messenger).

Diviner: Owóyokùn, what are you doing outside?

Messenger: At this place? This very place, I followed him, poured acid no, I poured water into his body, the body of the Deputy Director. I followed the millionaire. Baba, I followed him.

Diviner: I can now understand your plight (Drags him inside).

Messenger: (Shouting) Baba, I am not drunk? Leave me alone. I am ... am not... not, never... never drunk.

Diviner: You are a disgrace to humanity (Goes inside and comes out with a calabash of water). Wash your face with this water (Gives the calabash to the Messenger).

Messenger: Water and calabash, cleaning and washing (Breaks the

calabash).

Diviner: *Olúkóyèjò*, the gatherer of knowledge. *Òmòràn*, the all-knowing. *Oníyenyè*, the knowledge saviour, you control human knowledge, please return Lànwá the son of Adéríbigbé's knowledge to him (Spits on Lànwá's head who becomes conscious immediately).

Messenger: (Prostrating) Baba, I am sorry. I don't know that this is your house! I hope that I did not speak about the Deputy Director? Where is the cassette player that I am presenting to you as a gift?

Diviner: (Points) You better bring it in!

Messenger: (Goes for the Tape) To think of it, it is only four kegs of *Iyá Sèlía's* wine that disturbed me badly like this! It has exploded inside me and made me to lose my reasoning faculty. I am blank.

Diviner: See what you turned yourself into...

Messenger: Sorry, Baba. I am here because of three important things. First, when are we going to start the rituals? Secondly, I want a charm to send off a visiting ghost? Lastly, I am here to give you this tape...

Diviner: When I went to my mother's forest yesterday to make enquiries about the Deputy Director's death, I was informed that your hands are filled with blood. That is why we cannot begin the rituals. You are responsible for the death of...

Messenger: Nobody!

Diviner: Confess...

Messenger: Confess about what I don't know?

Diviner: Until you confess, the ghost will continue to haunt you till you die. Confess and shame the devil.

Messenger: Help me, Baba.

Diviner: Not at all. I can't help you.

Messenger: Why?

Diviner: You trade in violence, so says the oracle.

Messenger: I will pay you in thousands. Remember that everybody either knowingly or unknowingly trades in violence. Baba, you use human beings for rituals, what is that if not a smart way to violence?

Diviner: Confess first. As for me, I use human beings as ritual objects but am I the direct beneficiary of such acts? Or have I ever killed directly as you have done? Speak, Mr. Hangman! You are even challenging me in my own house? What is this world turning to?

Messenger: Yes, you benefitted directly or are you not collecting money for the job? Well, if you are rejecting my plea, I do hope that you will not reject the cassette player.

Diviner: I will not. All I have to do is to...

Messenger: The time is a minute to ten o' clock, let us listen to the news at ten (Tunes the cassette player which may be aided by the loud speaker): "This is Radio Wazobia FM Stereo. The time is ten o'clock. Here is the summary of the news. A timed bomb exploded yesterday night killing the commandant of Ahuwa Barracks, Major General Andy and leaving several other combatants injured. The Military Intelligence with the combined effort of the Military Investigative Bureau has arrested one Colonel Tanko Giwa in connection with the explosion. Pressed further, the Director of Military Information said that the Colonel has confessed the reason behind his seemingly violent action which was money. The administrative headquarters of..."

Messenger: (Stopping the news) What administrative headquarters? Why? Why should that General die like that?

Diviner: But he died. That General is too dubious for my liking, now he has been caught in his own web.

Messenger: What a pity! We met two days ago.

Diviner: Pity not the dead. Pity yourself who is still living. If you are not careful, you will soon join him...

Messenger: Baba, for the last time, when are the rituals going to begin? Stop seeing the impossible! I will live longer than my forefathers...

Diviner: Search yourself and purge yourself. You are gradually moving closer to the grave to meet your forefathers...

Messenger: I will come back tomorrow to see if you might have changed your decision. I shouldn't be your sacrificial lamb. In fact, if you have commanded the invincible spirit of money to my side since, wouldn't I have stopped the game of death that I am playing? Do something fast about my plights.

Diviner: Purge yourself and search yourself, violence is anti-human. From now on, I don't want to see you again in my house!

Messenger: Impossible! Don't forget that I still have a powerful and functional pistol with me and I can make you my next victim...

Diviner: You are indeed set for destruction but before then, I will destroy you!

Messenger: (Threatening) Good and if you destroy me, are you not part of the killer's squad, answer Baba?

Diviner: We shall see!

(The Orchestra sings "Write o Write o"):

Write o write o
We don write
Dem don write
We are still writing
They are still writing
Violence no good o...
We don write

Messenger: (Attempting to strangle the Diviner) You are popular and known far and wide. You are an *Irókò* tree, reasonably

courageous and powerful but I will kill you before you think of the next thing to do...

Diviner: (Coughing and chanting) Death comes to my house but meet my absence. Death comes to my extravagance abode but meet my enemy. Òrúnmilà and Èsù are friends initially but the battle for survival and greed separated the duo.

(The Orchestra sings "*Adìre bà lókún*" as bridge):

Adìre bà lókún:	The hen is on top of a rope
Ara ò ro ókún:	The rope is groaning in danger
Ara ò ro adire:	The hen too is groaning in danger
Èdà e rójú ayé:	See the face of the world
Ara ò ro ókún:	The rope is groaning in danger
Ara ò ro adire:	The hen too is groaning in danger

Messenger: You are Èsù...

Diviner: No, I am Òrúnmilà...

Messenger: No, I am Òrúnmilà, the leader of all the Yoruba gods.

Diviner: (Shouting) No...

Messenger: (Shouting) Yes...

Diviner: You are mad...

Messenger: You created the madness.

Diviner: No! Can a dog kill a lion?

Messenger: Yes and no! Yes, if the dog is smart!

Diviner: No! Except if the lion is foolish!

Messenger: Yes! You are the foolish lion.

(A sharp transition to Movement nine).

Movement nine

The General Manager disturbs the stage in his house, a mini neuroan

General Manager: Yes and no, no and yes. Poverty and affluence, affluence and poverty, no and yes. General Manager and Director, Director and General Manager, yes and no. Five million Naira. (Counting money) Yes and no. Oppression and

injustice, injustice and oppression! The Messenger and three hundred thousand Naira. Yes and No. No and yes! Bomb explosion, yes and no. A Colonel killed Andy the General, yes and no. Lànwá Adérìbigbé Owóyokùn, yes and no. (Runs inside and comes out with food) I am hungry, I am not hungry, yes and no. I don't have wrappers, to carry my second daughter, yes and no. (Points and walks to the audience) I don't know you people again. Come, my waist is now decorated with shingles, I need fresh air to survive (Places the food on the table). I am now a picnicker but only beg and beg phrenologist not to call me a fool. Yes (Laughing). Five million naira! (Thinks, runs inside, runs back to the stage and sprays a black substance on top of the food).

(The Messenger enters).

Messenger: (Shouting and stammering) General Manager, manager general, General Manager! Where is my money? I cannot wait for a second to have my money. Where is my money?

General Manager: Eat food first, your money is intact. Eat, eat food first.

Messenger: (Eating) Waaateer, I want to drink water!

General Manager: I, I am coming now, right now. Money is not my problem. How to live and spend it is my main worry (Goes inside).

Messenger: (Takes out his pistol) God! I, I, I will blast his head. God, you will receive another visitor today (Holds his stomach).

General Manager: (Enters with water and bundles of Naira Notes) This is water. Cool yourself with it!

Messenger: (Shoots at the General Manager who screams briefly before giving up) Baba said that I, I, I trade in violence. I should have shot Baba for refusing to start the rituals. Well, Baba is powerful but is he more powerful than me? My stomach. Three hundred thousand Naira! I haven't made money! The rituals, the medicine for money. (Pope John Paul II's speech on violence re-echoes from the loud speaker)

Can't somebody help me? I don't want to die. Why should I die? I have now made money. (Rolls and slumps. The Orchestra sings "Stop the Violence Action" and moves swiftly to the stage to clear set properties for stage use. They drag the dead bodies of the Messenger and the General Manager to the backstage).

The Epilogue: A Parade for the Killers

Narrators One and Two drum casually from the left crash door to the stage.

Narrator One: That is the drum of the knowledgeable. It is now left for the rational ones among you to decode it...

Narrator Two: (Stopping him) Tarry a little. Our play should have ended but we need an epilogue to parade pixilated animals in the jungle of injustice...

Narrator One: Or a short satire for monsters in their murderous missions...

Narrator Two: And a brief show to denigrate demons in human skins.

(Killers, who are strategically placed in the auditorium are entering the stage dramatically. Costumes speak for the role they are playing).

Narrator One: Welcome to the big parade. The Parade of "The Killers" (Sharp song of "Killer ooo" from the Orchestra. "The Killers" are dancing and the two Narrators are flogging them to the rhythm of the song by horsewhips):

Killer o o o
Killer!
Killer o o o
Killer!
Killer you don lose o
Killer!
Pátápátá you go lose again o

Killer!

Narrator Two: (Calling them one after the other) Mr. Contractor, let us hear from you.

Contractor: The accountant refused to pay my money and increase the mobilisation fees after persuasion. So, he paid for it dearly.

Narrator One: Mr. Lover Lover...

Mr. Lover Lover: (Faintly) Can't you all see that I am very handsome? Don't you see that my name is love? How can I share the love of my life with another man? (Smiling) I did not kill my rival but I disfigured him permanently with acid...no regret.

Narrator Two: (Slaps him) No regret? (Draws the Executive Director out) What have you got to say?

Executive Director: His rising profile was a concern to me. His managerial acumen and intellectual radiance were hard to beat. He was simply gifted. Besides, I am tired of playing second fiddle to the former director. So, I moved like a speed of light to dim the star of the former Executive Director, my gifted boss! I am now the Executive Director of Peace International, Chief Owokoniran Owowonuola Nwakaego Maikudi

Narrator One: (Pushing the Executive Director aside) Now our royal majesty, the custodian of our sacred custom and tradition, why did you kill?

King: Before war, the tongues must have danced. I warned them from the beginning to leave the throne for me but they gave me a run for my life. Two of them are now missing, the third was cursed to die. By the special grace of my forefathers, I am now the new King of Nadabi, the most populous town in Wazobia land. My name is *Ìrókò* and *Ìrókò* tree has no rival in the forest.

Narrator One: (Taking off the King's crown) Your forefathers

would never tell you to kill anybody. (Facing General) Now, General, it is your turn to speak...

General: (Marching and singing) I belong to the fifth column and I am the bigger rat eating the house slowly. The dictatorial government of yesterday had to be destabilised so that our coup can succeed. I am now the Minister for outer and inner affairs. Some of the *Gbum...* *Gbuuum...* *Gbuuum...* *Gbuuum...* were bomb explosions from my boys and me. God, some of my boys are still around and we are very deadly...

Narrator Two: (Pushing the General) Brutal General! Deadly General!! Your time is up for you have no place in the new Wazobian project. (Frowning) Some people are senators but you are an assassin (Pulling the Political Assassin). Speak...

Political Assassin: (Cowboy-like) Well, power is sweet. Its odour is good and those who have it are the Lords of the universe because nothing is impossible for them to do. Power is...

Narrator One: Confess and tell us the number of innocent Wazobians whose blood smears your hands. Who are you to lecture us on the meaning of power? Speak!

Political Assassin: Kudirat Abiola, Alfred Rewane, Suliyat Adediji, Sheu Yar'adua, Moshood Abiola, Bola Ige... (Prospective directors are free to include the names of the current political killings of the moment if there are for effect).

Narrator Two: God will judge you. (Calling) Tribal politicians!

Tribal Politicians: Yes, sir.

Narrator One: Speak one after the other.

Politician A: *Ndigbo kwenu!* Ironsi was brutally assassinated and the civil war also destroyed my people. We have the oil and we are marginalised. Monkey *dey work*, baboon *dey chop*. It is Igbo president or no Wazobia. The killings have just started. They must pay for it.

Politician B: (Pushing Politician A). You too must pay for it. Akintola was killed and Awolowo's imprisonment was politically motivated, yet my people have no real political power. It is either my people rule or no Wazobia... ruling by proxy must stop!

Politician C: Close your mouth or are you not aware that we have the exclusive right to rule? The symbol of Gamji politics; Sardauna, Balewa, Maimalari and so on were ruthlessly murdered. We are also poor economically, so we must deal with you infidels. It is not in our character to toy with political power. We will never allow you to control the political power of this country. Are you not satisfied with your rush for money making?

Narrator One: Sectional and centrifugal lords living in a federal state. Unfortunately, they all have ethnic militias such as O.P.C., A.P.C., Bakassi and Egbesu Boys tormenting and killing themselves under the guise of self determination, which has become an idiotic game of self-delusion.

Narrator Two: The Wazobian project is definitely on fire, however, we must fix the project. Let us listen to our medical doctor through whom many people lost their lives.

Doctor: My business is very simple. Injection of death for unknown accident victims...

Narrator One: (Angry) Are you not a human being?

Narrator Two: Let the wicked doctor continue...

Doctor: I also sold unclaimed corpses to ritualists for money making. I have made my millions, perhaps in a non-violent way!

Prison Controller: I am a controller among prison controllers. Most of the men under me have lost the chance to live through funny judgements why some are awaiting judgement; others are currently bathing in sickness. Why then should I feed them with the government money under my care? They now eat once per day while I have become a generous millionaire.

I am fantastically rich. I pay my tithe every week and contributed heavily towards the construction of the best mosque in Kaduna!

ssassin: (Points his pistol to the Narrators) Stop this show, if not I will blow off your heads.

arrators: (Overpowering him) Drop that pistol and confess.

ssassin: Well, I am not an applicant (Points his gun to the audience) like you and you because I am gainfully employed. I have worked for the rich in the society and killing has become part of my living. If you want to give me a contract, I live at number seven, kila street, opposite violent road, no mercy town in danger's republic. I kill through innovative skills.

anker: I am the manager of Wazobia International Bank. (Laughing) I had to kill my accountant and the secretary of my bank to be able to destroy some documents on some minor financial transactions done by my fictitious companies. What I made in one of the operations was too small to sustain my overbloated empire, three billion pound sterling.

Narrator One: (Singing the song of "Stop the Violence Action") Evils. Devils. Syndicates. You are not fit to be called human beings...

Narrator Two: (Crooning the song of "Be your Brother's Keeper", leads the Orchestra into the song and frowns at the audience). If you think that this is a mere play you are joking. Check your overweening ambition, pocket your ego, do not be deluded and goaded by materialism. You are part of our characters in this play and if you know that we have represented you sufficiently enough, change. The consequences of your violent actions may be devastating to you, change!

Narrator One: (Harsh) They are the agents of disunity. Traders in violence and tools for insecurity. (Facing "The Killers") Cover yourselves in shame ("The Killers" back the audience).

Narrator Two: (To the audience) What should we do to them?

Audience One: Leave them alone. They can't change. It is too late for them to change!

Audience Two: Let us preach to them, a Pastor and an Imam will help. This is the only way that can make the criminals on stage to stop their nefarious activities and misadventures.

Narrator One: Are the people here Godly? Do they know God?

Narrator Two: They do. They know God but they only help to spread the gospel of destruction.

Narrator One: (Begging the audience for direction) Again, I am asking, what punishment should we give to these criminals?

Audience Three: Let us burn them alive. They are not fit to live.

Audience Four: Tell us what to do! The artist should know better...

Narrator Two: The artists here tonight have only interpreted and chronicled events within man's socio-political reality. Solution to today's problem must be democratised. The audience must decide...

Audience Two: Let us take them to the law enforcement agents for subsequent prosecution in the law court.

Audience Four: Prosecution my people, let us prosecute them in a competent court of law. They are not fit to be part of us.

Audience One: Leave them alone. They are part of us.

Audience Three: Let us kill them.

Audience Two: No and no! Some of our judges are now honest. We must prosecute them...

Narrator One: You have made a good point and the play must end today. To hang the resolution of this play is to postpone the evil day. Genuine law enforcement agents must prosecute "The Killers" because the court is the last hope of the common man!

Policemen: (Coming from the auditorium to the stage) Where are "The Killers"? Where are the social misfits of the society?

Narrator Two: (Points to "The Killers") Make sure you do not take bribe or twist the overwhelming evidence before you to release them. We are very certain that the judiciary is ready to do its work if you can honestly produce overwhelming evidence!

Policemen: We will not! Of recent, our men too are the target of these people's violence. They kill us with impunity (They lead "The Killers" out of the stage).

Narrator Two: (Smiling) Sorry, we stopped the dance competition when this play began. You can now enjoy yourselves after the journey of "The Killers"! (Dancers file in. Vibrant stamping of feet, rhythmical body movements, sweeping of floor, touching of buttocks and clapping of hands, curtain call).

The End

NOTE: A few of the songs in this play are gotten and re-worked from the repertory of some Nigerian Dramatists while some are deconstructed within the culture of post-modern performance.



The Killers, a play in the promotion of peace, has shown, through total theatre idiom; the reign, paradox and he called violence. In a robust, eclectic and graphic details, AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye's *The Killers* dramatises the various antics and methods of violence, which have grown from the closet of our homes to wear local, national and international garments.



This social theatrical menu, in the melodramatic genre is, paradoxically, the mirror of the degeneration of the society into unnecessary anti-people's quest for wealth and social elevation. Scholars in search of peace, students of politics and literature will nonetheless see, in this play, the evils associated with violence through negative change and transformation. *The Killers*, a carefully written play has also shown the radical transformation of the writer from a theatrical author to a social writer; a sear in search of peace.



A Nigerian, from Ogun 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 (Ngunton, 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 Ife. He has published locally, nationally and internationally. He is a member of many social and academically related organizations such as (KORTA, ASAN, NAFSAL, ANA, IFT – International Federation of Translators) and so on. He is also happily married and blessed with wonderful children.



Creative Writing Series



The Killers (A Social Drama) AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye

The Killers

(A Social Drama)



AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye